

Curriculum reform in Wales: pedagogical principles to promote challenge for all

As schools prepare for the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales, it is important to retain a focus on the pedagogy that will underpin curriculum and assessment. This pedagogy must be sufficiently broad, inclusive and challenging to meet a wide range of learning needs, including those of the most able learners.

NACE is supporting schools in Wales to move forward with ambitious curriculum delivery and design, informed by the 12 pedagogical principles set out in the Successful Futures report.

Good teaching and learning:

- 01** Maintains a consistent focus on the overall purposes of the curriculum.
- 02** Challenges all learners by encouraging them to recognise the importance of sustained effort in meeting expectations that are high but achievable for them.
- 03** Means employing a blend of approaches including direct teaching.
- 04** Means employing a blend of approaches including those that promote problem solving, creative and critical thinking.
- 05** Sets tasks and selects resources that build on previous knowledge and experience and engage interest.
- 06** Creates authentic contexts for learning.
- 07** Means employing assessment for learning principles.
- 08** Ranges within and across Areas of Learning and Experience.
- 09** Regularly reinforces Cross-curriculum Responsibilities, including literacy, numeracy and digital competence, and provides opportunities to practise them.
- 10** Encourages children and young people to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.
- 11** Supports social and emotional development and positive relationships.
- 12** Encourages collaboration.

What does this mean for more able learners?

Creating authentic contexts for learning:

All young people benefit from teaching and learning which makes use of real contexts that both motivate and allow the application of learning. For more able learners, anchoring and applying learning in authentic contexts can engage learners in addressing real issues which are complex and have social, economic relevance.

Encouraging learners to take responsibility for their learning:

Taking responsibility for one's learning is a good habit of mind for all. For more able learners responsibility for making progress cannot lie solely with the teacher and realising high potential also means going beyond core school curricula and playing to one's own strengths independently. Teachers of course must judge to what extent individual learners need support and encouragement in taking responsibility for their learning.

Building on previous knowledge and experience to engage interest:

Good AfL practice means assessing early on what knowledge a learner has of a new area of learning – as well as being constantly aware of their broader strengths and interests. Very able learners may have significant prior knowledge which should be taken into account in planning and delivery so that they progress in line with their abilities and remain engaged and motivated.

Employing assessment for learning principles:

More able learners need to demonstrate mastery of required core knowledge and skills and to be supported in areas which they need to develop. Teachers therefore need to check for understanding and progress with more able learners in the same way as they do for all others. They need to check too that they are making the exceptional progress expected in areas in which they can excel and perform at levels beyond those expected for their age and stage. This also means giving guidance to more able learners on steps to take to accelerate their progress in line with their abilities.

Encouraging collaboration:

For all learners, including the most able, learning through collaboration must be planned and structured to optimise the benefits and form an integral part of a learning episode. In other words, collaboration must have purpose and play to the different strengths of different learners. Some more able learners may shun collaborative activities if they feel they are not gaining from them or that they are not making the most of their intellectual capacity. Appropriate outcomes, roles and tasks in collaborative work are therefore important for more able learners.

Employing a blend of approaches including those that promote problem solving, creative and critical thinking:

This is one of the most important principles in curricula and teaching and learning for the more able. Mastery of the foundations is important, but more able learners need to be challenged through approaches and tasks which require them to use their knowledge and skills at a high level through, for example, tackling and grappling with texts, questions, tasks and activities which require and promote higher level thinking and problem solving; abstract reasoning; critical appraisal; application and transfer of knowledge from different domains; synthesis and reporting of complex ideas in different formats and registers. This will look different in different subject/disciplinary areas and it will be helpful to exemplify in the AoL and at significant progression points.

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