

**Book title:** Outstanding Formative Assessment (Culture and Practise)

**Author:** Shirley Clarke

**Publication date:** 2014

## **The review**

### **1. What is your overall impression of the book?**

This book was recommended by my NQT mentor as an easily readable book about formative assessment. At the school there is a big emphasis on encouraging children to use their learning powers when working (encouraging them to think about their own learning). There are eight learning powers; concentrate, don't give up, be co-operative, be curious, have a go, use your imagination, keep improving and enjoy learning. This whole-school approach has been adapted from this book to develop meta-cognition and a growth mind set.

Shirley Clark takes examples from real practise and promotes strategies which you can embed in your own classroom/school throughout the book.

For easy reading, Shirley Clarke splits the book in to four main sections; laying the foundations (my key interest in the book), effective starts to lessons, developing the learning and effective ends to lessons. This also makes pinpointing areas which you want to develop more easily accessible.

I find the book an 'easy-read' and accessible to all.

### **2. Who do you think would benefit most from reading the book? What will they learn?**

This book has been very beneficial to me to support my professional development and understanding of the work done in school to promote a growth mind set and metacognition. Through using the learning powers and following the school's way of teaching I am already developing meta-cognition and growth-mindset within the classroom, this book however, deepened my understanding behind why it is important to teach this way and the positive effects it has had on many schools, teachers and pupils.

This book would therefore benefit any teacher or school supporting a growth mindset attitude. The book provides lots of practical examples, of ways in which schools have promoted a growth mindset.

### **3. What did you think about the quality of the writing? Please consider the tone, structure and ideas. Does it suit the audience?**

The book is very easy to read and has a lot of practical examples from teachers and schools to support the literature. It also contains QR codes throughout with links to video clips creating a book suitable to a wider audience.

I found a table on 'fixed', 'mixed' and 'growth' mind sets a great breakdown for how different people would tackle certain situations within school. For example, a person with a fixed mindset would feel threatened by feedback however, someone with a growth mind set invites feedback and are motivated by it. From this table and the breakdown, you can relate it to your own class and the children within it and where they possibly sit on the mindset continuum. On pg.17 there is also a suggested list of questions to ask children to assess their mindset however, puzzles are suggested as a better method for younger children.

The conclusion is combined with the impact of formative assessment. It stood out to me just how positive the teachers were in talking about the impact of formative assessment. Something that particularly struck me was the increased enjoyment for all, by making little changes in the classroom here and there a greater impact in enjoyment was seen.

**4. Please discuss the research used to underpin the ideas. What evidence does the author use? Is it robust and up-to-date?**

The author naturally references Carol Dweck as key reference for growth mindset.

To support her lesson culture and structure (as previously mentioned) she provides many examples from schools. The other supporting evidence to culture and structure in the classroom comes primarily from a Hattie (2009).

The research is relevant and rarely does the supporting literature date back further than the year 2000.

**5. What did you learn from reading the book? What ideas/approaches/practice will you change or adopt as a result of reading this book?**

The book has taught me many ways in which I can encourage the children in my class to have a growth mindset. In particular, the praise language I will use more of. For example, a key phrase I will remember is, "good – it's making you think – that's how your brain is growing". Using phrases like this in a positive way I will support the creation of a growth mindset culture. I will put less emphasis on physical "treasure" and stickers and more emphasis on the verbal praise and developing a culture where the children want to compete against each other and themselves to continue learning.

The breakdown of the book into the sections: laying the foundations, effective starts to lessons, developing the learning and effective ends. Supported my development and how I could incorporate many planning and teaching techniques in to the classroom. I hope to develop the ideas seen in this book further in to my career.

I have also found the section on questioning children extremely relevant and will consider more carefully my questioning in planning. I will aim to use questioning more effectively throughout my lessons to support the children's learning and continue a 'no hands up' policy.

I am keen to find out from other professionals how they seat their classes. Shirley Clark, feels very strongly against ability grouping. I wonder whether other professionals outweigh her disadvantages of ability groups using other methods. For example, ability groups in some lessons but not others.

**6. Could you share a quote from the book that particularly resonated with you?**

"When tasks are more complex for a pupil, the quality of meta-cognitive skills rather than intellectual ability is the main determinant of learning outcomes." – Hattie (2009).

This stood out for me because since starting my teaching role in September I am beginning to realise that the progress made by the children, seems to be greatly affected by their attitude and enjoyment towards learning.