INTRODUCING THE TAPS PYRAMID MODEL

Sarah Earle, *TAPS project lead, explains how this supports teacher assessment*

The Teacher Assessment in Primary Science (TAPS) project is a three-year project based at Bath Spa University and funded by the Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT). It aims to develop support for a valid, reliable and manageable system of science assessment that will have a positive impact on children's learning.

Background

Removal of statutory assessment guidance in England has led to a wide variety of practice and much uncertainty as schools trial different methods. Submissions to the Primary Science Quality Mark (PSQM) database reveal that many schools are exploring Assessment for Learning (AfL) in science using strategies such as KWL grids, concept cartoons, floorbooks and self/peer assessment, but then often feel that they need to do something separate at the end of term, such as a test to 'check' the teacher assessment (Earle, 2014). Case studies of TAPS project schools also found a range of different systems, with schools trying to balance a strong focus on AfL with a need to track progression (Davies *et al.*, 2014). The Nuffield Foundation (2012) argued that there need not be two systems: the rich formative assessment data collected by teachers in the course of ongoing classroom work in science could also be made to serve summative reporting purposes. They developed a pyramid model where assessment information flowed from classroom practice to whole-school reporting (on the TAPS pyramid this is represented by the big orange arrow – Figure 1).

Development of the TAPS pyramid model

The TAPS project team has worked with local project schools, PSQM, and PSTT College Fellow schools to consider what the Nuffield proposals would look like in practice. The result is a model of teacher assessment where classroom activity is based on a shared understanding of good practice in primary science, and children's learning can be moderated and summarised. The model does not specify 'one way' schools should assess; rather it provides a structure populated with examples from a wide range of schools. It can be used as a source of ideas for class teachers, or as a whole-school self-evaluation tool to identify strengths and areas for development. The downloadable pyramid pdf (see end) contains both the examples and an interactive function to traffic light school assessment systems (there is a black and white pyramid for printing if schools prefer to do this on paper).

Where do we start?

The 'pupil layer' and the 'teacher layer' at the base of the pyramid encapsulate the principles of AfL; schools should begin by focusing on these layers since this is not only the foundation of the whole system, it is also where changes will have the most impact on pupil progress in primary science.

References

Davies, D., Collier, C., Earle, S., Howe, A. and McMahon, K. (2014) *Approaches to science assessment In English primary schools* (full report, teachers' summary and executive summary). Bristol: Primary Science Teaching Trust.

Earle, S. (2014) Formative and summative assessment of science in English primary schools: evidence from the Primary Science Quality Mark. *Research in Science and Technological Education*, **32**(2), 216–228. Available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02635143.2014.913129#.VPgkTfmsX_E.

Nuffield Foundation (2012) *Developing policy, principles and practice in primary school science assessment*. London: Nuffield Foundation.

The interactive pyramid pdf and reports are available to download at:
www.pstt.org.uk/resources/assessment.aspx

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Figure 1 The TAPS pyramid model