Guide to Continuous Assessment: implementing the curriculum and assessment policy and improving learning and achievement in Lesotho
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<td>AfL</td>
<td>Assessment for Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Continuous Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Curriculum and Assessment Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECoL</td>
<td>Examinations Council of Lesotho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCE</td>
<td>Lesotho College of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoET</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCDC</td>
<td>National Curriculum Development Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Resource teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEO</td>
<td>Senior Education Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy of 2009 sets out a vision for education in Lesotho, where assessment and curriculum are closely integrated and mutually supportive. As a step toward achieving this goal, continuous assessment (CASS), is going to be introduced as a key strategy. By looking at the models from many countries and the research evidence, it has been decided to follow a programme of continuous assessment specifically designed for Lesotho.

In education, assessment is not just about testing; it refers to anything aimed at collecting information about what learners know, can do, their progress and their strengths and weaknesses. It is a vital part of education and is not just about reporting learning but encouraging and supporting learning.

As CASS must link both curriculum and assessment, it must meet the requirements of both. CASS must be valid and reliable in terms of education and assessment. It is designed to empower teachers to improve learning by giving them the tools, strategies and support needed to be effective facilitators and agents of change.

This guide is only the first step on a journey, but it is a journey that is well planned and carefully mapped out. It will not be a short or simple journey but it is achievable. And as part of that, it is recognized that this guide is only the first draft. The guide will be revised and updated as we learn more about what happens in the school learning environment in Lesotho and education evolves.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide will explain how to assess the learning outcomes in ways that promote effective learning. It will show how to translate the learning
outcomes given in the curriculum documents and teacher’s guides into classroom activities. It will explain how to:

- define what is being assessed
- assess the required skills
- judge success
- give feedback to learners
- record and report the results.

It will also provide some teaching strategies that can be used in the classroom.

The assessment packages in numeracy and literacy for Grades 1 to 3 will give examples of how teachers can put the ideas in this guide into practice. Teachers should build on these examples and incorporate the ideas into their day-to-day assessments and apply them to other learning areas.

**WHAT IS CONTINOUS ASSESSMENT (CASS)**

It is an on-going system of monitoring and assessing learners’ progress with the aim of helping them improve their learning. It is done in the school environment through daily teaching. It can also be achieved through projects, quizzes, tests, interviews and observations.

**RATIONALE FOR AND PURPOSE OF CASS**

CASS in the 2nd decade of the 21st century is based on solid research principles; hence it is believed to be sustainable. It is a serious discipline which has been proven to clearly define the proper role of assessment in learning and teaching. Its benefits far outweigh and outnumber those of summative testing. Thus, opting for and emphasizing CASS rather than summative testing (as has been the case in the past) is to move with the times and global trends. Of course, the envisioned far-reaching changes
brought about by CASS will have to be operationalised within the requirements of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy. It also needs the full realization that curriculum and assessment cannot exist one from the other.

In the context of Lesotho, the CASS that is favoured is one that merges formative assessments and assessment for learning. This type of CASS is preferred because it clearly exemplifies the shift away from the traditional ways of testing, which have been found to be severely limiting in a number of ways.

CASS is preferred over the other modes of assessment because:

- It is user friendly.
- It encourages the defining of learners’ performance without necessarily expressing it in terms of mark allocation.
- It fosters classroom participation and independent learning.
- It incorporates remediation.
- It focuses on improving learning.
- With proper strategies, it will be a handy tool towards minimizing the challenges posed by big classes.
- Learners will be assessed in a child-friendly environment.
- It is meant to improve dialogue between teachers and learners.
- It encourages learners to explore their own learning and understand what they are being assessed on.
- It empowers learners to become active learners.
- It provides immediate feedback, which will help identify barriers in learning so as to allow timely remediation.
- It is a system to allow a climate that encourages assessment for learning in the classroom.
- It allows teachers to formulate strategies to improve teaching and learning.
- It gives all learners a chance.
• It clearly indicates what learners know and can do and helps them understand what they need to do to improve learning and move to the next stage.
• It helps learners to be involved in the learning and upcoming activity even before it’s begun.
• It can help build learner self-esteem by offering them opportunities to contribute.
• It has a collaborative aspect which is a useful tool in strengthening teacher-learner relationship.
• It is designed to reduce repetition and drop-out rates.

The aggregate effect of all the above intentions enables the safe pronunciation that this type of assessment is truly authentic.

FEATURES OF CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

Unlike some forms of CASS which are based around regular formal tests, this form of CASS is about genuine continuous formative assessment. It consists of ALL the assessment activities that take place in the classroom, including the day-to-day questioning by teachers right through to the Quarterly Assessments which provide opportunity for learners to combine all their learning to date and show they can combine it. This means it has these key features:

• It is formative in nature
• It is integrated within the curriculum
• It promotes assessment for learning in the classroom
• It is intertwined with teaching and learning
• It allows provision of feedback on the learning progress
• It indicates what learners know and can do and what they need to do to improve their learning
• It employs all forms of assessment (informal observations, oral, project work, drawings, posters etc.).

The type of continuous assessment that is going to be used in Lesotho is built around assessment for learning (AfL), this has some additional features. A key part of CASS is the belief that every learner can improve on previous achievements.

Features of Assessment for Learning
• Sharing learning outcomes with learners
• Helping learners know the standards they are aiming for
• Providing feedback that helps learners to identify improvement
• Both the teacher & the learner reflecting on learners’ performance
• Learners learning self-assessment techniques to discover areas for improvement
• Recognising that motivation and self-esteem are crucial for effective learning and progress and can be increased through effective assessment techniques
• Sharing success criteria with learners

FEATURES OF A FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Formative assessment emphasizes learning as the shared goal for both the teacher and the learner. To reach this goal, modifications to the teaching and learning processes are made if, and when, necessary. Assessment and learning become an ongoing process instead of an end product. Formative assessment is:

Focused
Formative assessment is focused on the learning process and progress. While other assessments may only focus on the end result, formative assessment checks the learner’s progress consistently so that adjustments can be made to reach learning goals.
**Collaborative**
Teachers share learning outcomes with learners and assessments and feedback are used by both learners and teachers to reach these learning outcomes.

**Ongoing**
Formative assessment is consistent and ongoing throughout the learning process. It differs from assessments that focus on the end result. Ongoing assessments give both teachers and learners the chance to make adjustments to teaching and learning strategies so learning ultimately takes place.

**Immediate**
While other forms of assessment focus on the end result, formative assessment provides immediate feedback to both teachers and learners. The immediate feedback teachers and learners experience can be used to motivate and improve learning.

### KEY STRATEGIES FOR MAKING SURE CASS IS ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

Achieving successful AfL is not straightforward so we need some simple strategies to make sure it delivers good learning.

**Assessment for Learning Checklist**
What makes AfL effective? The following checklists will help teachers understand AfL and they should refer back to them regularly, reflecting on what is happening in the classroom and how they can improve.

**To make AfL effective, learners need to:**
- show changes in their attitudes to learning and in their motivation
- show changes in their responses to questions and in contributions to group sessions
• improve their attainment
• be actively involved in formative assessment processes (setting targets/peer- or self-assessment).

To make AfL effective, teachers need to:
• know their learners well, know why they make mistakes and be able to make judgments about next steps
• share learning outcomes with their learners
• build in review time in lessons
• analyse learners’ performance in assessments and adapt for future planning
• produce lesson plans which show evidence of the above.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Success criteria are statements that help learners determine whether they have been successful in their learning. These statements summarise the main key teaching points/steps required to achieve the learning outcomes by offering clear guidance on how to be successful.

Learning outcomes
A learning outcome is a statement that describes what learners should know, understand or be able to do at the end of a lesson(s). Learning outcomes are constructed using the stages in Bloom’s taxonomy such as remember, understand and apply. The learning outcomes are given in the new curriculum documentation.

They should also be stated in clear language that can be easily understood by the learners, teachers may need to explain them to their learners. If the learning outcome in the curriculum has more than one aspect then teachers should split it into constituent skills so that the learners can understand what is required easily.
Sharing learning outcomes
A learning outcome is a description of what the teacher wants the learner to know, understand and be able to do by the end of a lesson or lessons. It also explains to the learner what the focus for learning is going to be.

The importance of using learning outcomes
Making learners aware of what they are going to learn (and why they should learn it!) gives the learners an opportunity to take charge of their learning and promotes learning independence. It also helps them to stay focused for longer periods of time, to be more motivated and to participate more in their learning.

How do we frame and deliver learning outcomes?
Learning outcomes should be shared with learners before they begin an activity or a lesson. Steps to follow when using learning outcomes to introduce a new activity are:

- pinpoint what learners will be learning
- explain and/or negotiate the purpose for the learning
• convey the information in simple language that learners can understand
• always revisit the learning outcome throughout the activity or lesson

**Success criteria**
Learning outcomes are often too broad and need to be broken down into success criteria.

**Features of success criteria**
Success criteria are:

• linked to the learning outcome
• specific to an activity
• measurable and observable
• discussed and agreed upon with learners prior to the beginning of the learning activity
• used as the basis for feedback and peer- and self-assessment
• used to scaffold and focus learners while they are engaged in an activity

**The importance of success criteria:**
Success criteria:

• allow both the teacher and learner to be focused on the criteria that the work will be assessed against
• encourage independent approach to learning
• enable them to assess their own work and identify success areas for improvement
• promote independent learning by helping learners generate their own criteria
• allow both the teacher and learner to give accurate feedback
• help create a positive classroom environment
• encourage learners to be involved in the learning and upcoming activity even before it is begun
• help build learners’ self-esteem by offering them opportunities to contribute
• help strengthen the teacher-learner relationship because of its collaborative aspect

**Strategies for generating success criteria**
Success criteria should:

• be written in the words that learners understand
• be written in the same order as the task is modeled/undertaken
• help learners understand the steps in their own words i.e. grasp the key words
• use images/pictures to illustrate key ideas

**Creating success criteria**
When creating the success criteria, it is important to focus on process and characteristics rather than the final effect. The example below will illustrate the point:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome: Adding three digit numbers without carrying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity: addition of numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I will be successful if:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can add three digit numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I put them in columns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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15
In the example above, there are two suggested success criteria. The criteria on the left do not guide the learner how to add three digit numbers while the ones on the right do. The success criteria listed on the right provide learners with the key steps needed to add three digit numbers. If learners can follow the steps quite well, they demonstrate that they can add three digit numbers.

**ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS**

Why do teachers question learners? Teachers question learners to:

- involve learners in the session through thinking
- provide the teacher with an insight into the level of understanding.

Questioning is an important part of learning and teaching. It is used to assess whether learners have learned and ultimately progressed against the defined success criteria/learning outcomes. Teachers need to review what has been learnt and what is to be learnt in any one teaching and learning session. One strategy of assessing what has been learnt would be to use questions.

The two basic types of questions are *closed* questions and *open* questions. Closed questions usually only require the learner to recall an answer, while open questions require learners to think and formulate a response.

If we want to achieve formative assessment we need to move from closed to open questions. We need to develop questions and tasks that make learners think. Traditionally most questioning and testing has focused on asking closed questions which focus more on the lowest levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning. If the teacher focuses on the lower levels, how can the learners be expected to reach the highest levels and gain deep learning?
**Blooms Taxonomy of Learning**

Bloom’s taxonomy of learning is a simple way of expressing the complicated hierarchy of events that go through a learner’s mind as they acquire and assimilate new knowledge and skills.

**REMEMBER → UNDERSTAND → APPLY → ANALYZE → EVALUATE → CREATE**

This also represents levels of difficulty; the easiest skill is to remember a fact, it is harder to understand and apply it and even harder to use that knowledge or skill to create new things.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLOOM’S CATEGORY</th>
<th>SAMPLE SENTENCE STARTER</th>
<th>POSSIBLE ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remember</td>
<td>What happened after…? How many …? What is …? Who did …? Can you name …? Who spoke to ...? Name all the …? Can you count to …?</td>
<td>List the main events/characters in a story Make a facts chart List the facts you can remember Make a chart showing ... Recite a poem Repeat a list or phrase Count to 10 in order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Can you re-write … in your own words? How would you explain …? What do you think could have happened next? Who do you think was …? What was the main idea …? Why did they do that? What is 2 + 2?</td>
<td>Draw a picture of an event Turn the story into a cartoon strip Retell the story in your own words Write and ending for the story Compare two characters in a story Counting objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>Can you write in your own words …? How would you explain …? What happened next …? Who do you think …? Explain why a character acted as they did</td>
<td>Construct models to demonstrate something Make a map Write a guide about a topic Simple mathematical puzzles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Analyze       | Why did it happen?  
|              | How is ... similar to ...?  
|              | What else could have happened?  
|              | Is ... a good answer?  
|              | Why could ... not have happened?  
|              | Design a questionnaire  
|              | Write an advert to promote something  
|              | Construct a graph to illustrate information  
|              | Prepare a report  
|              | Come up with the for and against arguments  
|              | Come up with simple hypotheses  
|              | More complex mathematical puzzles involving selecting methods  
| Evaluate     | Which is the best answer?  
|              | What do you think is best?  
|              | What do you think about ...?  
|              | Is ... good or bad?  
|              | What would you have done?  
|              | How would you feel if ..?  
|              | How well did ... do?  
|              | What changes would you recommend?  
|              | Have a debate about a topic  
|              | Devise 5 rules and explain why they are important  
|              | Rank things by importance  
|              | Decide if a hypothesis is good or bad based on the evidence they have  
|              | Decide which is the best method of solving a problem  
| Create       | Can you design a ... to ...?  
|              | Can you paint a picture to show ...?  
|              | What would happen if ...?  
|              | How would you ...?  
|              | Think of a new use for ...  
|              | How many ways can you ...?  
|              | Draw a picture to show something specific  
|              | Give a speech to convince the class why your idea is best  
|              | Create a new type of sweet. Give it a name and draw an advert  
|              | Write how you feel about your family  
|              | Write a play/song/poem  
|              | Draw a machine to do a task |
At Grades 1 to 3 most learning outcomes are aimed at the lower end of Bloom’s hierarchy, so how do we turn questions exploring knowledge into more open questions? How do we encourage our learners to think and to learn? Here are some simple strategies teachers should use.

**Strategies for writing open questions**

Here are 4 simple strategies to move from asking closed questions to asking more open questions that will promote learning.

1. Reframe the question so there are a range of answers to be discussed, e.g. the recall question “What are the three uses of soil?” becomes “What are three uses of soil? Discuss these answers: growing plants, building houses, making clay utensils, making bricks, painting, straightening hair, make up, eating, making a road”.
2. Turn a question into a statement and ask if they agree or disagree e.g. “All animals are domestic. Do you agree or disagree and why?”
3. Find opposites or solutions that work and ones which don’t and asking reasons e.g. “Why is this meal a healthy one and this one an unhealthy meal?” (with relevant examples of a healthy meal and an unhealthy one).
4. Give the answer and asking how it was arrived at e.g. “7+3+2=12. What strategies could you use to come up with the answer?”

Some of these might seem strange questions but they are designed to make the learners answer “it depends!” If we look at the question about soil, the weaker learners answering just using their recall and without much understanding will say “grow plants, make houses and utensils” and not think; the brighter ones will analyse the options and say “well you can straighten hair with it! … maybe!” “You use it in roads but if you just have soil and no rocks it gets muddy!” The question is designed to make them think!
Strategies for oral questioning
If teachers are going to use questions like these, then they also need to think about the supplementary questions they might need to ask to help discussions and to probe learners’ understanding, misconceptions and difficulties e.g. “What do we think about soil as makeup? Have you ever seen people put it on their faces? When?”, “What about bricks - is that the same as making houses?” “Can you grow plants without soil, what about water plants?” etc.

Teachers need to plan how the discussion might go but not to be surprised or concerned if it does not go the way they think – learners can be surprising. But teachers do need to keep the discussion on topic and make sure it focuses on the learning points they want to make. At the end, teachers must sum up the learners’ thoughts and clarify any misconceptions.

To facilitate such discussions teachers need to become skilled questioners. The following strategies can be used for oral questioning.

- Pose, Pause, Pick (PPP - triple P principle)
  - *Pose* the question to the whole group
  - *Pause* at least for 30 seconds, allowing all learners to think of (or discuss) the answer. Within the 30 seconds, rephrase the question to help learners understand. Also probe learners to provide clues for learners
  - *Pick* a learner to answer
- Spread the questions around the class so that all can participate
- Acknowledge correct answers e.g. “Good answer, does everyone agree?”
- Incorrect answers should not be ridiculed either by the teacher or the remainder of the group of learners but instead used to explore the class’ understanding
How to move beyond just asking questions to other forms of assessment

CASS is not just about questioning, it also involves all types of assessments such as projects, role-playing, creating etc. So how do teachers introduce these other types into their classrooms?

- First think carefully about the learning outcomes and how they are best taught and then build an assessment around this.
- Share the learning outcomes with the learners before teaching starts so they can prepare their minds.
- If using a task then state the task clearly and check to make sure the learners have all understood it before starting. Write it on the board. Do not forget to share (or create) the success criteria with the class. Think about extension activities for the brighter learners or those who will finish early.
- Give the learners a clear introduction. It does not need to be long but it should explain to the learners what they are going to do and why.

For example, from Sesotho Grade 1 Unit 1, the introduction might start something like:

“Good morning learners, today we are going to practice all the things we have been learning about greeting people and showing respect in the Basotho culture. We are also going to practice our listening and speaking skills. With no hands up, who remembers our class rules for listening and speaking? [Choose one child to ask or use PPP – have a short discussion with the class to make sure everybody understands and remembers the rules.] Good, now we are going get into our groups and role-play the greetings and respect we learnt in Sesotho. Can everyone remember what I mean by role-playing? Etc. ....”

And don’t forget to feedback to them at the end of the class.
FEEDBACK

A key aspect of CASS at Grades 1 to 3 is that teachers should never put marks or grades on learners’ work. Instead they should develop one of the most important skills a good teacher needs, that of giving good feedback to help learners improve.

What is feedback?
It is an oral or a written statement which clearly indicates the learners’ strengths and weaknesses with regard to a predetermined success criterion. It comments on the quality of a learner’s work and offers advice on how to improve. A teacher can also use feedback to reflect on own teaching strategies, attitude and resources that can be used to improve learners’ performance.

Attributes of a good feedback
- It is immediate.
- It is constructive and positive.
- It has evidence of where the learner is currently and a definition of a desired goal as well as offering the strategy to close the gap.
- It motivates learners by building their self-esteem and reinforces positive learning.
- It is accessible to the learners, i.e. it is clearly stated in simple language.
- It addresses the needs of an individual learner.
- It promotes deep learning as it links what has been learned to what is being learned as well as what will be learned.
- It allows learners to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses and helps to improve future learning.
- It allows a two way communication between a teacher and a learner hence promoting participation in learning.
Ways of giving feedback
Feedback can be given either orally or in a written form.

Oral feedback
It can be given during a lesson and after the lesson. It allows for quick remediation and improvement in performance. For instance, during teaching a teacher guides learners to the correct answer through a series of questions as shown below;

Teacher: What would you do if you were sent to the staff-room to get a piece of chalk in the afternoon and found a group of teachers?

Learner: I would say good morning!

Teacher: It is good that you greet them first, but remember that it is in the afternoon.

Learner: Oh! I would say ‘good afternoon’!

Teacher: Very good! Remember that these people are not your age mates.

Learner: Sorry teacher, I would say, ‘good afternoon teachers’

Teacher: Good Girl! When greeting people we consider the time of the day and the people we are greeting.

As can be seen from the above dialogue feedback also allows a two way communication between a teacher and a learner. This will possibly improve learners’ verbal communication skills, boosts their self-esteem and confidence. It can also improve the teacher-pupil relationship.

How to give oral feedback
Oral feedback should be positive. It should carefully prompt learners towards the achievement of a desired goal. Negative statements such as wrong,
rubbish etc. should be avoided as they demoralise learners. It should address individual needs regarding the task given.

**Written feedback**
It is the kind of feedback that is given to learners in relation to the task given and marked. It should be provided every time learners have done a written exercise, whether the task is well done, partly achieved or not done well at all. [Suggestion: if you have large classes, think about sometimes using peer-assessment or self-assessment to give the feedback.]

**How to give a written feedback**
This should be clearly written in simple language that can be understood by learners. Teachers should identify learners’ achievements and give a positive comment. They should clearly state the identified problem and give advice on how to improve. Statements such as ‘good’ or ‘can do better’ are vague. They do not show the strength or weakness of a learner. Such statements should be qualified to indicate areas in which the learner is performing.

*For instance, where learners have been given a task to draw a picture of a member of their family, they might make a picture with one leg.*
Then a teacher’s comment would be, ‘this is good because your picture has a head, a neck and two eyes. Draw it again making sure that it has two legs instead of one’.

It should be noted that even though two ways of giving feedback are stated, these can complement each other to enhance learning.

**Good feedback vs bad feedback**
These examples are given out of context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bad feedback</th>
<th>Good feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WRONG!!!</td>
<td>Explain what they need to do to improve e.g. “Use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and with proper nouns”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubbish!!</td>
<td>Get them to think about why they are wrong e.g. “Think about the success criteria!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve</td>
<td>Give an reminder prompt for them to improve e.g. “Say more about why it is important to brush our teeth”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Explain why it meets the success criteria - and ask them to think how it might be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❌</td>
<td>Explain why e.g. if there are a series of steps then explain where they are going wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have only sorted them one way!</td>
<td>Give an example prompt e.g. “you could sort them by height as well”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is not good, try harder!</td>
<td>Give them a scaffold prompt e.g. Can you describe why you Mpho is your best friend?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to mark without giving marks - marks versus comments**
Traditionally when learners have been given piece of work, teachers mark it by giving ticks for acceptable responses and crosses for what is acceptable. At the end marks such as 8/10 or 2/10 would be assigned. These marks do not
convey meaningful information about what learners know and can do or how to improve, instead they promote complacency among high achievers and low achievers become demotivated. In addition over-emphasis on and over-use of grades and marks can create a competitive culture in class. Teachers should never give grades or marks at Grades 1 to 3.

Current trends in assessment advocates meaningful feedback that would enhance learning every time a learner is given a task whether oral or written. Ticks or crosses should be replaced with comments. This should clearly indicate what a learner can do and where he needs to improve as well as what needs to be done to improve and close the identified gap.

For example where a learner has been given a task to write ‘a’, a learner may write it with a tail at the bottom instead of after the circle. The teacher can write ‘Good’ and then write ‘a’ next to that of the learner. This should be followed by a comment such as ‘next time put the tail after the circle’.

The stars and smiling faces can be used in the place of comments such as ‘very good and good’. These should be used in collaboration with the comments to enhance learning.

**Summary of using good feedback and marking strategies**

Everyone likes to know how he or she is doing. At a minimal level feedback provides a reference point for learners. Feedback influences learning and can be very motivating or very demotivating depending on its nature, scope and timing. Teachers need to be aware of the impact that comments, marks and grades can have on learners’ confidence and enthusiasm to learn.

Effective feedback:

- Is timely
- Provides insight into misunderstandings, errors, lack of techniques
• Provides guidance about how learners may improve their performance
• Is positive especially at the start and finish of any comments
• Checks understanding regularly
• Provides examples of good and bad work
• Provides opportunities for discussion of feedback in a supportive and developmental environment
• Is legible i.e. avoids unknown abbreviations, notations
• Is realistic includes obtainable suggestions for improvement which are also unambiguous
• Should relate directly and primarily to the assessment criteria
• Should focus on the individual

It is worthwhile to note that teachers should be as constructive as possible in the feedback that they give.

Suggestion for teachers:

get together with your colleagues and discuss what you are all confident in and what you need to develop, share your ideas. Demonstrate modeling the success criteria and improvement strategies and how to give feedback. Suggest that you all try the following ideas in your individual classes, in this order:

• Using an anonymous piece of work to involve the whole class in deciding if the success criteria have been met
• Using that piece for whole-class identification of success and improvement against learning outcome. Use groups or pair-work to make suggestions for improvement.
• Using 2 contrasting pieces to analyse with the whole class which success criteria are most successfully achieved and why? Remember to focus on a small section at a time.
Feedback to each other once you have all tried them and discuss which strategies work best with your learners and why.

Adapted from Shirley Clarke

PEER & SELF-ASSESSMENT

It is commonly the teacher who assesses the learner, but the learner could also assess himself or herself. This is referred to as self-assessment. Learners can also assess each other—peer assessment. Peer and self-assessment aim at involving learners as far as possible in evaluating and critically analyzing their learning. These types of assessments encourage learners to reflect, modify, improve and take pride in their success. In order for learners to participate effectively in peer and self-assessments, they have to take part in discussing the learning outcome, determining the success criteria and identifying success against the set success criteria.

When a learner assesses himself or herself this often has far more meaning and impact than the same assessment by others. Learners not only examine the products and processes, but also their emotions and thoughts about what they are learning. It is the role of the teacher to help learners to develop self-assessment skills so that they are able to judge the effectiveness of their own performance accurately.

A key component of self-assessment is what is commonly referred to as self-reflection (meta-cognition). Self-reflection is a way of bringing meaning to important work. Its personal, evaluative and revealing qualities expand the learner’s understanding of and enrich their response to that work. Self-reflection serves different purposes as listed below:

- It can help the learner to plan a task
- Monitor their progress
- Evaluate their accomplishment
One simple and effective idea is for learners to use ‘robot’ (traffic lights) icons, labeling their work green, orange, or red depending on whether they think they have good, average or minimal understanding. The robot icons can be in the form of coloured pencils, painted sticks or any form of sustainable resource a teacher can come up with.

Peer assessment refers to assessment of the learner by his peers or classmates. This is a valuable means of involving learners in their own and other’s learning. It is productive in terms of improved learning. Learners can learn a great deal from each other. Peer assessment is very ideal for large classes. Care should be taken by teachers, however, to avoid using peer assessment only. Both parents and learners still look up to the teacher to verify learning achievement.

REPORTING

Reporting goes hand in hand with recording because the former emanates from the latter. Like everything else in CASS recording and reporting are important as an aid in making crucial decisions. It is however worth noting that not all CASS needs to be recorded, only key milestones in the learner’s education development in each learning area should be recorded, that is, the balanced outcome of all assessments including the quarterly checkpoint assessments produced by ECOL. Teachers should use the report card shown in Appendix A.

Recipients of the Reports
- Learners
- School (Principals & Teachers)
- Parents/Guardians
- Inspectors / EOs
- SEO / CI – Primary
- NCDC and ECOL
- MoET
Functions of the Report Card
The report card has been designed in such a way that it will be easily used by all the decision makers starting from the class teacher, principal, parent, education officers, inspectors, NCDC, ECoL, SEOs and CEOs. The evidence contained in the report will also be such that a variety of decisions can be made, e.g. remediation, repetition of a grade, promotion from one grade to another etc. Teachers, principals and parents or guardians should look at the report card every quarter to ensure that no learner is missing out on key skills that might stop them progressing to the next grade so that remediation can be put in place early – the end of the year is too late.

STRATEGIES FOR USING CASS WITH LARGE CLASSES

The aim of CASS is to make it easier for teachers to teach well. If teachers focus on learning rather than teaching and marking then they should be able to create enough space in the curriculum to change how they approach their role, and in the longer term, free up time to enjoy teaching more.

But as part of this they need to look for strategies to make CASS work with the large class sizes, mixed-ability and mixed-grade teaching that some teachers may be faced with (these are issues that also face traditional teaching but if CASS is well applied it should help).

Using peer assessment
A lot of excellent assessment happens during group work, so make sure you harness this. Just remember this is not an easy way to avoid marking, it is a way of making sure the learners help each other and deepen their own learning. Make sure you give good guidance and set rules for the learners. It will take a while for them to get the idea but once they do, it will save you a lot of time.
Making sure your teaching is directed where it is needed most
A nice idea based on the ‘robot’ (traffic light) system is to pair the yellow (uncertain) and green (confident) learners so that the green learners can help explain things to the yellow learners. You then take the red learners (the ones who think they do not understand the topic) aside so you can really help the learners who need it most.

Using class marking
Do not feel you have to mark every piece of work every time. Occasionally do the marking as a class activity. Make sure you have good examples of what makes a good answer and what makes an answer that needs improving. The learners can then mark their own work against the criteria and improve it. If you are asking shorter questions, e.g. mathematics answers, make sure you set fewer questions (say only 5 multiplications) so there is more time to go through the responses and for the learners to analyse their own work.

Use effective feedback
Agree on a set of short-hand symbols with your learners, so they know what you mean easily. For example, draw a star where they have met the success criteria and underline where they can improve. And do not give a paragraph of feedback: keep it simple and direct! For example do not write “Your story is very nice, I like the way you make me understand the characters especially the cat but you need to concentrate on your spelling and punctuation – you spelt picture as picchu, house as howse, messages as massage and you did not use full stops on lines 1,2,5,7,15 and 19, or commas on lines 4,7 and 9 and Mary should have a capital letter as it is a proper noun” instead write “I like the story, see where I have put the stars for bit I really liked, check your spelling against the difficult words and review your punctuation” or even “Good but how would you improve the underlined bit?”. 
Not marking everything but concentrating on using the learners’ work to guide their self-improvement
Choose one or two good examples from the learners’ work and use these to explain what makes a good piece of work and how work can be improved; this is linked with class marking. But in a similar way you do not need to go through each piece of work point by point. Instead, identify, say, 3 places where it is good and one where it could be improved and just annotate those.

Mixed-ability and mixed-grade teaching
Look for learning outcomes that repeat or link (e.g. sorting, sets and set notation) across the grades and use these as the basis of differentiated learning. Also use the strategies mentioned in the section on questioning, by basing the assessment on a skill you can set different contexts to allow different levels of learners to engage in the same task but to different extents. For example, a teacher could base an assessment around sorting and sets and have some learners doing simple sorting activities, others working out how to sort things and yet others recording the outcomes in set notation.
Also, if you normally split the learners into groups by grade or ability, sometimes make groups including all the grades or ability so the Grade 3 or brighter learners can help explain things to the ones who are struggling. The ones doing the explaining will also benefit by improving their learning as they explore the concepts.

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL, TEACHER, LEARNERS AND PARENTS

Good leadership skills play a major role in maintaining order, stability and discipline in an institution, organization, company or school. Thus, in a school, good leadership skills are likely to affect performance in general. Therefore, all stakeholders should work hand in hand to ensure the smooth running of the school. To determine performance, learners have to be assessed during their learning process. Therefore, each stakeholder should play an important role in ensuring continuous assessment of learners. Thus it is crucial that each stakeholder knows what role to play. Below is a list of some of the principle stakeholders and their roles:

The role of the principal
The principal is not just an administrator but someone who supports teaching and learning by inspiring, mobilizing, organizing and monitoring all the school activities. The principal has an impact on the performance of the teachers and learners. Among other crucial tasks, s/he ensures the effectiveness of AFL in the classroom. The principal also ensures that all parties know and perform their roles by ensuring that we all share the necessary information meant to support learning. The role of the principal among others is to:

- lead and spearhead the development of formative assessment
- make sure the teachers are all applying standards equally within the school and to the national standards
- work hand in hand with the management team
• provide resources (stationery, teaching aids etc.) for the staff
• monitor both the teachers’ and learners’ progress
• keep records at school
• coordinate meetings between teachers and learners, among teachers, inspectors, RTs, parents and the community
• ensure staff and learners’ welfare during CASS
• help in their pre- and in-service training on CASS

Suggestion for principals:

*Run a workshop for your teachers. Ask them to discuss:*

• *What they already know about formative assessment*
• *How far they are already using it*
• *What their development needs are*

Teachers can share their ideas. It might be also useful for you to give them examples of ‘assessment’ so they are clear about what makes good formative assessment and feedback (and that e.g. tests, marks in books, recall questions and meeting targets are NOT formative assessments).

**The role of the teacher**
The teacher is seen as the central person in facilitating AfL and being an agent of change. This means that without the teacher, AfL may not be put into place. As the central person to implementing AfL, the teacher has to work effectively and harmoniously in liaising with other stakeholders to support the learning process. The teacher therefore has to feel empowered and confident in implementing AfL in the classroom and therefore has to know his roles. Some of his roles are to:

• develop assessment tasks for learners in relation to set standards and learning outcomes
• select assessment strategies and learning tasks
• mark and provide constructive feedback to learners
• keep records of learners’ performance
• report learners’ progress to the principal and parents
• administer learners’ self- and peer-assessment and make sure it is effective
• create a conducive learning environment for learning
• reflect on his/her work and learners
• manage and control classroom behaviour
• implement and maintain success criteria
• manage time and share objectives with learners

The role of learners
The learners as active recipients of knowledge are expected to participate fully and take responsibility for their own learning. To ensure that learning takes place, the learners have to show a change in behaviour. This can be easily seen if the learners play their part by performing their roles which include:

• being actively involved in their own learning
• being responsible for self and peer evaluation
• making use of feedback
• sharing information with their partners
• identifying their strengths and weaknesses

The role of parents
Parents have sent their learners to school to be educated. Given the large numbers of learners in the classrooms, parents have to know how their learners perform and assist where possible, especially with the newly introduced mode of assessment. For assisting the learners, parents, among other things, should:

• follow up learners’ performance
• support learners and teachers
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CASS

1. **How do I give feedback without awarding marks?**

   Looked at carefully, marks by themselves don’t really say much about the performance of a learner, e.g. what does 8/10 really mean? By using clear statements of what the learner is able to do and what they need to do to improve, learning will improve.

2. **Is this not going to be one of those fly-by-night things?**

   No, it has been designed to be sustainable, as it is realistic and gives feedback on the performance of the learner. Research from other countries has shown that it works.

3. **How do I know how my school is performing in relation to others?**

   This form of CASS will give very clear standards and the centre moderation model will allow you to compare yourself with other schools in your cluster.

4. **Have teachers been trained to do this?**

   Not yet but, they will be trained and supported.

5. **How do I convince the parents on their children’s performance?**

   Parents will be sensitised on CASS.

6. **Are all learners going to pass?**

   Not necessarily. Achievement depends on individual learners. Only those who will have attained the intended skills at the end of every grade will be promoted.

7. **Is CASS similar to automatic promotion?**

   No.
8. **Are tests being abolished completely?**

Tests as we have known them in the past are going to be abolished. Teachers will be encouraged to use more varied and informative assessment.

9. **So what assessments will CASS use?**

Oral questioning, quizzes, project work, observations, etc.

10. **Is CASS replacing the teacher?**

No, it is to support the teacher in guiding a learner.

11. **Is CASS replacing end-of-year examinations?**

Yes, at grades 1-3.

12. **How is this CASS going to be different from the ones we’ve had before?**

During the extensive consultations and research we learned from the lessons of the past, both locally and internationally. This CASS will focus on improving learning and achievement.

13. **What should I include in the monthly/quarterly reports?**

Statements of success based on the learning outcomes.

14. **Will I be able to assess all learners in my class?**

Yes, using different strategies at different moments at critical points.

15. **Will group work be effective in this case?**

Yes, if it is well planned and purposeful.

16. **How is CASS going to address the issue of larger classes?**
Teachers will be guided on how to assess large classes.

17. What is wrong with the current system?

Education systems need to be reviewed periodically. We are building on the good practices of the current system and continually improving our educational system.

18. Is this CASS not going to increase our workload?

If done well in the school and by the teacher, it should not.

19. Can my child transfer to/from another education system?

Yes, of course. They will have clear reports.

20. Should I use CASS for literacy and numeracy only? What about the other learning areas?

CASS should be used across the curriculum.

21. What monitoring systems are in place?

There will be national assessments that will monitor the educational system as a whole and also the checkpoints. The existing School clusters will be strengthened to moderate CASS. The usual school support structures will also be used.

22. How will this thing impact on our free primary education?

It has been designed to be cost-effective and to improve performance, so it should have a positive impact on FPE.

23. What kind of support are we going to receive from MoET?
There will be in-service training, resources, monitoring, developing expertise within Lesotho by looking at international experiences, as well as support materials.

24. **How will our children be assessed at the end of the level?**

There will be no end of level test at Grades 1-3, instead the outcomes from CASS will give clear statements of success saying what they can do.

25. **Is CASS not going to encourage laziness among teachers?**

No, instead it will make teachers teach better.

26. **How do you ensure that teachers will not ‘cook’ results?**

There will be no marks, but clear statements of what each learner has learned and still needs to learn. There will be systems in place to monitor that reporting is done honestly.

27. **Where have you copied this one?**

Trends in international assessment have all been studied and we have adapted the most successful ideas to our context.

28. **How are learners going to be promoted to the next grade?**

The statements of success will indicate which learners have acquired the necessary skills to proceed to the next grade.
GLOSSARY

**Achievement**: what one has learned from formal instruction, usually in school.

**Active learner**: a learner who takes responsibility for and participates in learning.

**AfL**: using evidence and dialogue to identify where learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. It is any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve in the purpose of promoting learners’ learning. It is on-going and continuous.

**Assessment**: the process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information to aid classroom decision-making; includes information gathered about learners, instruction, and classroom climate.

**Assessment of learning**: refers to strategies designed to confirm what learners now, demonstrate whether or not they have met curriculum outcomes or the goals of their individualised programmes, or to certify proficiency and make decisions about learners’ future programmes or placements. It is designed to provide evidence of achievement to parents, other educators, the learners themselves and sometimes to outside groups (e.g. employers, other educational institutions).

**Attainment target**: a defined level of achievement that a learner is expected to achieve in a given learning area
Awarding criteria: assigning an interpretation to a piece of assessment evidence to enable decision making.

CASS: the term continuous assessment is used to describe the constant process of assessment that spends the entire learning process. Assessment starts when learning starts and is on-going throughout the learning process. Continuous assessment may be described simply as a continuous updating of learners’ performance. This does not mean more tests, but rather different assessment methods to monitor learners’ progress throughout the year. This all gives learners more than one opportunity to demonstrate the ability to attain an outcome.

Checklist: a written list of performance criteria, associated with a particular activity or product in which an observer marks the learner’s performance on each criterion using a scale that has only two choices.

Cluster schools: the schools grouped to form a dissemination centre which share experience and work together.

Curriculum: a national document produced by NCDC that maps out what learning and teaching should take place in schools.

Differentiated learning: is when different ability or different grade learners are taught in the same class but are the different levels are given different tasks or success criteria to ensure they all are able to learn to the best of their abilities.
**Facilitator:** is someone who facilitates, i.e. they give guidance and support to ensure meaningful learning happens and activities run smoothly with the focus on the learner doing the activity.

**Feedback:** It is an oral or a written statement which clearly indicates the learners’ strengths and weaknesses.

**Formative assessment:** assessment carried out for the purpose of improving learning or teaching while it is still going on; assessment for improvement, not grading.

**Grading:** the process by which a teacher arrives at the award of a grade that is used to represent a learner’s achievement in a learning area.

**Integrated curriculum:** a curriculum where the learning outcomes span traditional subject areas and the focus is on the skills and knowledge that underpin all subjects and life-skills.

**Learning area:** These are the five areas as defined in the CAPF: linguistic and literary; numerical and mathematical; personal, spiritual and social; scientific and technical; creativity and entrepreneurial.

**Learning outcome:** a description of what (knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do (at the end of a phase).

**Linguistic:** ability to encode, decode, interpret language and communication. It also involves awareness and consciousness of the use of words.
Literacy: ability to encode, decode, interpret text. It also involves awareness and consciousness of the print environment.

Marking: correcting and feeding back to a learner on their work

Moderation: the process of checking the teacher’s marking against set standards and making any necessary adjustments to ensure national standards are maintained

Monitoring: putting up mechanisms for checks and balances.

Multi-grade teaching: delivering teaching to more than one grade.

National assessment: an exercise designed to describe the levels of achievement, not of individual learners, but of a whole education system or part of it

Numeracy: the ability to use the basic mathematical operations in everyday life

Peer assessment/review: learners discuss and rate each other’s work based on clear performance criteria.

Performance assessment: observing and judging a learner’s skill in actually carrying out a physical activity or producing a product.

Performance criteria: the observable aspects of a performance or product that are observed and judged in performance assessment.
**Portfolio**: a well-defined collection of learner products or performances that shows learner achievement of particular skills over time. A systematic, purposeful and meaningful collection of a learner’s work in one or more activity, learning programme of learning area.

**Recording**: a systematic collection of assessment evidence of a learner.

**Remediation**: involves relearning and re-teaching.

**Reporting**: presentation of the interpreted assessment of a learner and decisions thereof

**Scaffold**: to provide supporting ideas, concepts and prior knowledge to help a learner build their own learning

**Strategy**: the way in which we approach a task

**Success criteria**: These are statements of the standards that help learners understand what is expected.

**Summative assessment**: assessment carried out at the end of instruction to determine learner’s learning and assigned awards: different from formative assessment which is intended to improve the process while it is still going on.
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APPENDIX A: CASS REPORT/RECORD FOR GRADES 1-3

<table>
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<th>Grade:</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Quarter</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Quarter</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Quarter</th>
<th>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Quarter</th>
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N.B. The report/record should be signed by the Class Teacher and the Principal.