



assessment

... not to mention free books
for children

Involving children in self assessment

"For children the skill of being able to consciously reflect on what they know and then being able to make an evaluative comment on it does not simply happen. It needs to be taught explicitly and planned for in an integrated way" (p.23 SALF Guidelines)

These *Self Assessment and Learning Folders* provide a structured framework for teachers that enables children to become more active in their own learning and the assessment of that learning. Children develop assessment skills to present evidence of their work and their assessment of that work across eleven curricular areas:

- English
- Mathematics
- Geography
- Drama
- Visual Arts
- SPHE
- Irish
- History
- Science
- Music
- PE

The *SALF Guidelines* is an easy read which carefully takes you through the 'building blocks' necessary to develop self assessment skills and strategies. It emphasises the need to create a culture of openness and honesty where children can develop skills and strategies to develop and engage in self and peer assessment. The skills are clearly explained, linked directly to curriculum objectives across all the subject areas and well illustrated with lists of examples, case studies and positive quotes from children, parents and teachers who were involved in the piloting of the programme.

Junior class teachers were particularly interested in the presentation folder for junior classes – a scrapbook format into which drawings, photographs and work samples can be glued. Some of the self assessment techniques – thumbs up, thumbs down and traffic lights are currently in use in their classes and they positively reported on the ideas for checklists and ideas for parental involvement. Whole class charts and whole class KWL charts would provide readiness and experience so that the children could move to independent records as they progressed through the school. This

would provide a valuable record of work and important communication with home at the end of the year. At middle and senior classes *SALF* is in the form of folders with 20/40 clear pockets that provide 40/80 display spaces in which the children's selected work samples can be displayed.

The *Self Assessment and Learning Folders* include an organiser at the start of each folder. The establishment of the organiser would certainly be assisted if self assessment/evaluation skills were encouraged and developed from the junior school. Many tips for creating and personalising the folder and for learning how to select work for presentation are listed. Again the list of skills is presented with plenty of suggestions and templates for tasks and ideas. The 'My Interests Survey for Middle Classes' is especially noteworthy, as is the list of words for affirming the child as a learner and the reflection questions for parents when they review the folder with their child. The folder-type presentation at middle and senior level allows the student to review choices of work and 'de-select' or 're-select' other samples from time to time.

The guidelines includes many comments of teachers who have used the *Self Assessment and Learning Folders*. They lauded the improved motivation within their classes and the fact that children, through reflection, came to recognise their individual areas of strengths, limitations, interests, preferences and needs. They were also enabled to set their own goals and identify their progress. As well as developing self assessment techniques, *SALF* also presents methodologies that support children's competencies for peer assessment. Teachers were particularly impressed with the standard of project work which provided for integration of subjects and differentiation (key principals of the revised curriculum).

"Before, with project work, children had a tendency to copy and paste or re-gurgitate facts. This has changed entirely and they now produce very original individual work". (Teacher quote)



SALF provides opportunity for teachers and students to engage in creating digital literacy profiles. The disc can be used like a flash drive where work can be edited or deleted at will; alternatively it can be used with a CD/DVD player which allows you to burn group or individual files but it does not allow for any editing after burning.

SALF outlines guidance for enriching home/school dialogue about children's learning and assessment by outlining ways in which parents, guardians and carers can support children as they reflect on and talk about their folders.

For teachers who want to develop assessment strategies in order to improve children's learning, this book describes the step by step guidelines to support teachers' classroom practice. The overall impression of the *Self Assessment Learning Folder* is that it provides a valuable structured framework that bridges teacher-led learning and assessment with child-led learning and assessment.

The components of the *SALF Starter Kit* are: *SALF Guidelines for Teachers* (€44.95), *SALF Folder for Junior Classes* (€4.50), *SALF 20/40 Pocket Folders for Middle to Senior Classes* (€4.95 each), *SALF DVD for Teachers* (€44.95).

"The SALF folder was his Curriculum Vitae... In the turning of the pages it was as if it became his voice. The pages contained synopsis of what he was about. So it had an authenticity about it because it was his own work. Ownership is hugely important". (Parent quote)

Available from **Outside the Box Learning Resources**, 045 409322, info@otb.ie (www.otb.ie/SALF). ISBN: 978-1-906-926-137.

Reviewed by: **BREDA FAY**, District 7 Education Committee Representative and teacher from Scoil Chóca Naofa, Kilcock. See also article on *SALF* on pages 44/45.