

Able pupils: Teaching and Learning Strategies

Starters

- Set investigations across a sequence of lessons.
- Select pupils to set the starter activity.
- Address the same objective through texts and tasks at varying levels.
- Use pair or small group work with ability pairings or groupings at times.
- Expect pupils to articulate rules or patterns to clarify understanding.
- Have tasks or examples that require higher-order thinking skills.
- Use differentiated or open-ended questioning.
- Make a statement and ask for it to be justified.
- Exploit the power of the follow-up question: 'What makes you think that?'
- Have a range of tasks based on the same text or focus.
- Ask abler pupils to articulate the skills involved in completing particular tasks.

Whole class

- Use differentiated questions.
- Differentiate expectations.
- Prepare questions targeted on particular pupils that reflect their needs and personalities.
- Prime able pupils for contributions that extend the experience of all.
- Pitch texts just above the independent reading level of the class.
- Avoid over-exposure of able pupils.
- Direct questions to individuals to involve able pupils in interactive discussion.
- Expect able pupils to articulate what has been learned.
- Give an oral commentary with the more able in mind.
- Involve pupils in modelling if appropriate.
- Ask able pupils to articulate explanations and principles.
- Make it possible for able pupils to enter tasks at a higher point.
- Use modelling to build the confidence of able pupils.
- Model problem-solving at different levels.
- Use the terminology to support meta-cognition.
- Model only what able pupils need to know.

Group work

- Recognise that able pupils are entitled to teacher time.
- Identify able pupils' shared needs and group accordingly.
- Use additional adults as mentors.
- Create task-specific groups.
- Vary group membership.
- Ensure that there are times when the ablest pupils work together.
- Ensure that able pupils have the opportunity to follow and to lead.
- Give able pupils roles in group work that reflect their abilities.
- Have group/pupil targets, not just class targets.
- Promote self-evaluation.
- Recognise and use the linguistic expertise of multilingual pupils.
- Use out-of-lesson conferencing, for example with mentors.
- Encourage pupils to set questions, not just to provide answers.
- Negotiate over objectives, styles of response and criteria for evaluation.
- Be open to suggestions that build on the pupils' cultural backgrounds.
- Decide together on the objectives to be addressed by able pupils.
- Discuss possibilities over presentation.
- Allocate challenging roles in group work, for example, chairing the group, taking responsibility for moving discussion forward.
- Use peer editing or marking.
- Require the articulation of principles and development points.
- Expect 'different' rather than just 'more'.
- Help able pupils to contribute to the success of others.
- Focus on qualitative outcomes.
- Explore possibilities for acceleration.
- Give all learning a time frame, but match timing to potential.
- Compact the task and give a limited focus to promote depth.
- Plan to engage with higher-order learning skills.

Plenaries

- Expect pupils to offer explanation, not just presentation.
- Exploit the possibilities of presenting in role and reporting back.
- Encourage able pupils to take notes for feedback.
- Allow able pupils a different timescale for feedback, for example via OHP or ICT at the end of the week.
- Be aware of the attitudes of other pupils.
- Focus on the articulation of what has been learnt, using appropriate terminology.
- Tackle demanding objectives.
- Instil the habit of reflection on learning.
- Build understanding of the big ideas.
- Enable able pupils to work with others of similar ability.

Independent work

- Marking should be formative, not just celebratory, and should be focused on specific criteria.
- Share differentiated success criteria in advance.
- Vary styles of response and avoid excessive pressure.
- Offer the inspiration that can come from meeting older pupils who are gifted or talented.
- Encourage self-checking based on prompt sheets for self-analysis.
- Monitor independent reading round the subject.
- Learn about the process of enquiry via the published comments of practitioners.
- Extend and exploit the conventions of different text types.
- Match texts and tasks to pupils' abilities through negotiation based on high expectations.
- Establish extracurricular groups.
- Foster originality, independence and initiative.
- Set investigative, research-based tasks.
- Make time for individual feedback.
- Promote extended reading and writing.
- Expect the use of ICT and encourage (monitored) e-mail link-ups with able pupils in other schools.
- Consider having students in training as e-mentors for able pupils.
- Ensure appropriate access to ICT.