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# TAPS for pupils

**Sarah Earle pulls together this special issue and shows that TAPS is not just for teachers, but also for the learners, through the voices of Science Subject Leaders...**



**B**y placing the Focused Assessment approach within the TAPS pyramid framework, schools are beginning to find a number of ways in which learning in science can be enhanced for pupils. The quotations in this article provide examples of the ways in which science subject leaders (SSL) describe the impact of TAPS on their pupils.

## **Enthusiasm for practical and multi-modal science**

Some schools have found that, by using Focused Assessments, they have made their science lessons more practical, leading the children to be 'more enthusiastic about their learning in science, and they're more excited about doing it' (SSL-G, June 2017). TAPS provides examples of different ways to present science ideas: 'It's allowed them to express it in different ways... if we ask them to explain, to show, to demonstrate, to act out, to video-record, any of the more visual, more audio, they are much better at it' (SSL-D, June 2016).

## **Supports disadvantaged learners**

By broadening the range of assessment evidence, 'reluctant writers' benefit (SSL-T, June 2017) and, by providing opportunities for open science investigations, 'children with very

*limited academic skills just come to life when they do things like this, they've got all the ideas in their heads and this gives them an opportunity to shine'* (SSL-E, June 2017). A particular example of this was described by one SSL: 'Science was a real hook for W who was disapplied for KS2 SATs and generally quite disengaged with learning, both in the classroom and at home. Highlight came when delivering his adaptation presentation about the Venus Fly Trap. At the end of the year, W had met all the interim science assessment criteria and was working at the expected level – a fantastic achievement, which gave him confidence and self-esteem' (SSL-P, November 2017).

## **Giving pupils a voice**

Some teachers describe a greater focus on dialogue and discussion in science: for example, 'when I've slowed it down and taken the time to unpick some of the things that they've said, it's been the most high-quality science I think I've probably ever done' (SSL-T, June 2017). Others describe the way that pupil voice had been amplified, giving the pupils 'ownership of the lessons' (SSL-P, June 2017); 'It's not happening to them; it's happening with them and by them' (SSL-H, June 2016).

## **Ongoing and active pupil involvement**

Providing opportunities for self- and peer-assessment; for example, with children deciding on their own success criteria, has meant that 'the children have got a better understanding of what they need to do, and why they need to do it' (SSL-G, June 2017). 'Formative assessment is a more ongoing teacher- and pupil-led process. Pupils are actively involved' (SSL-H, October 2016).

Active involvement of pupils in their science learning is a key principle of the TAPS pyramid and its application is an ongoing area for research in the next phase of the project. We have found that the Focused Assessment approach has provided a 'way in' for many schools and further examples of how to place this within the broader TAPS pyramid framework are currently being developed.

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