

What makes an effective plenary?

DCSF guidance suggests that:

Plenaries, whether they happen during the lesson or at the end, should:

- occur at a strategic moment in the teaching sequence;
- draw together the learning of the whole group and the individual;
- summarise and take stock of learning so far;
- consolidate and extend learning;
- direct pupils to the next phase of learning;
- highlight not only *what* has been learned but also *how* it has been learned;
- help determine the next steps in learning.

Plenaries need to be planned as part of the planned learning episodes (spontaneous plenaries tend to be less effective). They should link carefully to the objectives, outcomes and success criteria of the lesson as a whole. As with starters, active, engaging, challenging and well-paced learning can be achieved in plenaries through:

- carefully planned tasks;
- planned management and organisation of the classroom;
- use of appropriate interactive teaching skills.

Again, the tasks in this section follow this sequence of development for planning and teaching plenary activities.

Planning the plenary activity

When planning the plenary activity, first consider its purposes – there are likely to be several in any one lesson. Then choose a task that will involve all pupils in actively processing any relevant information from the lesson. Finally, consider the interactive teaching skills you need ‘at your fingertips’ in order to shape and develop a successful plenary.

As with starters, plenaries can be used for a range of different purposes. They can enable you to:

- review the lesson’s objectives – taking stock of what the class has covered in a task or a sequence;
- be diagnostic – assessing both individual and collective learning as well as progress, in order to plan accordingly;
- recognise and value the achievements of individuals and the class;
- stimulate interest, curiosity and anticipation about the next phase of learning.

They can enable your pupils to:

- remember what has been learned;
- crystallise their thoughts about what has been learned;
- deepen and extend their learning;
- see the ‘big picture’, putting what has been learned in the context of past and future learning;
- articulate and communicate their learning;

- gain a sense of achievement in the successful completion of a task(s);
- understand the progress made and revise or set new personal targets;
- consider *how* they have learned and the learning strategies they used – in terms of both individual and group thinking processes;
- develop a language for discussing thinking and learning and form a habit of reflection about learning;
- consider how thinking and learning can be ‘transferred’ to other contexts;
- perceive themselves as learners.

Although many of these purposes are concerned with what pupils do, their achievement depends on your planning and orchestration of the plenary.

To view the full publication this guidance is taken from please follow the link below:

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/174566>