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Accessibility in assessment for learning: sharing criteria for success

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Assessment for learning (AfL) practices in secondary schools are intended to help learners understand what expert performances in disciplines look like, and then apply this understanding to their own learning and assessment performances. Common AfL practices such as sharing criteria for success through rubrics and students using them to interrogate exemplars and give feedback rely heavily on the students' language and attention. Students need to understand and draw on conceptual and collaborative language, and to make connections across several activity stages. Consequently, students with language and/or attentional difficulties and their teachers face a dilemma. On the one hand, AfL practices can provide access to developmentally appropriate curriculum. On the other, AfL practices may present additional barriers to learning. This article identifies some of the barriers students with language and/or attentional difficulties may encounter in common AfL practices, and how teachers adapted sharing of success criteria to design for greater accessibility. Access to learning is conceptualized by referring to Dewey's principles of continuity and interaction. Interviews with 20 teachers were analyzed to find out how they adapted AfL to be more accessible in an 8week AfL pedagogical intervention focused on success criteria. Ideas for designing accessible AfL practices from the outset are outlined as teachers realized the role of their language, small steps, visual tools, and regular opportunities for connection and interactions in making it more likely for students to benefit from AfL practices. Given that students with language and/or attentional difficulties represent some of the highest occurrences of disability in student populations, these ideas have immediate relevance for teachers and those who support AfL practices in educational policy and research.

KEYWORDS

assessment for learning (AfL), accessibility, professional learning, student agency, formative assessment, professional learning conversations

Introduction

Assessment for learning (AfL) is a pedagogical approach intended to help learners understand what expert performance in disciplines looks like, and then support them to practice this understanding. In secondary schools, AfL practices include everyday pedagogic practices like clarifying learning intentions, illuminating the criteria for success, gathering evidence of progress, providing feedback, and facilitating peer- and self-assessment (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Klenowski, 2009). These practices work together to generate dialogue around examples of quality performance to illustrate expert disciplinary knowledge, language, and concepts. By participating in these norms of the disciplinary community, students learn to apply ideas and

develop self-regulation and agency (Allal, 2016; Hill and Edwards, 2019; Finch and Willis, 2021). Teachers share AfL patterns of quality practice with their students, in efforts to “enable all learners to achieve their best and have their efforts recognised” (ARG, 2002, p. 2). Helping students come to know what is expected and how to produce successful work is an efficient way for students to develop their expertise in the curriculum domain (Wyatt-Smith and Adie, 2021). Yet this is not the AfL experience for all students.

While AfL's principles to guide classroom practice refer to *all learners* (ARG, 2002; Anderson and Östlund, 2017; Tay and Kee, 2019), such aspirations to inclusion may not be realized in secondary schools where linguistic and cognitive complexity in assessment practices can be barriers for students (Graham and Tancredi, 2019). Common AfL practices have intrinsic motivational and cognitive demands (Braund and DeLuca, 2018; Panadero et al., 2018) and are socially demanding as well (Zimmerman, 2002; Chen and Bonner, 2019). These intrinsic demands (examples outlined in Table 1) can make participation in AfL practices difficult for many students, but especially students with neurodiversity, where cognitive, linguistic and social expectations already require extraordinary efforts (Graham and Tancredi, 2019). The ideas presented in this paper are part of an ongoing Australian Research Council Linkage Project: Improving outcomes through accessible assessment and inclusive practice (LP1800100830). The project seeks to make assessment more accessible for students with likely language and/or attentional difficulties from the outset, rather than relying only on time consuming differentiation *after* students encounter difficulties.

AfL has the potential to break down barriers for students as the set of everyday classroom practices can clarify expectations for quality performance and enable students, peers and teachers to notice and respond to evidence of learning. This paper reports on teacher interview data and considers the question of how teachers adapted their AfL practices in light of principles of accessibility, continuity and interaction, so it is more likely that students with language and/or attentional difficulties can access the benefits and realize the aspirational goals of AfL. Inquiring with students to find out whether these actions were effectual is another important step that is not reported in this paper but was explored in the project and is the focus of other publications. Designing for accessibility from the start to reduce predictable barriers is one of the important actions teachers can take to be more inclusive. Understanding what teachers realized as they acted is important to inform ongoing professional learning and

research in AfL, given it is a well-accepted pedagogic approach with inclusive aspirations that are not widely recognized.

Assessment for learning practices and potential for accessibility

Assessment for learning (AfL) pedagogies are well established in international research (Klenowski, 2009; Birenbaum, 2016; Black and Wiliam, 2018; DeLuca et al., 2019), officially embedded in policy via teaching standards, and promoted in schools as central to improving student outcomes. However, they are often put forward as strategies without the accompanying explanation of *why* they are effective or how they work together (Heitink et al., 2016; DeLuca et al., 2019). AfL's key practices may be so familiar to teachers and students that they are not recognized as AfL even when they frequently participate in AfL processes like “the framing, eliciting, interpreting and using of information” (Aarskog, 2020, p. 11). This paper argues that making these everyday practices visible and accessible to students can provide clarity and a shared language of learning between teachers and students. It can also enable connections between curriculum and assessment, and between small steps of learning and larger goals.

Extensive research highlights the effectiveness of AfL for learners as well as some common difficulties experienced by teachers. AfL is associated with improved student learning in a variety of disciplines (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Gardner, 2006; Taras, 2008). Impact has been attributed to enhanced metacognitive abilities (Earl, 2013; Andrade and Brookhart, 2019), increased motivation and positive self-perception (Harlen, 2006), and enhanced teacher instruction (Harrison, 2005; Lee and Wiliam, 2005). A robust research base explains the prominence of AfL. However, sustained tangible gains have been difficult to achieve in practice despite clear guidelines for establishing enabling conditions in schools (Stobart, 2008; Laveault and Allal, 2016). In the complex contexts of schools, and within education systems that prioritize high stakes assessment, teachers can struggle to shift their pedagogical orientation towards AfL-based teaching (DeLuca et al., 2018a). Marshall and Drummond (2006) observed that teachers can implement AfL practices differently either reflecting *the letter* or *the spirit* of AfL, indicating that the apparently straightforward and familiar repertoire of AfL practices are not just techniques but are “complex and full of tensions” (Crossouard, 2011, p. 62). The practices in the original conception of AfL outlined 10

TABLE 1 Examples of success criteria practices and inherent accessibility challenges.

Success criteria practices	Examples of inherent barriers to accessibility
Teacher sharing learning intentions and success criteria	Complex attention demands: Success criteria have implied connections to lesson activities, disciplinary and assessment goals. High language demands: Succinct success criteria use abstract technical vocabulary. Different words can be used by the teacher in written and spoken explanations.
Using exemplars	Complex attention demands: To order example extracts from more to less successful, students need to read multiple extracts and process the various qualities and criteria simultaneously. High language demands: Students use specialist disciplinary language to describe evidence, and what qualities make it more and less successful.
Co-constructing success criteria	High language and attention demands: Discussion and interaction in co-constructing involves exploratory dialogue, listening, paraphrasing, asking questions, clarifying, discarding ideas, using a mix of everyday, technical and conceptual language.

research-based principles (ARG, 2002) that proposed a vision for assessment that empowered learners.

One of those principles is that AfL is inclusive by design. Its chief architects called on teachers to “recognize the full range of achievements of all learners” (ARG, 2002, p. 2). Teachers apply this principle when they attend to students’ diverse responses in the fine-grained information elicited in everyday assessment practices that is not generally available via standardized or summative assessments (Klenowski, 2009). With this understanding, teachers can design adjustments to external conditions in teaching practices that enable student learning. In this way, AfL is aligned with the values of inclusive education, which call for “teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers ...to provide all students...with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences” (UNCRPD, 2016: paragraph 11). Inclusive education and AfL have been called “twin pillars” of effective education (Engh and Rose, 2014, p. 6). Both are needed to respond to the diversity of student needs that teachers encounter in their everyday practice. Inclusion is the overarching goal. This paper contributes a first step recognizing potential barriers in AfL and encouraging teachers to enhance accessibility because the practices of AfL can be cognitively and socially demanding.

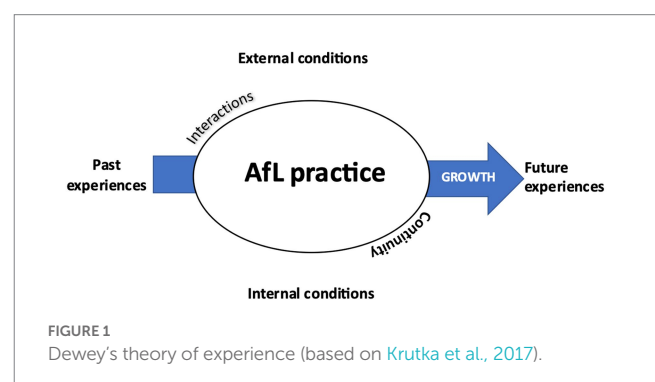
The cognitive demands of AfL like managing multiple ideas such as abstract criteria, evaluating examples, and articulating responses, and social demands like considering norms of peer discussion and framing peer feedback in ways that will not injure social relationships, are experienced by all students. For some students almost always – and we would argue for all students sometimes – such demands become barriers to participation. In this project, the focus was on the attention and language demands, particularly for students whose experiences of learning are made more challenging by the effects of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and/or Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), some of the most frequently occurring disabilities. It is estimated that 80% of students with ADHD also having another disability, frequently a language based disability (Lawrence et al., 2021). Students with either or both disabilities are likely to experience difficulties “dealing with visual and linguistic complexity, distinguishing between important and unimportant information, and prioritizing, organizing and coordinating” (Graham et al., 2018, p. 109). The practical effects may be that students do not hear classroom instructions or they may be late in submitting draft and summative assessments, things which are known causes of underachievement (Raggi and Chronis, 2006; Daley and Birchwood, 2010). Students with ADHD and DLD may have the required meta-cognitive knowledge to write a quality essay, but experience greater difficulty than other students in coordinating and sustaining the cognitive resources needed to synthesize, organize and structure ideas, or decide what is more important information (Cheng et al., 2022). Similarly, extensive verbal instruction and discussion based AfL practices are likely to present barriers to students with ADHD (Prosser, 2008) and DLD (Graham and Tancredi, 2019). DLD is associated with poor school performance generally (Wright et al., 2018) because students experience difficulties or delays with vocabulary and concept development and with using language to make meaning in social contexts (Graham and Tancredi, 2019). Inclusive practice includes planning for teaching and learning that *first* considers the barriers experienced by the student so that anticipated

barriers are removed so that activities can be more accessible (Glasby et al., 2022). Some of the language and cognitive processing demands inherent to AfL practices are outlined in Table 1.

There is little research evidence to suggest that inclusive practice has been a serious consideration in AfL (Cumming and Van der Kleij, 2016; Arnold, 2022). Tay and Kee (2019) studied the experiences of students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), who can also find it difficult to participate in discussion in the form of interactive feedback loops with their teachers. Probing questions, for example, may cause more anxiety to a student with ASD than for other students, who should experience the benefit that this form of deeper questioning provides. Students with disability recognize that AfL is essential to fair assessment yet it is not often considered as a focus for accessibility (Rasooli et al., 2021). AfL practices are problematized in this paper by identifying barriers in everyday practices, and opportunities for overcoming them. To further understand the challenges of realizing AfL as an accessible experience that provides a sense of continuity between learning and assessment, this article draws on John Dewey’s concepts of educational experience.

AfL as an experience involving continuity and interaction

At its most effective, AfL contributes to a generative experience of learning (Figure 1). Pragmatist and educational reformer, Dewey, argued for a rigorous pedagogy of schooling that balances disciplinary knowledge with the interests and experiences of the child, when he proposed that “all genuine education comes about through experience” (Dewey, 1938/1986, p. 247) warning not all experiences are “genuinely or equally educative” (p. 247). Dewey regarded the quality of an experience in education as dependent on two interrelated principles: *continuity* and *interaction*. Continuity refers to the responses of an individual in concert with their surroundings such that they see and feel certain things, plan their future actions and interactions, and formulate emotional and intellectual attitudes. Continuity is supported by AfL when students can plan future actions that are valued such as summative assessment performances, developing disciplinary skills or identities as learners and recognizing themselves as capable of planning to realize those future actions. Interaction is the premise that experience is a product of the interaction between the student and their environment. It also refers to social practices where there is an intention to improve and provide equitable opportunities (Dewey, 1938/1986). This focus on interaction



reflects sociocultural AfL theories where negotiating success together is also about creating identities as learners (Pryor and Crossouard, 2008) and sense-making through assessment interactions around curriculum, collaborative interactions with peers and experts, and within cultural contexts (Cowie et al., 2018). AfL interactions in self- and peer-assessment and feedback provide students with opportunities to check on their understanding of a task, and that their understanding is in line with teacher and peer expectations. Continuity and interaction ultimately allow “that continuous readjustment which is essential to growth” (p. 475). Applying Dewey’s principles to the social practices of AfL can help explain how AfL pedagogies enable generative learning experiences. Through AfL opportunities like analyzing examples with peers to identify quality indicators, students seek, interpret and act on evidence of their learning, further developing patterns of self-efficacy as they question, experiment, and explain to others. Peer conversations or question-and-answer sessions with a teacher can generate new perspectives. While such processes contribute to quality experience, these principles also highlight how AfL experiences are not all genuinely or equally educative. Students who find it more challenging to coordinate sustained language and attentional demands may not find it possible to simultaneously read text, hold criteria in their head and formulate responses within short interactions or without additional materials to support them. Similarly, they may find it challenging to recognize the AfL connections if they are having to infer what is expected for a quality performance from discussions. AfL’s accessibility within the affordances of everyday classroom practice are affected by internal conditions or individual characteristics. However, this paper focuses on the external conditions that also impact the students’ experiences, like the demands of AfL and opportunities to make AfL conditions more accessible.

Consider the following illustration of how continuity and interaction might contribute to student experience of AfL pedagogical practices in one of the Australian schools in this study. A secondary school student, Fletcher, has an English teacher who regularly facilitates peer assessment based on a shared understanding of the criteria for success. When students work in pairs to provide written feedback on a draft against the criterion of their partner’s choice, Fletcher recognizes the strategy and knows what to do. He feels confident he will be able to provide useful feedback and finds that the visual steps in the process clarified his grasp of the standards in relation to that criteria. Later, he will revise the color coded peer feedback he has received and check it against his own assessment of his progress. He’ll email his teacher with a query on some point or other about which he is unsure and make some further changes to his draft before submitting it. In terms of continuity, the quality of Fletcher’s experience of AfL pedagogy can be described by the way his past experiences continuously affect his future experiences in a continuous loop of response. He also sees how the activities are related to one another. The principle of interaction can further be related to Fletcher’s experience. He belongs in a supportive year 7 classroom environment that is the first year of high school, and he is well-liked by his peers. When he is provided with criteria and standards against which to judge his peers’ work, they make sense to him. He feels free to ask for clarification because he knows that his teacher responds positively to his questions and he feels valued in the classroom environment. He believes his peer in this activity will try hard to provide useful feedback to him and accept his feedback. The student

experience in this case has been a product of the positive interactions of the student in his environment, in concert with the continuity of his experience of learning over time.

How might this aspect of experience be traced for a student with language and attentional difficulties? Anna is in the same school and class as Fletcher; however, she is frequently withdrawn from the classroom because she has been referred by her teacher for remedial reading support where a specialist support teacher focuses on language skills in regular withdrawal sessions with small groups of students. On this day, she is in her general English class ready to participate in the peer feedback activity but she is not as familiar with the process other students. She missed the teacher’s explanation of the AfL activity the previous lesson so, when reading her partner’s writing and preparing to apply elements of the rubric, she has missed the opportunity to develop a better understanding of the success criteria and the connection between activities. Later, she makes limited corrections to her own writing before submitting it. Even if Anna had been in a context that did not withdraw students, the activity was structured in ways that exacerbated the demand on the internal conditions of her language and attentional difficulties. The task structure added barriers to her success as she was expected to focus on self-assessing her whole essay in one night at home rather than short sections over several sessions, a process more suited to her attention resources. In terms of continuity, the quality of Anna’s experience of AfL pedagogy has been interrupted by structural conditions related to her status as a student with additional learning needs. Interactions works differently for Anna too. The success criteria were presented by the teacher using vocabulary from the original syllabus document. When she encounters a descriptor like “effective creation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places” to describe a standard of performance, Anna is confused but too embarrassed to ask for clarification. The experience for Anna has been a product of the interaction between her internal conditions (including her language and attentional difficulties) and the external conditions (including complex concepts in elevated vocabulary and school context with withdrawal support structures), in concert with the (interrupted) continuity of her learning over time. She has had the ‘same’ classroom inputs as Fletcher but the practical effects of AfL are not equally educative. Attending to the conditions that enable AfL to be more accessible includes a twin focus on ensuring the language of successful performance is accessible and that all students have opportunity to build a sense of continuity through AfL interactions.

The theoretical principles of continuity and interaction are helpful overarching organizing ideas for accessible AfL. Within the AfL suite, sharing the criteria for success is a strategy that *enables continuity*. Insights about quality performance for students across their day-to-day learning activities prepare students for their summative assessment and longer-term disciplinary horizon goals (Marshall, 2004; Fives and Barnes, 2020). Success criteria that contribute to continuity, developed by backwards mapping from curriculum documents and summative tasks, can inform aligned and focused planning and teaching that enhances understandings of quality for students, and saves time for teachers (Willis and Adie, 2014). Students also gain tacit knowledge of quality when they *interact* with success criteria through interrogating examples of practice (Sadler, 1989) and co-designing what success looks like from examples of practice (Andrade et al., 2008; Ghaffar et al., 2020). These principles of enabling

accessible student interaction around a continuous idea of using success criteria to guide quality practice are elaborated in the conceptual framework in [Table 2](#) by drawing on AfL literature. This conceptual framework structured the design and data gathering for the current study.

Design

Data for this paper were gathered from 20 English teachers in three partner secondary schools. An 8-week cycle of professional learning engaged teachers in a foundational workshop and four online Professional Learning Conversations (PLCs) that focused on finding accessible ways to share the criteria for quality performance with students. It is one part of the *Accessible Assessment* Australian Research Council Linkage project design conducted in partnership with three Queensland state secondary schools together with the Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority, the Queensland Secondary Principals Association and Speech Pathology Australia. The data for this paper was gathered in Phase 2 of the project; however, the professional learning was informed by Phase 1. Phase 1 involved Year 10 Students reading an English Assessment task sheet for the first time displayed on a computer that used eye-tracking software, with students also interviewed about their ideas about the task. Data informed a professional discussion with Heads of Department to redesign the task sheets, in combination with previously developed accessibility principles to reduce linguistic, procedural, and visual complexity (see [Graham et al., 2018](#)). In Phase 2, Year 10 English teachers participated in professional learning about Assessment for Learning (AfL) for 8 weeks, and Accessible Pedagogies in an additional 10 weeks, enabling the teachers to apply these accessibility principles to everyday classroom teaching. Data was gathered in pre and post classroom observations, post intervention interviews with teachers and students after each round of professional learning, teacher reflections, and surveys. A wait list design enabled the overall project to investigate whether and how secondary school teachers' practice

could be made more accessible, and whether these changes were helpful to students with and without likely language and/or attentional difficulties. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the university Human Research Ethics Committee, the Queensland Department of Education, the school principals, participating teachers, students, and their guardians. This paper considers the AfL professional learning and the question:

What did teachers notice about their practices and student learning when they experimented with making success criteria more accessible for students?

Teacher professional learning conversations

The professional learning design enabled teachers to select and experiment one idea for sharing success criteria and get feedback from peers and their students on the enactment of the practice in three cycles. The focus was similar to repeated AfL cycles teachers enact with their students to collaboratively articulate success criteria, set goals, and refine practice in response to feedback from a range of sources ([Swaffield, 2011](#); [Birenbaum, 2016](#)). While success criteria can directly address the challenges of accessibility because they can potentially break quality performance into explicit steps, teachers can find them challenging to enact ([Veugen et al., 2021](#)). Teachers can have “expert blindness” and underestimate their own tacit knowledge and the level of difficulty for novices ([Lee and Johnson, 2020](#), p. 65). Explanations to students can focus on content or doing tasks, rather than disciplinary concepts, expectations of quality or opportunities for self-regulation ([Brooks et al., 2019](#); [Dayal, 2021](#)). When summative assessment criteria dominate learning the outcomes can be instrumental compliance ([Torrance, 2007](#)). Many of the teachers in Scotland in a study by [Crichton and McDaid \(2016\)](#) did not initially see the value of lesson success criteria. In a survey of 36 primary schools in Ireland by [Lysaght and O'Leary \(2013\)](#), which included 16 statements about practices to do with learning intentions and success criteria, there was little evidence of widespread use of WALT (We are learning to...) and WILF (What I'm looking for...). The authors conclude that AfL is a complex intellectual challenge for teachers to draw together “routine application in real time of advanced adaptive expertise” (p. 220). In order to address these challenges, this AfL inquiry process of professional learning enabled teachers to choose a focus that made most sense to their units of work and their existing repertoire ([Willis et al., 2019](#)) in subject based departments ([Tang et al., 2010](#)), and within school and researcher supported facilitation ([Hill, 2011](#); [Swaffield, 2011](#)). The design of the professional learning inquiry is represented in [Table 3](#).

The teachers were interviewed by researchers at the end of the 8 week AfL PLC cycle about what they had learned. The teacher interview transcripts were analyzed for content where they made direct commentary about what they noticed about their own practices and student learning when they experimented with making success criteria more accessible for students in the four domains outlined in the conceptual framework in [Table 2](#). Interviews were initially inductively coded for what teachers described as new accessible AfL practices. These practices were then deductively analyzed against the four dimensions of effective success criteria ([Table 4](#)) and interpreted

TABLE 2 Practical effects of accessible success criteria.

Class experiences	Observable effects
Continuity	(1) Are identifiable for students so expectations are accessible (Hume and Coll, 2009 ; McLaren, 2012 ; Charteris, 2015 ; Crichton and McDaid, 2016 ; Hill and Edwards, 2019 ; Arnold, 2022); (2) Connect the learning and summative assessment within and between lessons (Miedijensky and Tal, 2009 ; Cowie and Moreland, 2015 ; Tay, 2015)
Interaction	(3) Lead to shared understandings of quality with students through interactions with examples and discussions (Hung and Hoi, 2010 ; Gamlem, 2015 ; DeLuca et al., 2018b ; Vattoy and Smith, 2019), and (4) Are used by students to improve the quality of their learning performance within the lesson (MacPhail and Halbert, 2010 ; Harks et al., 2014 ; Sicherl Kafol et al., 2017).

TABLE 3 Professional learning for inquiring into accessible success criteria.

Professional learning events	Professional learning focus	Teacher activity and reflection opportunities	
Foundation workshop (4h)	(A) Recognize how the role of the student is influenced by traditional or learning approaches to assessment. (B) Identify how success criteria are a hinge AfL practice. (C) Articulate success criteria from writing samples.	Peers discuss 2 student paragraphs: <i>What does this student know that this student is yet to learn? What is hard for students? What is a significant pressure point in the rubric?</i>	Share existing practices on Padlet. Reflect in online journal.
PLC 1 (1h)	(D) Articulate purposes and dimensions of accessible success criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifiable • Connect the learning • Create shared understanding • Are used by students (E) Identify a personal goal to try a new or enhanced success criteria practice in a current unit of work.	Discuss existing practices on Padlet: <i>What learning activities will help students understand what quality looks like?</i>	What can I try with students in the next 2 weeks and report back to peers? Reflect in online journal.
Data collection	Research team interview some students with likely language and/or attentional difficulties. What helps you learn? Classroom observations		
PLC 2 (1h)	(F) Learn from students what they identify helps them learn and what concerns they have. (G) Share accessibility conditions that support or hinder students developing agency through AfL practices, especially sharing success criteria.	Evaluate the accessibility of common success criteria practices. Give peer feedback on what it would take to make our planned practices more accessible.	Post a quote from one of the academic readings and why it inspired you. Comment on one or more of your colleagues' posts. Try out another success criteria activity with students. Reflect in online journal.
PLC 3 (1h)	(H) Identify how students can learn success criteria from themselves and others through self and peer assessment	Share progress with peers. Make connections to summative task performance. Plan responses to actionable insights from students.	Plan to generate 1 min video or photo artefact, and post it to the shared padlet before next PLC meeting to demonstrate success. Reflect in online journal.
PLC 4 (1h)	(I) Share a video of successful success criteria practices and reflect and share with teacher peers about your own and students' learning.	Offer peer feedback to colleagues about their explanations of their practice. Plan actions you can take to support students to continue building their evaluative expertise in the next unit of work.	Reflect on what conditions have enabled or constrained you in realizing your goals.
Data collection	Research team interviews and focus groups with students: <i>Your teacher tried out this activity to help you learn – How was it helpful, and how might it be improved?</i> Classroom observations.		
Teacher reflective interview	<i>What did you learn through this process? Did it make a difference? Here is what some of your students said. How might that inform your next steps?</i>		

for their potential for improving accessibility, for example supporting sustaining attention or accessibility of language. The interview analysis was conducted by the researchers who had also observed the teachers and interviewed students, enabling us to contextualize and interpret the data.

These practices were then summarized and are reported in Table 5 in the findings. In addition, we returned to the pragmatic theoretical orientation (Dewey, 1938/1986) and the data was analyzed

abductively to identify evidence of what surprised teachers and ourselves (Timmermans and Tavorly, 2012). As researchers who are experienced teachers, we were both surprised and not surprised at the complexity of teachers' work involved in designing success criteria, and the way that a short, focused professional learning cycle led to some positive changes. We had alerted teachers to the importance of double loop learning and seeking out surprising data that disrupted their expert fluency as opportunities for inquiry and

TABLE 4 Example of interview coding.

Examples of inductive codes for teacher reported practices	Identifiable	Connecting	Shared understanding	Used by students	Accessibility features
Shared success criteria using student language	x		x		Support for language
Peer checking was structured	x		x	x	Support for attention
Changed order of unit – criteria up front	x	x			Clear, explicit purpose
Made more connection links to future learning		x			Connecting learning – explicit purpose
Gave more concrete expectations	x				Support for attention. Clear directions
Audio recorded ideas for student with language difficulties		x	x		Support for attention and language.

learning (Argyris, 1991). Surprises point towards ideas that can lead to further inquiry like disjunctures between espoused beliefs and practices, or revisiting assumptions about how much control to share with students in peer interactions (Dixon et al., 2011). Teachers' surprises were noted in the interviews through reflexive comments like "it's certainly been in some ways revelatory," or "it sounds so basic but," and "that has definitely been a bit of an aha moment." Concise representative quotes from across the range of participants illustrate teacher learning within the four dimensions of effective success criteria. This analysis meets several of Tracy's (2010) features of quality qualitative research: a worthy topic; rich rigor in theoretical constructs; time in the field; sincerity, and credibility through clearly articulating methods and data triangulation; resonance through transferable findings; making a significant contribution to the AfL field; ethical conduct; and meaningful coherence through the literature, data collection and analysis. In the interviews, teachers did point to reasons why they had difficulties enacting the accessible success criteria such as teaching a new topic, still getting to know students, and having less time to teach due to covid shutdowns. However, these perspectives are not represented in this paper that instead focuses on what teachers were able to change to better understand accessible AfL practice.

Choosing one focus area for improving the quality of student performance

Teachers identified one focus for improving accessibility of success criteria by comparing two paragraphs of student writing from their previous year's Year 10 summative assessment – one higher and one of lower quality. The teachers were asked to identify: *What does the first student know that the second student is yet to learn?* Teachers articulated ideas with peers from their school, then shared between the school teams. This discussion of abstract inferred or meta criteria (Wyatt-Smith and Klenowski, 2013) was productive as it was grounded in short examples and teachers were more readily able to see differences in quality and articulate their essence with peers (Willis and Adie, 2014). They identified success criteria they could see with their expert eyes and that students, especially those who have language and/or attentional difficulties, may not readily identify. These qualities informed their planning for subsequent teaching activities, alongside AfL readings that were made available to the teachers to provide additional ideas. Some teachers planned some in-depth lessons where students could explore expert texts that best illustrated the chosen focus area. Others designed lessons that used

examples of how others plan essays, provided scaffolds and sentence starters for planning. Still others modelled their own thinking aloud in an online document that could be revisited or recorded their thinking on video. A few teachers invited students to set personal goals related to the success criteria. Several decided to engage students in a similar activity to the one that they had experienced and used short examples of student summative work to articulate success criteria.

Findings: evidence of what teachers noticed in designing opportunities for accessibility

While sharing success criteria had been an expectation within the schools, it had not been a recent focus of professional development for the teachers. An emphasis on accessibility gave the professional learning new meaning. Many of the classrooms had a regular place on the whiteboard at the front of the room where teachers could write the learning intention and success criteria each lesson. Yet the teachers acknowledged that these whiteboard prompts were not always used to create strong connections to the curriculum focus:

This is sort of committing education heresy for me, but I've always found success criteria weird and just, they seem artificial and I don't, I do it [write them on the board]... (laughs)...I've always found it very challenging to articulate it in a way that has value, that I think has value for the students. And I never quite think that I've cracked it (T11).

Designing to make quality performance more accessible to students involved teachers becoming conscious of making the language of success criteria less artificial, and easier to understand: "Before I even write [it] on the board now, I, I think twice....is it is easy to understand language, that is, is it accessible?" (T1). Even the term "success criteria" was questioned for its accessibility:

These kids need to know what it needs to look like at the end, because they don't deal with abstract concepts well. They still don't know what success criteria is, in my opinion. That word language is not accessible to students. Criteria, that's a stupid and hard word. They're like, what? What's criteria? If it's my 'checklist to win,' then they would know what that meant (T2).

TABLE 5 Barriers and ways to increase accessibility when using success criteria.

Success criteria observable effects	Accessibility barriers observed by teachers and researchers	Accessible AfL practices
Identifiable	High language demands: Technical vocabulary may be complex, and different words can be used by the teacher in written and spoken explanations. High attention demands: Teachers talking while expecting students to be simultaneously reading the written success criteria and/or writing it down, often at the start of a lesson where movement and settling occurs, can create barriers for comprehension.	Consistent vocabulary use, and word walls or specific dictionaries increased accessibility. Giving students time to attend to either written or oral instructions. Small steps. Writing success criteria in routine places where students can retrieve them later.
Connect the learning and summative task	High inference demands: When mentioned once at the start of the lesson and not revisited, the connections between success criteria and lesson activities are implied. Students may not readily see how they link to disciplinary or assessment goals. High attention demands: When written in small writing at the side of a whiteboard, or on the first slide of a PowerPoint, students are not able to read or revisit the success criteria during the learning to make connections for themselves.	Accessibility is increased through making clear and consistent connections between tasks. Accessibility is improved by readability and retrievability. Icons, large font, predictable routines, recordings, all supported attention.
Develop shared expectations for quality	High inference demands: Can be a list of tasks, or not clearly related to the official curriculum goals, so that success criteria are more instrumental rather than conceptual or developmentally appropriate. Can be confused with learning intentions (learning input) rather than evidence of quality performance or outputs (success criteria). Limited interaction: Can be delivered to a class by the teacher with little interrogation of where the success criteria come from, or what meaning the students make from them.	Accessibility is improved by clear links to the curriculum, summative assessment and real life examples. Giving students opportunity to generate the success criteria from multiple examples improves their likelihood for students to 'get a feel' for quality that is sustained. Short examples. Multiple representations of different levels of quality make success criteria tangible.
Used by students to improve the quality of their work	Limited interaction: When there are few opportunities planned for students to use the success criteria in deliberate ways either by themselves or with peers, success criteria remain abstractions. High language and attention demand: Enacting peer or teacher feedback involves interpretation, analysis, and planning action, as well as managing social relationships in discussions of quality and improvement in peer or teacher feedback consultations.	Structured support for the complex steps increased accessibility. Socially inclusive learning environments included high levels of teacher circulation and checking in with students. Support for students' social skill development included discussion starters and reminders of expectations.

The teachers in the professional learning inquiry process focused on helping students make connections to quality performances in summative tasks throughout learning. This involved planning to make success criteria more easily identified for students, ensuring they connected the learning and summative assessment, led to shared understandings of quality with students, and were used by students to improve the quality of their learning and assessment.

Making success criteria more identifiable

New awareness of the importance of making the steps toward quality performance more *identifiable* to students was a common insight. Teachers reflected that not all students had previously understood what they were being asked to do, and that talking about success criteria was not as effective as making them tangible through examples and a co-constructed checklist:

I've learned a lot about making success tangible to students. Um, like something that they can really grab at... They know what they're supposed to do. Like, it sounds so basic, but ... it's life-changing (T3).

What have I learned about success criteria is a very, um, banal statement to make perhaps, but I learned that success criteria are useful...It's certainly been in some ways revelatory about how, the differences in how well some students already understand what they're being asked to do versus how some students do not understand at all what they're being asked to do (T4).

I think it's made me reflect a bit, or a lot, on being, I guess, more specific and that the success criteria aren't just a set of to-do lists, I guess. It's an actual goal that we can use as a basis for curriculum and, I guess, giving students a bit of agency around their own learning and what their aims and goals need to be by the end of a lesson. And using that specific language about the subject and, I guess, making it a lot more familiar for them (T12).

The concept of success criteria being more interactive beyond a statement on the whiteboard was a motivator for change for some teachers. For example, when teachers who were using the idea of evergreen success criteria shared their practice with colleagues, it led to some aha moments for colleagues:

What I want to do next term, is more of that kind long-term evergreen success criteria that sort of links to the long term success criteria for the assessment throughout the unit. That has definitely been a bit of an aha moment just in terms of a practice that I've always struggled with and found a bit confusing. And it was just so helpful seeing, "Okay, there's another way of doing this" (T11).

It's always something that we talk about but I think it seems a bit hard to do. I think the models that were provided made it very accessible for us (T20).

Seeing examples from other teachers about ways to represent success criteria enabled teachers to extend their accessible AfL practices.

Success criteria that were articulated by the teachers as a focus were not always a skill or knowledge aspect of the subject such as how to create a thesis statement and structure an argument, or how to use expert punctuation. They were also about expert practice and process like how to generate creative ideas. One teacher planned the success criteria around the ways experts turn creative ideas into a plan, saying: "I reflected on my past experience of, where have kids really gone awry. Success is more than what is on the criteria sheet... more than the final product" (T16). Co-constructing the focus with teacher peers and with students was another accessible AfL practice where the success criteria became tangible and focused through the interactive processes; "I think we have opened up that we are all learning together and I think this stuff that we'd be doing, Success Criteria, is encouraging that space as such" (T14). These interactions enabled students with language and/or attentional difficulties to overcome barriers because they had multiple opportunities with peers and teacher explanations to find out what was being valued in the learning activities and to connect past experiences with future possibilities for learning.

Success criteria connecting the learning and summative assessment

Visual representations of the success criteria as 'evergreen', or continuing over several lessons, enabled the teachers and students to trace the continuity between learning events as they connected the learning activities with one another, and to the summative assessment task. Lists of qualities on the wall, or on a planning sheet were visual reminders of what was being valued as indicators of quality. The teachers could direct the students' attention towards the relevant success criteria or ask the students to identify which success criteria was most related to that task.

I've definitely learned to just refer back to it and really keeping it at the forefront of the lesson (T9).

By having it on the wall as our evergreen success criteria, I realize how much more helpful that is, for the kids to see why everything we're doing fits with something (T2).

If it's all in front of them too, it's not, "I have to go to where the sentence data is in on my OneNote and I have to go over here for the success criteria." It's all there (T20).

Pointing out the success criteria also helped students to manage their attention in the moment and attend to what was seen to be important for the larger goal.

The visual reminder was also helpful for the teachers. The ongoing impacts of the Covid19 pandemic and extreme weather events meant that there were continual disruptions. Teachers had much less time to teach than they had expected. They felt confident when they were able to check they were on track by referring to the poster in the classroom.

I really found helpful for me too like, what haven't I done or how, I'm just showing them, "oh, look it's related to this." And just coming back to that the whole term was helpful (T2).

Small pieces of writing and discussions were interactive success criteria that also highlighted connections towards the larger goal of summative assessment. The teachers used the success criteria to create an overarching scaffold for students. It led to students, particularly those who might not usually experience success, gaining some traction in small steps:

It was about those initial steps, you know, if you have some success there, that sets you up for the success later on (T16).

By completing the small steps, the teacher was able to show how each part built towards the larger goal of writing an essay.

I don't think that student would have successfully constructed a successful story if he hadn't looked at the success criteria that we'd been breaking down (T4).

They were using though that checklist success criteria to check that they've done all the things so that's really good that visual worked (T20).

They were asking the right questions and...they were checking like, "Okay, is this too much? I think this sentence is a bit long. What can I do here?"...I could see their topic sentences, I could see them having a play around (T7).

Instead of waiting until the end of the term to talk to students about summative assessment, the teachers were articulating the connections between each learning activity and the summative task right from the start of the teaching term. In lessons along the way, the teachers often narrated the learning process and were making connections:

If I just gave them the learning intention, I said, "This is what we're going to do today," they'd be like, "Okay, whatever." But when I say to them, "This is what we're going to do and this is the end result," they're like, "Oh, okay." And it seems to be better for them because they know the end goal, so the buy-in's higher because they want to come along for the ride to get there, and they're like, "Oh, well there's only two steps to get there" (T19).

Connection points were designed to enable students with language and attention to focus on quality in smaller stages of success. Breaking the task down in this way meant some of the barriers that may be present when teachers share examples of complete responses

are avoided from the outset, allowing students to see how each lesson's activity was contributing to the completing of their summative task over time. From these connections, students started to develop their understanding of quality.

Success criteria leading to shared understandings of quality with students

Interacting with tangible examples of success such as example paragraphs or essays of different quality created opportunities for students to focus on what to do, and how to do the work well. Examples written by students were used as a resource for teachers to demonstrate different qualities. Conversations were more focused: "this Success Criteria is opening us up to have a series where we are building that knowledge together" (T14). For some teachers, it was about creating a tangible representation of the goal of summative performance. Several teachers revisited the examples of summative performance to highlight small improvements that enhance the quality of the overall writing.

Whenever I was making comments about their conclusion or something, [I would say] if you look at the exemplar's conclusion, it only has a couple of sentences and they do this and this. So if you were going to do that in yours, you could try that (T4).

A teacher who had a high number of students who had experienced difficulty with English in the previous year experimented with showing students a range of responses. The teacher found that comparing different standards of previous student work enabled current students to recognize the evergreen success criteria:

I showed them like an A versus D [sample of student work] at the very start of the term... I've never done that, where I showed them like a failed one... [as] a lot of those kids will be like, "But that sounds good to me." And now they know. Like, no, that's not good enough I think just showing the A example is disheartening and sometimes the ideas are too complex. They need something that they can grab onto (T3).

The teacher then did some collaborative writing with the students, using the success criteria to improve the D level example with the students making suggestions.

We rewrote the D-level to a B-level. And then I also printed out the A-level and we talked about how it met some of the success criteria that were on the side of the board (T3).

Not only did the activity help students feel like they had achieved success, but the teacher provided an opportunity for them to put their ideas immediately into practice on their own work.

I really liked doing some writing with them. It was very short. It was like five minutes of me typing and then just like asking them things... constructing a text and doing that with them is really powerful. But, it's just, we just never have time... I think making that little time for it and showing them like, "Look, we're now...

This is like a B." We did that together. That was pretty powerful ... I could see their learning. And I could see the results of the learning in action... as they then had an opportunity to do it for themselves almost immediately (T3).

This cycle of investigating quality performance with students in small stages and enabling students to apply those ideas to their own work almost immediately has strong potential for increasing accessibility for students with language and/or attentional difficulties. Students could work on small improvements without having to try to retrieve the memory from the previous week. They were also able to ask clarifying questions to apply the insights to their work before the learning moment was lost. The teacher recognized this experiment as powerful for student learning, but lamented it is hard to manage when there is limited time. Importantly, the pressures of time, and also the benefits of success criteria leading to 'saved' time, were evident in data addressing the fourth analytic focus, where students continued to use the success criteria in their summative assessment drafts and final performance.

Success criteria were used by students to improve the quality of their learning and assessment

Where learning intentions focus on the anticipated goal of learning, success criteria become evident as the students produce evidence of their learning. The teachers noticed that students were able to put the success criteria into practice in their summative assessment results:

In the limited time that we had, like, I'm actually impressed by the way that they're actually starting to synthesize that analysis, which is very... something that even some of my senior students are not even doing (T10).

When it came back in their assignment, it wasn't like a word-for-word rip off of what was on the board (T1).

Last term, he got a C+ and so he's one of my A's this time (T20).

The proficiency of students using the success criteria had flow on benefits for the teachers also who noticed that they did not need to spend as much time on giving feedback on student drafts:

It did cut down on my drafting time because they had a scaffold to work to. They knew they could check each other's work better as well because it was directly linked, like in their orientation, is there this, this, and this? (T2).

For some of the teachers, articulating the success criteria was also a way to help students manage their anxiety in a year disrupted by pandemic conditions and extreme weather events. The success criteria became a regular touch point, a way for the teacher and class to manage the expectations:

Breathe. We've got this. It's okay ... building that, sort of, knowledge that it's okay not to know, as long as you've got a strategy to find out (T10).

These insights led teachers who had previously regarded AfL activities as time-consuming to be seen as essential for their students.

I think that's the best thing, is just me making time for that. Because it's not um, expendable, is that the word? It's just not something that we can just not do. Like, and it's something that I usually just don't do because I don't have time. But, it's something that you have to make time for (T3).

It's almost like why didn't I think of that earlier? And you can see that the kids are going back to it and they're using it to help themselves as well as the person they're beside (T19).

Pushing yourself out of that comfort zone and then being like, oh, you know what, that wasn't too difficult. Actually, I can see how that comes back and connects (T18).

The teachers noticed that the focus on accessibility with this one aspect of AfL from the beginning of the unit had benefits for the students.

Discussion

To realize the aspirational goals of AfL, success criteria need to be more accessible and inclusive for students. Through secondary school English teachers' and students' experiences in an 8-week collaborative professional inquiry project, our findings expand the understanding of AfL barriers experienced by students with language and/or attentional difficulties, elucidate conditions that support teachers' inclusive design of AfL practices, and advocate a new conceptual lens for advancing accessibility and inclusion in AfL. At the heart of this work is cultivating a more equitable and fair orientation to teaching and learning by advancing an assessment for all practice and by attending to students' differential needs through the AfL practice of using success criteria. As [Tay and Kee \(2019\)](#) challenge, the premise of AfL as learner-centered means that AfL cannot be a "one-size-fits-all" as every classroom has a diversity of learners.

First and foremost, our findings confirm that AfL can be made more accessible to support students' learning, including students with language and/or attentional difficulties, despite its intrinsic cognitive and linguistic demands (see [Graham et al., 2018](#)). Teachers reported that students were making fewer mistakes in their drafting, grasping challenging disciplinary contexts, engaging in self-regulatory practices, and experiencing success in summative assessment. Making changes to practice occurred when teachers were proactive in understanding and addressing AfL barriers experienced by students by *first* considering barriers like those in [Table 1](#) that are frequently experienced and undisclosed (i.e., hidden) barriers, *then* planning to increase accessibility as they provided opportunities for more connection and interaction. As outlined in [Tables 1, 3](#), barriers for students' engagement with success criteria can be language-based (e.g., the use of complex vocabulary or inconsistent terminology), attentional (e.g., teachers talking about AfL strategies and task instructions simultaneously), inferential (e.g., teachers only referencing AfL strategies at the start of a learning cycle), and social (e.g., challenges in peer assessment or students being withdrawn from

the classroom for remedial programming and missing opportunities to participate in AfL activities). Therefore, in designing AfL practices that support all learners, teachers can recognize and reduce barriers to enhance student understanding and yield valid assessment outcomes.

Teachers were familiar with the practice of articulating success criteria to students at the start of a lesson, but not as familiar with the idea of the role of success criteria as articulating evidence of quality *with* students. Making success criteria tangible and visible, using smaller steps, and exploring quality together rather than teachers 'telling' were the most frequent accessibility realizations. The value of interactive opportunities for students to engage with success criteria surprised most of the teachers. As also shown by [Andrade et al. \(2008\)](#) and [Ghaffar et al. \(2020\)](#), when teachers used models and involved students in the creation of success criteria, this co-construction process can help students to see and understand differences in quality that they could apply to their own learning activities as they work toward summative assessments. These interactive AfL practices are the least used by teachers ([Lysaght and O'Leary, 2013](#); [Veugen et al., 2021](#)) and a requested focus for future professional learning. Models of ways to use success criteria from teacher peers were valued. Even when success criteria were not used in interactive ways, other highly visual, representations of success criteria such as those in class OneNote digital notebooks, provided accessible opportunities to connect and re-connect concepts of quality between learning events for students. The repetition and shared language was an accessible support for all students, but particularly those with variable attention as it provided persistent access beyond a teacher's verbal explanation, reinforcing key disciplinary language and concepts. [Table 5](#) summarizes some of these accessibility barriers and enablers that were observed in the teachers' practices.

In the specific case of making success criteria accessible and inclusive for all students, teachers were able to (a) reduce language barriers by using clear, consistent vocabulary to promote understanding and make success criteria tangible; (b) reduce attentional barriers by posting success criteria in a visible place where students can revisit them regularly; (c) reduce inferential barriers by promoting ongoing and consistent connections between success criteria, learning tasks, and summative assessments; and (d) reduce social barriers by cultivating a socially inclusive learning environment whilst supporting students' social skill development. This clarity around expectations that underpin success in summative assessment are ways that teachers can design accessibility within AfL experiences to achieve more socially just summative assessment outcomes for students. However, as [Sadler \(1989\)](#), [Crossouard \(2011\)](#), and [Torrance \(2017\)](#) have all noted, too great a focus on success criteria for summative performance is also a concern because students can learn that exploration of ideas and identities that go beyond the summative task are not what is expected of them. Some of the teachers noted this when they focused on interactions that "opened up the space" (T14) and commented that "success is more than what is on the criteria sheet" (T16); however, for most teachers success criteria were focused on the summative task. Teacher flexibility and opportunity to learn with students and one another is an important way to negotiate this inherent "paradoxical pedagogic mix" ([Crossouard, 2011](#), p. 68) of making success criteria clear but not overly prescriptive in standards-based assessment systems.

Secondly, our findings elucidate conditions that support teachers' design and implementation of accessible and inclusive AfL practices. Ongoing inquiry-based collaborative professional learning focused on creating accessible and inclusive success criteria allowed teachers to engage in iterative cycles of planning, implementation, discussing, and reflecting on their AfL practices (Hill, 2011; Willis et al., 2019). The short but focused cycle of professional learning helped teachers develop and refine their AfL practices as they taught, with input from their students and colleagues. Where success criteria had seemed to be an odd or irrelevant practice prior to the professional learning focus, the reflective, collaborative process enabled teachers to focus on leveraging one set of AfL strategies to support teacher learning and AfL implementation, with peer sharing enriching the range of possibilities. Teachers benefitted from learning with peers from the same subject area and grade level (i.e., secondary English; Tang et al., 2010; Willis et al., 2019) that enabled collaborative analysis of student work to determine their collaborative inquiry focus and carry their learning into a clear application to classroom practice. Starting with interactions around examples of student work helped to identify some of the latent success criteria that students may not readily access. Their different degrees of expertise and readiness with respect to AfL also enabled them to support and enhance each other's AfL learning and practice, and for them to articulate what they were not yet understanding or found surprising. When teachers can reflexively articulate new aspects of AfL practice that they notice, they are also preparing themselves for continuing to respond differently in future (Cowie et al., 2018). Focusing on what surprised the teachers highlights how success criteria, while a relatively old idea, is still a productive focus for professional learning. Surprises also point towards new possibilities within familiar routines.

Dewey's principles of continuity and interaction provide a productive theoretical lens for advancing accessibility and inclusion as teachers work and learning toward realizing the aspirational goals of AfL in their classrooms. In many of the classrooms, the story of continuity focused on how the success criteria could prepare students for their school summative task. Less frequent were connections to learning purposes beyond school or referring to students' existing understanding of quality in other aspects of their lives. The importance of students' funds of knowledge (Cowie et al., 2011, 2018) can also be seen as issues of interaction (e.g., relationships in the classroom or among combined AfL practices) and continuity (e.g., shared language between teachers and students or between home and school) as students build on past experiences toward new learning. This article points to the need for more research around the ideas of connection and interaction, and to explore the accessibility within co-construction of quality expectations. Connection was often reinforced through material reminders and cultural AfL tools and routines which can support students in their interactions across several steps within an AfL activity. As Finch and Willis (2021) note, these cultural tools often combine traces of different epistemic quality expectations from multiple time points. While discontinuity and disruption are examples of in-accessibility, thus leading to a cumulative loss of opportunity to learn, continuity is also a focus for critical inquiry.

Similarly, continuity and interaction appear critical to supporting teachers' learning about designing and implementing

accessible and inclusive AfL practices. The specific inquiry focus provided continuity wherein teachers could respond to the offer of new learning and make plans to enact it their context, developing expertise, confidence and commitment to new practice. The cycles provided multiple opportunities for improvement-focused interaction through classroom implementation with students and professional discussions with colleagues. Prioritizing continuity and interaction in professional learning about AfL allowed teachers to support each other's professional learning, growth, and risk-taking, encompassing a range of teacher expertise and readiness in designing and implementing accessible and inclusive AfL opportunities for students.

Implications for practice

Our study advances the importance of continuity and interaction in contributing to generative experiences of student and professional learning when (a) designing accessible and inclusive AfL practices, specifically success criteria, to support students with language and/or attentional difficulties, and (b) supporting teachers' professional learning about accessible and inclusive AfL through collaborative inquiry-based approaches. As such, we offer three key recommendations for practice:

1. While inclusive design is fundamental to all students' learning, it is essential to attend to the accessibility of AfL experiences of students, especially those with language and/or attentional issues. Teachers can prioritize removing language, attentional, inferential, and social barriers to AfL so all students can engage with and benefit from AfL practices. Moreover, accessible AfL design emphasizes Dewey's principles of continuity and interaction to support equitable learning experiences.
2. When applying accessible design to the AfL practice of success criteria, teachers can consider:
 - a. using clear, consistent vocabulary in success criteria to promote understanding;
 - b. involving students in interactions like the co-construction of success criteria to help them recognize and understand differences in quality that they can apply to their own learning activities as they work toward summative assessments;
 - c. posting success criteria in a visible place (physical or virtual classroom) where students can revisit them regularly;
 - d. using success criteria to promote foundational disciplinary knowledge and concepts and support student agency; and
 - e. fostering ongoing and consistent connections between success criteria and quality through learning tasks and assessments.
3. Professional learning for teachers can focus on collectively determined AfL practice (to promote *continuity*) through iterative cycles of collaborative inquiry that involve planning, implementation, discussion, and reflection (to promote *interaction*). Additionally, bringing surprising data to teacher attention, or asking teachers to notice what has surprised them, can help them disrupt taken for granted routines and open up opportunities for new practices. By attending to the

principles of continuity and interaction, teachers with varying degrees of expertise and readiness can be supported to design, implement, and refine accessible and inclusive AfL practices for equitable learning opportunities for all students and help them cultivate the aspirational goals of AfL in their classrooms.

Limitations and future research

As we look toward future research, we acknowledge the limitations of the current study. First, data were collected from 20 secondary English classrooms engaged in an 8-week online collaborative professional inquiry initiative across three partner schools in Australia. The teachers involved focused their inquiry on one aspect of AfL practice in one subject area: using success criteria to support students' learning of key disciplinary language and concepts in secondary English. The contextual challenges for teachers that included learning during COVID-19 shutdowns, and at a time when the assessment policy in the context was undergoing fundamental changes, are not included as a focus of analysis. Finally, while student interviews about the accessibility of these teacher practices were conducted with students with *likely* language and/or attentional difficulties, not necessarily formally identified difficulties, they are not reported here. These limitations suggest the importance of future research across additional students, grade levels, disciplines, topics and pedagogies (open-ended, inquiry, play-based, etc.), and school contexts to investigate the transferability of our findings. In addition, future research should explore accessibility and inclusion in designing a range of AfL practices, beyond success criteria, over longer periods of time to see how inclusive design promotes the aspirational goals of AfL across classrooms. Lastly, additional research is needed with students, especially those who experience barriers to AfL and with formally identified learning difficulties, through Dewey's lens of continuity and interaction, furthering our understanding of how we can help these students more fully engage with and benefit from AfL practices.

Conclusion

AfL is a maturing field, particularly in its articulation of classroom practices. At the same time, equity and fairness are increasingly important considerations to ensure all students can access the benefits associated with AfL and the learning goals across curriculum areas. Additional research is needed with students and teachers to consider how AfL can be more accessible for all students and to better understand the professional learning conditions needed for teachers to design accessible assessment from the outset. The potential for AfL remains for children receiving the kind of education they need to receive; that is, one in which "present experiences ... live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (Dewey, 1938/1986, p. 248). Designing AfL for accessibility and inclusion adds power to AfL practices rather than oversimplifies them. Continuity of access and productive interactions can lead to stronger identities as learners and disciplinary expertise, with success leading to more success, and with recommended practices associated with learning gains for all.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Queensland University of Technology. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

JW and JA: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis, theorization, and writing. CD: data analysis, theorization, and writing. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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