

Teaching Squares provide a form of peer support, coaching/ mentoring and development. A Square consists of four teaching colleagues who:

- visit at least one session taught by each Square partner
- reflect on their observation experience
- share reflections with their Square partners
- share their experiences as a group and reflect on the overall experience.

Those involved can be from the same curriculum area or from different areas. Visiting a colleague from a different area can provide a richer experience but might be more difficult to organise.

Teaching Squares provide a safe and mutually supportive environment for you to:

- observe, reflect on and celebrate good teaching and learning
- increase your understanding and appreciation of the work of colleagues
- gather ideas for developing your teaching and learning 'repertoire'
- formulate a plan for trying out and developing new approaches.

The focus is on learning from observing, not on giving feedback.

PLANNING YOUR TEACHING SQUARE

Each Square can set its own ground rules and procedures but you may want to consider:

- how much notice you give of a visit
- the role of the visiting teacher
- what information is useful in advance of the visit
- how long the visit should last
- when each pair should share their reflections on the visit
- all Squares share – where the whole group reflects on the experience.

Some participants find that the Squares work best when paperwork is kept to a minimum but it is useful to make informal notes as a prompt for reflection and sharing. It takes several weeks to complete a Teaching Square so some planning is needed.

WEEK	ACTIVITY
Week 1 All Squares kick-off	Meet as group, agree Square partners, ground rules and arrangements for visits.
Week 2 Visit 1 Week 3 Visit 2 Week 4 Visit 3	Organise materials and information needed, carry out visit, note observations and reflections.
Week 5 Reflection and Square share	Review your notes and share positive reflections with Square partner.
Week 6 All Squares review and celebration	All four participants review and share their experience.

Some suggested prompts are given opposite.

Your group may prefer Square partners to share reflections immediately or soon after the visit if this can be timetabled.

SUGGESTED PROMPTS FOR ALL SQUARES REVIEW SESSION

- What did you observe that you might use to make your teaching more effective?
- What have you tried out as a result of your visit(s) and how did your learners respond?
- How did the experience give you a greater appreciation of:
 - your learners?
 - your colleagues?
- What specific things did you like about the Teaching Squares experience?
- Why?
- How could we improve the process?

VARIATIONS

Some teams have adapted the approach to form Teaching Triangles. This can help resolve logistical problems but reduces the range of observations.

REFERENCES

Further details of Teaching Squares can be found at: <http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/140801-little-acorns-taking-root-en.pdf>