

Developing staff to lead from within, with Lead Practitioner Accreditation

"We're very proud of the effort and commitment our staff showed to their Lead Practitioner projects and the positive impact that they were able to have on students' learning" *Abby Deeks , Vice Principal and Cohort Lead*

In 2015, the leadership team of West Lakes Academy in Cumbria were considering how to enable some of their strongest staff to play a greater role in improving the quality of teaching and learning across the academy. Having found out more about the purpose, structure and focus of SSAT's Lead Practitioner (LP) accreditation, they decided it would provide an excellent way to give these staff members the skills necessary to share their great practice with others.

Once selected, the aspiring LPs each chose a project based on an area in their departmental development plan, all of which fed into the academy development plan, so ensuring that each project was relevant to the needs of the academy as a whole. The LPs chose a mentor to work with and also had peer coaching through monthly group meetings. SSAT conducted training sessions to launch and explain the LP programme to all the staff involved.

The programme at West Lakes began only in January 2016, yet Abby Deeks, vice principal and cohort lead, says it has already "enhanced performance in focus areas and provided a better experience for our students." Among her colleagues, she adds, "Steph Lewthwaite's work has improved the experience of our least advantaged students in food technology, which is incredibly important for the students' future wellbeing as well as their sense of esteem and inclusion in academy life. Melissa Relph's project enabled her to use her leadership skills and experience to work with another school locally on developing their English provision and increasing enjoyment of this crucial subject."

Their other aspiring LPs have already gained greater confidence in their leadership skills and are working outside their immediate teams. When these achievements are accredited, these colleagues will be able to play a greater role in the academy's future.

So what does the LP programme mean to West Lakes Academy? "It provides an excellent opportunity for our strongest staff to develop their leadership skills in a way that enables them to make a greater contribution to the development of our academy and the young people in our community," says Abby Deeks. "It provides formal recognition of the high standards that these staff have achieved."

To find out more about the SSAT Lead Practitioner Accreditation and how it could support your school /academy, including cross federation/chain approaches, see: www.ssatuk.co.uk/lp