



How we embedded formative assessment

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One outcome of the EFA programme at Ricards Lodge High School: ten staff members aspired to become leaders of learning, as assistant head Annabelle Taylor reports.

As the lead for CPD at Ricards Lodge, I wanted to generate a wider discussion between colleagues around teaching and learning. Lesson observations by many were seen as something done to them to meet the requirements of our teaching and learning and appraisal policies. I felt lesson observations had become more about a showcase lesson than developing and sharing good practice to further

improve the learning experience. We were also on a journey to secure outstanding and to enable us to do this we needed to improve progress for all our students. So I was delighted when Ricards Lodge secured a place on the two-year EFA programme authored by Dylan Wiliam and supported by SSAT under the leadership of Corinne Settle.

To ensure that teaching staff could see the value of the EFA programme, I asked staff to volunteer to be part of the EFA programme and lead a pilot teaching and learning community (TLC). The volunteer group worked through the programme in advance and became not only advocates for the



programme but leaders of teaching and learning in the school. After trialling the strategies in their classrooms, they could see the benefits of working with a colleague outside their subject area. The TLC leads came from different curriculum areas, so conversations developed in curriculum area meetings, learning walks, line management and staffroom bases.

Over the period of training we collected a variety of different evidence not only for quality assurance purposes but to ensure staff and students were engaged in the programme. Findings from the student questionnaire showed that 84% of all pupils agreed or strongly agreed that the EFA strategies had helped them to become more engaged and helped them with their learning. Findings from staff questionnaire suggested that the EFA strategies had a very positive impact on students. They observed the following:

- more independent students
- more engaged students
- more confident students
- increased collaboration among students
- improved outcomes
- students enjoying their learning more
- fewer teacher-led lessons.

Staff were keen to share their ideas and student work through our EFA Twitter feed, and a sense of competition developed between the different TLC groups.

Our achievement data supported our quality assurance findings. In 2017, we achieved our best ever results with a Progress 8 score of +0.71 which ranks us sixth nationally for progress. Our Attainment 8 score is 54.4, which ranks us second out of 55 similar schools nationally.

In October 2017, Ofsted rated the school outstanding, highlighting the quality of professional development in their report:

‘Leaders ensure that teachers receive the high quality training that they need to improve their teaching. As a result, teachers are highly skilled in meeting pupils’ different needs. Teachers challenge pupils to think deeply about their learning.’



And:

‘Teachers pose questions and organise activities that encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning. Teachers check on the accuracy of pupils’ understanding and quickly correct any misconceptions. The most able pupils also feel that teachers extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. One pupil’s comment, which echoed the views of others, was, ‘Teachers challenge us and prepare us for what is coming.’

Taking it further

Once the formal part of the EFA programme came to an end, staff spoke about the value of visiting other subject areas and discussing strategies that they had adopted and developed in their own practice. The creation of TLCs and the EFA programme presented us as a school with two very strong opportunities:

- Ten teaching staff now aspired to be leaders of learning, and were keen to continue and support the school’s CPD programme.
- Teaching staff recognised the value of peer-to-peer observation to support the attainment and progress of all students. Staff were more open to be observed working with more challenging groups.

A working party reviewed the teaching and learning and appraisal policies. After consultation with the working party and the governing body, I saw an opportunity to extend peer-to-peer observation and move away from the model where lessons were graded against Ofsted criteria. The success of the EFA TLC model and support of school leaders made this possible. The open door culture and peer-to-peer support had become embedded; conversations about student learning become more research based.





The processes of reporting to governors and assessing the quality of teaching were changing. After the first round of lesson observations in the autumn term, we still had a training need for observers for coaching and teaching and learning conversations. Leading on from the success of the TLC leads and after consultation with Corinne at SSAT, we advertised SSAT Lead Practitioner training posts, supported through the CPD budget. The LP worked with Corinne on a module for all teaching staff, to explore:

- What makes outstanding teaching and learning and how this is evidenced.
- How to make connections between teacher action and the impact on the student.
- The importance of continuously reflecting on practice and taking appropriate action to improve the quality of teaching and lead to better student outcomes.
- Developing a coaching culture.

New TLC groups

This was then delivered in new TLC groups. Setting the scene was considered to be the most important element, so we met as a teaching body before moving into the groups. The feedback from the session was very positive:

‘Really nice tasks, lots of discussion exploring outstanding teaching and learning. Very enjoyable and reinforces what I am doing. Inspires me to do more.’

‘It was nice to be given time to reflect on our own teaching practice and also to be given tangible questions when coaching a lesson.’

‘Opportunities to reflect and consider good practice for observations and feedback.’

‘Really thought-provoking questions which allowed me to be reflective on my own approach to teaching and as a mentor (to NQT student) – great session!’

The challenge for us as a teaching and learning community continues as we look to review the quality of peer-to-peer mentoring, lesson observations and of course the impact on student outcomes.