



NiceWORK

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK IS ESSENTIAL FOR NEW TEACHERS, SAYS DANNI ALMOND, AND NO ONE COULD BE BETTER PLACED TO PROVIDE IT THAN THEIR STUDENTS...

It's taken you twenty minutes to navigate your way around the unfamiliar, concrete jungle that is the parking lot. Stepping into the busy maze, of corridors and classrooms (otherwise known as 'the school') is no easier. You're not familiar with your new peers or surroundings. You don't know your students' faces, much less their names, and for the fifth time already today you've felt as though you have no idea what you're actually doing. Sound familiar? If it does, then you are probably a Beginning Teacher (BT).

I can say without hesitation that the first year of teaching is undoubtedly the most stressful time in any pedagogue's career. That is why it is so important for schools to provide the necessary resources for new teachers to become effective and successful in the profession. Understanding this, we decided to introduce the Pupil Researchers Programme at All Saints School in Dagenham, where I am LEC manager and Pupil Voice coordinator.

The voluntary project falls under the umbrella of 'Pupil Voice' as it provides students

a chance to contribute their views to future teaching and learning practices; the Pupil Researchers are a group of students chosen from across KS3 & KS4 to observe and feedback to BTs about their views on classroom teaching and learning.

Putting it into practice

Each researcher is involved in a rigorous selection process involving an invitation to apply, an application stage and interview. The interview is largely to gauge how well the student performs in a 1:1 situation with an adult. I ask them to tell me about themselves and why they think the programme might be an important aspect of Pupil Voice. I then follow up by asking what they think they personally will gain from participation and, likewise, how they feel a BT might benefit from engaging with the programme. We select only the most mature, discreet, confident and independent thinking students from across years 8 & 9 to participate.

The students are trained in two half-day sessions on observation techniques and



constructive feedback, which equips them with the skills required to critically observe a lesson and provide constructive feedback. We try to get them thinking about the kinds of things that a BT might want feedback about and considering appropriate forms of feeding back to an adult (i.e. being tactful); familiarise them with the observation record; and have them practising feeding back to each other.

The researchers work in pairs and are assigned to a specific BT for the duration of their placement. Firstly, the researchers undertake an initial paired observation. Secondly, they organise to meet with their BT to assist with the planning of a lesson. The BT will bring an idea of a lesson they wish to teach and the researchers will aid them in the planning of that lesson. Their final task is to observe that lesson and give feedback to the BT regarding both the practicalities of the lesson plan and overall comments from their cycle of observations.

The programme is designed to promote independent learning and behaviour amongst participants, and while it is managed by staff members, it is intended to be student led.

Mutual benefits

We've seen a number of benefits for both our students and the BTs. The programme helps to build student skills in a number of different areas including verbal and written communication, observation, critical analysis, feedback techniques and discretion. The vast majority of participants agreed that their planning and organisational skills were improved and they learnt how to express themselves constructively. It also builds their confidence in interacting and conversing with both peers and adults. In fact, 100 per cent said that, after being trained, they felt comfortable observing a BT, and 90 per cent said they felt that the BT took their feedback on board and used it to develop his/her second lesson.

Taking part in the programme looks good on young people's UCAS applications, and as the skills learnt are transferable, they will be of huge benefit when they enter the workplace.

On the other hand, our BTs can talk about the programme on the end of placement report, and use it to show reflection in their placement, which can be linked to standards in inclusion/well being and teaching. In addition, the programme also affords BTs a rare opportunity to get constructive feedback from carefully trained students, which may help inform their future teaching practices.

The programme has gone from strength to strength, changing and evolving to better suit the needs of both the students and our BTs. From a school's point of view, it really is a win-win innovation!

Big IDEAS

ALL SAINTS SCHOOL HAS A STRONG RECORD WHEN IT COMES TO SELECTING AND IMPLEMENTATING INITIATIVES TO DRIVE IMPROVEMENT, AS HEAD TEACHER KEVIN WILSON EXPLAINS...



I've been the headteacher at All Saints Secondary School since 2006. We're a mixed Catholic school located in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, catering for learners aged between 11-18 years. We

have approximately 1,200 students currently on our role; 79 teachers and 31 support staff.

Like any school, we've had to overcome some challenges. We've developed a culture of success that has been achieved through our staff and pupils. The school itself lies in an area of comparative deprivation and has a rising population, yet despite the challenges placed upon it by the local demographics, we have fostered a positive atmosphere and our children are encouraged to reach and exceed their goals.

We build on our ethos of making the school

an oasis where 'the streets' are kept firmly outside.

Some other initiatives we've implemented include the iTeach programme, originally created to increase the intake of teachers for chemistry, maths and physics, which is run in conjunction with the Training & Development Agency (TDA). The strategy behind the iTeach project is seen as an innovative way of providing a PGCE qualification, spread over 18 months, with trainees working on-line to develop their professional studies and subject enhancement linked to three placements in schools.

In 2012, we also introduced the Student Summit to start a communication network between school councils in the borough, with the hopes of building relationships and improving individual school practice. It also aimed to build the skills of student leaders and refine their knowledge base on how to run an effective school council. The Summit has become an annual event, and has gone from strength to strength.

Our Year 10 Interview Day has also been a huge success. We implemented this five years ago and it involves all Year 10 students, participating in a 30-45 minute interview with representatives from local businesses. The process is designed to mirror a real-life interview scenario; students are briefed about the company they are going to be interviewed by and it is their responsibility to research the company and prepare accordingly.

Immediately after the interview they are given constructive written feedback assessing factors that relate to self presentation such as body language, eye contact and verbal projection. When meeting with potential employers we want our students to have the ability to promote themselves and highlight their achievements with confidence, and the feedback is designed to support this.

And finally, we have successfully achieved Bronze and Silver Eco-School status and the Green Flag Award, which symbolises an excellent approach to environmental awareness, so we have a lot to be happy about!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Danni Almond is LEC Manager & Pupil Voice Coordinator at All Saints School, Dagenham.