



CASE STUDY REPORT

Narrowing the Gap

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This study was originally published in 2010 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to use data to personalise learning for more students and to narrow the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and their peers.

Aims: The main aim was to use data to personalise learning and narrow the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and their peers.

Methods: The participants included the Head of School Improvement, Headteacher, Middle Leader, National Strategies Consultant, Senior Leadership Team, School Improvement Partner, Subject Leader, Teacher, and students. Methods used included staff training in inclusive quality first teaching, re-grouping learners into needs-based focus groups, creating a data dashboard, providing mentoring, lesson observations, data tracking systems, and personalised focus sessions.

Findings: The main findings are that personalisation of learning, use of data, and proactive intervention strategies have led to improved learning outcomes, increased teacher engagement, and better school organisation and leadership.

Implications: The findings suggest that personalised learning, data tracking systems, and proactive intervention strategies can lead to improved learning outcomes and increased engagement from students. These strategies can help narrow the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Secondary education

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

Our school priorities were to use data in order to personalise learning for more students than ever before. We identified the need to improve our inclusive quality first teaching, our tracking and monitoring systems and our wave two and three interventions. Our focus on attainment groups helped us to drill down tracking and monitoring to individual learners, in our efforts to serve the needs of the whole-child we focused on a learning gap identified from our analysis of the 2009 data.

We identified the need to address learning gaps and work on strategies to narrow the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and their peers. In 2008 our percentage gap analysis was 43, our SLT highlighted Intervention as a priority for 2009.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Subject leader
- Teacher

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- All aspects
- All subjects

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

We wanted our students to take ownership of their own learning, we started by ensuring each child knew their baseline and aspirational targets and that, most importantly, they knew the next steps necessary to achieve them.

We spent the majority of our staff development time on training that focused on improving inclusive quality first teaching for all and the 'Wave' model of intervention. Drilling down further, staff highlighted the need to improve students' independent learning, revision and examination skills. Further staff workshops were provided to boost good practice in the use of the different lesson stages and their key principles.

We re-grouped learners into needs-based focus groups instead of 'form-period' and created a 'data dashboard' for ALL to share.

What were your success criteria?

- Improved learning in and out of lessons.
- Raised aspirations of some of our most disadvantaged children.
- Improved strategies for independent learning.
- Improved teaching and learning strategies. (ie inclusive quality first teaching and learning for all)
- Improved tracking and monitoring.

- Improvement in wave 2 and 3 interventions.
- Improved performance in internal and external assessments and examinations.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- CVA data
- Data comparison of cohorts
- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

All staff were asked to take part in the making of a DVD, the aim was to produce a resource 'by staff, for staff' to improve inclusive quality first teaching and learning for all, this DVD was used as a training innovation on our first staff development day. The sections of the training were; questioning, independent learning, modelling, starters, plenaries, visual learning, peer and self assessment and next steps for learning. (This DVD has been used to help NQT's and students on placement.) All staff have taken part in extensive training in assessment for learning and have developed an understanding of APP.

Lessons have been observed as part of the PMR cycle and a 'wave observation' document has been used to focus the observer on IQFT&L (Inclusive quality first teaching and learning) strategies. Once staff were fully acquainted with wave one, they could identify learners for wave 2 and 3 intervention.

Children's work has been scrutinised by learning development leaders and feedback has been given on quality, diagnostic written feedback and curricular target setting. Mentoring was provided for a cohort of children after data scrutiny.

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

National Strategy Documents:

Who provided you with support?

- Middle leader
- Senior management
- Subject leader

How were you supported?

We had the support of the whole team of staff, learners and their parents who were informed by personalised letters. Subject teachers from all areas not only took part in the training they identified learners from their areas who were not on trajectory and programmed personalised interventions. (Based on wave 1 intervention)

All staff were asked to contribute to and continually update a 'learning dashboard' in the headteacher's office, this detailed all the interventions for each targeted individual.

Our finance department resourced a small budget for prizes for learner of the month and our deep support team provided mentoring and reinforced the central messages in assemblies. Form-tutors were key instruments for change when tutor-groups were re-organised for needs based interventions.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Pupils have raised esteem and aspirations as they have appreciated the personalised attention from subject staff, subject leaders, mentors and SLT.

Pupils have taken more responsibility for their own learning, attendance at extra-curricular workshops, booster and focus sessions was good.

Student voice exercises documented appreciation of curricular targets and particular reference was made to the intervention of the Headteacher and Head of year, with visits to the learning dashboard (a wall in the head's office) and explanations of 'where they are at, where they could be and how to get there.'

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

The roll-out effect of inclusive quality first teaching and the wave model of intervention has improved learning for all, reflected in our best examination results and CVA ever.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

'I am now in the sixth-form at Todmorden High, I was struggling in year 11, but knowing my targets and how to improve really helped me' (year 11 Student)

'I was advised to concentrate on my best eight subjects, doing ten had always been too much for me' (year 11 student 2009)

'At a glance, I could tell who was predicted to get English and not maths and vice versa, I used the data dashboard in my office as a snapshot of real school improvement' (Headteacher)

'Re-forming the tutor-groups was the key intervention from my point of view, tutors were able to focus on specific subjects with their needs -based groups and I was able to track and monitor achievement and many

'Interventions' soon transformed to 'satisfactory' or better.'

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- CVA data
- Data comparison of cohorts
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

We selected a cohort of 13 from 133 in year 11, 2009. These students were identified as they were not on trajectory to achieve targets and were in receipt of free school meals.

Of these students selected; 61.5% achieved 5 A* to C grades, 30.8% achieved 5 A* to C including English and Mathematics, 100% achieved grades A* to G.

The average value-added (FFTB) was + 4.32 and the CVA for cohort 1010.80.

We narrowed the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers from 43% in 2008 to 27% in 2009.

Our intervention strategies led to us narrowing the gap between our most disadvantaged learners and their peers by 16% in one year. We are looking forward to seeing the gap narrow further this year.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teachers are engaged with the wave model of intervention, lesson observation record sheets and now include the 'Wave' criteria for inclusive quality first teaching and learning for all. Teachers employ a range of strategies to engage learners and realise that it's not the amount of teacher talk and classroom management that contribute to good standards of learning but the planning for progression and the use of the lesson stages.

Teachers plan for positive behaviour for learning and integrate independent learning into their lessons.

In an audit of teaching and learning styles and using feedback from the 'Wave' lesson observation sheets, our Director of Teaching identified scaffolding and peer and self-assessment as areas for improvement, consequently these have become areas of increased training and focus.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

'I did not expect year 11 to react very warmly to the change in their tutor-groupings, however there seemed to be a general consensus that it was for the greater good and they gelled together very well in my needs-based 'maths but not English achievers' group.' The regular visits from the Head of year 11 and SLT were always a boost to them making them feel important...and somehow they felt...'looked after' (Year 11 form-tutor.)

'Teachers in my faculty use data to track their learners in their class, we set targets and monitor individuals, from discussion with my teachers I flag-up learners for interventions, for example; G&T group, MGP, one to one tuition or mentoring, we concentrate on year 11 and this good practice needs to spread to all years' (Head of Faculty.)

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

For the academic year Sept 07- July08 53 lesson observations took place, 1 was Inadequate, 17 (32%) satisfactory, 35 (66%) good (of these 10 were judged to have outstanding features)

In the academic year Sept 08-09 25% of lessons were judged to be satisfactory, 54% judged to be good (ten with outstanding features) and 21% judged as outstanding.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Data tracking systems have become a major focus: our Deputy Head for Student Experience has introduced the PASS data system and all staff have been trained on how to access it electronically. The 'inadequate' grading has been replaced by 'intervention' signalling to all the need for additional input.

Intervention starts with identifying the child and we have collectively recognised the need for accurate and telling data that maps starting points, present progress and baseline/aspirational targets.

As a result all faculties submitted timetables for assessment (APP, exams etc) that dovetail into the school's assessment and reporting calendar. This data is analysed at all levels and SLT have recognised the need to be pro-active instead of reactive, putting systems in place for interventions which are starting to provide the linkage

between the 'deep experience', 'deep support,' and deep learning' gateways to personalised learning.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

'Making data work at tutor level' was the focus of our latest twilight training evening. SLT, middle leaders and teachers are committed to making the data come alive for students. Teachers discussed ideas for strategies on how tutors could be used to trigger academic intervention. These were feedback to SLT and discussed at the Deep Support meeting.

SLT have identified the need to work more strategically re intervention, putting systems in place that will trigger intervention eradicating the need to react to data and then put a plan in place. This will involve the whole-school community.

Our data systems are now capable of producing our own 'Raise on line style' report as a predictive exercise as to how individuals/groups and whole-cohorts will do, not as a post results trend analysis tool.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

Personalisation means making it personal, let each learner know they matter.

Involving learners in the ownership of their data, sharing our targets and aspirations with them via personalised focus sessions and the Headteacher's data dashboard.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

National Strategy Documents;

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

- The Todmorden High School Wave bookmark
- The Todmorden High School Behaviour for Learning bookmark

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- Pedagogy Pack
- AFL strategy document
- National Strategy intervention website
- SSAT David Hargreaves series of pamphlets on 'Deep Learning' etc
- SSAT website

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

- Link the deep gateways, more collaboration between the deep learning and deep support teams to make data powerful.
- SLT to introduce a system of proactive triggers that become an integral part of the school calendar so that intervention is proactive, planned and consistent.
- Continue to evaluate and enhance practice.
- To have a greater student-voice input.

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- Lesson Plan Template
- Todmorden High School 'Wave' Bookmark
- Todmorden High School 'Wave' Bookmark - word version
- Independent learning presentation
- Questioning training presentation
- Wave intervention presentation

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About 'What Works Well'

This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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