Identifying a need

Eastbourne Primary School has two primary drivers. Firstly, it looks to achieve more than 12 months’ growth in 12 months for its students. Secondly, that disadvantage should not be a barrier to success. To meet these challenges, the school introduced a personalised learning approach in 2010. A key component of this approach was better use of data to track student growth, identify next steps in learning, inform feedback, and to understand the impact of teaching practices.

In 2010 the leadership team organised for staff to visit schools already using a personalised learning approach to help determine the approach they would take at Eastbourne Primary School.

It’s an ongoing process of updating data because learning happens all the time, so we have to assess and give feedback all the time.

Nicole Rees, Teacher
Implementation narrative

An initial step was establishing a Personalised Learning Passion Team (PLPT). The team met fortnightly and was integral to planning and implementing effective teaching and personalised learning within the school. The PLPT reviewed a range of pedagogies and evidence-based practices to inform their vision of effective teaching for the school. The team introduced a focus on feedback based on John Hattie’s Visible Learning. Feedback was identified as evidence-based, high impact and aligned to the personalised learning approach.

The school held fortnightly in-house professional learning sessions for all teachers to build understanding and capacity in feedback practices, based on John Hattie’s Visible Learning approach. Resources helped facilitate the buy-in process among teachers. The school leadership developed a clear guide that outlined the practical steps required to provide feedback and for goal setting and data gathering.

Observations and walk throughs. Teachers have the opportunity to observe each other’s classes. This supports sharing of effective practices and consistency in practice across the school.
To help teachers understand the impact of their teaching and accurately track student performance and growth, the school created its own data management system using spreadsheets. Teachers use the system to track individual student growth across time and against the expected rate of growth. The school also uses online tools to make the data accessible for all teachers.

School leadership introduced a collaborative and flexible teaching model and teachers now work together in open-plan spaces that provide an environment for sharing the responsibility for the learning of all students. Teachers maximise the flexibility in this model to provide timely and specific feedback through conferencing and small group work.

The work around feedback has primarily focused on identifying and communicating the next steps in learning. The students and teachers concentrate on answering the questions at the core of feedback: where they are going, how they are going and where to next.

Teachers use pre and post-tests and ‘cold writing’ exercises to gather valuable evidence about current understanding and performance, learning needs and students’ progress. Positive changes in pre and post-test data provided an early indication that the personalised learning and feedback practices were positively impacting student performance.

All students agree on personal goals with their teachers and evidence is being collected to support their progress towards them. This evidence is reviewed in conferences with teachers when students are given feedback on their progress against their goals. Prior to conferencing sessions, students are required to self-assess their work against criteria and to engage in peer feedback.
We want kids to build their efficacy as learners, to build a growth mindset, so that they know they are always capable of making progress.

Hugh Greer – Assistant Principal