Feedback Case Study

FEEDBACK TO STRETCH SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

FAIRHOLME COLLEGE
TOOWOOMBA, QLD

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited

- INNER REGIONAL
- NON-GOVERNMENT
- PREP-12
- ICSEA 1126
- 70 TEACHERS
- 727 STUDENTS
- LBOTE 5%
- INDIGENOUS STUDENTS 1%

(Accessed from MySchool - June 2017)

Identifying a need

In 2013, the Fairholme College enjoyed academic success, but was keen to encourage student self-motivation and independence in learning as a way to further improve student learning and addressing the issue of coasting students.

At monthly professional learning sessions, teachers discussed areas of need and selected learning environments to promote independence, interdependence and self-motivation as a priority focus area. This aligns to promoting student peer feedback practices.

'It became a real journey for us to take that step backwards and to encourage our girls to take risks.'

Stewart Peacock, Head of Learning and Curriculum

KEY IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES

The leadership team researched widely for a suitable pedagogical model.

Engage an education consultant to help build whole-school professional learning and capacity.

New practices were piloted across all school levels, Prep to Year 12 with a small group of teachers.

The pilot group presented learnings to all staff, then ran workshops with heads of department to recruit new staff for an expanded pilot across the school.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. **Identified a need** for a whole-school pedagogical framework to enhance the existing high student results.

2. **Researched for a model** that had the potential to address the school's issue with "coasting" students.

3. **Unpacked the selected model** with all staff over the course of a year.

4. **Established the priority learning issue** was developing students' self-regulation.

5. **Staff collectively selected a focus on** the learning environments that promote independence, interdependence and self-motivation.

6. **Engaged an education consultant** to help teachers implement new practices in selected classrooms.

7. **Pilot group of teachers established** to trial new strategies and to share learnings with all staff at PL sessions and recruit adoptees.

Implementation narrative

Seeking expertise to help build their practices, Fairholme engaged an education consultant to help implement new practices into a select group of classrooms. The college also established an initial pilot group of teachers who met fortnightly for professional learning sessions on how to unpack the research behind positive interdependence, so they could effectively implement and model it in the classroom. The consultant assigned tasks for the pilot participants to trial, and then they would report back to the group on the outcomes.

At the outset, students at Fairholme did not have strong skills in peer feedback. When they were asked to help each other with work, they were more likely to "take over." As a result, the school focused on teaching students to "help, not do." This is taught at all levels – from kindergarten to Year 12.

One of the methods to "help, not do," was the checklist method, one of the first to be trialled by teachers in the primary and high school. The Year 5 students used a checklist to provide peer feedback on each other's written work. These students were explicitly taught how to give constructive feedback throughout the year. Peer feedback sessions usually ended with a class discussion about the process and how students could use it to further improve their learning.

KEY FEEDBACK PRACTICES

A focus on building student capacity in self and peer feedback.

Students use 14PCR to provide collaborative feedback. Students work in groups, then review each other's ideas. The group publishes a mind-map (P); four of the group members move around the circle (C) of individual members to discuss ideas; then the four return to refine (R) their group's work.

Anonymous written peer feedback, where every student in the class is involved, allows recipients to find trends.

30-second blocks for students to provide feedback to each other, both positive and for improvement.

Students are required to write responses to teacher feedback, to be shared with parents.

Checklist: Students randomly select another student's draft work and use a checklist to provide detailed feedback about how the work is successful and why.

The Year 7 cohort was engaged in a more autonomous feedback process. Students sought feedback on their own work from three peers, and were responsible for reviewing other students' work by referencing a more sophisticated checklist to provide detailed feedback about how the draft was successful and why. While students carried out the feedback process, the teacher supported them by providing timely and point-of-need feedback.

Students are taught to collaborate through methods such as "14PCR." In this method, a group of five students develops a mind-map relating to a particular topic. The group publishes (P) the work, then four members of the group will move round the circle (C) of other groups, with one member remaining to explain the work to other students who are circulating. When the four have seen the other groups' thinking, they return to refine (R) their own.

Another feedback approach is to give students thirty seconds to provide positive comments on homework assignments, and a further thirty seconds to provide feedback about how they could be improved. This culminates in a class discussion about areas where students were happy with the feedback from their peers and where they felt they could improve. A different approach sees each student's work reviewed anonymously by every other student in the class. Students then collate and analyse their peers' feedback to look for common trends.

Teachers monitored students' engagement with the feedback provided to them by collecting the peer feedback along with their assignments. Students were also required to write a response to teacher feedback, referring to the marking criteria. Feedback and responses became part of a folio that was presented at parent-teacher interviews. These approaches helped support students to act on the feedback they received.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

Staff ownership was instilled through collective decision making.

Collaborations between teachers from kindergarten to high school.

A thorough approach to professional learning, leading to low staff turnover.

Staged adoption allowed teachers time to make a distinction between routine feedback and effective feedback, and build on strategies.

Parents were kept informed about the new practices.

IMPACT

- Year 3 reading results have increased by a full band in NAPLAN since 2013.

- Year 9 results for numeracy in NAPLAN have increased since 2013.

- NAPLAN results place Fairholme students consistently above the state and national average in every test item and in every year level since 2008.

- Fairholme achieved its highest Year 12 results in the school's history in 2015.

Following the pilot, the leadership team invited the consultant to present the new practices to all staff. To widen their adoption, pilot participants were asked to run workshops for heads of departments to provide authentic examples of how they could adapt their teaching to the new methods. The pilot program was then expanded to include twelve teachers who would adopt the practices across some or all of their teaching.

The leadership team offered in-school professional learning to encourage staff buy-in and the cross-pollination of ideas. Wide scale adoption was initially slow and the staff's levels of enthusiasm varied. However, the pilot period allowed staff to collectively conclude that the new practices could address the issue of "coasting" students at Fairholme.

To ensure the new learning was supported at home, parents were walked through the approach and its benefits. The school has now incorporated discussion of the new practices at the Middle School Parent Information Nights.

❝ Our feedback to students happens all the time when we're engaging and interacting. And it needs to often be fairly explicit. It needs to be timely. ❞

Jo Darbyshire, Teacher