

Case Study: Using the Framework for Collaborative Dialogue and Lesson Study

Exwick Heights Primary School, Exeter, UK

<p>Short description of the challenge that the tool was used to tackle</p>	<p>Retention is an on-going issue for UK schools and Exwick Heights Primary School was keen to identify strategies for schools across the Exeter Teaching School alliance to help address this. The intention was to gain better understanding of some of the potential reasons why teachers leave the profession (i.e. the difficulties teachers face) and identify ways to address these.</p> <p>The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) hoped that implementing these tools would:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Encourage staff to look at the difficulties they encounter with 'fresh eyes' b) Strengthen opportunities for collaborative work c) Complement work already being done in the school and not add to teachers' workload.
<p>Contextual information</p>	<p>The SLT in the school decided to combine the 'Framework for Collaborative Dialogue about Teaching' (FCD) and 'Lesson Study' tools as they felt that these tools worked well together, did not need to be edited or adapted for use and offered the greatest impact in the shortest period of time.</p> <p>The structure provided by the tool descriptions was considered to be clear and easy to implement and did not require further resources. The Deputy Head was familiar with Lesson Study and had been using it with recently qualified teachers across the city.</p>
<p>Title of the tools</p>	<p>The 'Framework for Collaborative Dialogue about Teaching' and 'Lesson Study'.</p>
<p>How did the school work with the tool</p>	<p>A 1.5 hour meeting for all teachers and two one hour meetings for Teaching Assistants were used to set up the trialling process. All staff were involved since it was felt that the tools offered a valuable professional development opportunity that could be personalised to individual members of staff.</p> <p>The SLT began by gathering data concerning how staff felt about current professional development opportunities. The FCD was then introduced as a potential tool for discussion of their concerns.</p> <p>Staff then split into triads to explore the issues that had been identified. The FCD template was distributed and used to guide and record the ensuing discussions.</p> <p>SLT then introduced and explained the Lesson Study tool.</p> <p>Triads then planned an activity to address their identified area of difficulty. They were encouraged to think creatively ('out of the box') when planning their activity.</p>
<p>Promoting factors</p>	<p>Introducing the FCD to all staff rather than for a few individuals meant that everybody was clear about the expectation that this was a tool designed to support their professional development.</p> <p>The FCD helped give each Triad a clear focus and enabled them to consider new ways of looking at their area of difficulty. It encouraged discussion and the opportunity it provided for staff not in the SLT to lead the discussions was valued.</p>

	<p>The FCD was an effective prompt for discussion and worked particularly well when it was used to explore more open ended issues such as pupil engagement.</p> <p>Staff were very positive about the Lesson Study tool which they felt enabled them to collaborate more with colleagues without fear of 'judgement'. They enjoyed participating and observing children in different ways. In every case the LS lesson had a positive impact on learning e.g. in one of the lessons the children made much better progress in learning 'times tables'. Pupils often made better progress through having to complete more challenging tasks. Staff valued the open-ended nature of the tool and the shared understanding that it was the lesson or new approach that was being investigated rather than the teacher teaching the lesson.</p> <p>Discussion using the FCD helped to identify a focus for Lesson Study tool and the FCD was also seen as a potentially useful tool for helping to frame discussion following the lesson observations.</p>
Barriers	<p>When using the FCD staff were not sure whether they had to fill in the grid rather than use it to frame their discussions. Some wanted to complete the template and others didn't, preferring to use the tool as a stimulus for their discussions.</p> <p>Some thought the FCD 'too academic' and asked 'When I have got time to research?' Recently qualified teachers responded more positively to the idea of completing the template as they were used to working with similar tools during their training year. They were also more familiar with recent research. Experienced members of staff did have knowledge of the findings of research, but struggled to articulate this as they felt their understanding was innate. They were able to identify next steps to address areas of difficulty and felt constrained by the prescribed format of the Framework. These teachers felt knowledge of research was not necessary to use the Lesson Study tool effectively and that the information in the toolkit placed too much emphasis on this.</p> <p>The main barrier to the use of Lesson Study was the time needed to implement the process effectively as it required measures to be put into place to enable participating teachers and support staff to be released from their usual commitments at the same time.</p> <p>Specific emphasis needed to be put on the idea that staff were being invited and encouraged to think 'outside of the box'. Using FCD seemed to encourage teachers to take risks and try to something completely new.</p>
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