Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) Action Research Project

Enhancing two-way feedback

York Learning – June 2022

CONTENTS

Enhancing two-way feedback

York Learning

SUMMARY

This project aimed to investigate how we could enable better two-way feedback with learners, drawing on digital tools that could be used in both remote and face-to-face teaching.

RATIONALE

When York Learning's provision switched from face-to-face to digital during the pandemic, tutors found it challenging to provide good quality, meaningful feedback to learners on their written work and to encourage peer feedback. Our project aimed to apply and extend the digital tools and techniques tried by staff during this time e.g. digital marking, audio and video messages. We were inspired in part by the OTLA 7 project using Mote by Leeds City College. Our goal was to explore how tools could be used across different learner groups to enhance two-way feedback in hybrid and face-to-face learning situations. We also wanted to improve our own technological skills.

Three tutors, teaching different groups of learners in different locations, decided to use the teaching triangles approach, a form of situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1990), to explore and evaluate our practice.

Other Contextual Information

Our action research was part of the Education and Training Foundation's OTLA 8 Programme.

City of York Council's York Learning Service is York's chief community adult education provider. Our programmes include learning for leisure, training for personal development and workplace learning. We teach in over 60 venues across the city including libraries, children's centres, schools and community centres as well as in council premises. We also offer classes online and through video-conferencing.

We offer Functional Skills English qualifications from Entry 1 up to and including Level 2 and GCSE English Language. We also offer stepping stone qualifications to support learners moving up to the next level of qualification. We support learners on our 16-18 study programme with their English requirements, many of whom have SEND and SEMH. We support learners with High Needs (16-25) on specialised study programmes within sub-contractor provision. We offer ESOL from pre-entry up to Level 1, where learners can take qualifications in certain elements like Reading or Speaking and Listening or full certificates. We work closely with Refugee Action York to support learners who have a very low level of English.

Our action research project involved three tutors, teaching four English courses with a combined total of 18 adult learners and one Employability course with a small group of 16 to19-year-olds. Four of the classes were mainly face-to-face with additional digital learning through our online platform (Google Classroom); the other was a flexi class for apprentices delivered through online learning (BKSB and Google Classroom) with an optional face-to-face weekly class.
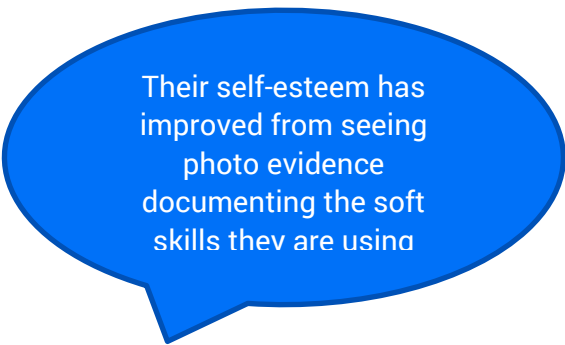
APPROACH

September 2021	Formed a teaching triangle
	Held initial meeting to explore ideas and decide individual focus
	Planned our individual interventions
October 2021	Tried out tools and teaching techniques
	Developed standardised writing feedback form
	Held Triangle meeting to update each other and share learning
November 2021	Held Triangle meeting to update each other and share learning
	Investigated and tried out additional digital tools: Flipgrid, Mote
	Developed Activity Log for two-way feedback
December 2021	Researched ICT solutions for audio messaging
	Held conversations with other providers
January 2022	Held Triangle meeting to update each other and share learning
	Attempted to recruit for a second Triangle on the same topic [this did not succeed]
	Developed teaching ideas for complex sentences
	Used new visual feedback techniques
	Asked other tutors about their methods for teaching complex sentences
February 2022	Continued to try out tools and teaching techniques
March 2022	Held Triangle meeting to update each other and share learning
	Held observations to watch the research in action and give feedback to each other
	Held learner reviews using RAG rating
	Shared our learning at English team meeting
Future plans	
April 2022	Adjust and improve our interventions
May 2022	Held Triangle meeting to update each other and share learning
	Adjust and improve our interventions
June 2022	Adjust and improve our interventions
July 2022	Hold final Triangle meeting to evaluate our interventions across the project
	Plan for sharing learning at cross-organisation meetings

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

As tutors, we have increased in confidence to try out teaching and assessment tools online and in the classroom. We have tried new methods of recording assessment and encouraging learners to feed back to each other e.g. using photographs, Screencastify, Flipgrid and voice recording apps.

We have also grown in confidence at adapting in-house tools specifically for our needs. Our tailored recording and reflection tools (Appendix 5, 6) have empowered learners to have choice and control over their learning, tracking their progress and understanding when more work needs to be done. As one tutor found, this was particularly helpful for her apprentice learners, who often panic when they realise they are running out of time to complete their English qualification as they reach the 'end date' for their apprenticeship. Another learner who has had experience of both versions of the ILP commented that the new version is much more "chattable."

Their self-esteem has improved from seeing photo evidence documenting the soft skills they are using

For learners on the Employability course their self-esteem has improved from seeing photo evidence documenting the soft skills they are using, and they are more confident when giving and receiving feedback (Appendix 7). As the tutor has reflected about one learner: "*This has really boosted confidence levels for her to actually have visual evidence of herself taking such an active part in the session.*"

Learners on English Functional Skills courses have had the opportunity to give honest feedback about how they feel about writing complex sentences, and this has shaped the tutor's teaching approaches. It is empowering for learners to see a direct link between their views and the context of lessons (Appendix 4).

Overall, we have come to appreciate that our biggest strength as a learning provider is that we have small classes. Although our learners often have complex needs and backgrounds, we can tailor our approach to suit individual learners in many cases.

Professional Development

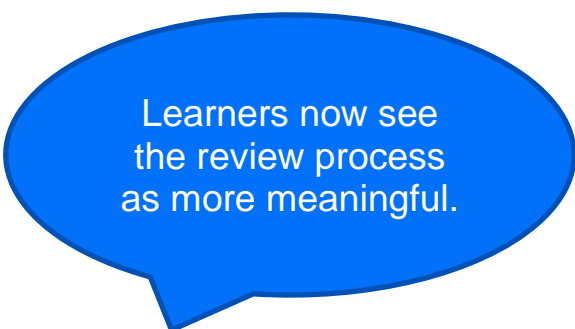| Professional Standard	How our project outcomes demonstrate this standard
1. Reflect on what works best in your teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of learners.	Our three tutors worked with diverse groups of learners, some 16-19 and some adults, with a wide variety of needs and goals. We discovered through our research that having small classes enables us to tailor our approach to individuals, including how we manage the digital tools we use and combine them with face-to-face feedback. Learners were able to tell us clearly what worked best for them.
6. Build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and learners.	The collaboration between tutors working in different teams was very productive, leading to conversations and discoveries that would not otherwise have taken place. We also sought to collaborate beyond the teaching triangle by sharing our learning at team meetings and staff events. In this way, our project strengthened the teaching triangles approach across the whole

	service. Learners collaborated with us by sharing their feedback on the new tools and approaches we used. One learner actively improved one visual feedback method trialled (Appendix 4).
13. Motivate and inspire learners to promote achievement and develop their skills to enable progression	Our initial focus on providing feedback to learners widened out to encompass encouraging learners to give feedback to tutors too. We motivated learners by capturing photo evidence of 'soft skills' being used in practice; learners could then see how these related to the RAG rating of their skills (Appendix 6). This improved confidence in our 16-19 year old learners. We encouraged learners to record and reflect on their learning by improving two key tools – at the end of sessions and after writing tasks - to make them more effective tools for learners to track their own progress (Appendix 5). This was especially crucial for our apprentices.

Organisational Development

Through this project we have strengthened the teaching triangle approach across the service. This has supported an overhaul of OTL processes, begun after York Learning participated in the Advanced Practitioners Project, whereby we combine traditional formal observations with unseen observations, teaching triangles, peer observation and learning walks.

Part of our action research involved working with the ICT department to improve their understanding of the ICT needs of non-school teaching. It took time, but together we found a solution for voice-recording capability. In turn, as tutors we have understood that some requirements are going to be challenging in a local authority setting, e.g. lengthy procedures around privacy and data protection when installing apps, that wider organisations don't always experience.

As result of this project, our Routes team has looked at its Individual Learning Plan (ILP) paperwork as a whole, to streamline it and make it more meaningful for learners and staff. The Routes tutor reflected: "*I feel [the learners] see the review process as more meaningful and understand why it is so important to have feedback but also that they themselves are capable of facilitating this.*" The English team is planning to roll out an improved version of its learner record (ILP) in September 2022 to allow for better two-way communication between tutors and learners. The tutor who worked on the new ILP reflected: "*Having the time and opportunity to develop and discuss different approaches to giving learner feedback and how feedback is recorded, in an encouraging and 'safe' environment has been both enjoyable and rewarding.*"

> Learners now see the review process as more meaningful.

LEARNING FROM THIS PROJECT

Initially, this project was about providing better quality feedback for learners that would be effective in both online and face-to-face settings. We were in part inspired by Leeds City College's project on feedback in remote delivery (OTLA 7). However, a theme soon emerged that face-to-face feedback was often better for some learners. Now that our teaching had partially returned to the classroom,

we concluded that there was no reason to 'hang on' to digital tools where there were better options for our learners. As a result, we have combined digital and face-to-face approaches in a tailored way to suit different groups of learners and reflect their individual needs.

We have found it empowering to involve learners in our research, both for them and for us. Learners have provided us with really honest feedback, for example, detailing when they prefer face-to-face methods and where some tools haven't worked for them (Appendix 7). For other learners, being able to communicate digitally with a tutor away from a session has boosted mental well-being.
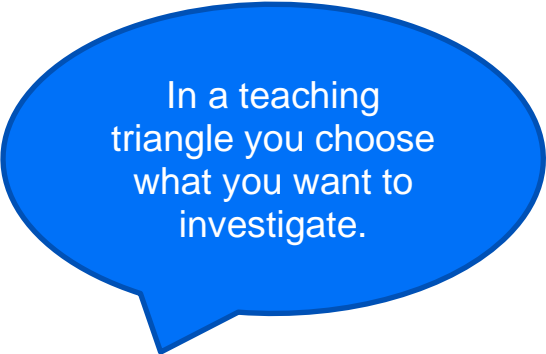
Here are some of the ways that learners have influenced our thinking on this project:

One learner commented that they preferred sitting next to the tutor to look at the RAG rated skills feedback instead of just reading it on the screen; that way they could challenge 'red' ratings and take better note of the 'green' ratings (Appendix 6).

One tutor used a visual weather map to help learners reflect on their confidence in writing complex sentences. A learner with ADHD could not access the exercise as they found it difficult to work with weather as a metaphor for their learning (Appendix 3).

Another learner improved a reflection wheel by marking it in a different way; this has now been built into the task and the tool is a reflection clock instead! (Appendix 4)

On reflection we would have liked to be able to try our new approaches with a larger group of learners in some cases, as some course numbers have been low. We would also have liked to have recruited a second teaching triangle to develop these ideas, but time constraints are perceived as a significant barrier by many tutors. This perception is reflected in other research on teacher peer-learning (albeit formal peer observation) by EEF which found that "teachers involved in the trial reported that they felt uncomfortable taking time out of teaching to complete observations" (EEF 2017).

In a teaching triangle you choose what you want to investigate.

Listening to learners' direct feedback resulted in one tutor significantly changing her research topic halfway through the project and looking at teaching complex sentences (Appendix 8). The tutor commented: "*I love the fact that in a teaching triangle you choose what you want to investigate, knowing your learners and their challenges*." As a result, findings are still emerging in this area and the approaches will continue to be tested in the 22-23 academic year.

REFERENCES

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (2017) *Teacher Observation: Evaluation Report*. EEF, London. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/teacher-observation

Lave, J and Wenger, E (1990) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
https://www.cambridge.org/gb/academic/subjects/psychology/developmental-psychology/situated-

learning-legitimate-peripheral-participation?format=PB&isbn=9780521423748

Leeds City College on feedback in remote delivery (OTLA 7) https://ccpathways.co.uk/practitioner-research/otla-7/cluster-6/7-10b/

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Project Team

Project Role	Name	Job Role	Contact
Project Lead	Project Lead	Claire Wilton	
Project Deputy	Project Deputy	Helen Clarkson	
Project Team	Project Team	Alison Thorne	
Project Team	Project Team	Sharon Hutchinson	
Mentor	Mentor	Helen Hewlett	helen.hewlett20@gmail.com
Research Group Lead	Research Group Lead	Bob Read	bobread945@gmail.com

Appendix 2: Participants and Stakeholders

No of learners?	30	No of staff?	4
No of organisations?	1	No of employers/ stakeholders?	1

Appendix 3: Research/ Evaluation Approach

Participant/observer (e.g. practitioner reflective accounts, logs)	x	**Interview/survey** (e.g. polls, questionnaires, learner interviews)	x
Observation of practice (in person, video, observation notes)	x	**Document analysis** (e.g. learner work, session plans, annotated resources, policies)	x
Custom test/assessment (of knowledge, skill, attitude, participation) for your 'intervention'		**High-stakes learner assessment** (e.g. A Level results, End Point Assessment, BTECs	

Before/after assessment (e.g. measures of progress or change in attainment, participation)	X	Comparative trial (e.g. comparing participants' outcomes against a 'control' group	
Other (specify):	Action research		

Appendix 4: Weather reflection tool

The pictures were drawn on a flipchart. Learners were asked to put a mark by the weather symbol which best reflected their feelings about writing complex sentences. Two learners have marked the chart with an initial (C) and a tick. A third learner was not able to access the task by relating it to their own sentence-writing skills and instead wrote commentary exploring the metaphor of weather.
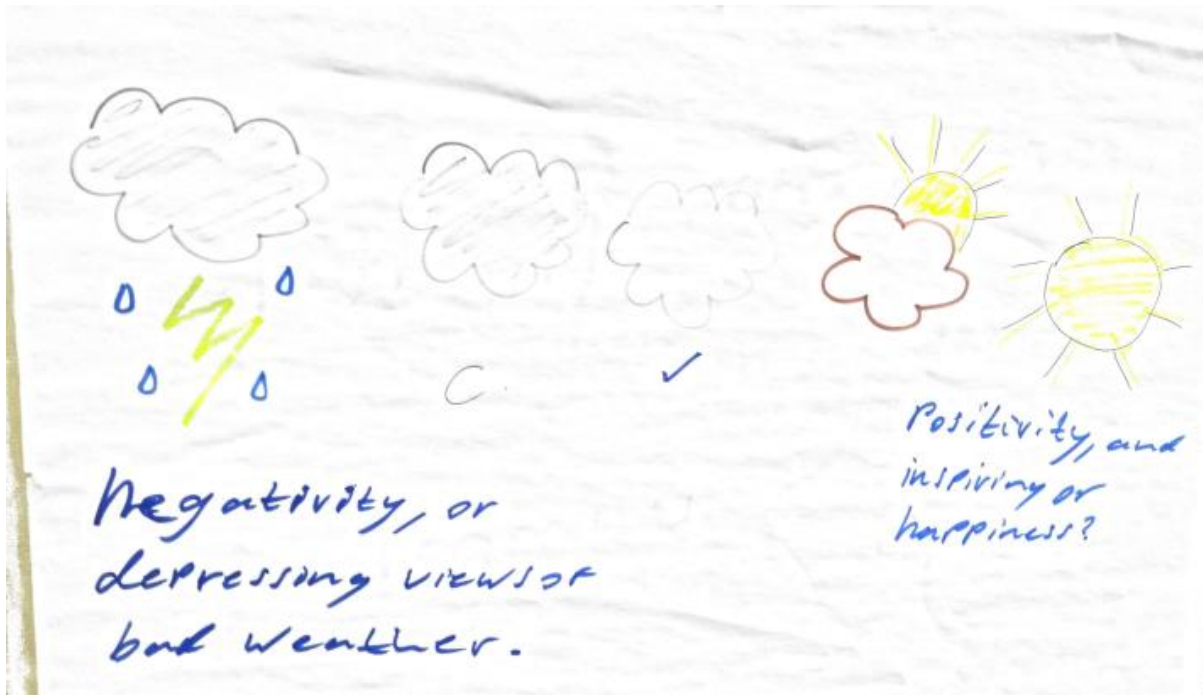
Appendix 5: Sentence skills wheel / clock

Learners were asked to rate their sentence-writing skills in 6 different areas: full stops, commas, conjunctions, capital letters, fragments and over-long sentences. The exercise was repeated 8-10 weeks later.

On the left: Learner P's sentence skills wheel with first assessment marked in black and follow-up assessment in red.

On the right: Learner S's sentence skills wheel marked around the rim, making it more like a clock. This learner found the task easier to understand this way.
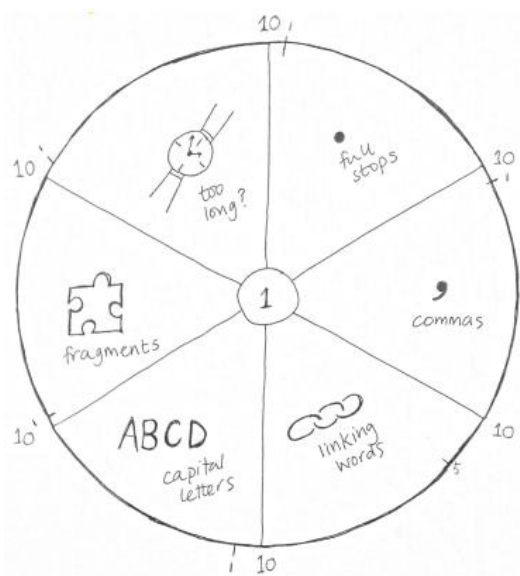
Below: Clock adapted by tutor following feedback from Learner S
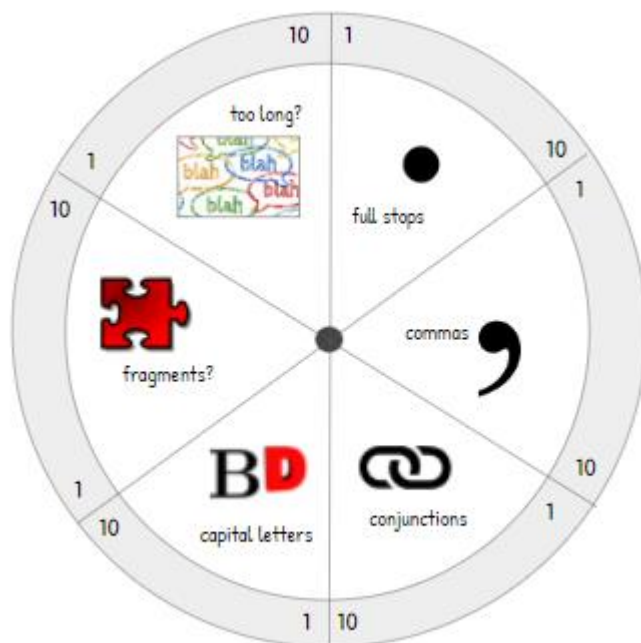
Appendix 6: Samples from ILP used for two-way communication

Date	Work completed	Reflection
	Write down the tasks you completed. **Include any work from books or study guides.**	**What did you learn today?** **Was anything tricky?** **What were you most pleased with?** **Do you need more time on a topic or skill?**
30/09/21	today i completed YL course induction presentation, YL induction review activity and initial assessment and starting points form.	Today I feel so much more confident in my work just from seeing Sharon in person and being in a different environment. *Great first session, J. Begin the next session by completing the 'letter to my tutor' activity. We'll review your practice reading paper then you need to complete a practice writing assessment, in class.*
7/10/21	today i have completed the letter to my tutor and i have logged back onto bksb and me and sharon have a conversation about subject verbs	in todays session i have had a good conversation about the near future and what the plan is and what i will be doing next week. it was great to be back on bksb. i definitely need to do some more work on subject verbs *Good session, J. In the next session, the plan is for you to complete a practice writing activity. We'll be looking at the areas you need to work on as well as starting to look at exam timings in relation to your planning, writing and proofreading. .*
14/10/21	today i have complete the writing activity	In today's session I completed the writing activity which I feel quite pleased about as I haven't done one in years. me and sharon have talked about where i can improve and we will be working on that in the weeks to come. *This was a very useful session; well done.*

Date	Work completed	Reflection
4/11/21	i have done my reading practic paper	in todays session i have completed my leave 1 reading paper which i found a lot easier then i though. me and sharon went though the questions which i got wrong and they where stupid mistakes which i now know what to do when i do my next paper. *Well done J. As you can't make the next session, you are going to work on L1 grammar.*

17/02/22	Sentence work: simple/compound/complex Complex sentence activities	i prefer to use paper base stuff to practic on as when i do my exams i will be doing them on paper. i have took some paper based stuff home so i can practics when i am no in the classroom Don't worry we'll use paper resources from now.
03/03/22	Practice reading activity - sample 1 Plastics	*this week i have done a reading paper and i feel ok about it just want to get some more practic in. me and sharon have talked about my speaking and listening exam.* Well done on completing the practice paper. 18/30 (PM 20). We'll work on different types of language - the term emotive language caught you out so you missed out on 4 marks in this question. We'll also look at compare and contrast although you did pick up 2 points in this question, you lost 2. I think you lost your other marks when you didn't read the questions carefully. This is the first level 2 practice you did so it was a great first attempt. Don't forget to complete the practice activities you took home so I can mark them and we can discuss your answers.

Appendix 7: Soft Skills RAG rating tool

Soft Skills	Name:				
	Beginning	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Secure**	
Attendance	Does not attend all sessions	Occasionally attends all sessions	Usually attends all sessions	Rarely misses a session	
Time Keeping	Does not arrive to sessions on time	Occasionally arrives to sessions on time	Usually arrives to sessions on time	Rarely arrives late to sessions	
Confidence/Self Esteem *(Score out of 10)	Confidence and self esteem is poor (?)	Confidence and self esteem is improving (?)	Confidence and self esteem has improved (?)	Has confidence and good self esteem	
Attitude to learning	Has a poor attitude to learning	Attitude to learning is improving (?)	Attitude to learning has improved (?)	Has a positive attitude to learning	
Behaviour in sessions	Always behaves inappropriately in sessions	Often behaves inappropriately in sessions	Occasionally behaves inappropriately in sessions	Behaves appropriately in sessions	
Attitude towards others *(staff/peers)	Has a poor attitude towards others	Attitude towards others is improving (?)	Attitude towards others has improved (?)	Has a positive attitude towards others	
Consideration of others	Has no consideration for others	Occasionally considers others	Usually considers others	Has consideration for others	
Completing work set	Does not complete work set	Occasionally completes work set	Usually completes work set	Completes all work set	
Motivation	Has no motivation	Is occasionally motivated	Is usually motivated	Has motivation	
Respect for others (staff)	Does not show respect	Occasionally shows respect	Usually shows respect	Is respectful	
Respect for others (peers)	Does not show respect	Occasionally shows respect	Usually shows respect	Is respectful	

	Beginning	Emerging	Developing	Secure	
Independent learning	Does not work independently	Occasionally works independently	Often works independently	Can work independently	
Following instructions	Does not follow instructions	Occasionally follows instructions	Usually follows instructions	Always follows instructions	
	Beginning	**Emerging**	**Developing**	**Secure**	
Communication with others	Does not communicate with others	Occasionally communicates with others	Usually communicates with others	Communicates well with others at all times	
Team Work	Does not work as part of a team	Occasionally works as part of a team	Usually works as part of a team	Always contributes to working as part of a team	
Listening skills	Does not listen to others	Occasionally listens to others	Usually listens to others	Has good listening skills	
Appropriate use of language	Frequently uses inappropriate language	Often uses inappropriate language	Occasionally uses inappropriate language	Uses language appropriately	
Use of social media	Always uses social media during sessions	Often uses social media during sessions	Occasionally uses social media during sessions	Rarely uses social media during sessions	
Use of mobile phone	Always uses mobile phone during sessions	Often uses mobile phone during sessions	Occasionally uses mobile phone during sessions	Rarely uses mobile phone in sessions	
Alcohol	Uses alcohol daily	Uses alcohol weekly	Uses alcohol in social situations (weekends/with peers)	Does not use alcohol	
Drugs	Uses drugs daily	Uses drugs weekly	Uses drugs in social situations (weekends/with peers)	Does not use drugs	

Appendix 8: Learner case studies
Student 1 - G

G had previously not sat any exams during year 11 due to anxiety linked to poor experiences whilst at school. I teach G in my Employability and Personal Development class and the difference in her this year is remarkable. G has gone from not wanting to work in a group to happily sharing ideas and feedback with peers which I have encouraged as part of my work on the project. We have used photographs taken during the sessions to evidence team working communication and listening skills. This has really boosted confidence levels for her to actually have visual evidence of herself taking such an active part in the session. A weekly quiz on a range of topics has allowed students to "take over the lesson", marking each other's work and giving feedback. During termly reviews I have used these as a tool to show progression on the course along with our "soft skills" colour coded document Red Amber Yellow and Green.

Learners shown collaborating and supporting each other

Student 2 - A

A is a Foundation Learner who also joined us on the Routes Programme in September 2021. A did not have a previous qualification for maths but has GCSE English grade 4. I teach A for Employability and Personal Development. A had low confidence, although academically capable really struggled to believe in herself to pass her maths to allow her to progress on to a career in Childcare. Using the assessment and feedback tools as for case study 1, A has grown in confidence in her own ability. She now has a work placement at a children's nursery and has been offered the chance of an apprenticeship and as part of this has also been asked to plan an activity for the children to do. I think the work we have been doing for the project has allowed her to have the courage to try out a task with the children as she has seen herself giving feedback and helping peers during sessions with visual evidence to prove it, not just verbal feedback from me.

Learners from York Learning's 16-19 provision working together on creative tasks to support Employability skills

Student 3 - P

P started a Functional Skills programme with York Learning in September 2021. The last time she studied English was at school, 28 years ago. She says she found school okay, but some areas of English were tricky for her and she achieved an E grade in English. She has returned to learning to improve her GCSE grades in both English and maths and help her get a better job.

P has a good standard of writing and excellent spelling. Sometimes it takes her a while to get the hang of what a task requires. She can struggle to get going and to think of ideas to include in her writing.

Before the project started, P felt less confident about writing longer and more complex sentences. Since the project, P says that she feels "*a lot happier and more confident, but feel I still need a bit of practice.*"

Activities that worked well for her were the homework writing tasks. She says that doing it at home made it easier. P does tend to produce her best work at home, perhaps because she can tackle it at her own pace. One classroom activity that left her feeling confused was adding information to a sentence to make it longer.

There has been a definite improvement in the range of conjunctions that P uses. She also more confidently uses them at the start of sentences, instead of just in the middle. Her next target is to work on using commas in her complex sentences.

<u>Before the project</u>

Finally after a long wait it was time for me to go to the theatre to meet my babies, I was greeted by my anaesthetist who then proceeded to start preparing to give me a spinal injection so i didn't feel anything. I was now ready after asking if I was ok. They proceeded to bring my babies into the world- First was Jxxx followed by Axxx they were both healthy and perfect.

<u>After the project</u>

Closing it would cause upset to the community as people will be left to play at home or cause trouble and problems while playing on the streets.

It will also affect not just children's mental health but adults too because they will have nowhere to go so this is why they should remain in place. Although it takes a lot of maintenance and money, it would be worth it by all the different people that will visit it.

I hope you take my points into account and I look forward to hearing from you.

Student 4 – S

S is in her third year of a Functional Skills programme with York Learning. She completed Level 1 in July 2021 after two years disrupted by Covid-19. She expects to take two years to complete Level 2.

Although S does not have any diagnosed learning conditions it often takes a while for her to learn concepts and terminology can be a barrier. She struggles with spelling and controlling her sentences with full stops – either using too few, or too many. She loves to write stories and can write quickly, at great length, when she is enthusiastic about a topic. S has four children with SEN and she experiences anxiety. Both of these things can affect her attendance.

S says that she does not feel confident in her punctuation, spelling and grammar. She is nervous about writing in a range of sentences, feeling more confident about some than others.

Since starting the action research project, S reports feeling "*a bit more confident*" about writing sentences and that it's work-in-progress. One activity that worked well for her was the whole lesson we spent on using because, but, so and although. She felt confused about the "*I walked up the stairs*" activity where we added extra information to a short sentence to make it more effective.

The focus on conjunctions has enabled S to make a significant improvement in using a range of conjunctions and, at the same time, full stops. This is a huge step forward for her.

<u>Before the project</u>

My idea is to have a family fun day and maybe try and get somebody famous to declare the fun day open by cutting a red ribbon. Maybe we could get a famous band or singer to come .We could have stalls sell things, We could have a raffle ask for donations from local business . Hire a bouncy castle for the kids to play on they can bounce away till there heart content. Maybe we could ask if the fire brigade could come. Kids would love to sit in a big red engine. Maybe have barbie scrummy hot dogs covered in red sauce and massive juicy big beefy burgers.

<u>After the project</u>

It may only be a playground to you but it means alot more than that to us. It is a place for our kids to play. Many families have children who don't have nice gardens so the park is a place where children can play safely. Most people live near the main road which is dangerous for younger children. Not
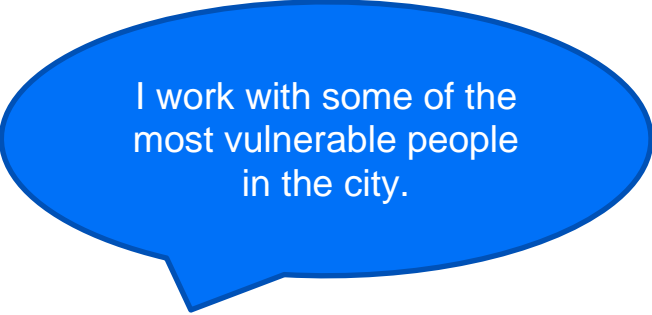
only is it a park but it has a big playing field where kids and the older ones can play football or basketball. we also put activities on for the kids get them off the street keep them out of trouble because in the past it used to be a rough neighbourhood but we turned things around although some kids still cause some problems things are a lot better around here.

Appendix 9: Tutor reflections on Teaching Triangle approach

(1) Alison Thorne

When I was asked to take part in a teaching triangle which was something I had not really heard of before I was hesitant as to what it would mean and also about the amount of time it would take out of an already busy schedule for me.

For me sharing ideas with other tutors has been such a positive experience and working with people I didn't really know before has been really good

I work with some of the most vulnerable people in the city.

I work with some of the most vulnerable young people in the city so lots of issues around mental health self-confidence and anxiety. I teach Employability Skills and Personal Development to an age range of 16-19. I am also one of the Programme Managers and part of my role for this is looking at ways we can improve the teaching and learning experience. I feel working in a triangle has supported this really well.

During sessions I have encouraged the learners to "*take charge*". This has been maybe taking the lead in our weekly quiz giving feedback to others and supporting each other during tasks that are either practical or written. The difference this has made has been tremendous they have really gelled together and there is a real sense of inclusion within the group. I felt it was a bit of a gamble as it could have gone either way with people being over critical or hurtful but I felt confident to try it out and see what would happen. We have used photos as an assessment and feedback tool to illustrate group interaction and this has given the learners a real confidence boost when they see themselves not only completing a task but helping and supporting each other. I feel they see the review process as more meaningful and understand why it is so important to have feedback but also that they themselves are capable of facilitating this.

One of the main barriers to learning for us is very low aspirations for life and not seeing themselves ever being able to achieve or progress in the work place. I feel the work I have done in my triangle has given me more confidence to come out of my comfort zone try other assessment and feedback methods resulting in this cascading to the learners promoting self-esteem and wellbeing.

It would have been good to see more of each other working in our individual settings but I still think what we have taken from the experience has been so positive and more than makes up for the time spent. I feel it is so important to take time for yourself when you are constantly supporting others in your roles whatever they are and working on something like this really promotes this.
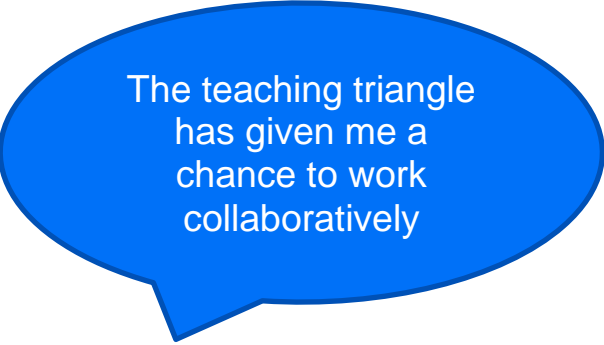
2) Sharon Hutchinson

I've really enjoyed having the opportunity of working with two of my colleagues on this project. Having the time and opportunity to develop and discuss different approaches to giving learner feedback and how feedback is recorded, in an encouraging and 'safe' environment has been both enjoyable and rewarding. On a personal level, I've developed a new learning log/ILP which I'm using with a new course I'm running and I'm currently sharing it with other English and maths tutors and managers, for feedback, with a view of using this document from September in place of the old ILP.

A negative, and probably the only negative I found, was/is working to the timescales required by the

OTLA project, which has been frustrating at times. Having said that, and on reflection, maybe the timescales helped to me to focus more on the issue as it had to become a priority and not wanting to let down my colleagues I had to get on.

As tutors, we all work in different locations so normally we rarely see each other due to the demands of our individual roles. We work very independently, so we can become quite insular and lock-down, with its ramifications, has probably exacerbated this situation. The teaching triangle has given me the opportunity to work collaboratively with two other tutors which has helped me on both a professional and personal level so I'm keen to be involved in another teaching triangle, in the future.
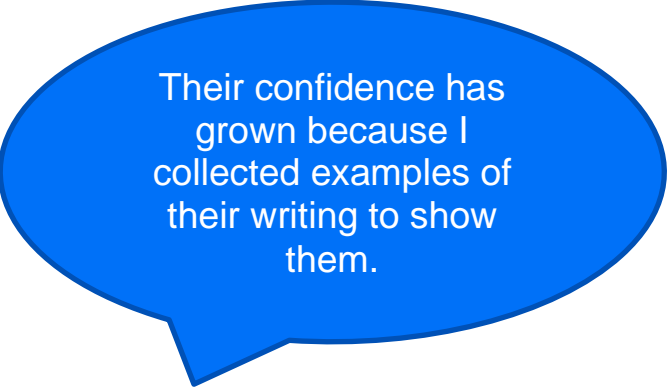
> The teaching triangle has given me a chance to work collaboratively

3) Claire Wilton

The teaching triangle gave me an opportunity to explore an area of teaching which has been bugging me ever since the 2019 update of the Functional Skills specification: complex sentences. My learners are adults who didn't get GCSEs at school, and who often had a negative experience of learning as teenagers. Many of them have learning conditions such as autism, dyslexia and ADHD; sometimes undiagnosed. Their confidence is low and they feel excluded by jargon like '*subordinate clause'* and '*fronted adverbial'*. I really needed to figure out how to support them to write better sentences without drowning them in terminology.

I didn't actually start off looking at this topic, but the colleagues in my teaching triangle – as well as my mentor and the OTLA 8 team - empowered me to change my initial focus and choose something that would have more impact on my teaching. I love the fact that in a teaching triangle you choose what you want to investigate, knowing your learners and their challenges. Nobody imposes an improvement on you, as they might do through a formal observation.

The project gave me the time and the justification to try out new activities, read around the topic and steal ideas from other adult education providers in different cities. I found that being in a supportive triangle of colleagues is a great way of keeping focused and not letting your research slide.

> Their confidence has grown because I collected examples of their writing to show them.

Learners have responded well to most of the activities I tried out, and I know this because action research encourages you to involve learners from the start and seek their honest feedback. I have seen an improvement in learners' use of conjunctions and sentence openers. Their confidence has grown because I have collected examples of their writing to show them how it has improved. They have also told me that they found some activities confusing, so I can go back and improve those for next year.

One of the ideas of the teaching triangle is to observe each other's sessions. The three of us didn't manage that fully because of timetable clashes and I think we would have gained even more if we had. I also think I would have had better results if I had worked on the same topic for the full length

of the project. Ideally I would have refined the less successful activities and tried them again with the same group.

I wouldn't hesitate to get involved in a teaching triangle again. It can be time consuming, but the rewards – for my development as a tutor as well as for the learners - more than justify it.

Thankyou

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