Southport College: How to Embedded Numeracy within a Vocational Course

Point of departure

The project has enabled us to embed numeracy within a unit of the Gas level 2 programme and introduce other members of the Gas teaching team to the embedding process. The success of the students has meant that we have moved nearer to achieving the Skills for Life target set by the LSC and have demonstrated a capacity to improve to inform the College Self Assessment Report.

What we did

We obtained Senior Management buy-in along with the Head of Faculty. Group timetables were checked to see what provision had been made for numeracy within the vocational programmes they were on. The Gas curriculum leader worked alongside the Skills for Life curriculum leader and a weekly planning and development meeting schedule was set up with brief interim reports being submitted to the Head of Faculty. A student representative was involved throughout the process of planning the sessions. The sessions were delivered jointly by the Skills for Life and vocational tutors.

A staff and a student evaluation was undertaken to capture views at the end and this information enabled the project to be evaluated.

What we learnt

Involve staff and students all through the project and ensure there is buy-in from Senior Management and the Head of Faculty. Consider staff timetabling issues when planning joint delivery of sessions and evaluate the process by obtaining staff and student feedback. Celebrating the successful outcomes with both staff and learners was well received. Don't look for numeracy in the vocational units when it isn't there and remember the Exams department need time to organise test entries and ensure dates selected by learners are available. Start with a small cohort in the pilot stage to identify and put right any flaws in the process.

Next steps

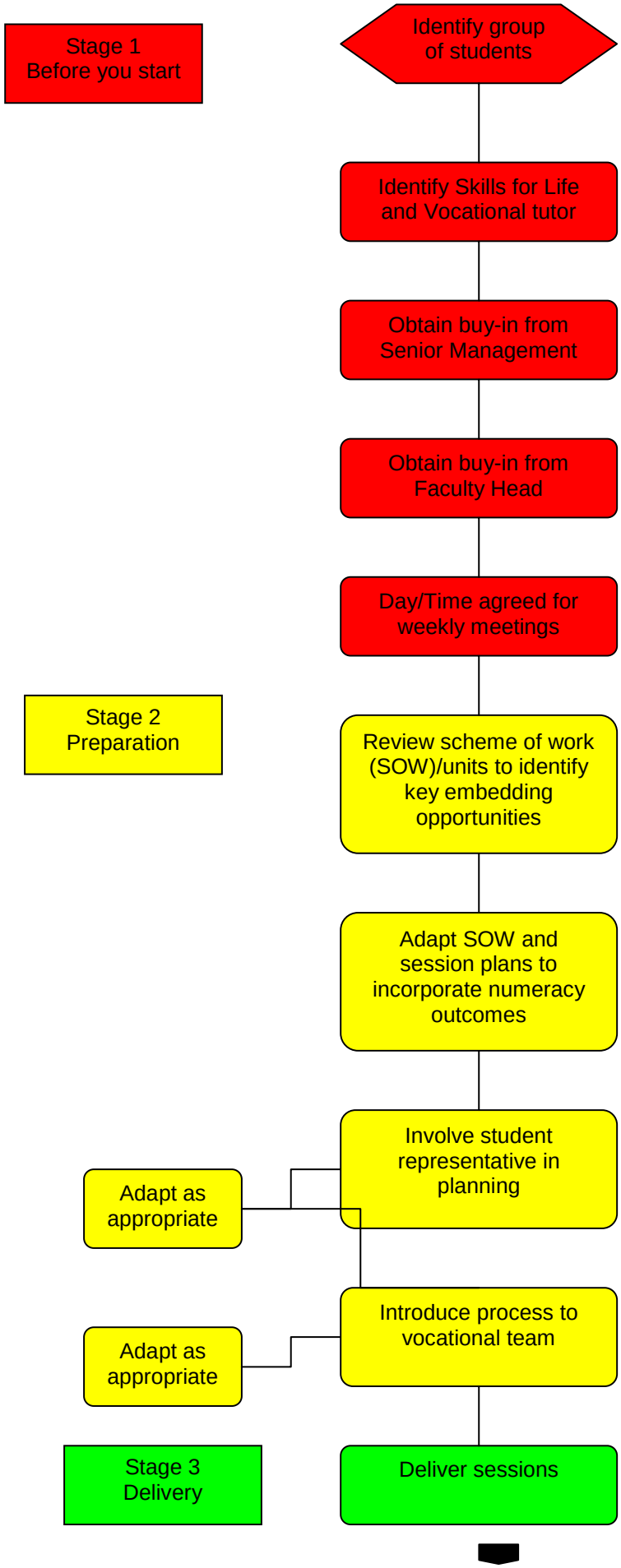
We plan to use the developed model of delivery to roll out across the rest of the Gas groups for this academic year and plan to roll out the model to the rest of the Faculty in the forthcoming academic year.

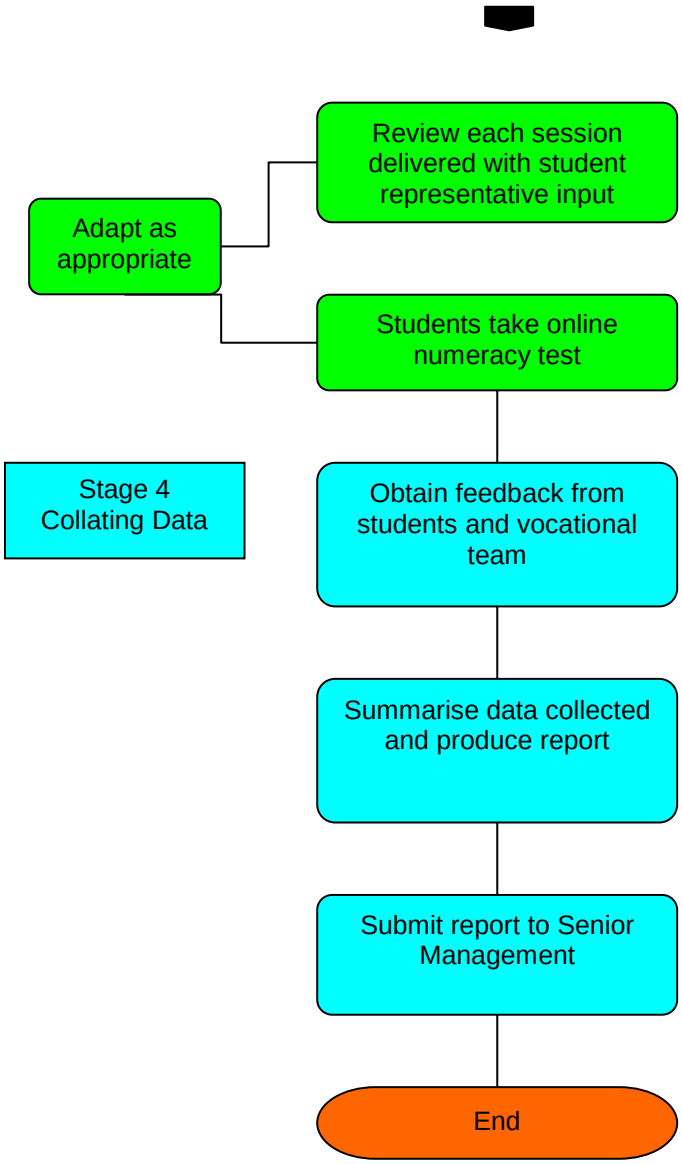
This resource has been produced as a result of a grant awarded by LSIS. The grant was made available through the Skills for Life Support Programme in 2010. The resource has been developed by (managers and) practitioners. The contents should not be compared with commercially produced resources, although in many cases it may have comparable or better learning outcomes.

EMBEDDING NUMERACY WITHIN A VOCATIONAL COURSE (FLOWCHART AND GUIDANCE NOTES)

Skills for Life Department,
Southport College
March 2010

FLOWCHART – A PROCESS FOR EMBEDDING SFL




Review each session delivered with student representative input
Adapt as appropriate
Students take online numeracy test
Stage 4 Collating Data
Obtain feedback from students and vocational team
Summarise data collected and produce report
Submit report to Senior Management
End

Guidelines for Flowchart

The rationale behind the project was to provide the opportunity to study adult numeracy to students who otherwise, due to the intense nature of their vocational programme and the limited time they were in College, would be unable to access Skills for Life within their vocational programme.

Whilst the project was based on a mature Gas NVQ 2 group who attend College two days per week, the process can be adapted to suit other groups of vocational students. The process is also relevant for the embedding of functional skills within 14-19 programmes as well as adult provision.

Stage 1
Before you start

- Identify students who have not had the opportunity to study adult numeracy within their programme.
- Involve staff who are positive about embedding, proactive within their area and also respected by the vocational team of tutors.
- Obtain senior management buy-in by linking to equality of opportunity, meeting student needs, improved success rates within vocational programme, contribution to LSC skills for life targets, staff development, increased funding allocation and indications within the SAR to show capacity to improve.
- Buy-in is also needed from the Head of Faculty with similar benefits as above and their involvement in identifying a day/time when the identified tutors can be released and cover put in place for any teaching commitments during the times allocated.
- Make sure that there are set dates and times agreed and enter these dates/times into diaries so there is consistency and no interruptions.

Stage 2
Preparation

- Work together to identify the vocational units most suited to numeracy and don't try to find numeracy when it isn't there!
- When adapting the session plans, take into account that part of the sessions will be taught together so ensure that the numeracy part always falls at the same time of day otherwise this can create timetabling problems.
- Identify a student representative who has the 'ear' of the group who should be involved in the process. This is a key element to getting student buy-in as the representative can help to remove/reduce any barriers to numeracy and also help with the design and adaption of the programme to meet the students' needs.
- The Skills for Life specialist should support the vocational tutor by attending the vocational team meetings to explain the process to the rest of the team. This is only to keep them informed initially and take on board any of their suggestions and then feed back to them at the next meting of how the session went following their suggestions.

Stage 3 Delivery

- Both the vocational tutor and the Skills for Life specialist should be involved in the delivery, with the vocational tutor in charge of the session and calling on the Skills for Life specialist at the identified times on the session plan. The Skills for Life tutor will need to obtain a basic knowledge of what is involved in the vocational session regarding terms used and link these terms to the numeracy being delivered and the terms likely to be seen within numeracy tests.
- Always involve the student representative to find out his/the group's view of what was good and what could be improved. These comments should then influence the next session planned.
- Negotiate with the students the best time of day for them to take the test but do remember there are others in the College also taking tests so plan ahead to make sure you can enter them appropriately.

Stage 4 Collating Data

- The evaluation forms used in the project are included in this document and can be adapted to suit the group and the vocational team.

- When summarising the data collected include age, gender, ethnicity and level of the group – which is information that can be obtained from the College management information system.

- Use any feedback from the students and staff to revise/amend the process and let them know their views have influenced what is to be done next time.

- Celebrate the students' success in a way appropriate to the College and the student group!

- Submit a report of the project to Senior Management including recommendations/proposals for roll-out to other areas both within the Faculty (a larger pilot) with the aim to roll out across College after that.

STUDENT EVALUATION

COURSE TITLE _____

DATE _____

Please score all statements using a number between 1 and 10 (1 being low and 10 high)

My maths skills before the programme	
My confidence in answering maths problems before the programme	
The likelihood of enrolling on a maths class prior to the programme	
My maths skills at the end of the programme	
My confidence in answering maths problems after the programme	
The maths helped me with my vocational programme	
My involvement with deciding the maths taught during the sessions	
There was sufficient time given to cover the key topics	

Write down what you found most useful about the maths on this course

Write down what you believe could be improved

Thank you for taking part in this survey. Your input in providing feedback is greatly appreciated.

STAFF EVALUATION

COURSE TITLE _____

DATE _____

Please score all statements using a number between 1 and 10 (1 being low and 10 high)

My knowledge of embedding before the programme	
My confidence in embedding maths before the programme	
I knew who to contact about embedding before the programme	
My knowledge of embedding now	
My confidence in embedding maths now	
I know who to contact about embedding maths into my units now	
My involvement with the embedding/delivery process	

Comment on what you have found most useful about the embedding of maths into the programme

Comments on how the delivery of maths on this programme could be improved

Thank you for taking part in this survey. Your input in providing feedback is greatly appreciated.