

College Improvement (CIPs) Programme

City of Sunderland College



Project Synopsis

This project focused upon the improvement of teaching and learning at an institutional level. Through the use of strategic College Improvement Partners, the 'Learning Framework'- was introduced into the organisation, which had previously been shown to significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning. At the heart of the approach is a threefold strategy; a hybrid coaching intervention to address and improve teaching underperformance, deployment of the Framework's Learning Cycle which demonstrates a common view of learning and development of robust monitoring via Governance.

Project Aims

- 1) To support the Principal and Governing Board to identify key improvement strategies.
- 2) To support the Principal and Governors in monitoring key improvement strategies and their implementation throughout the year.
- 3) To support the Principal and Senior Management Team in developing and implementing a clear, concise message for improvements to all staff.
- 4) To provide both support and challenge to the Principal and Board of Governors in the execution of their responsibilities for securing improvements in standards.
- 5) To work with each college to improve their performance through improved success rates.
- 6) To support improvements in teaching and learning based upon evidence-based practice.
- 7) To focus upon improving teaching and learning as a core college activity.
- 8) To support the college in developing improvements in lesson planning, curriculum delivery, questioning techniques, feedback techniques and a range of other improvement activities.

Project Delivery

The CIP approach is one of heavily influenced by coaching theory and evidence based practice. The format is comprised of three stages:

- 1) Initial engagement: here the client is aided by CIP into identifying and prioritising issues which the project will address. It is important that this is steered by the CIP so that all issues are evidence based; performance data, student feedback, observation data, external reports, etc can all be used to assist this process. Rather than 'telling' the client what is wrong, common in many consultancy models, the CIP uses these analyses jointly and collaboratively in order to increase the client's involvement within and investment into the change process. This differs again from more traditional consultancy models which can lead to a 'passive client' model which may result in little long term impact. It is crucial that quantitative evidence is identified at this stage which will be used to predict impact, rather than a post hoc search for data which justifies the intervention. In this project, the following data was used as quantitative predictive evidence:
 - improvements in success rates,
 - improvement in lesson observation grades,
 - reduction in variation across groups

- increase in completion of Professional Development Review process

Additional tangible impact evidence included:

- Development of Governance monitoring via new committee structures
- Monitoring metrics to be established
- Training of Advanced Teachers in the hybrid coaching model
- Launch of the Learning Framework

2) 'Top-down and bottom up' processes of change:

Here one CIP (a College Principal) worked at strategic level, with the client college Principal, the Chair of Governors and the College Governing body. Five separate whole day sessions were used to engage, challenge and support Governors in designing and implementing scrutiny mechanisms, including key performance indicators, and committee structures. This element concluded with the CIP and her Chair of Governors leading a whole day workshop testing and honing the new structure. This was a very powerful learning experience and very positively evaluated by the client college.

The second element of the project, the development of teaching and learning was initiated with a three day residential development programme in which previously selected Advanced Teachers underwent training in coaching and the learning framework. Separate training was developed for middle managers in identifying impact assessments of any coaching interventions.

3) Longitudinal support and challenge:

A key characteristic of this element is the ongoing monitoring visits (2) and feedback derived from these. This served to preserve the momentum of the year-long project and embedded the processes into the culture of the client college.

The project developed according to plan which was due to the rigorous and detailed planning at the beginning of the initial engagement phase. There is little doubt that the top-down and bottom up approach has great leverage in inculcating and supporting change. Governors and Strategic Leaders are supported in developing crucial insights into 'what works and how to know when it is working', whilst operationally, managers and practitioners are given practical tools and strategies to instigate and maintain changes in the quality of teaching and learning.

Lessons learned from this project include the confirmation of the importance in focusing upon the identification of measurable predictor evidence of impact during the initial engagement. It is imperative that this phase fully explores the three key questions: what is the change we wish to see? why is this change needed? and what evidence will we use to identify the change has taken place?

Project Outcomes

The initial engagement identified four quantitative and four qualitative impact measures:

- Quantitative:
 - improvements in success rates,
 - improvement in lesson observation grades,
 - reduction in variation across groups
 - increase in completion of Professional Development Review process
- Qualitative:
 - Development of Governance monitoring via new committee structures
 - Monitoring metrics to be established
 - Training of Advanced Teachers in the hybrid coaching model
 - Launch of the Learning Framework
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Table 1 below illustrates the impact of the project upon the predicted quantitative impact measures.

Table 1

Measure	Impact
Success Rate (overall)	Increase of 10% points from 78% in 2009-10 to 88%.
Observation grade	Improvement of 7% points from 86% to 93% (good or better)
Variation across groups	Reduction of 7% points in success variance between 16-18 and 19+ from 2009-10 base Reduction of 1% point variance in success between White and BME groups of learners on 2009-10 base.
Professional development review	Completion rates of professional review increased by 2% points.

Table 2 below illustrates the impact of the project upon the more quantitative aspects of evidence.

Table 2

Measure	Impact
Development of Governance monitoring via new committee structures	Curriculum and Quality Committee established with a clear remit of evidence to review.
Monitoring metrics to be established	Success rates, percentage of high grades, points per entry, observation grades, and value added scores were established as key performance indicators.
Training of Advanced Teachers in the hybrid coaching model	Cohort of six staff were fully trained and supported. Additional cohort of line managers shadowed the training.
Launch of the Learning Framework	Framework launched officially and on schedule.

Sharing of Project Findings

The outcomes for this project will be disseminated via the client college's network of Midland College contacts. The CIP will disseminate via the 157 Group of Colleges as well as AOC. Within the college of the CIP, there is a peer reviewed journal; 'Praxis', which has a very wide readership within the GFE sector. The CIP and her team are also working currently with three other GFE colleges, within the North East, the Midlands and South East England. The team are also sharing the results of this and other (non-funded projects) with the Teaching and Learning Lead Co-ordinator of LSIS.