# A New Way of Working

## Jo Byrne

### The Uncomfortable Truth

1. Nationally, 27% of resit learners in North Devon have a SEN characteristic or are identified as disadvantaged

2. A learners is twice as likely to fail to make progress in FE as opposed to school

3. 100% of learners, employers and parents view a grade 3 in GCSE as a fail

4. Failure at GCSE English in KS4 has a profound impact on the learning behaviours of resit learners

This research project discusses and evaluates the impact of embedding study skills and coaching into the teaching of GCSE English & maths, in particular the organising, prioritising and developing of independent learning strategies. Many colleges are witnessing a widening attainment gap for vulnerable learners; learners who have low prior attainment and/or restricted social mobility. According to the Office For Students (2018), students who are eligible for free school meals, achieve significantly worse outcomes at GCSE.

The national pass rate for English GCSE resit in 2019 was 30% . This statistic represents learners on study programmes aged between 16-19. The following questions led to the creation of the project:

'Is our current delivery model for GCSE English addressing areas of true pedagogical weakness'? 'What are the psychological and emotional impacts of failure'?

### Key Objectives
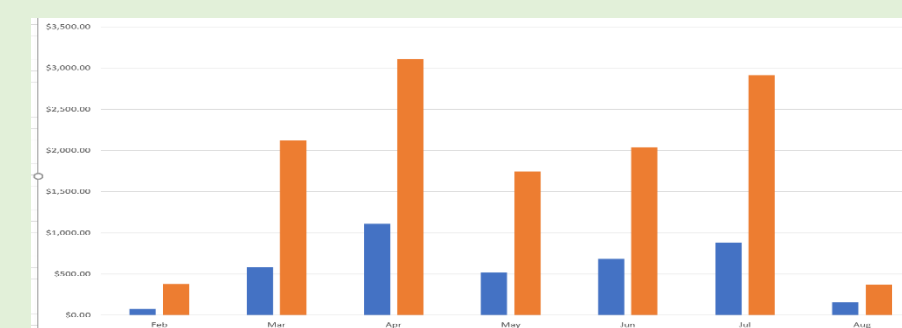
- To challenge the acceptance of an attainment gap that exists for vulnerable learners by modelling a new mode of delivery
- To evaluate whether coaching and the discussion of fear, disappointment and purpose can help students to re engage with learning
- To evaluate whether implementing study skills and VESPA strategies can improve learners outcomes across the cohort.

### Methodology

A model focussing on study skills and coaching is being trialled at a college in North Devon. This curriculum model has been influenced by the work of Oakes,S and Griffiths, M.(2018), Sherrington, T (2019) and Coffiield, F (2009) who all advocate the use of metacognitive strategies to improve outcomes. The model has been trialled across the entire GCSE English cohort of learners enrolled on vocational courses (levels 1-3).

Metacognitive learning has been promoted through the implementation of the VESPA model (Oakes and Griffiths, 2018). During this academic year (2019/2020) in North Devon, we have replaced a session of teaching with a session on VESPA strategies and coaching delivered by an instructor with a history of THRIVE teaching and learning assistant support

To gauge the effectiveness of the model, the following key indicators are being analysed:
1. Attendance
2. Attitudes towards English & maths
3. Assessment outcomes
4. Data from learner surveys, learner interviews and college data

Outcomes are measured against prior attainment to determine whether current levels of study influence learner perception and achievement. From these data sets case studies illustrating learners' progress have been generated.

A separate scheme of work was produced for the VESPA and coaching sessions that would run concurrently with GCSE English teaching. Students were aware that the content and structure of these lesson would differ from traditional English lesson due to the expected outcomes. The lessons allowed for more discussion and a greater rapport between teacher and learners.

Capturing how students feel about learning?

### Emerging Findings

Learning is an emotional and cognitive process, 'Let's not forget that the little emotions are the great captains of our minds' Vincent Van Gough

**Qualitative Findings**

At times, it does feel that the same negativity amongst learners exists but in actual fact when a learner states, 'I've had enough now' this can be interpreted as a sign of trust.

From the learner interviews, we also see progress in the ability of learners to self-identify areas that are challenging. One student who has autism commented:

'My teacher knows when I'm struggling with difficult words and will make things more simple when I feel overwhelmed.'

The learner also commented that he is no longer, 'afraid of English.'

We have also seen some improvements in effort. A simple method in achieving this outcome is consistency and clarity in expectation.

**Quantitative Findings**

Prior to lockdown due to Covid 19, attendance at English VESPA sessions was 10% above the college average.

However, following the lockdown and the change of provision to online delivery, engagement has fallen.

Key questions- How significant is the teacher's character and manner to the success of the teaching session?

The emoji test has delivered interested data to date
1. The least popular emoji is Proud
2. The most popular is Frustrated
3. Students are twice as likely to use a Frustrated emoji in an English lesson compared to a VESPA/Study skills session.

### Conclusions & Recommendations

1. Previously, we had assumed that supporting learners meant awarding more hours to core teaching, the findings from this project suggest there is merit in other approaches.

2. We now understand that learning will only be effective when the student is open to learning, feels safe and secure in the learning environment, can be empowered through self-regulation and truly sees the importance of learning.

3. The project has also shown us that we can't offer the same delivery pattern to Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 learners and expect the same progress. We believe that some cohorts will benefit from a greater degree of support with systems and practice than others

Recommended Research

1. How can we build strong teacher/student rapport and trust when delivering online GCSE English

Key Literature

- Plevin. R (2019). *Classroom Management Success*. Raft Media.
- Melby-Lervåg, M., & Hulme, C. (2013). *Is working memory training effective? A meta-analytic review*. Developmental Psychology, 49 2, 270-91.
- Oakes, S. and Griffin, M. (2019) *VESPA Mindset Workbook: 40 Activities for FE Students That Transform Commitment, Motivation and Productivity*. Crown House Publishing

Term 1:
| Weeks 1&2 Study Skills/ Coaching/ initial assessment | Week 3 -9 Teaching and work on vision | Weeks 10 &11 assessment week, feedback & parents evenings. Intense teaching on gaps |

Term 2:
| Week 1 Coaching week 1 - vision focus on progression | Weeks 2-9 Teaching. Coaching focus on EFFORT | Weeks 10-11 Assessment week, feedback & parents evenings |

Term 3:
| Week1 Teaching & coaching focus on systems and practice | Week 2-5 Teaching | Weeks 5-10 Revision |

The VESPA Model

**Vision** — Having clear goals and an actionable plan on how to achieve them

**Attitude** — Responding constructively to setbacks

**Effort** — Number of hours of independent study

**Systems** — Organising learning resources and time

**Practice** — Developing and practising study skills

Neutral | Happy | Frustrated
Bored | Proud | Surprised
Worried | Disappointed | If we collected all

BIDMAS Advanced | Understanding