

Collaboration between functional skills specialists and vocational specialists

Barking and Dagenham College



About us

Barking & Dagenham College is a further education college offering academic and vocational courses to young people and adults. The college is based in Rush Green, Romford, East London. We have a very wide range of learners; currently there is a particular emphasis on working with learners on apprenticeship programmes

Our challenges

The college has a well-organised programme for English, maths and ESOL, but the introduction of functional skills has raised new challenges, especially in the provision of vocational programmes.

The college has recruited a large team of functional English and maths specialists and wants to use the expertise of these staff to best advantage. Initially it was identified that the delivery model of stand-alone functional skills sessions was hindering collaboration between vocational tutors and functional skills tutors. We hoped the improvement project would identify ways in which the two sets of staff could offer each other mutual support and share expertise.

The learners on vocational courses were unclear and suspicious of the need to complete functional skills assessments and saw no gain in doing the additional work. By showing the connections between functional skills and vocational specialisms it was hoped to improve learners' motivation and achievement.

Our priorities:

- Developing innovative maths programmes to meet learners' needs
- Embedding maths into vocational programmes
- Whole organisation approaches to embedding maths and English
- Embedding functional skills in curriculum delivery.

Supported provider

Barking and Dagenham College:

- Tinyan Akin-Omoyajowo
Curriculum Team
Leader, Functional Skills
and Adult Basic Skills

Improvement partner

Learning Unlimited:

- David Kaye, Teacher
Trainer, Numeracy CPD

Outcomes so far

The college is supporting the move to integrate and embed functional skills into vocational programmes, including apprenticeships, in a variety of ways. This has included participation in a number of innovative projects, including a successful action research project on embedding maths and English. See the link below.

There has been progress in functional skills staff contextualising their planning in line with vocational schemes of work. The maths and English specialists have also developed a greater awareness of how they can work more collaboratively. During the action research project they have explored the best ways to include maths and English specialists in vocational training sessions.

See our video on the Excellence Gateway:

[Functional skills: how to engage young people and help reverse the trend of disengagement and non-attendance in English and maths](#)

“The fundamental issue is about how to develop learners’ skills in literacy and numeracy, whatever is the current favoured method of assessment. This is particularly the case where there is an emphasis on young adults.”

David Kaye, Learning Unlimited, Improvement Partner