

Feedback Case Study



EXPLICIT TEACHING AND FEEDBACK

SOUTH HALLS HEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL
MANDURAH, WA



- 🌀 PROVINCIAL
- 🌀 GOVERNMENT
- 🌀 PRIMARY K-6
- 🌀 ICSEA 1016
- 🌀 31 TEACHERS
- 🌀 600 STUDENTS
- 🌀 LBOTE 8%
- 🌀 INDIGENOUS STUDENTS 4%

(Accessed from MySchool - March 2017)

Identifying a need

South Halls Head Primary School opened in 2008. In 2011 the leadership team became concerned with the school's NAPLAN results, as 30% of students were falling below the national minimum standard in NAPLAN reading and numeracy. To raise student outcomes, it determined it needed:

- a consistent pedagogical approach across the school
- to provide more support around basic skills and knowledge
- to agree its own benchmarks for minimum student performance.

The school leadership team explored a range of options and identified that 'explicit teaching' offered the best approach to meet the needs of the school population. A critical component of this method is providing feedback to students to progress their learning, as well as using that information to adjust teaching to meet student needs.

“ We’ve become so focused in our teaching;
it’s much easier to give feedback that is specific. ”

Kylie Loney, Teacher

KEY IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES

Building staff capacity through whole of staff professional learning on the explicit teaching approach and feedback practices. Further developing their practice by regularly sharing successes and challenges in grade level team meetings and whole staff meetings.

Viewing and modelling explicit teaching practices, regularly.

Grade level team meetings allow teachers to collaborate with peers and the leadership team.

Using a **slow and steady approach and identifying early successes** through student assessment data kept staff engaged.

A data collection cycle is used to assess student progress and ensure the implementation of explicit teaching and feedback is working as expected. Data is collected on performance against the school's scope and sequence documents at the class, grade and whole school level. This informs forward planning, with teachers working collaboratively in grade level teams to address any identified concerns.

Performance and development plans mean both teachers and education assistants have goals aligned to feedback. Performance and development goals ensure accountability. Performance and development conversations and classroom observations provide opportunities for leaders and peers to provide constructive feedback.

Visiting other schools that are also implementing explicit teaching and feedback allows exposure to different practices and approaches.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. **Identified a need** for a consistent pedagogical approach and to better support students academically.
2. **Explored options** and selected an explicit teaching model with a focus on feedback.
3. **Built capacity** in leaders, teachers and education assistants through professional learning.
4. **Supported implementation** through grade level team meetings and performance and development plans.
5. **Professional learning** on feedback aligned to the evidence base.
6. **Monitoring progress** through data collection, grade level team meetings, staff meetings and performance and development cycles.

Implementation narrative

After selecting explicit teaching as its preferred approach to better support student learning, a small number of staff visited other schools to see explicit teaching in action. These teachers were able to see what the approach looked like in a classroom, informing the planning and approach undertaken within their own school.

All staff, teachers and education assistants, attended a full day professional learning session on explicit teaching run by an external expert. This was complemented by the expert spending a day observing individual teachers in their classrooms and providing feedback to them.

Implementation started incrementally, initially looking at the warm-up phase of explicit teaching until the full model - warm-up, I do, we do, you do and the 'plough back' - was being used across the school in all literacy and numeracy classes. The 'plough back' phase provides an opportunity for the class to reflect on the learning intention, discuss what was learned and determine where to go next.

Learning goals and success criteria are used to ensure students know exactly what they are expected to gain from each lesson.

¹ Explicit instruction involves directly teaching students the content or skill to be learned, using clear and unambiguous language. Teacher modelling and then teacher guidance is followed by scheduled opportunities for practice. Student/teacher interaction is high.

Explicit instruction is also systematic: there is a carefully planned sequence for teaching from simple to complex objectives, starting from the point at which the students are already competent.

Sourced from <http://www.fivefromfive.org.au/explicit-instruction/>

KEY FEEDBACK PRACTICES

Learning goals and success criteria are shared with the students at the beginning of each lesson so they know exactly what is expected. Teachers refer to these when providing feedback and during the 'plough back' session.

Over the shoulder feedback provides timely, critical and point-of-need feedback to students connected to the learning intentions and success criteria.

Building student capacity to understand and use feedback is key. Teachers scaffold and model examples of what feedback is and how it supports student development. Explicitly teaching students about feedback builds their resilience, so they see that it's about improvement, not criticism. Students then understand that feedback helps them progress to the next step.

Self and peer-assessment helps students to review their own and each other's work aligned to the success criteria. Students use rubrics to guide this process.

Focusing on comments enables teachers to ensure there is opportunity within class for verbal and written feedback.

Classroom techniques include:

- using pre and post-tests for units of work
 - showing the expected quality standard by sharing work referenced to the assessment rubric
 - identifying student understanding and progress through questioning and check-in activities, for example, use of mini whiteboards and thumbs up – thumbs down
 - adapting future lessons based on evidence of student understanding and progress.
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After establishing the explicit teaching model, the school leadership team noticed that the feedback being provided required further development. Feedback became the focus for whole-school professional learning which was informed by current research showing the impact quality feedback can have on students. The work of John Hattie and Dylan Wiliam informed the professional learning, where staff explored why feedback is important, what it means for students, the importance of collecting and analysing data to inform feedback, and practical approaches to feedback.

Teachers were supported through the implementation process through whole school and grade level team meetings. The latter offered an opportunity to analyse data, identify strengths and weaknesses in learning, review scope and sequence documents, plan learning sequences and share and develop feedback practices.

Staff received feedback on their practice through observations by school leaders and peers as well as in performance and development conversations. All staff have goals connected to feedback in their performance and development plans, which has increased accountability and has played an important role in the successful implementation of effective feedback practices.

Focusing on effective feedback has changed the teachers' mindsets away from non-specific positive comments to those that help progress student learning.

ENABLING CONDITIONS

A whole school focus on feedback across all classes, teachers and education assistants.

Benchmarks and standard levels for student performance were determined for all grade levels. Benchmarks outline the minimum standard expected of all students and 'standard levels' set higher achievement targets that 50% of students are expected to reach. Teachers review student progress against the benchmarks twice yearly.

An agreed lesson format for literacy and numeracy sessions was introduced.

Scope and sequence documents that detail content to be covered for each year level and which are based on the Australian Curriculum.

Growth culture with all staff open to improving their practice and motivated to provide the best possible learning opportunities for students. They take on critical feedback and review research about what works to guide future teaching and learning practices.

Collaboration where teachers work in grade level teams to review scope and sequence documents, analyse data, review student progress, moderate student work and plan learning sequences.

IMPACT

- NAPLAN results for 2016 showed all students in year three at or above the national minimum standard (NMS) in numeracy and almost all at or above NMS in literacy.
- All year three students in 2016 met the school benchmarks. The need to raise the school based student performance benchmarks are also an indicator of student progress.
- Classroom-based assessments show students are progressing.
- Students are more able to talk about what they are learning and why with teachers and peers.
- Students are better able to identify errors and ways to address them.

“ The students are definitely taking greater ownership of their own learning. ”

Sarah Charles, Teacher

