

Development of the TASC model for G&T students in Drama

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Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

East Barnet School is an 'Outstanding school' with good GCSE grades. The intake covers a range of social groups with a variety of different needs. With the introduction of the PLTS (Personalised Learning and Thinking Skills) into the National Curriculum it is the schools responsibility to provide these opportunities to students. This, coupled with aspects of the school G&T policy, generated the need for improved thinking skills in the classroom. As the G&T Lead teacher and a drama teacher, the natural place to start was in my own lessons.

Who might find this case study useful?

Teachers, Subject leaders and Middle leaders, National Strategy Consultants

Key Points

Point 1

This study examines the development of thinking skills of G&T students in a mixed ability setting.

Point 2

A practical case study of Belle Wallace's TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) with problems and successes.

Who

School and setting

School

East Barnet School

Type of School

Secondary

Type of Setting (if Early Years)

LA maintained school setting

Local authority

Barnet

Region

London

Free school meals

Percentage

Less than 20%

Improving Schools Programme

Contact(s)

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Learners

Year groups

Year 7 (KS3), Year 8 (KS3), Year 9 (KS3)

Gender

Both

Group

Gifted and Talented

Performance

At age-related expectation

Whole school

Yes

Teachers

KS3

Support Staff

KS3

Leadership teams

Subject leaders

Parents / Carers

KS3

Local authority advisers

Secondary

Number of classes

1

No. of adult learners

1

What

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

Drama, Other - see below, Creativity

What main aspect of pupil learning were you trying to improve?

Problem solving, Learning how to learn, Independent learning skills, Using thinking skills

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

The aim for pupil learning was to expand their understanding of metacognition and to allow them to develop thought processes for themselves. For the G&T students, it would allow them to question and learn to justify their own choices using the TASC wheel to aid the process. As a consequence this would hopefully make them much better learners and thinkers in the future.

TASC: Thinking actively in a social context

What were your success criteria?

My success criteria were to produce an effective and engaging TASC lesson and to understand the TASC model in greater depth. This would be measurable in terms of the student response to the model and how their work progressed as well as the production of a scheme of work.

What did you do? What teaching approaches did you use to achieve the intended impact?

Use of thinking skills, Collaborative group work, Other

Describe

Focussing on Belle Wallace's TASC model gave a very structured approach to teaching and learning from the beginning. The wheel was used by the students to initially set criteria for the task and then to help them create an idea for the drama project. The class were put into mixed ability groups with one G&T student in each group to guide the others and give them the opportunity to develop their own idea. Within Wallace's book, 'Teaching Thinking Skills across the Middle Years' she advocates the development of problem solvers to raise self-esteem in children and prepare them for the reality of the working environment. The merits of the TASC model allow for the theories of Bloom's Taxonomy to be applied in a classroom setting and suggest the long-term merits of thinking skills. Wallace applies her technique to a number of subject in the text, although not in an already practical subject such as Drama, which gave a great deal of room for development.

TASC wheel http://www.nace.co.uk/tasc/images/TASC_wheel_800px.jpg

In context http://www.nace.co.uk/tasc/tasc_home.htm

National Curriculum Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/skills/plts/index.aspx>

Related Information

[TASC lesson plan](#)

What did you do? What approaches to supporting professional development (CPD) and learning for adults were used?

Training, Coaching

Describe

During the initial stages of the project, I was teamed with a member of a local primary school who helped to coach me on my TASC lessons. We also organised an INSET twilight session for both schools in order to raise awareness of the TASC model. We later decided that this was too ambitious for the first phase of the project and chose to focus on developing our own understanding of the TASC model before involving others.

Having a colleague apply the same model to a different stage of education was an invaluable experience as we were able to coach each other in difficult aspects.

What CPD materials, research or internal or external expertise have you drawn on?

In order to understand the practical teaching of thinking skills, Bloom's taxonomy was an essential piece of research. The following website gave a breakdown of the different stages and a brief

explanation of the process: www.learningandteaching.info/learning/bloomtax.htm

Clearly the most valuable research was in reading Belle Wallace's 'Teaching Thinking Skills Across the Middle Years' published by David Fulton Publishers. This gave examples for a range of subjects and how the model would work in those lessons. She also discusses the principles behind the TASC wheel and links to a number of other pedagogies.

In our initial INSET we invited the G&T AST for the borough to talk about her experiences of the TASC model in her own school. This was a valuable first hand dialogue that was later used to guide the lessons.

Allen, D. & Towler-Evans, I. 2007. Learning and thinking skills through drama. Online: www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/learning-and-thinking-skills-through-drama-2866
Accessed 26th August 2008

More on the publication Teaching Thinking Skills across the Middle Years can be found at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/thinkingskills/resources/565150>

How were you supported?

External agency

Describe

This project was part of a pilot module for Oxford Brookes University in conjunction with the National Strategy and QCA. We were supported through 3 learning days and via email ultimately producing a 3000 word project.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards and achieve your success criteria?

Observation outcomes, Logs or interviews, Pupils' work

Impact

Impact on pupil learning

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Pupils were able to generate more complex and unique ideas gaining ownership over the work. This was evidenced in their response to climate change as a topic; all groups chose their own topics and one group chose to focus on the recent hurricane considering the impact on a variety of people. All groups had diverse responses to the topic creating the sense of ownership. All students were participating, even the least able and more disruptive students. Pupils were actively identifying what they already knew and comparing this to what they could research and improve upon. Students were able to relate back to the criteria they created using the initial stages of the TASC wheel. The G&T students led the groups in the initial stages and helped to generate ideas.

The learning of the majority of the class was improved in the initial stages, however towards the end

students became less focussed on the task and G&T students became disengaged.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Most students have the capacity for high level thinking and G&T students need to be continuously challenged to maintain their interest. This particular project did not challenge them appropriately and I would need to rethink the focus of the task in order to differentiate more effectively.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

"I thought about different stages of working when looking at the TASC wheel and I'm not sure if we did them before" - Student

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

Pupil progress data

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

Observation outcomes, Logs or interviews, Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

The two students that I chose to observe behaved in different ways. The girl, G1, conversed with the rest of the group and took over organisation, making sure that each student was doing their job. She aided and coerced the less able students to make a contribution, becoming a clear leader and teacher in her group. She led many of the discussions, but also took the time to listen to others. Although she developed good leadership skills, there was no clear evidence that this lesson was extending and challenging her. Her group produced some good work based on the idea of polar ice caps melting where she played a politician. She was able to demonstrate her excellent acting skills and understanding of techniques.

The talented boy, B1, had a very negative response to the task. He was impatient with the rest of the group and clearly did not feel challenged by the task. He had very little response to the questions and his body language separated him from the rest of his group. When participating in whole group discussions, B1 was able to offer considered contributions, but he clearly stated that he preferred acting to sitting down and writing. This was echoed by many students in the class. B1 performed a basic role and did not take the main part in his performance. This was disappointing as he was regularly the strongest member of his group, but did not engage during this scheme of work. The less able students engaged in the work and raised their effort grades and their national curriculum grades by one sub level on average over the course of the half term period. This was mainly because they were thoroughly engaged in the work and wanting to achieve their best so were focused during the devising process and in performance. The more able students maintained their high level of work but did not show evidence of changes their NC levels.

Impact on teaching

What has been the impact on teaching?

The project helped me to analyse Bloom's Taxonomy and the general approach to thinking skills. As a consequence I have made them more explicit in my teaching and have used elements of the TASC model in lessons, although not in that particular structure.

As G&T Lead I have encouraged other staff to extend their knowledge of thinking skills by providing relevant literature and arranging enrichment trips based on thinking skills.

Thoughts you think are relevant to impact on teaching

This project made me more aware of thinking skills techniques and the process that students need to follow in order to gain ownership over their work.

Quotes you think are relevant to impact on teaching

"PLTS - what's that? Oh Thinking skills...!"

Evidence of impact on teaching

Teacher perceptions, Evidence from planning, Evidence from observation and monitoring

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Planning the initial TASC lesson in conjunction with a colleague helped to focus on the TASC model and to define the process.

My colleague from a local primary school observed the initial TASC lesson and we met to evaluate it after. This was an interesting meeting as my colleague was able to observe all students and their response to the gather/organise stage.

In order to analyse the student response I chose to observe two G&T students for whom I recorded their input in each lesson.

Impact on school organisation and school leadership

What has been the impact on school organisation and school leadership?

I have discovered the importance of thinking skills and with the introduction of the PLTS, this has effected the response from the rest of the school. At the beginning of the project the school was heading towards writing a new SDP and therefore it was difficult to choose a focus based on a whole school need. Looking at new government initiatives helped me to anticipate the new areas in the SDP.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on school organisation and school leadership

The link of Bloom's taxonomy to the PLTS should help to lead provision in the classroom. Belle Wallace gives a framework that can be manipulated to fit any lesson.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on school organisation and school leadership

"It sounds interesting, maybe we could use that in PE." - PE Teacher

Evidence of impact on school organisation and school leadership

Thinking skills now have a greater impact in Drama lessons and as G&T Lead Teacher, it is a focus for my working party later this year.

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The essential difference to pupils' learning has been making staff more aware of students thinking and allowing them the freedom to think and develop.

Summary

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

Wallace, B. 2002. Teaching Thinking Skills Across the Middle Years. London: David Fulton Publishers.

PLTS link - <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/skills/plts/index.aspx>

Bloom's Taxonomy www.learningandteaching.info/learning/bloomtax.htm

London Gifted and Talented TASC introduction - <http://www.londongt.org/?page=eTasc>

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Our INSET Session from the Borough G&T Lead and the AST.

Coaching sessions with a colleague from a local primary school

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

Read the Belle Wallace Book thoroughly

Use the London Gifted and Talented forums to ask questions and clarify any issues.

Try to observe TASC in action

If all else fails just try it and learn from experience - but allow the students to lead the lessons and do not force them in one direction.

I would also suggest attempting the project with a G&T group who could be an exemplar group as my G&T students did not engage fully.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

Develop the TASC model as a scheme of work for each year group.

Link with another department and share the good practice.