



## INTRODUCTION

This case study is from one of 15 collaborative projects, across a range of cross-sector partnerships that were commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to support Phase 4 of the Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) programme.

This phase was delivered by touchconsulting and CETTAcademy to evaluate the role of Advanced Practitioners (APs), as defined by [Tyler et al \(2017\)<sup>1</sup>](#). The projects were intended to explore the [functions](#) and [values](#) of the AP role within the partnership's quality improvement priorities.

## WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

The partnership wanted to explore how they could use the role of the AP to address the challenge of increasing learner attendance, achievement and satisfaction when taking GCSE and Functional Skills Maths and English qualifications.

At South Devon College a team of twenty Champions in Maths and English (CHiMEs), who were also vocational tutors, had been newly appointed to deliver contextualised maths and English sessions for one hour per week within their vocational areas. In addition, learners were also expected to attend core GCSE or Functional Skills English and/or Maths sessions, taught separately by designated maths and English staff. The project sought to address how APs could enhance links between these two teams in order to make the learning experience more holistic and purposeful for students.

Bridgwater & Taunton College wanted to explore how the AP role could support vocational tutors within the Construction, Automotive and Engineering (CAE) area to embed specific GCSE English skills within their sessions. As with South Devon College, the aim was to create a whole curriculum approach by upskilling vocational tutors to enable learners to link English skills developed in their vocational subjects to the separate GCSE English sessions they attended.

## WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The project delivery team from each of the partner organisations met to:

- agree the focus and timescales of the work to be undertaken
- establish the metrics to be used to measure the progress and impact of planned activities on the tutors and learners involved (i.e. tutor and learner surveys issued prior to the launch of the project and at the end to capture distance travelled, tutor and learner forums, attendance and progression data, video testimonials)
- determine the process for sharing practice which included monthly video/telephone conferences between project leads, creating a padlet to share resources, scheduling reciprocal learning walks conducted by

*“Our organisations faced similar challenges to do with the delivery of maths and English. This provided the project with a clear focus; we then supported each other to experiment with different potential solutions.”*

Project Lead, Bridgwater & Taunton College



Staff from the partnership engaging with the Vocational Revitaliser course.

<sup>1</sup> Tyler, E., Marvell, R., Green, M., Martin, A., Williams, J. and Huxley, C. (2017) Institute for Employment Studies (2017). Understanding the role of Advanced Practitioners, (Education and Training Foundation)

APs and some of the tutors involved to evaluate the new, emerging practice in each organisation

- plan and run the ETFs [Vocational revitaliser for maths and English course](#) as a means of launching the project and enabling APs, CHiMEs and staff from both colleges to meet and network.

At South Devon College two APs, one a maths expert and the other an English expert, were selected to experiment with and model different approaches to providing individualised support to CHiMEs based in four curriculum areas. Full details of the work they undertook can be found [here](#), this included:

- coaching an Adventure Sports tutor to embed literacy skills into a planned employer visit
- co-planning a project in Animal Care on plastic pollution that highlighted and developed specific writing and communication skills
- brokering the relationship between tutors and core Maths and English staff to ensure that learning delivered in the four chosen vocational areas was drawn into and developed further in designated GCSE and Functional Skills sessions
- developing a tool known as the 'maths infinity generator' which vocational tutors could use to create a raft of core maths starter activities contextualised to their vocational area e.g. ratio questions linked to hairdressing, area questions linked to construction.



As well as working independently the two APs worked collaboratively to create the concept of a 'Project in a Box'. This consisted of working with a CHiME to identify a topic relevant to the vocational area and then co-creating a scheme of work focusing on the development of specific maths and English skills over the period of half a term. The APs provided a series of maths and English resources, training guides and infinity generators related to the topic that the CHiME could adapt and use.

At Bridgwater & Taunton College the AP created and piloted a series of posters that highlighted the top ten skills a successful GCSE learner needs to evidence in order to achieve GCSE English. This included skills such as the ability to identify, analyse and explain. A QR code was embedded within the posters which enabled learners to access a series of associated revision resources.



The A3 posters were displayed throughout the CAE department and provided as A5 cards to be used within vocational sessions. These specific skills were then highlighted by vocational staff as part of the aims and objectives of sessions and then further reinforced as the session progressed. The same cards were used in GCSE English sessions where the English tutors identified how English skills developed within CAE could be transferred to learning taking place in GCSE English classes.

## WHAT HELPED THE PROJECT TO SUCCEED?

The focus of this project was aligned to a key strategic priority that was common to both organisations and identified in their self-assessment reports (SARs). This secured buy-in and support from senior leaders and curriculum managers which gave the project both gravitas and impetus.

The project was also driven by an evidence base that identified a clear need for staff to develop their own skill set and to be supported by strategies that would make the embedding of English and maths within their sessions more relevant, purposeful and motivating for students. This was further reinforced by feedback from students and the negative attitude they displayed towards having to retake their GCSE English and Maths qualifications – the need to do things differently was irrefutable.

At Bridgwater & Taunton College the AP recognised the importance of developing high quality resources that stood out from the crowd. The posters and cards were deliberately designed using fonts from brands that had positive associations for students in an attempt to break down the negative views that many held towards GCSE English.

Both Project Leads recognised the importance of sharing and broadcasting success, as it emerged. They ensured that progress was reported back regularly to senior leadership and quality improvement team meetings through snippets produced for newsletters, monthly progress updates, emails sent to key staff and CPD events to share emerging practice. At South Devon College capturing key milestones on video as the project unfolded was crucial to its success. Short clips from tutors and learners talking about what they were doing and the difference it was making had a significant ripple effect, engaging and motivating others to engage with the project.

## WHAT CHALLENGES DID THE PROJECT FACE?

As snippets of success started to emerge from this project organisational pressure mounted to scale up at speed. A realistic evaluation of what was achievable within the project time frames was then needed and a focus on the specific vocational areas that had been identified. Although they were ambitious, both teams realised they needed to start small, gathering robust evidence about what does and does not work to inform the processes and resources that would be required to roll out such approaches more widely.

Communication with departments and managers did not always go to plan. Individuals had competing priorities and personnel changed. At South Devon College when the APs struggled with a particular team the Project Lead met informally with staff to identify any issues. This enabled her to address immediate short term barriers but also provided invaluable feedback about the perceptions of APs and what will need to be developed further if APs are to support all CHiMEs across the organisation in the future.

*“Using excel infinity generators to contextualise maths in vocational sessions brought maths alive for learners. They gained in confidence and could also see the purpose of what they were learning.”*

Maths Advanced Practitioner, South Devon College



APs also recognised that a differentiated approach was required and that some staff do not want to/have the time to be coached or supported on an individual basis. The APs had to be resilient, flexible and responsive – thinking about different ways they could provide support, such as ‘Project in a Box.’

## WHAT DIFFERENCE DID THE PROJECT MAKE?

Both partners were rigorous in their collection of both qualitative and quantitative data which they have each used to present an informed business case to their senior leadership teams on possible next steps concerning the development of the AP role.

At South Devon College the model for AP support is universal. The majority of APs provide generic support, however, what this project has highlighted is the benefits of having some APs who support the development of subject specific skills, such as maths and English. Headline statistics indicate the following:

- Learner satisfaction has improved. In the vocational areas where the APs supported CHiMEs there has been a 6.6% growth in satisfaction for maths and a 7.0% growth in satisfaction for English, when compared with the same vocational areas in the previous academic year
- Attendance at designated GCSE and Functional Skills sessions has improved. In vocational areas where the AP worked with the maths CHiME attendance at the designated Maths lesson was 88.5% as opposed to 83.5% in other vocational areas and 88.6% as opposed to 83.0% for English
- Achievement in Functional Skills English and Maths has improved, which can be associated in part to the collaboration between APs and CHiMEs. In English there has been an increase from 53.2% to 75.5% of learners achieving their Level 1 written paper. In Maths the Level 1 success rate was 55% last year and the trial group supported by the AP working with CHiMEs are on track to achieve a 78% pass rate
- Absence rates from exams have also fallen, indicating that learners feel more prepared to take their formal assessments and/or they value the qualifications as a part of their preparation for working life.

Quantitative data depicts only one side of the story. Please view the videos that South Devon College have created to capture feedback from [learners](#), [vocational tutors](#) and the [project team](#) about the difference the project has made to them.

The data collated at Bridgwater & Taunton College reveals a similar story:

*“Both teams harnessed the emotional power of qualitative data. Comments from students such as ‘I hate English. Ever since secondary school I have been useless at it,’ are real motivators for staff who are driven by making a difference.”*

Project Lead, South Devon College



GCSE English key cards being used during a vocational session.

- Learning Walks evidence that the posters and A5 key cards have supported vocational staff to stretch and progress learners academically
- Staff surveys show that 100% of vocational tutors within CAE are now 'often' or 'very often' supporting students to identify key points, consider their use of vocabulary, check spelling punctuation and grammar. They are also highlighting the top ten skills a successful GCSE learner needs in their session delivery
- Learner attendance at GCSE English sessions has improved by 4.8% in Construction, 7.2% in Automotive and 5.9% in Engineering
- Across the CAE department there has been a 3% increase in students achieving grade 4 and above when compared to last year.

*"The APs have had real impact on the confidence, skills and creativity of the staff they have been working with."*

Project Lead, South Devon College

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For further information please visit the Advanced Practitioner OTLA

Projects Padlet page here: <https://en-gb.padlet.com/joss1/collabprojects>

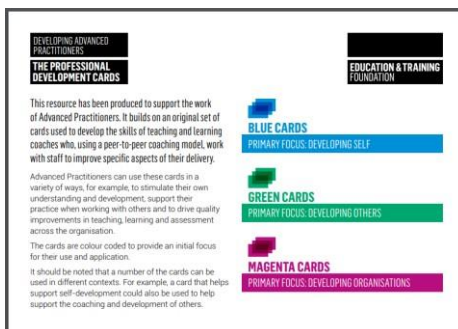
Or contact:

Nicky Hawkins, South Devon College: [NHAWKINS@southdevon.ac.uk](mailto:NHAWKINS@southdevon.ac.uk)

Jim Odams, Bridgwater & Taunton College: [ODAMSJ@btc.ac.uk](mailto:ODAMSJ@btc.ac.uk)

**RESOURCES SUPPORTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ADVANCED PRACTITIONERS (OTLA 4) – 2018/2019** [CLICK ON THE IMAGE TO ACCESS THE RESOURCE](#)

- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Professional Development Cards



- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Practical AP Guides



- Advanced Practitioner Monthly Communications

© Crown copyright 2023. This resource is available to use under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#).



**DELIVERED BY**



