Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance
Partnership to promote excellence in teaching, learning and leadership

<u>**Research and Development Coaching Project**</u>

Final Report

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1. Rationale / Context

The Research and Development Coaching Project, was established to offer teaching staff the opportunity to work with colleagues from different educational institutes across the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance (FCTSA), to improve professional practice, develop teaching and learning and enhance professional development.

Coaching is widely recognised as an effective way to raise staff performance and consequently pupil and student attainment. In this context, coaching operates between peers and is therefore non-judgemental and outside the normal hierarchy of traditional school/college C.P.D (continued professional development) and mentoring. The FCTSA has instituted a standardised coaching practice across Alliance members from July 2012, by ensuring the training provider remained the same across each organisation.

The project is a 2-year study into the development of an effective and sustainable coaching infrastructure allowing staff to support each other and share good practice across institutions. Sustained, as the year 1 coachees became coaches in the second year.

Coaching Coordinator Roy Blake, who has worked as part of the Senior Leadership team at Hodgson Academy and now independent coaching consultant and Research and Development Coordinator, Lucinda Campbell, Head of Department and Senior Leader of Education, have worked collaboratively, to design the feedback proforma of the coaching project. This enabled the Coordinators and the Co-Director of Teaching School, Tim Freeman to establish a clear vision; discuss and agree specific timelines; and to ensure that effective communication systems were in place for the project.

2. The Coaching Project Design

The Research and Development Coordinator held a phone conference with the External Facilitator from Sheffield Hallam University in January 2013. The complex issue of how progress from the coaching project could be measured was discussed in depth and the need for the collation of base data was identified, along with establishing a genuine collaborative approach to the project as a key method for success. According to; Eaker, DuFour & DuFour 2002:26, "*What is collaboration? A systematic process in which we work together, interdependently, to analyse and impact professional practice in order to improve our individual and collective results.*" This interdependence has helped shape the project, valuing the individual to work in a group with a shared goal has been a main focus of the project. We were particularly interested in discovering if there were any shared goals or desired outcomes from the coachees, or indeed any shared areas for development or challenges. Were there any similarities or differences, could any further analysis be drawn from capturing this data? In section 5 of this report you will see the findings to this investigation question.

The implementation team for FCTSA stated, due to accountability and confidentiality, that lesson observations, performance management reviews and student results could not be used as measurable indicators in the coaching project. This therefore raised the question of how would the outcomes of the coaching project be measured? How could we track success? Does coaching have any influence on teaching, learning and assessment? How do we measure this?

During March 2013 the Research and Development Coordinator and the Coaching Coordinator attended an Action Learning Set at Sheffield Hallam University to meet with the External Facilitator and to network across themes, from different regional cohorts. A reoccurring theme discussed at length was how data could be used which was qualitative, rather than quantitative to share findings. Answering the questions surrounding how the project could be measured and accessed. This opened up a broader spectrum of opportunities of how feedback from coachees and coaches could be sourced and analysed. Without using quantitative indicators such as; performance management reviews, OFSTED lesson observation grading criteria, OFSTED framework and other conclusive, performance indicators, which are so commonly used in education today.

3. The Coaching Model

Stage 1 of the project involved coaches and coachees from the same schools being paired up, to enable effective monitoring and review of the coaching process, gaining feedback and making any amendments before the project went cross phase and across institutions. The purpose of the project being to enable staff to experience the GROW coaching model (see Fig 1), a less complex, user friendly, coaching model, already used in CPD and familiar to numerous schools in the alliance, to develop teaching practices, in a non-performance management related way. To explore new strategies and techniques and engage in professional conversations with colleagues, with whom they may not normally associate.

According to Palmer & Stough, 2008: "*Coaching is not about imparting expert knowledge in a particular field. Instead it is about guiding individuals in self-directed learning and development. The coach may not have specific expertise in the area of influence of the person, but they are able to assist the individual in maximizing their influence.*" This definition of coaching is paramount to the research and development coaching project and provides a framework of how the coaching model may be beneficial, particularly to teachers working across a teaching school alliance.

The GROW coaching model provides a framework for discussion that can be used to develop teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers learn by considering past, present and future strategies and establishing clear goals through detailed discussions. According to LSIS (2009), "*The GROW Model developed by John Whitmore (2003) provides a model of coaching that aims to unlock potential following a cycle that explores the Goals, Reality, Opportunities and Will to commit. The model does not always follow a monocyclic route and you may find yourself moving between the different elements at various stages in series of coaching conversations. One of the key elements is the effective use of questions.*"

The GROW Model

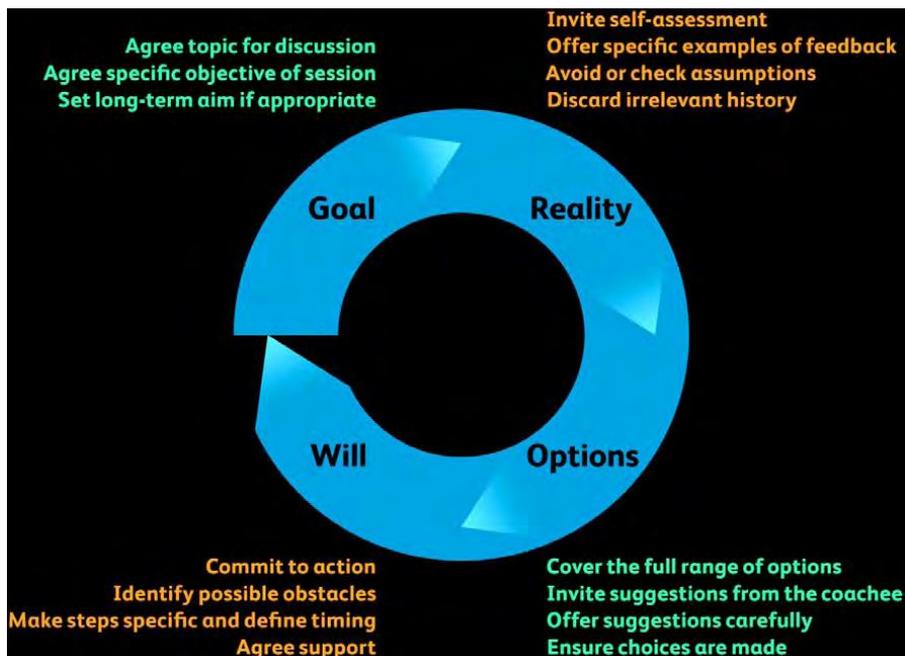
Fig 1.

4. The Coaching Project – Stage 1

From the FCTSA, 8 schools volunteered to be part of this project, these included: 2 primary, 4 secondary, 1 sixth form college and 1 special educational needs through school. The coaches were selected by senior management teams, from each establishment and provided with training on the GROW coaching model. This took place during a coaching INSET day, led by the Coaching Coordinator. Once the coaches had been selected, informed about the coaching process and fully trained, the coachees were selected and approached. They were then introduced to their coaches and the outline of the project was explained. The initial stage 1 of the process could now begin.

During a ten-week period the selection of participants and the collation of feedback took place. During this time the coaches and coachees took part in the 4-stage process, which included initial meeting, initial coaching session, classroom coaching session and completion questionnaire. Coaches also attended 3 forum meetings to discuss the process and provide feedback to the Coaching and R&D Coordinators. These meetings proved vital in establishing a collaborative approach to the project. Coaches were to able have an input into the design and implementation process, which made a real difference and contributed to creating a positive culture for coaching to develop. Developing the collaborative nature of the project was a key target, accomplished by holding a series of forum meetings, sharing views and ideas, where ever possible, developing the collaborative culture of the project.

5. The Coaching Project Outcomes – stage 1

The feedback from the initial phase 1 of the project revealed some interesting findings. Firstly the format by which the feedback was collated was fully reviewed to enable the R&D Coordinator to collect and use some qualitative data. Secondly comments and feedback from both coachees and coaches revealed that 88.8% of coachees stated that they achieved their initial desired goals and 77.7% of coachees

stated that they took risks during the classroom coaching session, which they may not have considered otherwise. Thus indicating that the coaching project challenged teachers to step out of their comfort zones.

44.4% of coachees identified behaviour management as an area they would like to develop; 33.3% wanted to focus on assessment for learning and 22.2% wanted to focus on questioning techniques. These common themes regarding areas for development were equally as interesting as the areas of strength. 77.7% of coachees identified their strengths as being able to quickly establish relationships and rapport with students.

6. Recommendations for stage 2

The next phase of the project is for the coaches to work with coachees from different educational institutions. The feedback booklet (see Appendix A) used by coachees and coaches was simplified to enable further analysis of feedback, which could feed into the research and development of the project. The next forum meetings were arranged with both coaches and coaches, in order to gain feedback and ensure a truly collaborative approach.

The research and development enquiry focused specifically on how coaching in the classroom can impact on teaching, learning and assessment. The next phase of the project aimed at further analyse this line of enquiry, as well as looking at how effective cross phase, cross institutional coaching can be and what can be learnt from further expanding the coaching programme.

7. The Coaching Project Outcomes – Stage 2

90% of coachees agreed that they had achieved their desired goal from being part of the coaching project, with 50% feeling able to take risks in the classroom. A key theme, which became apparent, was that the confidence of the coachees being a main area for improvement. The over riding factor which came from the collation of the feedback was that having an external coach from another institute enabled coachees to develop trust, work collaboratively and take risks as there were no judgment being made. Below are some quotes from coachees from stage 2 of the project;

"I would definitely recommend this coaching programme. I found it really helpful to have input from someone else with a fresh pair of eyes and more so from someone from another school and age group."
" It has been a really good thing to have a short-term programme which is entirely devoted to trying something new. There hasn't been the pressure of grading; it has all been about developing my skills. It would have been even better if there were the time to do a second observation to see further progress. The informal approach and the way the coaches have made me feel at ease have been very beneficial."
"I would certainly recommend the experience, it took up minimal time but had maximum output. There was a real focus on improving practice and I felt fully comfortable at all times. I thought it was particularly beneficial to work with a coach from another school."

8. Final stage of the Coaching Project

The final stage of the project included 8 pairs of coaches and coachees, with 8 participating schools/colleges; 3 primary schools, 3 secondary schools, 1 special education school and 1 sixth form college. The sustainability of the project relied on

the coachees from stage 1 being trained and becoming coaches for the final stage, to a new cohort of coachees all 8 of the coaches in the final stage were coachees in phase 1 of the project.

100% of the cohort agreed that they achieved their desired goals during the project with 100% feeling that they had taken risks during the coaching lesson. 100% of participants agreed that they would positively change areas of their teaching as a direct result of their involvement in the project. 86% strongly agreed that they would like to participate in a coaching project in the future and the remaining 14% agreed they would also like to participate in another coaching project in the future. 100% of the cohort agreed that the project was well organised and that their involvement in the project was well worthwhile. 100% of coachees agreed that they would not only recommend someone else taking part in a coaching project but that they would be interested in becoming a coach in the future.

From the feedback, the following areas were identified as areas of strength prior to the coaching project; questioning was identified by 20% of the cohort as being a strength prior to starting the project along with a further 40% considering rapport, planning and communication as key strengths prior to the coaching.

60% regarded behaviour as a key area they wanted to develop as a result of their involvement in the coaching project. This varied from engagement to independent learning and classroom manners, all areas for development. This coupled with literacy, stretch and challenge and using electronic feedback were all key areas coachees wanted to develop whilst working in the project during this final stage.

" XXX was very positive about the coaching programme and commented that this was the second time that she had been involved in the coaching process and that she finds it to be really beneficial"
" I feel that it has been a beneficial process and that it has made me think about my teaching. It has been good to reflect on the targets established at the start of the process, and consider how to develop my practice further, something which should be continuous in this profession. I would participate in the coaching in the classroom experience again most definitely!"
" During the feedback session, X was happy with how the lesson went and felt the boys did engage in the session well. X discussed the progress made and felt that the goals which had been set had been successfully achieved. The feedback conversation allowed X the chance to reflect and discuss the session and X respected the point that no judgement was made. X was very happy with the coaching process."
"The process was enjoyable with no pressure. Useful to take time to discuss with someone and try new ideas. Yes, I would engage with the coaching in the classroom experience again…particularly as a coach! "

9. Impact – Economic, CPD, Culture, Outcomes

9.1 Economic: One benefit of this project is that the only cost, is to allow staff the time to participate. It is a sustainable project in that the coachees from stage 1 and 2 become the coaches for the final stage. 100% of coachees who become coaches have enjoyed the transition from coachee to coach and felt that that career development in terms of CPD has been extremely worthwhile.

9.2 Bespoke Professional and Personal CPD: Due to the nature of the project being 1 on 1, the CPD is bespoke to the individual creating greater 'buy in' from participants. The non-judgemental element of the project is fundamental to its

success. According to Professor Black, "*Comment-only marking provides students with a focus for progression instead of a reward or punishment for their ego (as a grade does)*", (Presentation on AFL September 2013 BSFC.) Applying this same theory to teachers and **their** assessment for **their** learning has been quite revolutionary. When the coachee becomes the coach, they can share their experiences from a first hand perspective and the non-judgemental nature of the project is embedded further, building trust amongst the coaching pairs and in the project itself.

The leadership competencies which have been developed as a direct result of involvement with this project are endless but include the following outlined by the National College for Senior Leadership; self awareness, integrity, resilience and emotional maturity, conceptual thinking, delivering continuous improvement, modelling excellence in teaching, learning focus, serving others, inspiring others, partnership working, relating to others and developing others.

The success of the first cohort is evidenced in the percentage of coaches and coachees who were successful in gaining promotions following their involvement with the project, 70% of coaches gained senior leadership positions and 50% of coachees gaining promotions into middle leadership. The feedback from these staff was that the R&D Coaching project had been a positive point for discussion during their interviews for their new posts.

9.3 Cultural: The collaborative nature of the project from all involved has enabled participants to have shared ownership and develop ideas together. This freedom to challenge oneself and try new things has made a shift in cultural perceptions of developing teaching and learning. When asked, "*As a result of your coaching experience are there any areas of your teaching that you will change*?" 100% agreed. Having a Coaching Coordinator and a Research and Development Coordinator was a crucial element of the projects success, helping drive forward the project and draw reflections from the process. The coach and coachee forum meetings enabled the cohort to meet and share experiences and good practice which was important to keep the project moving forward, particularly as the project is across several institutions.

9.4 Outcomes: At the end of the 2 year project we were able to access the long term impact on teaching and learning, from learner voice feedback. The coachees and coaches forum meetings allowed us to discuss how the students reacted and responded to the coaching in the classroom and the innovative practise which was being developed. The response was hugely positive with students expressing that they felt learning had become more fun, engaging and structured. Enabling them to progress at a quicker rate and they felt the tutor had more control in the classroom. This concept of coaching in the classroom has shone out as real innovative practice, one where the coach and the coachee can discuss the concerns and areas for development from a closer perspective (in the classroom) helping build rapport and trust, progressing teaching and learning quicker and further creating a culture of collaborative professional development.

We had hoped to be able to review teaching and learning lesson observation grades as a result of this project but as annual lesson observations had already taken place for this academic year this data was unavailable. Originally we had hoped to capture some lesson observation grades data in this new academic year but due to most of the coachees moving into new posts with promotions, this is unachievable. If this project was lead with a cohort at the start of the academic year then this data could potentially be tracked and monitored as a tool for improving teaching and learning

lesson observation grades however when this project was set up it was agreed amongst the various schools that teaching and learning lesson observation grades would not be used as evidence.

10. Recommendations

10.1 Capturing quantitative data linked specifically to learner outcomes, would provide more conclusive evidence of the projects outcomes

10.2 Running the project for a minimum of half a term would enable 10.1 to be realised

10.3 Behaviour for Learning (BFL) was highlighted as a key area for development, which reoccurred throughout the project, across different age groups. Independent learning, student motivation, classroom management, communication were all areas for development. This could be used as part of a whole school improvement plan

10.4 Coaching in the classroom can be used as a tool to improve staff moral, motivation, rapport, communication, trust and create a collaborative approach towards CPD

10.5 Significant impact on leadership for people involved in the coaching project was not anticipated. Could be used as a method of leadership development in the future

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*Please refer to **Appendix A**, for a copy of the feedback booklet proforma used in this project.*