Gateshead College: Successful Coaching through video analysis

Summary

Gateshead College has used peer coaching as a model for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) since 2003.

The coaching model involves intensive peer support with the use of video to allow a detailed and critical self reflection of classroom practice. The use of video technology plays a key part in this process; classroom practice is videoed by the coach and gives the coachee the opportunity to self-reflect on their teaching practice. The coach does not point out areas for self development, but encourages the coachee to recognise them.

The college has been awarded the highly prestigious Beacon Award by the Association of Colleges for outstanding performance in staff development for this project and was awarded ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted in 2009.

Post-coaching session observing the classroom practice video
About…

Gateshead College is among the largest further education colleges in the North East and offers a wide range of full and part-time courses, vocational training, apprenticeships and responsive training for employers. Specialisms include sport, creative, automotive, construction, leadership and management and hair and beauty.

The challenge

In 2003, the Gateshead 14-19 Teaching and Learning Initiative (a partnership between Gateshead LEA, Gateshead College and Work Based Learning Providers) aimed to raise standards of teaching, learning and attainment across the borough and demonstrate a consistent approach to developing these standards throughout the sector.

The activity

As part of this project, coaching was introduced at Gateshead College. The coaching process works as follows:

- At the start of the process, the coach and coachee agree on a focus for the coaching.
- The coach records the coachee delivering one or two teaching sessions, using a basic video camera. The nature of the coaching process means that the coach needs to remain unobtrusive and be able to move around the class with the camera. The smaller, more easy to handle cameras are better for this purpose.
- The coach and coachee will watch the resulting footage separately and make notes.
- They then watch the recording together.
- Through careful questioning, support and guidance, the coach encourages the coachee to deeper levels of self reflection on their own practice.

Coaching encourages coachees to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and to identify required changes in behaviour to improve their practice.

Coaching is offered to:

- New teachers
- Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Certificate in Education (Cert Ed) students

Any member of staff who needs or wishes to improve their practice in the classroom.

The outcomes

Initially five members of staff were trained as learning coaches. In 2009 this number has increased to over 30. Evaluation of the coaching model, from particularly the student teachers, showed the following outcomes:
• Encourages self awareness generally and made the student teacher a more self aware practitioner.

• The use of video gave the student teacher ideas from a student’s point of view and allowed reflection beyond the normal boundaries of paper based systems.

• Student teachers had someone to turn to when they needed advice or feedback, particularly after a negative session.

• Student teachers could see firsthand their strengths and weaknesses in a safe environment.

• A measurable distance in change in practice followed as a result of coaching.

• A focus on activity promoted student autonomy.

• The approach greatly improved the ability of the trainee teachers to develop self-reflection skills which are invaluable in allowing them to continue their development once qualified.

Once qualified student teachers are not afraid to embrace (new) technologies in their own teaching and found using IFL reflect easy to use.

The impact

The college’s success rate has improved significantly over the years and in 2009 Gateshead College has been graded ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted:

“The excellent development opportunities for teachers provided by the college’s advanced lecturers underpin the high quality of provision”.

The strong benefits realised by the coaching approach resulted in the college deciding to continue with the use of coaching as a core element of its workforce development strategy.

Useful links

Gateshead College

Jisc RSC Northern

video of peer coaching

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