

Interviewer: Claire Merchant-Jones

Interviewee: Kristyn Woodward

Start

I'm Claire Merchant-Jones and I'm the learning support manager and disability officer at Somerset College

I'm Kristyn Woodward and I'm Senior Tutor at the College. I line manage the enrichment coordinator.

As part of some of the work we've been doing this year we've been trying to identify and address difficult behaviours in classes with groups of learners, and what we've done with some of your enrichment team is direct groups of students towards them to do activities, to get them working together as a team. What sorts of activities happen?

Okay. I think where we've moved on from previous years, is this time we actually tailor the enrichment packages to individual curriculum areas. So before, whereas I was saying; 'This is our enrichment package, everybody will enjoy it and have a good time', that clearly didn't work, so now we're tailoring it to bespoke curriculum areas, so we'll have the tutors come forward to the enrichment team to say: 'This is what we think' or 'This is how perhaps we can widen the skills sets of our learners and this is what skills we would like to develop in them' and that's when I contact the likes of Stuart Hooper or Dawn Gardener to come in and perhaps remove the student from their normal everyday classroom environment, perhaps take them out of their comfort zones and start working and developing the skills that the tutors have highlighted.

Yeah and that's been really effective actually I think as a group of students I've met with who fed back that what they found to be the best thing about it is that they've been taken out of the classroom where things were going wrong and I suppose they identify all the difficult behaviours, that they'd been expressing in that environment and when they've been taken out of that they've really learned to get on with each other and have far more meaningful relationships. And also I think what's been really important is take ownership of where things have gone wrong. I think one of the things we can learn from, perhaps for next year, is to start that earlier on in the year. Perhaps identify groups that we know potentially are going to be challenging, and put some early enrichment activities in for them. Do you think that that's something we could move forward on?

I do and I agree I think that process could be helped because at the moment it's just the personal tutors making that decision about what enrichment they should put on. And again it's things that we've worked on already like sharing of information between the learning support tutors, the learning facilitators, the student support officers, that whole group of support people should be, I think, getting together at an early stage, looking at evidence passed to us from secondary schools or the care homes, whoever it may be, and then tailoring enrichment at that early stage.

Yeah, and that would be brilliant because there's lots of groups of students that once they're put together in a room their dynamic doesn't necessarily always work. And I suppose one of the good things we could do, and we are doing this year is identifying who those groups are and where it

might be going wrong and perhaps not just blaming the students for their bad behaviour but looking at what might be going wrong on a different sort of level.

I know Stuart's felt, this year particularly, that even if it's just he breaks up their normal working week with an intervention of sort of fifteen or twenty minutes just take them away, sometimes ad hoc, so the students aren't aware of what's happening. Stuart will come into the classroom, take them out of that environment, and do something completely different. The tutors then fed back that when the students have come back from that twenty minutes they're a lot more settled and that the group dynamic is different for the rest of the day.

I think it's something about taking responsibility for their own part in the classroom, so it kind of disrupts that powerbase. So instead of it being teacher and learner in that traditional model it's saying okay we're all equal here and you start from a place where everybody takes responsibility for each other's learning and I think that when we've spoken to students in focus groups what they've said is that that's really helped them to feel that they're respected by everybody in that room, and it's even better when a tutor takes part in those activities because it's saying we're all equal and we're all level.

Yeah.

And so actually what we probably need to do as well in the future is encourage tutors to take part in those enrichment activities, which I know sometimes makes some people feel a bit anxious. But it probably is a good model in terms of the work that students do.

Yeah because they definitely see that tutor in a different light then, and I think you're quite right about the responsibility. I think as a college over the past few years we've worked on perhaps creating more of a holistic approach to that, everyone reinforcing the message that this is an adult environment and that students should be taking responsibility for their learning and behaviour, so I think that all of those sorts of ingredients will help.

Yeah and do you think that enrichment can have a positive effect on people's behaviour?

Most definitely, I think. I've just come back from a day with all the D of E group and there's some students there who literally couldn't concentrate, I think, for more than about twenty or thirty minutes at a time. However again by removing them, putting them into a completely different environment and giving them responsibility for the group. So for instance we kept rotating the leadership of the group, they'd just learned their orienteering skills, and to see some people that weren't having any interaction with the rest of the students, suddenly being sort of put forward and saying 'Here you are, this is your responsibility to lead the group.'

Yeah.

And they really become a real different person and take that mantle on, so most definitely.

And that might be one of the only successes they've had in their life so far?

Yep. And we look at it is the experiences they get by going to different places and then we're looking at taking students out of their local environment, out of their community, out of the South West,

even, to remove them completely from that, so perhaps they learn these new skills sets and perhaps look and think about things differently.

End.