Case study: Collaborative enquiry using coaching skills

# Part of the Education and Training Foundation South Central outstanding teaching, learning, and assessment programme (OTLA 3) 2017/18

## Which organisations were involved?

This project was delivered by NESCOT in partnership with Brooklands, Guildford, and East Surrey colleges.

## What was the purpose of the project?

Much professional development can be characterised as facilitators telling teachers what to do, usually in a one-off, one-day support workshop without follow up. Often, it assumes that what teachers lack is knowledge, and it fails to assess the impact of changes to teachers’ practice and students’ learning. By contrast, this project aimed to advance professional development through collaboration, that results in continuous innovation and improvement in teaching and learning, is owned by teachers, and is embedded in practice.

## What did the project do?

The project set out to pilot a ‘collaborative enquiry’ professional development model by:

* Establishing a baseline in terms of the experience of professional development and accountability to see if there was shared understanding between colleges.
* Designing and agreeing the collaborative enquiry framework and the suitability of ‘collaborative peers’ for the pilot.
* Establishing the resources and training needed for the project. The resources and project handbook were hosted on a collaborative IT platform.
* Reflecting in coaching pairs on the successes and challenges of current teaching and learning practice, collaborating to develop a teaching and learning focus, innovating practice through coaching conversations and engagement with evidence.

## What helped the project succeed?

A key feature of this project was the commitment and enthusiasm of participants and the impact of the collaborative training and working on staff and managers alike. As a result, despite challenges, the project remained on track and produced significant data to inform future development.

## What challenges did the project face?

Managing change was a significant challenge. During the project, the colleges experienced 2 changes of principal, 3 Ofsted inspections, 3 college structural reviews, and the project lead was made redundant.

## What difference did it make?

Feedback, using self-report Likert scales and semi-structured interviews, indicated that participants were more engaged in reflecting on a relevant focus of teaching and learning, thinking through how it might work in the context of their classroom, and then testing out a development of this practice. There was strong agreement that collaborative enquiry provides effective feedback that is relevant to teachers’ professional development needs.

Participants from three of the colleges strongly agreed that collaborative enquiry is a supportive professional development process. They also said collaborative enquiry increased their motivation to want to improve their teaching.

## Where can I find more information?

You can find out more about this project:

* By contacting Lance Finn, Sports Lecturer and Sports Therapy Lecturer, NESCOT, Reigate Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3DS | Tel. 020 8394 1731.
* In the ETF [Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment 3: South Central. Final Report](https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf3023) (undated).

“I got a lot out of the process in the short period, such as learning how to question better…I have noticed I started to use coaching questions in a conversation with a peer, whereas I would have told them what to do before.”

“I really enjoyed the process, I found it really interesting and learned so much. I learned about the importance of body language and building effective relationships.”

Sample quotes from participants

Text box 1: Sample quotes from participants