

## Brushing up on teaching skills. What are the ingredients of effective classroom practice?

Creative, Arts and Media provision is consistently rated more highly than other programmes by the inspectorates in terms of learner progression, meeting of individual needs and equality of opportunity. It also attracts a large number of learners. According to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) approximately 480,000 learners were enrolled on LSC-funded courses in Arts, Media and Publishing in Further Education, Adult and Community Learning and Work-Based Learning in England in 2005-06. According to the last ALI Chief Inspector's Annual Report 'Arts (before adult inspection responsibilities moved to Ofsted), media and publishing' is one of the largest and most popular areas of learning in adult and community learning. What helps to make CAM providers so successful? ...

	Characteristics of weak classroom practice	Characteristics of outstanding classroom practice
Classroom management	<p>When classroom management was poor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disruptive or inattentive students were not dealt with effectively</li> <li>• teaching and learning at the beginning of lessons were often disrupted due to poor punctuality</li> <li>• practitioners frequently talked too much and did little to combat learners' passivity.</li> </ul>	<p>Classroom management was rarely an issue where practitioners adopted a more imaginative and rigorous approach to teaching. For example, in a graphic design lesson, students were introduced to industry buzz words which encouraged wider thinking and high level debate about moral content and ethics relating to graphic design. The pace of lessons was demanding and topics were challenging.</p>
Differentiation in teaching	<p>Lack of differentiation reduced participation among learners. This took the form of disengagement, poor punctuality and reduced attendance levels.</p>	<p>Teaching was less directive and tailored much more to learners' needs. Lessons were well planned with differentiated activities that allowed the most able students to achieve at the highest standard and supported the less able students to achieve well.</p>

<b>Expectations and motivation</b>	Mismatched expectations and de-motivated learners appeared to be common. When expectations were low, the work set was too directive. The focus was often on technique at the expense of expression, which resulted in students producing dull work that lacked individual creativity.	Practitioners were much more likely to encourage a culture of high expectations, agree challenging target grades with students and vary methods, approaches and materials to encourage independent learning.
<b>Key skills</b>	In some cases, providers failed to teach key skills adequately; in most cases the problem was a failure to embed key skills into the classroom. Key skills were not integrated into assignments and teachers lacked the knowledge of key skills assessment to be able to support students effectively. Sometimes, key skills provision was well-planned but poorly implemented.	Reports on outstanding providers rarely highlighted key skills as an issue, but when mentioned they were seen as well integrated into the vocational curriculum.
<b>Feedback</b>	Poor feedback was common. Constructive, firm guidance to ensure students complete work on time and understand how to improve was not provided effectively.	Feedback in outstanding providers was more detailed and frequent, made targets clearer and reduced learners' fear of formal assessment.
<b>Preparation for employment</b>	Providers offered relatively few opportunities for learners to develop work experience, few educational visits and in some cases a curriculum which was not a relevant preparation for work.  Professionalism was often not encouraged. Many students did not fully appreciate the discipline, commitment and rigour of the profession they hoped to enter.	Outstanding providers generally offered a range of links to industry and the local community, along with enrichment activities such as study visits. These were closely tied to learning. External links enabled students to undertake live commissions in industry and in the wider community. For example, students successfully undertook mural and sculpture projects in a local teaching hospital.

### Take action

Could you:

- use these characteristics to construct a series of observation schedules?
- work with a colleague to observe each other's teaching sessions, using the schedules as a guide?
- share and reflect on your findings, and decide on an area you'd both like to improve on?

**Evidence source**

University of Wolverhampton, School of Education and Desq Ltd (2007) QIA National Teaching and Learning Change Programme (Phase Four) Creative, Arts and Media (Final research paper)