

MAXIMISING POTENTIAL COMMENTS FROM THE PILOT PHASE

Sept 2006- June 2007

The following quotations are drawn from communications with teachers and others involved in the Maximising Potential project in its pilot phase (2006-2007). Writers are identified by their remit rather than by name, and comments are sometimes 'composite' i.e. drawn from more than one communication with the writer. Some of the comments are 'as reported' by researchers, therefore not direct quotes, but these have been checked with the writers to ensure that they represent their views faithfully.

Principal Teacher, Modern Languages

"[Our S4 Access/Foundation] group are now into exam leave and will no longer be a focus. Many lessons learned by staff and strategies trialled. The pack is an excellent thinking tool for teachers struggling with difficult classes. Now staff [are] working on a similar project with S2 lowest set. I am working alongside a learning assistant and together we discuss before and after the lesson. This is most useful and allows the LA to feel involved in the planning of the lessons."

Principal Teacher, Modern Languages

"This term [summer] we are expanding the MAX project in S1. We have identified another group of ten young people who have a variety of needs which are currently preventing them from fully accessing the German curriculum. This group will be taught by the LSS teacher who has been working with [the class teacher]. She will be taking on board the strategies already developed. She has the support of the PT Behaviour Support and a Learning Assistant in class. This means that [the class teacher] is now comfortable working with her group with the support of a learning assistant but no additional teaching colleagues. Clearly, since our classrooms are located very close to each other, it will be easy for us to monitor things and react quickly should we be unhappy with progress."

Principal Teacher, Modern Languages (re. low ability group in S1)

"Where learners have particular learning needs, extra staffing in the initial stages has a strong impact in allowing needs to be met. Once positive relationships and attitudes have been formed and once the staff involved have identified barriers to learning and developed strategies to overcome them, the extra staffing becomes less essential except for learners with specific learning difficulties who may need readers/scribes/etc."

Class Teacher, Modern Languages

"[The project] has made me evaluate what I do in a number of ways, which is always worthwhile."

Principal Teacher, Modern Languages

"Some excellent ideas to help any teacher at any stage in his/her career to think through the issues involved in teaching a challenging class."

Class teacher

"I was looking for a way to help my students. I had arrived at a point in the year and in my career where I had begun to feel frustrated and demoralised. Teaching a mixed ability Spanish class is hard work, especially when the students have so many different needs. [The project] allowed me to do some self-exploration, which in turn led me to ways to support myself and my teaching, but also to more effectively teach and support my students."

Teacher of Modern Languages with a class of students with learning difficulties

"I have read through [the programme] and found the information thought-provoking. It has already begun to help me to think about what is going on in my class and amongst my students at the present time, and active strategies I can take to improve learning and teaching."

Principal Teacher, Support for Learning

"The project is supporting English in an S2 middle but very challenging set. [It] is going superbly. The class teacher and I spent two days observing and discussing and we identified a range of problems in the class - dyslexic, semantic pragmatic disorder, mental health, ADHD, EAL, dyspraxic, behaviour, pupils using laptops etc. We endlessly discuss and implement strategies - moving seats, me phoning home, keeping pupils back at end of block to build relationship, teacher presenting info in linear text and also in visual formats, only asking volunteers to read, warning pupils well in advance of tasks to be completed, frameworks for writing, praise etc. I am very happy with how it is going. I would not have been working with [the English teacher] in this way if it was not for the project!"

Teacher of Support for Learning

"The next steps phase is now in operation and much of the support is being moved away from the initial group in order to create a second Max class. This is a positive indication that the programme is working well."

Modern Language teacher in the Chartered Teacher programme

"The project fits in very nicely with my research. I enjoyed the Power Point presentation on "Do you recognise these pupils?" I have opted to pursue the line of how best to reach all pupils and that is by helping them to be effective learners and understand how they learn. I am going to trial a few activities with a S2 class... Although I have not been using the grids I have made use of the philosophy behind the toolkit."

Quality Improvement Officer

"The programme has been a great help in the debate about entitlement and the place of modern languages in education for citizenship. In several schools senior management have seen real improvement in the engagement of pupils with their lessons, as a result of work on breaking down the barriers to learning languages. The accolade is that they are transferring the initiative to other subjects. The effects are particularly encouraging in areas of deprivation. It is our intention to roll out the scheme more widely in the authority."

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS

[The class teacher] has reported better than expected prelim results from her F/G pupils, and the Access 3 course is going well, with good application and endeavour from the pupils. [The class teacher] had been working with NQ teachers and student teachers and has found this to be beneficial, the materials seem to have been particularly helpful to the new and probationary teachers. She suggested that they might be of use in Teacher Education Institutes.

Proof [that participation in the project] is making a difference:

1. Children are willing to do assessments.
 2. They do not mind writing, as long as it is in German.
 3. They understand rules of behaviour more and apply them.
 4. Even if the bribing is getting rarer, kids still motivated and working hard.
 5. Teacher doesn't have to do crowd control that much anymore.
 6. Relationship and trust established between kids and teacher.
- The Maximising Potential project has become firmly embedded in the learning and teaching of the class. Collaboration with LS has been successful, even though the present LS teacher is the 3rd one to work with the class on the project.

- The class will follow *SG* courses in English, Maths and German only; they will be involved in alternative courses in all other subject areas
- *SMT* has been supportive of the project. Time has been allocated, some money (£100) given, *LSS* and behaviour support teachers have been timetabled sympathetically. The project seems to fit in well with the school improvement plan.
- Collaborative meetings have been difficult to arrange; more such meetings would have been helpful.
- Pupils are co-operative in class, and reluctant to be withdrawn from *ML* to go to a boys' group, working at their behaviour, usually through fun activities.
- Pupils are taking responsibility for their own seating in the class. They are showing increasing learner autonomy, listening to the shared learning intentions at the beginning of the lesson, and managing their own work in lessons. Evidence of their work has been shared on the school wikispace. Tangible outcomes, such as filmed interviews are proving good motivators.
- Their behaviour is less good in other classes and as a result of this they are frequently excluded, which has interfered with plans for filming, and other activities they were looking forward to.
- They are recognising their own successes and achievements and enjoying their assessments.

Comments from PGDE/ML students:

The pilot materials:

- allowed me to focus on a specified class
- helped me to differentiate my lessons
- made me aware of how to ensure I was catering for individuals in my class
- made me think more about how my lessons could be barriers to the pupils
- allowed me to work jointly with *SfL* staff
- raised my awareness with regards to working alongside *SfL*

It was interesting to see theory linked directly to a *MFL* context