

Impact Summary – Submitted by Jo Jones, KS1 Co-ordinator, Y2 class teacher in Putney High School

Will the introduction of key learning attributes through animal characters increase the pupils understanding of what the attributes mean?

By developing a verbal and written vocabulary to discuss the impact of these attributes can they demonstrate an increased appreciation the value of each attribute?

1 Context- Putney High School is one of the UK's leading schools within the GDST. It has a reputation for providing the challenge of a rich and broad education to bright girls aged 4 – 18. Selection is predominantly at 4+ and 11+ The school operates very successfully within a competitive area of South West London. The ability profile of the school is well above the national average when referenced to standardised data. Students are encouraged to enjoy learning in a supportive, nurturing environment, while developing the self-confidence they need to take intellectual risks and to think independently. The junior school has a 2 form entry from reception and a majority of the girls move onto the senior school. There are less than 5% of girls with SEND. 25% speak one or more languages other than English at home.

In summer 2016 we introduced a new, detailed reporting system that graded girls for effort and attainment in all their subjects. We also reported on 6 key learning attributes: **Empathy, Collaboration, Curiosity, Imagination, Resilience and Independence**. This was done by identifying which skills were considered strengths. Direct comments were also made relating to these particular skills. These skills were selected based on our use of the C J Simister programme "How to Teach Thinking and Learning Skills". Each year group has a lesson on Thinking and Learning each week.

2. Driver for innovation

Despite the reporting on these key skills it was apparent that some of the girls did not have a clear understanding of what the actual terms meant and were often not able to explain why having these attributes might be beneficial. This was particularly apparent in EYs and KS1. A majority of the year 1 girls thought that curiosity was about being nice and giving compliments. Year 3 though a curious person was nose-y and were looking at things that they should not. (see transcripts of focus group in appendix)

There was a need to provide appropriate vocabulary and examples for EYs, KS1 and KS2. This was clear as when the girls were asked to explain what the skills meant many of them said they understood what they were but could not express it in words.

We wanted to raise awareness throughout the school- so that the use of these terms should be second nature when describing how a pupil is behaving. We also wanted the girls to naturally use the skill terminology in their self and peer evaluations.

It was also hoped that there would be increased awareness in the parents of the value of these attributes that are reported on each year rather than solely focus on academic achievement.

Ultimately we hoped that increased metacognition may result in raised understanding and desire to demonstrate these values in school and at home. (Hattie)

3 The innovation

I decided to introduce the 6 learning skills to the girls through animal characterisation. Each animal would be introduced through a story. The use of story should engage the children and allow even the youngest children to start acquiring an understanding of each of the characteristics. (guardian article) For each characteristic I chose an animal that would display key behaviour that demonstrates one of the skills. I created a starter story for each of the characters that was read in assembly during a focus week. This project is aiming to embed the use of these 6 key characteristics in our assessment and self- evaluation throughout the school. I hoped that by having a named character we would be able to engage the youngest girls in discussing the behaviour in an

age appropriate way. The older girls were asked to demonstrate their increased understanding by writing their own stories about each animal.

4 Activities and Interactions

Firstly I ran some focus group discussions with 4 girls from years 1, 3 and 5. These were based on what they understood about curiosity. How they might use it and whether it was a good skill to have. The girls were videoed and asked prepared questions to each other. There was minimal adult input in this activity so that I could gain a clear view of what the girls thought without being led by adult questioning. (See selected transcripts in appendices)

The KS2 girls were also asked to complete an online questionnaire about the 6 key skills so that I could obtain a baseline on the level of understanding about each skill. The girls were asked to identify which of the 6 words they understood and then to expand their answers with an explanation of the skills and how they could be used. They were encouraged to complete this without researching answers beforehand. In KS1 and early years the class teachers collected this information through class discussions.

Then in the Autumn term one new character was introduced to the whole school

Gemma the Curious Giraffe. We had a handmade giraffe that was brought into

The assembly when the story was read to the girls. This was at the start of a focus week looking at curiosity. The KS2 girls were all asked to write a story at the end of the week about Gemma. It was hoped that they could express what they thought about curiosity through story. It would also be a non-judgemental way for the girls to consider whether they demonstrated this characteristic.

Class discussions were focussed on how the use of curiosity could be a good skill but also allowed the girls to consider if there were negative connotations to the use of curiosity. I felt it was important to have this discussion as it was clear, following the focus group discussion, that many girls were concerned

that curiosity was not a behaviour that should be encouraged but it was actually to be discouraged, which I was surprised at. It demonstrated that as an adult I was making an assumption that the girls knew that it was good to be curious and this was not actually the case. As the girls were able to express their doubts about the value of curiosity it was clear that they were worried about being nosy or annoying by asking too many questions. The class teachers encouraged them to set some guidelines that included being kind, staying safe and considering other people while stretching their curiosity. In ICT lessons we linked these guidelines to the safe use of the internet.

Throughout the week the class teachers planned to highlight opportunities when curiosity needed to be used- these included maths investigations, research using the internet, treasure hunts, science experiments and writing scripts for interviews with historical characters. Thinking and Learning lessons asked the girls to show their understanding of curiosity. (see year 2 and year 4 PowerPoint in appendices)

In KS1 the story was shared again in class and questions such as "What would Gemma do?" used to encourage the girls to use more curiosity.

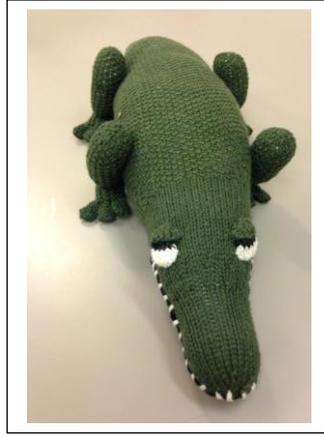
A book containing many of the stories written over the week has been made and is now available in the library.

The focus week appeared to have a positive effect throughout the school. Many of the KS2 girls were excited to submit their stories and an evaluation after the week showed a clear improvement in the girls' appreciation of curiosity throughout the school.

Over the following 2 terms 2 more animal characters were introduced in a similar way.



Ellie the Empathetic Elephant and Clara the Collaborative Crocodile.



Each of these two animals had a story written to demonstrate their key attribute.

I decided that as we are 2 form entry throughout the junior school one class of each year group would be introduced to the one of the new characters and they would then teach the other class about the new characteristics through paired work and shared activities. This was to reduce any additional workload. Again there were a range of activities provided for the classes in the focus weeks including Empathy Charades and collaborative team games. (See appendices for story script, assembly PowerPoints and lesson ideas)

5 Learning

I hoped that over the year a majority of girls would improve their understanding of the 3 attributes we had focussed on and that they would be able to express their ideas about how they could use these attributes in school and at home. I was pleased that our survey results have demonstrated a far greater familiarity with each of the 3 skills (see appendix) In KS1 and EYs there was an increase between 70-94% in the girls who were able to identify and use the vocabulary appropriately. In KS2 there was a higher initial understanding of the 3 skills but this has developed considerably, particularly with empathy which had a lower initial level of understanding.

What has been clear as the year has progressed is that girls throughout the key stages are excited to use this new vocabulary and many are naturally choosing to use it in their school and home.

In a picture quiz set for EY and KS1 over 90% of the girls were able to identify the skill being demonstrated in a variety of real life scenarios. In class discussions about friendship issues my Y2 class have used the term empathy when explaining how to help friends who are upset. They were also able to suggest that they would be using empathy when they celebrate with the winning house on sports day, even when it is not their own house and they might themselves be feeling disappointed. I felt this was a mature use of the terminology and showed a deeper than expected understanding of it from 6 year olds.

6 Changes in behaviour

The girls are still seeking opportunities to use their new skills vocabulary, even 2 terms after the focus weeks. Class teachers throughout the year groups have encouraged their classes and some excellent assemblies in the Summer Term that were performed to the school and parents demonstrated their understanding of the 3 skills. Year 6 analysed the actions of Shackleton and his team and re-enacted scenes to show their use of collaboration and curiosity. They then explained the value of all 3 in their activity week. One girl said that though she was initially worried about not doing well on the climbing wall she felt that the empathy she received from her team helped her overcome her fears. A year 1 assembly saw the girls explaining to their

parents why each of the skills was important and how they had used them to improve academically over the year.

In the coming year we will continue to expand this program with the focus on imagination, resilience and independence. These will be spread over the 3 terms as focus weeks and taught in Thinking and Learning lessons. The 6 attributes were used in the summer reports and it is intended to keep them in our reports in future.

Next year there will be artwork put on display in KS1 to maintain the focus on all 6 skills and the story compilations will be read in library sessions.

7. Difference

I think enabling the girls to express themselves has encouraged their awareness of the skills and this in turn is developing their use of them. One example came to me from a parent following her daughters report. She told me that when she was asked her daughter what she had most enjoyed in the year she had said "I like collaborating with all the different people in the class. It showed me how special the other girls in the class were and I liked it when I could help them when we were talk partners." She is in year 2.

I hope that by the end of next year the girls will have gained a strong grasp of these 6 skills and continue to develop the language they need to express themselves. While I cannot state that their use of the skills has directly improved due to this project, I feel that their heightened understanding of the vocabulary, the value (and the occasional risk) of each skill is a benefit. If John Hattie is correct this should enable them to consciously use these skills and identify their use in others when offering peer appraisal.

8. Reframing Value

Next year in Y2 lessons I intend to identify when a particular skill is required in a lesson alongside the learning objective for the lesson. As KS1 coordinator I will be discussing how this can also be done in year 1.

We are considering giving awards specifically for using one of the 6 skill in KS1 assemblies, much as we give kindness and good manners awards at the present time. This will allow the girls to see that the school continues to value these attributes.

In thinking and Learning lessons which will be delivered by the Deputy Head to all classes next year I will be planning with her to ensure the skills remain a focus for all year groups.

The stories will be read to the new reception classes over the year.

Bibliography

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