



Fellowship Update

Name	Jodi Black
Project Title	What are the benefits (in terms of learner engagement and progress made) of practical learning/learning through play, combined with an effective assessment tool (to capture those small steps) for learners with severe learning disabilities (SLD)
Reason for doing the Action Research/Fellowship	I have worked for many years as a post 16 SEN teacher for learners with PMLD and SLD, during this time I have gained a wealth of knowledge and experience in planning, delivering, and assessing progress for these learners. I have used and am familiar with a range of different SEN curriculums, learning activities, inclusive resources, and assessment tools to plan for and measure progress and achievement, capturing those small steps which cannot be measured by a more traditional/academic assessment process. I have most recently worked within the Nurture provision at Beech Academy and joined the team at the very start of its journey (This is a new provision January 2019) Learners have a range of learning and communication difficulties, as well as needs linked to anxieties. They therefore require a curriculum designed to develop knowledge and skills for life, including positive communication skills, Independence skills and Literacy and Numeracy skills that are functional and can prepare them for adult life. During my time within the Nurture department, I have identified a need for a curriculum, which involves more practical/play based activities to meet the individual learning needs of learners, as well as an assessment process that can capture the progress made from learning in this way. I have therefore decided to complete the action research/fellowship project in the hope of proving a positive connection between the use of practical learning/learning through play and an effective assessment tool in terms of learner engagement and achievement.



<p>A snippet of progress to date</p>	<p>My fellowship progress so far...</p> <p><u>Literature review</u></p> <p>SEND code of practice EYFS Curriculum Tom Sherrington – Rosenshines principles in action. What about me? Inclusive strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day – Louise Michelle Bombier. AET Autism progression framework Teacch Approach Intensive Interaction- Implementing Intensive Interaction in Schools: Guidance for Practitioners, Managers, and Coordinators.</p> <p><u>Summary of findings so far....</u></p> <p>I began my research by reading THE SEND code of practice, focusing in particular on the graduated approach of ‘plan, do review. Concluding that this approach is effective in helping schools to remove barriers to learning, and identify successful strategies to best meet individual needs.</p> <p>I also researched the assessment element of the graduated approach concluding that teachers need to constantly review and track learner progress, they need to use a formative assessment approach rather than summative.</p> <p>With research of the SEN code of practice and the graduated approach of plan, do, review in mind, I began my own research PLAN: I firstly conducted a baseline assessment of my Nurture study group (containing 5 learners) in order to assess the learning abilities and needs. I formed this assessment using information from their EHCP’S, my own observational assessments, learner work, and PDBW assessments. DO: Having identified needs, I then began to research and trial a range of different learning activities, styles, and resources such as Makaton Symbols, the TEACCH approach and Intensive Interaction to meet these identified individual needs including their learning, sensory, and emotional needs. I concluded that there is a need for an individualised approach to learning within the Nurture provision, and that by offering a range of teaching resources and learning activities including (written, practical, and play based) barriers to learning were broken down, and as a result learners engaged more within sessions and activities.</p>
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REVIEW: How do we evidence learning within the Nurture provision? Having recognised similarities between the EYFS curriculum delivery, and the successful learning strategies and resources I have trialed. I decided to research the EYFS approach further. In particular their curriculum delivery and assessment. Confirming my thoughts that their delivery and assessment are similar to my identified PLAN and DO elements of the graduated approach. I therefore felt it necessary to research their assessment strategies (REVIEW) I found that they use 3 main steps 1) day-to-day-formative assessment 2) in setting summative assessment and 3) National statutory summative assessment. Finding that their main form of assessment is observational. I then considered our current assessment processes within the Nurture provision.

Whilst I recognise that as a provision, we are very good at:
1 - Day to day formative assessment: using observation and to gather evidence for an individual's learning. (observing those smaller steps of achievement due to severe learner needs), I feel we lack the ability to use this evidence to;
2 - fully understand a learners performance at the end of a period of teaching, and,
3- measure this progress in relation to national expectations and comparisons. We are currently not able track and show their progress 'to capture those small steps'

The main reason for this being an insufficient assessment process/tool.

I have analysed Nurtures main assessment tool PDBW scales (based on Rebecca Doyle 2001, Jayne Mcsherry 1999 research) which, alongside traditional subject assessments is the assessment tool used by the main site Beech Academy to measure personal development and welfare based on a readiness for re integrating children with social, emotional and behavioral difficulties into mainstream classrooms. – Effective alongside traditional academic assessments such as B'tecs, and GCSE's.

What about learners who due to PMLD/SLD needs, cannot show progress in a traditional way – Nurture Learners?

Having studied the PDBW scores for learners within the Nurture department, (assessment tracking window spring 2020). I have found that out of the eight learners within the group, all but one (who has been identified as needing to progress from Nurture next academic year due to academic abilities) has a score of 50% or below in the category of skills for learning. This alongside their EHC P's suggests to me the reason for a low score in academic



progress may be due to a significant barrier to learning/ learning disability rather than social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties alone.

I have identified that the PDBW scale is not able to show this progress for learning, in learners with SLD/PMLD needs. I do agree that for the majority of learners with MLD and associated social, emotional and behavioral needs who attend the Beech main site, It is an effective way of capturing progress combined with traditional assessment methods (as mentioned earlier)

So how do we capture learning and progress of learners who have poor skills for learning due to profound and multiple/ learning disabilities?

I have identified an assessment tool (SOLAR) I have seen it used successfully in other SEN schools within Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire; I feel it will help the Nurture provision to 'capture those small steps'. To bridge those assessment gaps that I have identified. Capturing both academic and personal learner progress via an assessment of subject target achievements and individual target achievements linked to EHCP outcomes (The main basis for securing funding to attend a specialist educational needs provision)

Impact of Covid 19 –

I had arranged a demonstration of the Solar Assessment tool to Nurture leader KJ, and head of quality of teaching and learning JE. From this, a two-week free trial of Solar Assessment within Nurture had been planned to start in the middle of March. However due to COVID 19 and school closure, I was unable to implement this trial and gain the much needed data to hopefully prove its success in measuring progress for learners with SLD. I have contacted the SOLAR team and they are happy for us to resume the free trial once it is safe to do so.

Solar have since sent me an information leaflet and a selection of customer reviews from other schools using the SOLAR assessment tool to include in my research.

To balance out reviews provided by Solar I felt it was also important to try to gather my own reviews to ensure a balanced and fair none biased review. I therefore conducted a Colleague survey from two other Nottinghamshire SEN schools currently using SOLAR as an assessment tool. To gather data on the effectiveness of using this tool, in terms of measuring achievement and tracking progress for learners with PMLD/SLD needs.



	<p>Concentrating on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Effectiveness of Initial and baseline assessment.- Tracking individual learner progression – Linked to targets and EHCP outcomes- Individual learners progress within subject areas.- How does the data prove useful for informing future planning?- Would they recommend the SOLAR assessment tool? Can they give Advantages and Disadvantages of using this tool? <p>I am currently awaiting feedback from these surveys, due to the COVID 19 restrictions I have had to rely on EMAIL as my source of data collection the positives to using this method are that it is reliable and can be a quick way to gather data. The negatives to this form of data collection are that I am reliant on others replying, and have no way of knowing if they have received the survey and if they are planning to partake in my action research.</p> <p>I am hoping that this data collected from other teachers using SOLAR will allow me to consider the potential impact it will have on my own teaching, the curriculum delivery and assessment within the Nurture provision as well as considering the impact on Beech Academy as a whole.</p>
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