Teaching for Mastery Lesson Design at St. Joseph's CVA

Tom Hooley

Teaching for Mastery Lesson Design Work Group

One of the biggest challenges facing schools as they adopt a teaching for mastery approach is how to design lessons. Working collaboratively with practitioners from across the East Midlands the project, we began by identifying the key features of mastery, before exploring a route through a lesson, that allowed teachers to link these together in a coherent manner. Essentially we were looking at how to turn theory into outstanding classroom practice. Though our research often went much wider what is captured here in these case studies, each participant school was asked to focus in on one aspect of lesson design, how it has been incorporated into classroom practice, and the impact it has had on learners.

Overview

Tom Hooley is Maths Co-ordinator and Year 2 teacher at St. Joseph's CVA in Market Harborough. Tom took part in East Midlands West Maths Hub Lesson Design Work Group in 2017/18. He has found this to have had a big impact in how Maths is planned and taught within his school. Having taken part in previous Mastery Work Groups and incorporating these findings within school, the design of lessons for the benefit of learners whilst keeping workload to a minimum for staff was an issue he felt needed attention.

What we did at St. Joseph's.

The Lesson Design work group began by focusing our attention on what mastery is and what we should expect to see within lessons. Within our school, we had bought into Maths No Problem! (MNP) from Years 1-6. There had been teething issues with this, namely gaps needing to be closed and using this as a scheme. Through working with the group, the realisation hit us that, although MNP is a great resource, we were neglecting vital steps and missing out on other great resources.

As Maths co-ordinator, I collated the resources that I had used or heard about through a variety of sources into Year Group folders accessible to staff where they could find a range of resources to use within their lessons. Teachers were encouraged to plan using powerpoint and to consider carefully the coherent steps throughout a lesson. Questions to consider when planning included: What representations were useful at which points? Where would Greater Depth be incorporated into lessons? Are all children able to access all parts of the lesson? How will rapid graspers be challenged? How will struggling learners keep up?

As a one form entry school, I found that teachers who had not been on mastery courses/work groups did not have the pedagogical understanding or opportunity to observe mastery teaching in practice. The thing that had the greatest impact on our school were consecutive staff meetings. Lesson Design and useful resources were introduced in the first part and then teachers were invited to go away and work with another teacher to plan a lesson between them. This enabled staff to talk through their planning process in a way they had been unable to do before, challenging each other and aiding in the coherence journey of a lesson. In the second staff meeting, teachers were required to present their lesson and discuss the process they had been through in order to design their lesson. If they had taught the lesson, they were encouraged to talk through how it had gone, what had worked well and what hadn't. Staff were encouraged to challenge their thinking through questioning the reasons for the design or representations/tasks that were used.

Impact

The impact on our school has been profound. Firstly, teachers are planning smarter. They are considering what is important within their lessons and spending the time they would of done marking (children self mark) planning coherent lessons with small steps enabling all children to make progress. Of course, not all children progress at the same rate and rapid interventions are used with those who have struggled to master a concept, in order for them to access and make progress in the next lesson. On the whole, teachers are more confident in designing lessons and knowing where they can find resources to aid in this process. We have found that more of those children who traditionally would have struggled to reach the expected standard are doing so. Also, more children are accessing and achieving a deeper understanding of some areas.

Summary and next steps

I feel that we are in a good place with our lesson design on the whole. The next steps are to focus specifically on different parts of the lesson. These could include; where the Greater depth come within a lesson, the use of stem sentences and generalised statements within lessons and how variation is used to aid learning.

We also intend to look at how we are evidencing Greater Depth thinking. I am confident through lesson observations and discussions with teachers that questioning is very good and children are encouraged to go deeper. We are seeing that children can access complex problems but from a recent book scrutiny, it is difficult to see evidence of children working at greater depth. In my opinion, Greater Depth can best be seen through discussions with children and hearing their reasoning and responses. However, I think evidence is needed for outside agencies and SLT. Our next steps are to think how best we can do this through using our maths journals.

More Information

For more information about this project, or other workgroups and opportunities available through the East Midlands West Maths Hub:

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