



ACTIVexpression - Case Study

School / Academy: North Oxfordshire
Teacher Name: Jonathan Cassidy

Using ACTIVexpression to develop mental mathematics.

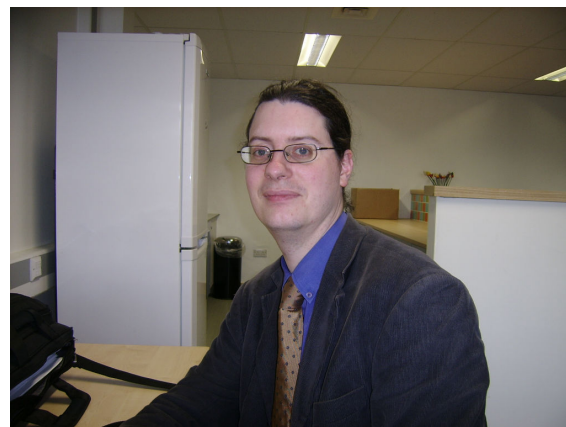


Building transformation at North Oxfordshire Academy

North Oxfordshire Academy is an academy in Banbury, Oxfordshire which opened in September 2007, replacing the former Drayton School. The timetable consists of four 1 Hour & 20 minute periods each day, and this includes one 20 minute break and one 35 minute lunch break. It's an academy undergoing a physical change to create state of the art facilities, a 21st Century personalised curriculum that deploys new technologies to engage and motivate learners.

Context

Jonathan Cassidy is a maths teacher at the academy; he has always been a keen user of technology to support his teaching and was excited by the prospect of using a learner response system with his pupils. In particular Jonathan targeted a year 9 class to work with on introducing the ACTIVexpression technology. He chose this group as he had a particularly good relationship with them and felt more at ease experimenting with the technology as he knew they would be quite forgiving if he had any teething problems in operating the system. Jonathan has used the Expression set with other maths groups as well as for an extra-curricular Italian enrichment class.



Jonathan Cassidy – Maths Teacher

Usage

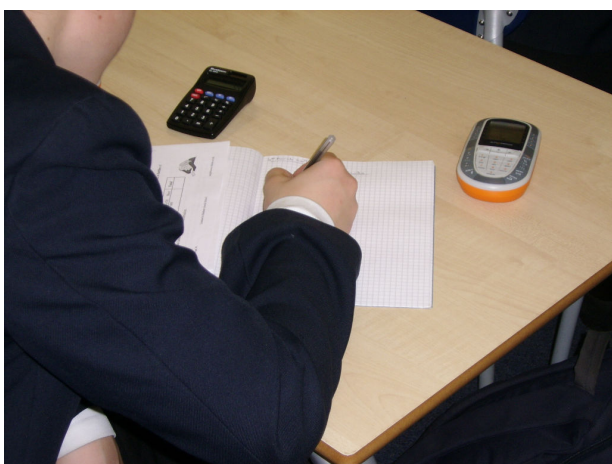
Jonathan saw the potential that the ACTIVexpression system had to engage and involve pupils in the lesson by requiring them to answer a much higher proportion of the questions put to the class. Much of his usage of the system is via the Express Poll mechanism – which means that Jonathan is not spending a lot of time preparing questions. As Jonathan says “I plan my lessons but I can't always plan the questions I'm going to ask. Lesson's are fluid and sometimes need to go in directions that you had not foreseen, therefore asking questions on the hoof is very much part of my teaching style.”



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Jonathan was also quick to see the potential of using ACTIVexpression with other published materials. The academy has a range of published materials in a variety of formats which provide a useful starting point for developing questions for use with ACTIVexpression without the need for a great deal of time consuming preparation. It's not that Jonathan doesn't know to pre-prepare his questions for use with the system, it's really down to finding the time to do it and this is something he'll be working on in the coming months.

Although Jonathan can and does use a variety of question types – it's the numeric entry that as a mathematician he really uses most often. He points out that when pupils use number entry it really cuts down the scope for them to send inappropriate inputs to the board. When using the Expression system Jonathan makes a point of giving feedback on the range of answers received and the pupils really benefit from



this. Such is the relationship with his pupils, Jonathan is not afraid to name and shame in his lessons using the *who answered what graph* and this again gives him the opportunity enter into meaningful dialogue with pupils and correct misunderstandings.

Jonathan encourages the use of Expression devices alongside other more familiar equipment and approaches found in maths teaching – exercise books, calculators etc.

New tools of the maths trade. Expression devices sit on the desk alongside more conventional equipment.

Impact

Although Jonathan is just really beginning his journey in using the Expression system he is clear about the impact it is having in his classroom. He is quick to identify the two most positive aspects of its use as follows:

- 1. Involvement** – a number of the year nine pupils were quite reticent in class when it came to offering any response to the oral questions that Jonathan asked. A few pupils tended to dominate, however, with ACTIVexpression every pupil gets the opportunity to respond to questions, every pupil participates and as Jonathan says, "It's a truly democratic tool and a voice for every pupil in the class".



Pupil involvement and engagement are key benefits of the Expression system



- 2. Engagement** – Jonathan has noticed pupils spend much more time on task when Expression is used. He notes that pupils are well motivated and engaged by the technology and that makes for a purposeful working atmosphere in the classroom. Pupils have looked after the devices very well and any doubts about their ability to withstand the rigours of the classroom were quickly dispelled.

Another aspect that Jonathan has noticed is that there is less work in pupil exercise books as more of the class work is conducted digitally and this needs explaining to colleagues and parents.

Development

One of the next steps for Jonathan is to develop materials for use with his Yr 11 class and in the near future Jonathan intends to experiment further with the use of ACTIVexpression, noting successes and failures and acting upon these. This action research, reflective approach to teaching in the classroom underpins his whole philosophy as he says:



“I’ve made mistakes, I’ve taught some terrible lessons – but I’ve always learnt from them.”

He would urge teachers to get hold of a set if they can and, after undertaking appropriate training, just to get stuck in with using them as it can add a whole new dimension to classroom interaction.

Jonathan makes effective use of the Express Poll function in class questioning.