

Appendix 8 - Two case studies

Case Study 1

L1 Plumbing GCSE Learner – starting grade 2

I chose this particular learner for one of the Case Studies as he was the ‘class clown’ which I quickly learnt was his disguise to hide his low level when it comes to writing. Whenever, there was a writing task to be completed, he would act up and start low level disruption within the class to distract his peers and potentially delay the start of the writing task.

Assessments indicated that he was more of a GCSE grade 1 than the 2. However, the grade 2 came as a result of a Centre Assessed Grade due to COVID-19.

He could talk about films, TV and cars all day long but getting him to put any of his thoughts down on paper, was nigh on impossible. We had our share of battles for a short period of time until I called home and spoke to his parents. They explained about how he missed some education as a result of initially being bullied and then being a bully at school. We identified that his lack of skills and poor self-esteem helped him create this persona of the ‘class clown’.

Once I became aware of the bigger picture, I started using distraction techniques and he supported me with moving the PowerPoints on and other tasks which meant he had to follow and engage in the lesson. I felt that in this way at least everyone was learning. The next step was getting him to put something on paper. We tried a variety of different strategies including timed writing, writing what he knew about, picture stimulus, movie reviews and so on. However, when we started looking at horror genre within our lessons, he could quickly identify with the different features in this genre. When we created our own list of horror vocabulary, he was completely engaged in a synonym activity and instantly began to use more sophisticated vocabulary.

However, the final piece of the jigsaw was the ‘slow writing’ technique. Once I gave him clear instructions on what his first sentence should be and then his second and then his third.... EUREKA! The lightbulb not only lit but exploded. He felt that whilst I controlled his writing, it was my fault if it wasn’t good and not his. After some weeks of scaffolding tasks and letting him believe this, we then moved him on to where he followed the structure given and wrote his own piece of work. Not only did he surprise himself but he surprised me, the repetition of the higher level vocabulary lessons, the creation of horror similes and other techniques all fell into place. Punctuation was still an issue but there was engagement and enjoyment taking place and he no longer balked at writing tasks. We looked at a variety of stimulus pictures and spoke about how most of them could be turned into a horror story of some sort. I really feel that we battled together to find a strategy that worked best and that he found easy to follow. This learner has definitely progressed in his GCSE grades this academic year and I look forward to working with him again next year.

Case Study 2

L1 Construction learner with a starting qualification of Entry 1 Functional Skills

My intention was never to enforce GCSE assessment objectives with this learner. He had a brain injury a couple of summers prior to joining us so his memory skills were poor and at the start of the year, I was worried about his achievement for Entry Level 2 Functional Skills. However, the Christmas Creative Writing competition came around and he saw the poster advertising it and that the prizes were related to progress and not just about being the best story. He was also interested because the prizes were hand tools and gaming accessories.

Because of his poor memory skills, I tried the 'slow writing' technique with him. We did a little every lesson and then he went home in the evening and worked a little bit more on it, nothing extensive as his skills set was low and his parents had to support him with notetaking. We discovered that he could verbalise what he wanted so parents took notes and then he went through the notes and typed up his sentences in line with the Slow Writing structure. He used language techniques which I would never have expected someone at this level to comprehend. His determination to win a prize outweighed his skills set so he kept on re-writing sentences and showing them to myself and his support worker. From these, we would guide him and prompt him but never led him.

His final submission was extremely good for someone of his ability and definitely worthy of a prize. Whilst he just about passed his Entry Level 2, we discovered he had a knack for storytelling and had a huge imagination but just needed to be able to follow some form of structure. He continually pesters me to create more competitions so that he has something to aim for!