



Student-teacher Story 6



Read through this story and see what you notice in this student-teacher's story.

It is not what it looks like!

The issue:

When I started my first placement I was teaching a sequence of lessons to a year 9 class. The class was lovely and worked well with me and with my mentor. I left my first placement around December and went on to a second placement.

After six weeks, I came back to my first placement and started picking up classes again. I was truly disappointed to see that a student who had always been kind and respectful and had done his homework and cared about learning had become completely the opposite. He was rude with his peers and disrespectful to me and my mentor. I had no choice but to follow the school procedure and firmly sanction his actions. He was given detentions and after school detentions but clearly it had no impact whatsoever.

I remember making phone calls to his parents and it was the father that always answered the phone. On many occasions he was apologetic and promised to have a word with his child.

One day, both parents turned up to school as they had a meeting with the Headteacher because their child was involved in a serious incident that could have resulted in him being excluded from school. The parents disclosed that a divorce was taking place and the child was distressed and angry and displayed explosive behaviours.

What happened?

This situation caused me to reflect on the centre-based professional learning and development sessions. I asked for specific behaviour management theories and books to read and wanted to attempt some new strategies. One of the books helped me to understand that there is always a reason for a child to misbehave. At times, a family situation can tip the scale and there is no guarantee that the child will disclose anything. Therefore, it is vital for me to know my classes and spot any extreme change in a pupil's behaviour.

As a school we adapted our approach and I personally had to find common ground to work with this student. Luckily, we support the same football team and I used this as a basis for building a relationship with him and supporting his emotional needs. I managed to gain his trust and convinced him to attend catch-up sessions so that he was in line with other classes. He did not attend all of the sessions, but he made a positive decision and attended a few.

What was learnt?

I learnt the importance of communication between the school and parents. It was clear to me that as a teacher, I have a responsibility to care for my students' wellbeing and play a part in their emotional stability. As a teacher, I learned that I must be proactive in my teaching and be able to adapt my teaching to best stimulate students' minds. In fact, the centre-based sessions helped me to adapt my teaching and to understand that adaptive practice is about reaching out to a wide range of students and having a positive impact.

This situation has taught me to be mindful of sudden changes in behaviour and to always work with parents, colleagues, pastoral staff and the school SENCO to best support pupils.



Appreciative inquiry

- Discover: what went well in this story?
who was involved in the story?
- Dream: what could have made this even better for the student-teacher's learning?
how would you have liked the centre-based teacher educators and the school-based teacher mentor and professional mentor to have contributed?
- Design: what practical steps could you take towards achieving that dream?
make an action plan.
- Deliver: put your action plan into effect.



Taking it further



Change is a daunting prospect for many, and changing the way we work in partnerships is a challenge. A major issue in enabling change to take place is that people can feel uninvolved in the actual change process and become unengaged. The focus can tend towards what is not working well, and how we can fix problems. Appreciative inquiry (www.davidcooperrider.com/ai-process/) is an alternative approach which is solution-focused and was founded by David Cooperrider. It starts from success stories and draws out the good and ignores the problems, which feels counter-cultural, but can have substantial impact. The recommendation is that you bring together a school- and a centre-based team to work through the steps to enable positive changes to the way you are working in your partnership.

Appreciative inquiry comprises of four steps: discovery, dream, design and destiny. In discovering, you are looking for what gives life here, appreciating the best of what is already happening. The dream of what might be is envisioning the results and impact you would like to see. The design involves co-construction of what should be ideally, and designing an action plan; and the destiny or delivery involves implementing the action plan and sustaining the positive change.

For an example of using appreciative inquiry in practice see:

Chapman, L. (2014) What pedagogical approach is needed in school-led training to develop outstanding teachers? In Jones, K., & White, E. (Eds.), Developing outstanding practice in school-based teacher education (pp.40-46). Critical Publishing.