

Activity 5: Planning a session with your staff on resource management

Understanding what resources are available across a school (particularly a large one) and whether existing resources are being fully utilised will involve the whole staff. As the school leader you will need to explain the rationale for addressing the issues of underutilised and unutilised resources, and the impact this may be having on learning outcomes. You will also need to make explicit that you need the staff's help in identifying human resources (or people) that fall into these categories. Your starting point for this process is to invite the staff to participate in thinking about these issues.

Make some notes in your Learning Diary as to how you plan to run the session. Afterwards, make sure that you evaluate how it went and make notes about what you may do differently another time. The points listed below could form a basis for how this meeting may progress.

- Introduce your rationale for addressing underutilised and unutilised resources, making sure it is rooted in improving student learning. Discuss the auditing you have done so far and what you have learned from it.
- Introduce the idea of a wider view of resources and what an educational resource can be. You may want to explain the different categories and get the staff involved in thinking about what resources are available in your school for each category, to help them understand these.
- Discuss how, as a school community, you could work together to identify underutilised and unused resources in other subjects or curriculum areas.
- Discuss how, as a group, you could best ensure that everyone's skills and knowledge is being utilised fully in support of student learning (this includes parents, students and others in the community, as well as teachers).
- Set some targets for the use of resources or actions to be taken before a review on a set date – remember to relate these to learning outcomes for students.
- Seek volunteers to work with you on a plan to better use the available resources. Fix a follow-up meeting with them to work on a utilisation plan for these resources.

Discussion

Planning sessions like this invariably lead to a better outcome. As with students, there has to be the right balance between instruction and information giving, and active engagement by your staff. You should be modelling active learning when you introduce new approaches and when you are seeking changes in

practice. When people understand what has brought something into focus and feel supported in making a change, they are more likely to see this as an opportunity rather than as a threat. In this situation, you are inviting your staff to bring more variety, energy and resonance to their lessons through employing a range of different resources: they could find that exciting!

You may find Resource 2 a useful handout to give to your staff.

Resource 2: Using local resources

Many learning resources can be used in teaching – not just textbooks. If you offer ways to learn that use different senses (visual, auditory, touch, smell, taste), you will appeal to the

different ways that students learn. There are resources all around you that you might use in your classroom, and that could support your students' learning. Any school can generate its own learning resources at little or no cost. By sourcing these materials locally, connections are made between the curriculum and your students' lives.

You will find people in your immediate environment who have expertise in a wide range of topics; you will also find a range of natural resources. This can help you to create links with the local community, demonstrate its value, stimulate students to see the richness and diversity of their environment, and perhaps most importantly work towards a holistic approach to student learning – that is, learning inside and outside the school.

Making the most of your classroom

People work hard at making their homes as attractive as possible. It is worth thinking about the environment that you expect your students to learn in. Anything you can do to make your classroom and school an attractive place to learn will have a positive impact on your students. There is plenty that you can do to make your classroom interesting and attractive for students – for example, you can:

- make posters from old magazines and brochures
- bring in objects and artefacts related to the current topic
- display your students' work
- change the classroom displays to keep students curious and prompt new learning.

Using local experts in your classroom

If you are doing work on money or quantities in mathematics, you could invite market traders or dressmakers into the classroom to come to explain how they use maths in their work. Alternatively, if you are exploring patterns and shapes in art, you could invite maindi [wedding henna] designers to the school to explain the different shapes, designs, traditions and techniques. Inviting guests works best when the link with educational aims is clear to everyone and there are shared expectations of timing.

You may also have experts within the school community (such as the cook or the caretaker) who can be shadowed or interviewed by students related to their learning; for example, to find out about quantities used in cooking, or how weather conditions impact on the school grounds and buildings.

Using the outside environment

Outside your classroom there is a whole range of resources that you can use in your lessons. You could collect (or ask your class to collect) objects such as leaves, spiders, plants, insects, rocks or wood. Bringing these resources in can lead to interesting classroom displays that can be referred to in lessons. They can provide objects for discussion or experimentation such as an activity in classification, or living or not-living objects. There are also resources such as bus timetables or advertisements that might be readily available and relevant to your local community – these can be turned into learning resources by setting tasks to identify words, compare qualities or calculate journey times.

Objects from outside can be brought into the classroom – but the outside can also be an extension of your classroom. There is usually more room to move outside and for all students to see more easily. When you take your class outside to learn, they can do activities such as:

- estimating and measuring distances
- demonstrating that every point on a circle is the same distance from the central point
- recording the length of shadows at different times of the day
- reading signs and instructions
- conducting interviews and surveys
- locating solar panels
- monitoring crop growth and rainfall.

Outside, their learning is based on realities and their own experiences, and may be more transferable to other contexts.

If your work outside involves leaving the school premises, before you go you need to obtain the school leader's permission, plan timings, check for safety and make rules clear to the students. You and your students should be clear about what is to be learnt before you depart.

Adapting resources

You may want to adapt existing resources to make them more appropriate to your students. These changes may be small but could make a big difference, especially if you are trying to make the learning relevant to all the students in the class. You might, for example, change place and people names if they relate to another state, or change the gender of a person in a song, or introduce a child with a disability into a story. In this way you can make the resources more inclusive and appropriate to your class and their learning.

Work with your colleagues to be resourceful: you will have a range of skills between you to generate and adapt resources. One colleague might have skills in music, another in puppet making or organising outdoor science. You can share the resources you use in your classroom with your colleagues to help you all generate a rich learning environment in all areas of your school.