

Horizon Community College Teaching and Learning Strategy

“Challenging every learner, every lesson, every day”

Values

When considering how to improve the quality of teaching and learning at Horizon, we function according to the following values:

1. All teachers, regardless of their experience, subject knowledge, or success, are able to improve their practice.
2. All teachers should develop a mentality of being a reflective practitioner, identifying incremental areas for improvement and engaging with various methods to make those improvements.
3. Expert teaching comes from excellent pedagogical knowledge (knowing how to teach), excellent subject knowledge (knowing content broadly and deeply), and excellent subject pedagogical content knowledge (knowing how to help students learn that subject).
4. Teachers should promote excellent behaviour for learning: without a culture of understanding the importance of learning, well planned lessons are undermined.
5. We find the gaps in knowledge, understanding or skills and we find out how to close the gaps. We work together to close the gaps, and we check that they have been closed.

Key Drivers

Whatever the approach to developing teaching and learning, we should consider the following ‘golden threads’; core drivers that we should aim for all of our students to benefit from:

- **Challenge:** In a high challenge, low threat environment, students will develop the confidence to work harder, expect more of themselves and get the most out of their education
- **Powerful knowledge:** As a college we have a moral duty to instruct our students about the wider world and ensure that their understanding of the subjects they study combines into a coherent whole, underpinning an increased cultural capital.
- **Metacognition:** Students with high self-efficacy have more effective learning strategies and have better self-monitoring of their learning outcomes; in other words, they have a strong grasp of metacognitive processes – they understand how they learn and how this will support them in future academic and professional success.

Quality First Teaching: The Six Elements

These elements are given in no particular order, and are not a ‘tick list’ that a teacher should use as a way of planning an ‘outstanding lesson’; instead these should be considered as constituents of a ‘learning episode’, as together they ensure that a student has had a full and complete opportunity to understand the concept being taught:

- **Setting high expectations and building positive relationships:** The power of positive relationships and high expectations is not to be underestimated. Everyone in the classroom should feel safe, respected and valued. Likewise, high effort and good behaviour for learning should be modelled, practiced and celebrated when successful.
- **Explanation and modelling:** Research shows that novices (i.e. our students) learn more successfully from studying a series of completed worked examples of problems or tasks than if they are asked to solve problems independently. Once a method is known and understood, it is easier to apply. In addition, by the use of concrete examples and dual coding, abstract concepts and ideas can be followed more confidently.

- **Questioning and discussion:** It is important to establish how well students are making sense of the material studied. It is important that teachers do not assume that students have understood vocabulary, ideas, concepts, explanations or processes without feedback from students. A rigorous checking process helps students secure understanding and helps accelerate learning move forward.
- **Deliberate practice and retrieval:** Students engaging in regular practice, starting from closely supervised guided practice and moving to independent practice will help students develop confidence and fluency in what they study. Supplemented by retrieval practice, through deliberate practice students can increase their retention and recall of learning in their long-term memory, whilst freeing up working memory to tackle higher order thinking.
- **Scaffolding and differentiation:** Research shows that the most effective teachers provide scaffolds for difficult tasks. Instead of setting low expectations for learners, teachers ensure challenge is in place for everyone by pitching learning high and using a range of methods to support students to reach ambitious goals through a variety of processes and guidance.
- **Responsive teaching and metacognitive strategies:** Quality feedback and reflection on learning can support a students' metacognitive development, providing support not just on the subject matter, but how to approach learning in general and provide guidance to develop independent learners.

These elements inform the quality assurance processes and continued professional development within college – through a commonality of language, sharper focus on and connection to core pedagogical ideas and a shared approach to improving teaching through observation, reflection, modelling and coaching.

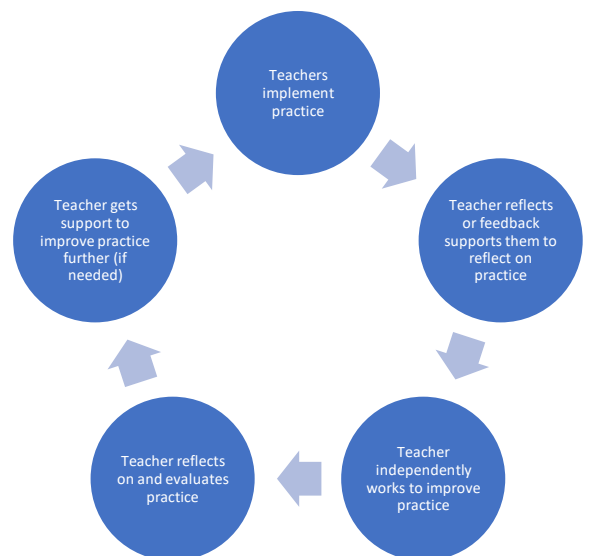
Developmental Process

It is important that as a college, we develop a culture of improvement, i.e. that all teachers understand their areas for development and can draw on support to improve their practice in these areas. Our approach to developing this culture can be thought of as two cycles:

Leadership led proactive T&L development;
QoE/SL driven:



Teacher led responsive T&L development;
subject leader driven:



The **Teaching and Learning Framework** outlines in greater detail the values, drivers and elements of our approach to Teaching and Learning at Horizon, along with concrete examples of what the elements look like in practice, and how we can in still a culture of improvement in staff across the college.