

The Across Cultures EAL Framework course and Action Plan

An international case study

This case study relates to an international school in Spain. EAL leads at the school took part in the Across Cultures EAL Framework Course and then drafted an Action Plan to transform their school's EAL provision.

The EAL leads were looking for a structured approach that allowed them to use their own professional training and expertise in EAL. Their overall aim was to bring a more rigorous approach to EAL in the school.

They gave an example of why this was needed:

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It's no secret that in international schools like ours, English language support is a vital cog in the proverbial machinery that allows our students to access the academic content of their lessons. But, what's perhaps less obvious is the ways in which a student's use of English can impact on their social and emotional experiences of the school environment.

Take 'Paco'. He's been at this school for four years now and is a native speaker of Chinese. He speaks Spanish at a conversational level and has adopted a Spanish moniker so that he might have an easier time blending in with his classmates. Nonetheless and despite his best efforts, his difficulties with English have prevented him from feeling successful in the classroom. He rarely speaks in social situations. His academic achievement is waning.

When confronted with a situation like this, we have to ask ourselves, what was his academic achievement like prior to being in an English speaking environment? What tools does he have at his disposal to negotiate the complex task of adapting to a new environment? And can we help him to feel successful in our school?"

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ACROSS
CULTURES

EAL FRAMEWORK

CHANGING TO A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

One of the EAL leads explained how the Across Cultures EAL Framework course transformed her view of EAL:

Sarah, EAL lead and immersion class teacher, Primary/Secondary/SEND for new-to-English and intermediate learners:

“Prior to completing the EAL Framework course, I always had a very narrow view of my subject. My job was ultimately to enable students to eventually join normal classes, with a view to supporting new-to-English learners, for up to two years, and SEND students for as long as it was deemed useful. I did not see the Big Picture; that virtually all of our students are EAL learners, and therefore that an EAL approach should be infused into every lesson. I was not aware that our role in EAL begins from the moment a prospective student contacts the school, at the very root of their learning journey. The course brought this to the forefront.”

Following the course, both EAL leads expressed their appreciation of the structure the EAL Framework course offered:

“It gave us a clear foundation from which to build an action plan that addressed the specific needs of our students and our school.”

- Ted, EAL lead and mainstream teacher

“Through the course, we discovered that the key to improvement in EAL learning is to develop an EAL mindset, and embrace the concept that all of us are EAL teachers. With this, we can improve admissions processes, welcome new students and new parents to an environment of belonging, and enable them to learn alongside their peers. In other words, we can provide a whole-school, multicultural approach that sees all students thrive.”

- Ted and Sarah, EAL leads



THE SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

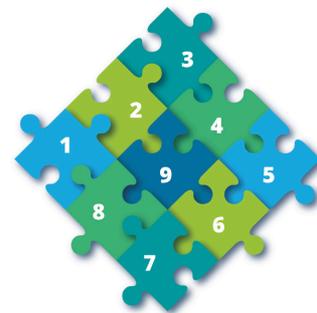
Following their participation on the course, the EAL leads created a school Action Plan. They divided up their aims and goals into five major areas, characterised as:

- ▶ Amazing Learning
- ▶ Amazing Teaching
- ▶ Relevant Training
- ▶ Provisioned Staff and Student Wellbeing
- ▶ Enhanced Admissions

Their Action Plan has a timeline of five years, with five clearly defined phases across these years. Within each phase, there are actions relating to teachers, students, parents and admissions, with concrete goals such as 'Develop a buddy programme for new students', 'Train staff in scaffolding for EAL needs' and 'Develop departmental vocab and language structure lists'. Some of the actions have clearly defined parameters, such as 'Include a language questionnaire in admissions', while others are of a more ongoing nature ('Develop a stronger sense of community amongst students').

In all parts, as the EAL leads stressed, the Plan has been greatly influenced by the Across Cultures EAL Framework course and its nine 'strands':

1. Understanding EAL Learners
2. Enhanced Admissions
3. EAL Assessment
4. Induction to English
5. Planning for EAL learners
6. Differentiation for EAL learners
7. Focused Scaffolding of Language
8. Supportive Use of Language Learning Strategies
9. Whole-School EAL Development



“This framework offered a strong basis for evaluating the effectiveness of our current systems and practices, as well as a guide for identifying key areas for improvement.”

The school's experience with the Learning Village

Sarah works in immersion classes across Primary and Secondary, including with SEN pupils, for learners who are new-to-English or intermediate-level EAL learners. She has recently begun using the Learning Village programme with her learners. In addition, as an EAL lead, she has trained all relevant staff within the school on the use of the programme.

the Learning Village to pre-teach and gauge what they know already. It is also a very useful tool for students to independently revise what we have covered in class.

I find that, for my students, the Learning Village provides a very visual, structured approach to learning English, created in a game-like style, that students seem to enjoy. SEND students also find it easy to access, and enjoy the feeling of success that they gain when completing the classes. We have many students who speak no English or Spanish. A visual approach really helps these students.

As a resource, Learning Village also provides teachers with visual, editable, and easily accessible resources that they can use in class. Teachers can also create their own tailor-made classes to put on the Learning Village. Overall, the experience has been a very positive one, showing increased understanding of English (with some students scoring 98% on end-of-unit assessments). There has been a definite improvement in English understanding across the school. More importantly, my students are able to feel a sense of belonging, and this helps them to succeed in all areas of the school."

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"All Primary students, from Year 2-6, have logins for the Learning Village, and each year group has customised classes to support their development of vocabulary, and grammar concepts. I have seen, first-hand, how students are motivated in English class by using the Learning Village.

In Secondary, all immersion and English support students also have a Learning Village account. For them, they go to The Islands, which is designed for teenagers. Across the school, students are receiving more immersion classes than they ever have. I use

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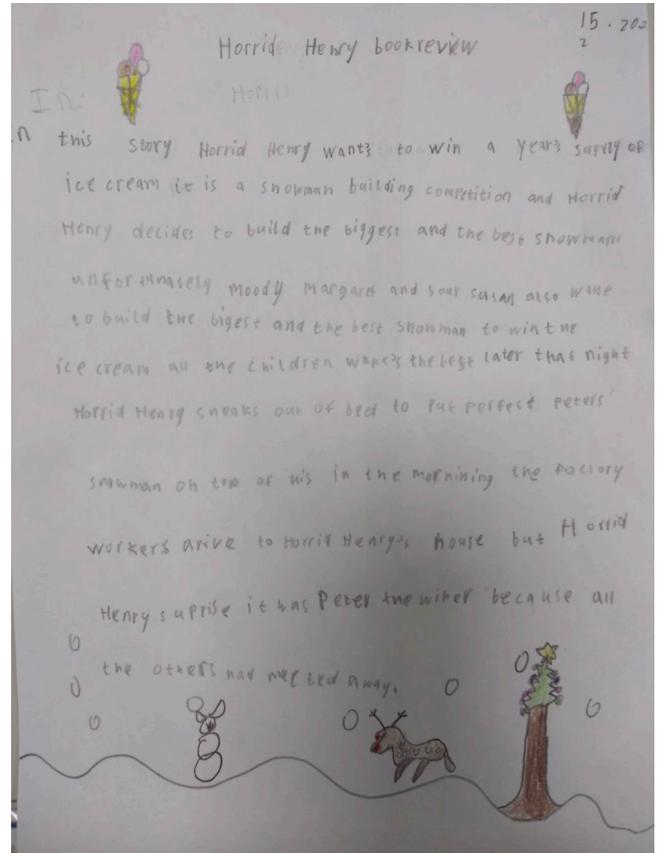
Dawn, Head of KS1 and 2 at the school is particularly enthusiastic about one particular aspect of the Learning Village:

"The Sentence Visualiser is an amazing tool, as it perfectly supports Talk for Writing in Primary. For EAL learners, it is particularly beneficial for students to have visual prompts. The Sentence visualiser allows me to enter a text and select the appropriate image. With this tool I have seen a huge improvement in the writing of my students. It's incredible!"

The Learning Village in action!



Year 3 writing based on use of the sentence visualiser in conjunction with Talk for writing.



The Learning Village in action