

# WHAT WORKED FOR ME

## EXPERIENCES FROM A SECOND YEAR TEACHER

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### *Growth mindset - peer observations & practice*

We are past the halfway mark of the year and at this point last year, I definitely began to feel 'transitioned' into the teaching profession and had already felt like I had achieved considerable growth. Try it right now – think about yourself at the start of the year and just briefly reflect on some areas of your practice you think you have significantly improved on, or to which you've made even minor tweaks.

It is very easy to be our own worst enemy at times, being overly self-critical, and this can have a detrimental effect on our motivation, mindset, home life and ultimately our teaching and learning. In these times, it is important that we are identifying these feelings and issues within our practice and viewing them as opportunities for growth and further learning.

### *Developing a growth mindset*

Imagine this hypothetical scenario:

*You've identified a group of students who aren't showing much progression with their reading. You feel like you've tried everything such as differentiating the task for them, allowing them more time to complete the task, and scheduled meetings with the parents. After implementing some strategies, you assess the students and they have still shown no progress.*

In this scenario, there are different ways we might respond. While some initial frustration is normal, a fixed mindset might make it very easy to blame the student e.g. "They have trouble focusing and always

daydream". If you see the problem as unsolvable, you might continue as normal and make no adjustments. You may continue to feel frustrated, unmotivated and helpless.

We can respond differently with a growth mindset. Initial feelings of frustration are normal - we are human. However, it is how we conduct ourselves after this stage that makes the difference. A teacher who is committed to a growth mindset could begin to ask some questions, using data to help understand what is happening.

- Why hasn't this student progressed since the strategies have been in place?
- What has been working well? What hasn't been working well?
- Have I altered my planning to cater for my student's needs?
- What else could I try?
- How can I seek more help?

This last question is something I always ask myself when faced with scenarios such as this. As we know, every individual is different and responds differently to things we put in place. What works for one student, might not work for another!

## *Peer Observations*

When encountering these situations, it is important to use the people around you for support, guidance and knowledge. When I have faced challenges in the past, I have asked my colleagues to observe areas of my practice that I have self-identified. For example, in my first year, I was team-teaching with a colleague and sometimes asked her if she would be able to observe aspects such as my behaviour management and how consistent I was being with our College flowchart. When initiating these conversations and observations, we used the Department of Education resource: [Peer Observation, Feedback and Reflection Guide](#) to ensure we were effectively communicating and maintaining professionalism throughout the observations, reflections and discussions. Through this process I was able to maintain consistency with my team-teaching partner, which led to a predictable environment for the students. After this we could see a significant difference in student behaviour from the feedback and actions I had implemented.

In essence, when we are faced with challenges, it is okay to accept that you don't know something. What I really want to emphasise is to seek support from a colleague, gain different viewpoints and think about changes to your practice that you can make as a result of independent research and external feedback