

Students with low literacy become active learners

EIF (Exploring Identities & Futures)

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For this teacher, the Personal Learning Plan (PLP) program had become scripted and uniform across their school. Students and teachers found the program boring and lacking the spark of individualism.

However, Katelyn was able to see the significant change and positive impact the introduction of EIF had on students, their self-motivation and collaboration between students and teachers.

Low-literacy students became active learners and carried the EIF-learnt strategies into other subjects and their everyday lives.

In particular, Katelyn observed a student with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) speaking openly about their identity as a learner, bringing knowledge of how they learn best from EIF into their English class in a group work situation. This student was able to claim their strategies, strengths, and required adjustments and present them to fellow English group members educating on positive participation.

With another student, Katelyn encouraged effective relationship-building strategies — an area the student self-identifies as a place he struggles the most. The student applied these strategies and concepts in other classes, such as Maths, where he actively and openly engaged the group, stating, ‘I really want to work on this for my personal wellbeing. If we could prioritise our work, but also if we could try and be friends by the end of it, that would be really great.’

She saw students taking pride in their achievements and collaborating at every level of task design and negotiating assessments. This opened pathways for students to work in innovative ways that teachers may not have been able to imagine or predict.

EIF still has room for the valuable careers focus of PLP, but it also provides more freedom for those that can benefit from developing other skills. This subject came along at the right time for this teacher and has helped reignite her passion for teaching through student conversations whilst resetting her expectations of student achievements when they are granted control over what they can do. She states that her students feel more acknowledged and valued.

Katelyn identifies the collaborative approach with students has changed the dynamic in her class. It's an open negotiation between her and her students on task types, assessments and current workload.

Participating in the pilot and innovating in this way has also made an impact on the way Katelyn has been viewed by leadership in her school and she has received affirming feedback from these sources on her own leadership and teaching progress.