

Time pressures alleviated

AIF (Activating Identities & Futures)

Anonymised

Teacher A taught Research Project (RP) for six years prior to Activating Identities and Futures (AIF) and was involved in marking and moderating the subject. They always saw the possibilities in the RP space and have had some great results despite the negative view amongst colleagues and students in the school around the subject.

She opted to do AIF with a colleague who had never taught RP before, which she found invaluable as her colleague came with no preconceptions. She noticed that both his approach and class thrived during the pilot because of this.

The school has a mixed range of students, yet the emphasis on striving and achieving higher grades is ever-present. Therefore, RP demanded a lot of time, energy, and resources to get some students to achieve higher grade bands. Typically, RP was allocated two lessons per week, and due to the nature of the structured approach to teaching it, the lessons would continue for the whole year, often with a boot camp near the end, as a final opportunity for some students.

The biggest changes came in two forms: logistics and timing, and agency and the learning process.

AIF was completed by Week 8, Term 2, rather than the year RP typically took. Even with three lessons a week allocated to the subject, the students were so happy and almost disbelieving that they had finished in the time they had. The time freed up for these students and opened possibilities for an additional subject in Semester 2. Teacher A felt that a semester's work was more reflective of the ten credits given.

Also, the flexibility in the timeline was very freeing for both the teachers and the students. The students didn't need to have the whole project mapped out with micro deadlines included, which reduced the pressure. They pursued and explored what was important to them, offering the best portfolio outcome.

As AIF is predominantly about the students' agency, the learning and process had to be driven entirely by the student. Teacher A realised they couldn't structure it all and provide templates. Once established that any form of collecting evidence is a suitable strategy for this subject, the teacher was able to supply solid guidance, which fostered their freedom. This meant that what was ultimately produced was student-driven, demonstrating that the students responded well to the authentic nature of evidence.

The outstanding outcomes were much more varied than what Teacher A had seen in RP before. All the students loved the process and the genuinely desired outputs.

Furthermore, they noticed the additional benefits like connections with family and external people. For example, one student's relationship strengthened with their grandmother by making an outfit together.

Another impressive example was when a student reached out to a contact with an international charity, and the result was profound, not just for their exploration of the topic but for the student's future.



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Through AIF's unique assessment of learning focusing on process as well as output, students were thrilled to understand they could achieve higher grades without the cumbersome written folios that RP often required. Being multi-modal really benefitted those students who typically are challenged with written assessments.

Teacher A looks forward to further enhancing the subject for next year's cohort.