

Students work it out

AIF (Activating Identities & Futures)

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Before the pilot, students who excelled in Research Project (RP) liked the structure and formality of RP. Similarly, those that didn't respond to additional writing and formality didn't perform as well. Unfortunately, the majority of students did not enjoy the subject, and it was hard to motivate them.

Erin was determined for Activating Identities and Futures (AIF) to not just be reimagined but an entirely new subject from RP. Therefore, she considered the assessments in a new way.

The biggest change for Erin, when introducing AIF, was allowing the students to have a go on their own whilst letting solutions and learning to unfold. With a focus on offering guidance on thinking, as opposed to providing answers.

The language of the performance standards provided clarity, and she used these to guide students' thinking rather than using scaffolds and templates, which she replaced with consistent guidance and skills progression via discussion with students.

Although students who respond well to structure, formality, scaffolds and templates initially found it hard to adjust, Erin noticed all students eventually worked out what was expected of them and completed their project with success beyond the physical output. A significant shift in attitude occurred throughout the project, and by the end, they embraced the different style and freedom to progress their own learning.

As they weren't assessed on their research skills, students took their area of interest in a different direction and, as a result, developed new skills and strengthened community connections beyond school and the project.

Erin witnessed their achievement beyond the project itself as they advanced transferable skills, confidence, and independence. Plus, the confidence to take control of their learning in other subjects.

Although Erin was unsure about elements of the subject and how to guide students, she felt that SACE Board provided good professional development along with reassuring dialogue. She has already reflected on teaching AIF and how to improve the learning experiences for future classes.

Overall, Erin believed this subject beneficial and is enthusiastic to participate in the next trial, to develop her own teaching style and pedagogy and foster students' learning.