



Diamond 9 is a collaborative strategy to help students prioritise key factors.

Blue Sky is a means of kick starting a student's imagination and compels students to provide a variety of options or ideas.

- Managing information and thinking
- Managing myself
- Communicating
- Being literate
- Being creative
- Working with others

JCT recognises the importance of teaching and learning strategies in the classroom. They activate student's engagement with learning. There are currently 21 strategies available for download in PDF format. Some of these strategies are also supported by video exemplars reordered in Junior Cycle classrooms in Ireland. Each video is about 4 minutes in length and is designed to support you in implementing these strategies. Best practice suggests that teachers explore these strategies within their subject department and experiment and embed their use with their students.

Our Project

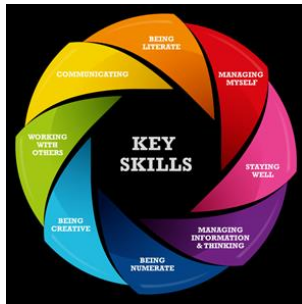
Diamond 9 and Blue Sky Thinking

To encourage students to work collaboratively; to activate their engagement with learning and provide teachers with the necessary skills to implement these AFL methodologies.

Aims

Students

- To improve groupwork skills such as communicating and turn taking.
- To promote collaboration amongst students.
- To compel students to provide a variety of options and ideas.
- To encourage students to prioritise information.



Teachers

- To host a TeachMeet to share ideas and insights.
- To increase awareness of AFL strategies amongst teachers.
- To provide materials and encouragement in implementation.
- To experiment and embed methodologies at Junior Cycle.

Our project focused on teaching and learning in terms of:

Learner Outcomes

Students worked in groups to analyse information and present it in various ways.

Learner experiences

Through group discussions students engaged with strategies and follow up assignments were informed by the thinking of the group.

Teachers' individual/collective/collaborative practice (repeated below?)(Check teacher num match to other)

All teachers were surveyed, two strategies that teachers were most keen to know more about were focused on. 17/34 teachers chose Blue Sky and 16/34 chose Diamond 9. A TeachMeet was held to present methods and share ideas. All teachers were invited to take part from different subject areas to trial the use of each strategy in their individual classes and report their findings.

Our project supports school leadership and management through:

Leading teaching and learning by facilitating whole school use of two teaching strategies which are appropriate to the learning intention.

Value and engage teachers in professional development and collaboration which enriches teachers' and students' learning.

Mediate change to respond to the implementation of the new Junior Cycle specifications.

Promote and facilitate the student voice to help teachers create successful learning moments.

Plan of action

Teachers were surveyed to find two teaching and learning strategies they wanted to find out more about. Packs were created to facilitate their use and a TeachMeet held to share expertise and promote implementation.

Teacher Implementation?

Subject departments grouped together during the Teachmeet to listen to presentations by staff facilitators. They were encouraged to brainstorm possible uses of each strategy for their own subject specifications, with specific focus on the first year curriculum.

Pre Implementation Student Survey?

Implementation

Over two six week periods, teachers (of first year classes) used Diamond 9 and Blue Sky where appropriate. Packs with detailed instructions aided the process. Reusable laminated posters and whiteboard markers were provided to encourage students explore many options and change their minds if they deemed it necessary.

Teacher Survey Results

Staff were asked if they used these strategies in class. 34 surveys were returned which accounts for over 80% of teaching staff. Of those surveyed 11 (34%) said yes and 23 (68%) said no they did not use the strategies.

Of the Yes responses 64% had used with first year groups so we decided to focus on this year group for more in depth feedback.

(Teacher focus quotes?)

What we did

1. Focused our research on two first year classes based on teacher survey results.
2. Investigated students' experiences of Diamond 9 and Blue Sky thinking through student survey.
3. Carried out two focus groups with a variety of first year students to deepen our knowledge on the student experience.

The student data we collected showed:

- 73% of students gave the strategies a rating of 5 or more.
- Various suggestions were made for improvements to the implementation.
- Positive and negative feedback on the strategies use and effectiveness were attained.

(diagrams inserted here) (quotes from focus group)

Conclusion/Our Achievements

- Students were owners of their learning; through peer assessment they were instructional resources for each other.
- Students became more confident, vocal and active by asking questions of each other and their teacher.
- Teachers enthusiastically attended our Teachmeet and implemented the strategies outside of first year classrooms which is positive.
- Teachers own practice was shaped by the variety of perspectives gained from content created by students.
- As a school we reflected on the main outcome of the project which was the promotion of cooperative learning and the benefits of AfL strategies.