



LEEDS CITY COLLEGE AND THE EXAMREADER

Building confidence while developing reading independence

A radically new delivery model for maths at Leeds City College was introduced in September 2016 and has resulted in a significant increase in the number of students taking a GCSE rather than a Basic Skill qualification. The model is based around personalised learning programmes, coaching, high quality online learning.

Historically, only students with a grade D or above were offered the opportunity to take a GCSE and those with a lower or no grade took a Basic Skill. Leeds City College currently has 7319 GCSE English and maths enrolments. This large number of students results in a significant amount of learners requiring exam access arrangements, with by far the most common need being dyslexia. This results in the need for a reader and often a small or separate room with a trained reader.

As of the 2018 summer exam series we had 1218 access arrangements. The need for readers in exams is by far one of the most common Exam Access Arrangements (EAA) as we work to support such a large number of students, the use of technology to facilitate examinations has become essential.

Introducing the ReaderPens

Leeds City College is a champion of technology enhanced learning, as such, they were keen to accept

“They can be more independent in their work and do not need to rely on a member of staff reading questions for them. Some said that they often felt self-conscious about asking staff to read for them, so prefer being able to do this by themselves more discreetly.”

the opportunity of trialling the reading pens with their learners. Their key aim in trialling the reading pens was to improve their students' independence both during exams and in lessons. This would, in turn, alleviate the immediate need for human readers, in exams and in sessions.

In September 2018 they trialled 50 of the exam reading pens with students that had an identified need for a reader and were also sitting a GCSE resit in the academic year. Students were carefully selected by the English and Maths Leads in each department to ensure that using a scanning pen was the most appropriate support. Students and staff were trained in using the pens and using them became the students' normal way of working.

Students used the pens during the November 2018 exam series and this was found to be logistically effective as it alleviated the need for as many human readers on exam days. While the sample of students was too small to see any significant

impact on results in November 2018, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from students led Leeds City College to purchase the 50 ExamReader pens, as well as, trialling 10 ReaderPens and 10 DictionaryPens from January 2019.

How to best use the ReaderPens

They found that using the reading pens both in class and in exams helped to build student independence, and allowed students to access texts without the need for tutor or LSA support. This also had a positive impact on students' confidence, wellbeing, and attitude to learning.



The feedback from staff surveyed was overwhelmingly positive;

“Builds learner confidence with the reading elements of GCSE English.”

“They have found the pens helpful in their lessons. The students who used it in the exams thought that it gave them the assistance they needed to access the texts, and they preferred the autonomy it gave them.”

“Reduced the requirement to have staff as readers.”

Student Testimonial

It wasn't just the staff that had nothing but good things to say. The students were raving about the support they found.

Student- “I liked being able to do the work in class without asking the LSA to help me. I like that I can use it in all my lessons and use it for my work at home. It makes me feel more independent.”

Student - “The reader pen I was given to test is very good, in general it reads extremely well across black text on a white background as it can distinguish the text well. The dictionary function is helpful in certain situations although it does have some troubles with some fonts.”

These disadvantages are miniscule compared to advantages I have now.”

Summary

Leeds City College will continue to champion assistive technology to enhance the learning experience. By creating an inclusive environment within the classroom and examinations. They believe that by developing their students' confidence, independence and motivation they will be enabled to progress into higher education, apprenticeships and employment. Leeds City College plans to continue to use Scanning Pens' technology as a support tool and use them as effectively as possible.



This project was led by Carol Layall, Head of English & Maths

