



Educake Case Study – Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School, London

We talked to an inner-city comprehensive school about their first two months of using Educake, including student motivation, giving feedback, gaining insight into students' learning habits and identifying areas of confusion.

Background

The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School is an 11-16 girls' inner-city comprehensive school, with about 800 students. The school was rated as outstanding in the latest OFSTED report in December 2014.

The school started using Educake in September 2016, and their students had answered over seventy thousand questions by half term in mid-October.

We talked to Tina Southall, Associate Headteacher and Science teacher, and began by asking why Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School started using Educake, and how it has helped their students:

Why did you start using Educake?

Tina: I asked my Head of Science to find something for online homework in Science, and she did some online research and found Educake. There has been some good stuff for English and Maths for some time, but nothing for Science. It was great to find something that actually matches the needs of teachers and students.

Last year we analysed students' performance on tests at a question level, and found that they had done less well when they needed Key Stage 3 knowledge than Key Stage 4. We'd also had staffing difficulties in the past, at Key Stage 3, which were coming to a head in our current Year 11 students. We noticed that they were not working independently and we really wanted to close this gap. Educake has real potential to do this.



How did you get started with Educake?

We sent our list of students to Educake, and they created all the students accounts and sent the log in details back to us.

To motivate students to use Educake, we have talked about it in assemblies. For example, in the Year 10 assembly we told them how well Year 11 were doing with Educake, and how many questions they added, and challenged them to do better. Of course, we also did the same with Year 11, the other way round.

Getting buy-in from the pastoral team helped too. And I think it helps to have SLT on board.

I even got someone from admin to phone all the Year 11 students during half term who hadn't done any Educake work yet.

What are you using Educake for?

Homework mainly, but also for consolidation and revision.

The feedback function of Educake is one of the most powerful things. When I have five minutes in the day, I log in to Educake and give some feedback on individual questions, or a whole test.

Giving typed feedback means students can actually read it, not like my rushed handwriting. Also, you can copy and paste feedback if you need to say the same thing to multiple students. I use growth mindset language where possible. I like to give feedback on different things – skills, content, progress and hopefully this motivates them.

I remember one student commented on a question saying that she'd misread it. I replied saying that it's very important to read the question carefully in the exams. It's this kind of specific feedback that's really easy to do in Educake.

We make sure the students know they can ask questions about any question, or test, which is part of our Commitment to Learning strategy. I want them to review each test, and I want to comment on it. Getting them to understand their weaknesses and review them is great.

The next challenge is to use feedback to change those students with a fixed mindset, to having a growth mindset.

Has there been any change in the students?

Yes, the students love it. They have amazed me. I'm even getting emails from them asking me to set them more Educake work!

I have to admit we've done a bit of bribery with chocolate bars using the league tables. We gave small rewards to the ten students who had made the most progress with Educake, and the ten who had answered the most questions.

Just before the year 11 parents' evening, students did feel pressure to do more Educake, because they knew we would print out the Educake student reports and talk about them (how many questions they'd answered, how many they'd got right, where they were doing well, and not well etc).

Since using Educake, we've also spotted that when students work independently they don't pace themselves. We noticed that over half term they were all doing it on Sunday evening, so now we're teaching them how to revise more sensibly, with things like interleaved learning.

Educake gives you a wider insight into their learning habits and how we need to change them. We're already thinking about strategies to develop better habits.

What has been the response from teachers?

Very positive. I've actually found that Educake has changed how I teach, depending on what I found out from the tests. The misconceptions are often not what I think they are, so I can then change what I focus on.

It's been very useful to identify areas of confusion, such as between mass spectroscopy and mass spectrometry.

We've also used Educake to identify areas of weakness in teaching within the department. You can see which topics have been done poorly by classes compared to other topics (I think it was electricity for us), and that can help us identify if we've got problems in our scheme of work, or revision.

Teachers like that they can add links to other online resources in the test, so that students can access the right area of Bitesize, or a YouTube video, for that test.



We're looking at using the Track Progress system in Educake at Key Stage 3 to support Assessment without Levels. There's real potential to use it for progress tracking.

Has it helped with teachers' workload?

There's much less marking now. Marking books was becoming a logistical nightmare. I teach Year 11 classes, as well as being an Associate Headteacher and having to set work, collect the books, mark the books, give feedback, and then hand out the books again just took forever.

Now book work is note-taking or going over classwork. Science teachers do have to act on student queries of questions and reviews of tests, giving feedback, within Educake but that still massively reduces written work.

Also, I can now set homework in advance, so if I have a quieter morning I can assign homework that will appear to students in a few weeks' time, when I'm busier.

What's your IT set up like in your school?

We have several computer rooms we can book, and there are two laptop trolleys. There are some teachers in the school piloting Google Chromebooks I think.

Most of the time Educake is done at home, and we don't have any problems with that. It's also used for cover work.

Are you worried that Educake doesn't produce paper records?

Not at all. If OFSTED came in tomorrow I'd be happy to stand up and show them the books we use (peer and self-marked, checked by teachers), the required practical booklets, the end of term summative assessment. I could then also show them the Educake work, including the questions and tests that have been reviewed by teachers.

One of our Associate Headteachers is reviewing feedback across the school at the moment. We need it to be a more effective use of staff time.



What's your overall impression of Educake so far?

I'm absolutely sold and convinced completely by Educake.

In the long term, I'm sure that it will reduce teacher workload, increase teacher input, and increase student outcomes.

It's just exactly what I want from a system, even down to extracting the individual questions the students get wrong.

Tina Southall was speaking to Charley Darbishire, founder of Educake.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School: www.egaschool.co.uk

Educake: www.educake.co.uk