

Educake Case Study
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School
London





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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 900 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 he did some online research and found Educake. There have been some good online packages 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 noticed that students 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?

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 had done, and challenged them to do better. Of course, we also did the same with Year 11.

Getting support from the pastoral team helped too. It helps to have SLT on board. Someone from the admin team phoned 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 aspects. When I have five minutes in the day, I log in to Educake and give some feedback on individual questions, or a whole test.

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.

Giving typed feedback makes it easier for students to read. 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.

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 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 all 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 not always 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.

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 challenge. I teach Year 11 classes, as well as being an Associate Headteacher.

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 allocated to Science. There are some teachers in the school piloting Google Chromebooks.

Most of the time Educake is done at home, and we don't have any problems with that. It's also been 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 show them the books we use (peer and self-marked, checked by teachers), the required practical booklets and the end of term summative assessments. I could then also show them the Educake work, including the questions and tests that have been reviewed by teachers, the progress tracking and student feedback sheets.

One of our Assistant Headteachers is reviewing feedback across the school at the moment.

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 effective teacher feedback and improve student outcomes.

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

Tina Southall was speaking to Charley Darbishire, founder of Educake, in November 2016.

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