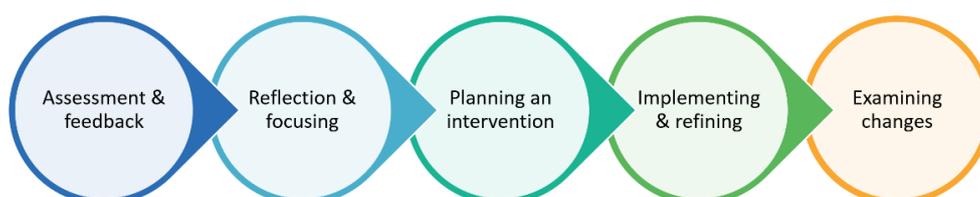


## NSI Partnerships Case Study: Michael, Year 11 Photography



When Michael's<sup>1</sup> school worked with NSI, all teachers were asked to select a 'focus class' for their collaborative inquiry efforts. Michael chose his Year 11 photography class. Through NSI's inquiry process, Michael hoped to learn more about how these students felt about his classroom environment and find ways to improve his work with them. He also hoped that this would result in improved academic achievement across this class, as the students were not performing as well as he would have liked.



### **Step 1: Assessment and feedback**

Michael's class completed NSI's Classroom Climate Questionnaire (CCQ). NSI analysed the data and provided Michael with a personalised feedback package. A range of aspects of the classroom environment were examined in the CCQ and the survey data let Michael compare students' perceptions of the *actual* environment in his class with their *preferred* learning environment.

### **Step 2: Reflection and focusing**

Michael was particularly interested in the students' feedback related to assessment – the formative benefits of assessment activities and the clarity of assessment criteria. This stood out to Michael as he had previously engaged in a professional development project related to assessment. Reflecting on that earlier work, Michael commented:

*I became more aware that, when an assessment was returned to the students, many of them only looked at the final mark/grade and that they rarely took the time to read the feedback notes that I was providing. The assessment sheet was placed in their file/folio and the student moved on with the program of work. Sometimes, regardless of intervening discussions, the student would repeat the same or similar errors.*

Michael decided to focus on assessment again for his work with NSI, hoping that he would be able to increase his students' engagement with and use of assessment feedback.

### **Step 3: Planning an intervention**

In the 'planning an intervention' stage, teachers are encouraged to access a broad range of information, ideas and people to inform their planning, as well as reflecting on their existing

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym.

'teaching toolkit'. Michael remembered reading about a strategy in which teachers provided digital commentaries as part of assessment feedback. He stated:

*I decided that I should explore strategies that would more positively engage the students in the processes of assessment by providing THEM with better tools and understandings about assessment; providing feedback that was not only complex but personalised, relevant and engaging; providing feedback in a way that catered for all types of learners. I realised that mp3 players, iPods and of course mobile phones would be the tools of preference for generation "Y".*

Michael decided that in addition to the written feedback he usually provided when he assessed each student's work, he would record himself giving oral feedback and provide this audio file to the student. He also decided that he would allocate class time for students to listen to this feedback rather than relying on them listening in their own time.

#### **Step 4: Implementing and refining**

Michael implemented his new strategy over a six-week period. During this time, he provided digital feedback once to each student. After the first few students had received their digital feedback, Michael wrote in his reflective journal that:

*Last week, four students who had finished their work early (giving me the chance to get the work marked etc.) received their audio files and, at the conclusion of the process, I had one student whip out a note book. I asked her what she was doing and she informed me that she was taking down notes, so that she could incorporate the recommendations in her future work. It doesn't get much better than that for me.*

Encouraged, Michael stuck with his strategy over the remaining weeks until all students had received personalised digital feedback on their work. At the end of this process, he noted that:

*Students often listened to their feedback and made immediate adjustments to current works based on my recommendations. I noticed also that they were more engaged in the processes of assessment.*

Michael received comments from some students saying that they liked the personalised feedback and could tell that Michael was really trying to help them improve.

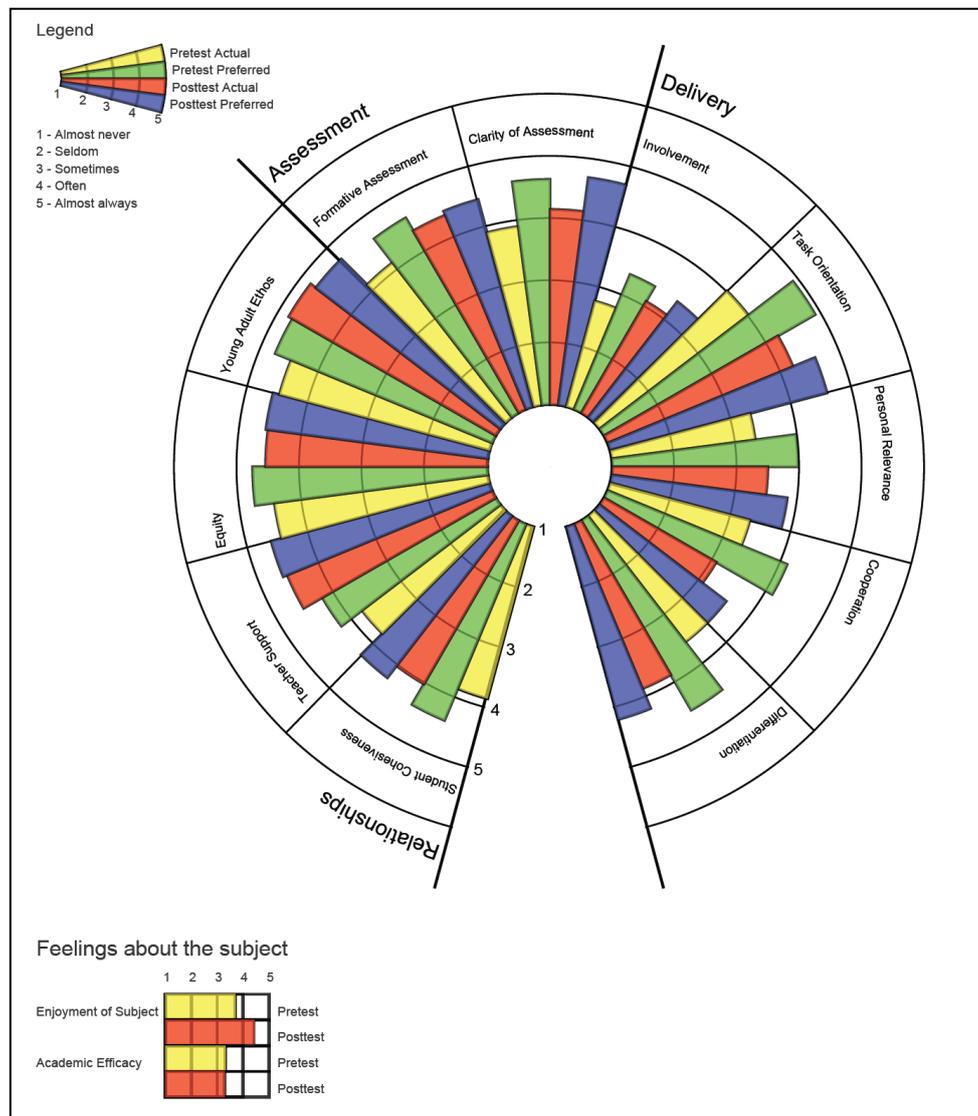
#### **Step 5: Evaluating the changes**

After the six-week intervention, Michael's class completed the CCQ for the second time. NSI analysed the data and provided feedback to Michael, letting him see the *before* and *after* data side by side. The figure below shows students' scores for:

- Actual perceptions before the intervention (yellow)
- Actual perceptions after the intervention (red)
- Preferred perceptions before the intervention (green)
- Preferred perceptions after the intervention (blue).

Comparing the yellow and green scores shows the gaps between students' actual and preferred perceptions of the classroom environment at the beginning of this process. Comparing the yellow

and red scores shows the change in students' perceptions of the actual classroom environment as a result of Michael's intervention.



The students' *actual* scores for both formative assessment and the clarity of assessment criteria had improved after the intervention (red / pre-test actual compared to yellow / post-test actual), as Michael had hoped. In addition, the scores for teacher support, differentiation, and students' enjoyment of the subject had also increased. The gaps between actual and preferred perceptions had also reduced for several scales when the before (yellow and green) scores and the after (red and blue) scores were compared. This suggested that as Michael had improved areas such as Equity, Formative Assessment and Task Orientation, students were more satisfied with the new classroom environment (so there was not so much of a gap between their actual and preferred perceptions in the post-test data).

Overall, Michael was delighted with these results and the impact that the digital feedback strategy had had on his class.