



Using Alps as a tool to make a difference Elliott Hudson College

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Context

Elliott Hudson College opened in September of 2015 and is a Post 16 Free School located in the Beeston area of Leeds. The college serves a community with pockets of significant social and economic deprivation, indeed 30% of students live in postcodes which are in the bottom 10% nationally on the index of multiple deprivation. The purpose of the college is to act as a catalyst for social mobility, giving students the academic profiles and core skills required for success in 21st Century Britain.

Content

The 2017 A Level results were the first full set of A Levels for Elliott Hudson College and we were delighted that a L3VA Progress Score of 0.29 made us the fourth highest performing sixth form college in the country. We were very recently graded 'Outstanding' in all areas by Ofsted. The success of the college is underpinned by a number of core values, all of which are supported by Alps.

In our experience Alps has been successful in driving student performance (and consequently the performance of the college) for the following reasons:

- Alps is part of the culture at EHC, it is fundamental to many of our Teaching, Learning and Assessment systems and processes.
- Alps data proves that in the right setting, even students with low GCSE point scores, can achieve excellent A Level results.
- Alps operates at individual student level, subject level, faculty level and whole college level. At each of these levels it is the basis for assessing our effectiveness in maximising student progress.
- Alps does not provide solutions, but it does provide the basis for identifying meaningful questions.
- Every grade does count with Alps, changing an E grade to a D grade is as important to us as changing a B grade to an A grade. This helps focus the mind of staff on where grade improvements can happen. Staff are clear about the number of grade improvements that are needed to move to the next Alps score.
- Alps does create healthy competition between departments, staff want to do well.
- Alps is a system that is easily understood by all stakeholders: Governors, staff and students are all trained in the important elements of the system.



Accountability is high in a Sixth Form College. Every student in every class is on a pathway to external examinations and all staff feel the pressure of high expectations and the visibility that Alps brings. It is important to us that Alps is not used as a mechanism to be critical of teachers, but as a mechanism to strive for continual improvement. At EHC we have tried hard to build a culture where we see the results of students as a team effort. If one department appears to be doing well, then staff can work collaboratively to see what aspects of their practice are having an impact. Getting the balance of individual accountability right has been a challenge and one that we have not always got right. I am hopeful that we are now closer to a true sense of team ownership of the results.

At EHC success in A Level examinations comes from daily actions with students. In classrooms we have a regular assessment model. Students are tested formally every three weeks and grades in tests are uploaded to our MIS system, where they are assessed against the Alps methodology. We have developed tracking processes that allow staff to be able to constantly assess the progress of their classes against their Alps thermometer. As a consequence, students and staff get regular feedback on their progress and students who are not meeting their Minimum Expected Grades (MEGs) are identified for intervention. It is our view that students will not maximise their progress if they are not clear about their progress (or lack of it); as a college we are then able to intervene effectively with students who are not making sufficient progress.

The beauty of Alps is its simplicity. It allows teachers and leaders to be clear about the impact that they are having and it identifies when things are not as they should be allowing prompt intervention. Like all systems, Alps is only as good as the people that are using it and their level of commitment to it. At EHC we are very fortunate that we have a very dedicated and professional team who are totally committed to ensuring that all of our students finish their courses with the best grade they can possibly achieve. Alps has very definitely helped us to establish a culture which allows our students to thrive and more than anything else, at EHC we believe that it is the development of a positive culture that is the key to having a successful college.



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