



Strengthening Learning Conversations: a case study

Overview:

With the advent of Covid-19 lockdowns, keeping learners engaged presented its own challenges. However, it also provided the opportunity for learning setting teams to work with learners in different ways. This case study shares some of the new opportunities that teams used to engage and support learners in their learning journey

Principles:

The six basic principles of engaging individual learners remain the same across modalities.

- **Strike up a rapport!**
- **Start where learners are at!**
- **Listen and respond to each girl's needs**
- **Use the unit story**
- **Seek other learning opportunities**
- **Work at the learner's pace**

When working with small groups, it is important to consider how to engage with every learner's varying and multiple needs.

- **Be prepared for the range of learners and abilities you will encounter:** Be prepared with a range of ideas and activities to engage learners at all levels
- **Use a mixture of individual and group focused activity:** Group-based tasks can promote cooperation between learners, motivation and ongoing support. It is also important that learners have opportunities to receive support from you on developing their individual knowledge and skills.
- **Make use of opportunities for collaborative learning:** Working in small groups means not only that learners can learn from you but that they can learn from each other.
- **Enlist the assistance of more advanced learners to support other learners with more basic tasks:** Teaching others helps consolidate learning. Allowing more advanced students to support others helps them become even more confident in their own knowledge and skills.

Safety:

- **Think about the programme SOP and any safety training.** A key priority is to keep in touch with learners to support their safety and wellbeing, when the context may lead to increased vulnerabilities.

Case Study:

Miss Ncube has begun to arrange small group and 'door to door' visits with learners. She has grouped these so that she meets learners from the same cohort and who live in the same village within a single timeframe. Miss Ncube hopes to establish small groups of learners, local to one another to work with and who may be able to support each other between visits.

In preparation for her visits, Miss Ncube reviews the information she has for each learner, attempting to recall their interactions in the learning setting, including their strengths and areas in need of development. Miss Ncube finds this easier for some learners than others, as it has now been months since she has had contact with some learners.

Miss Ncube gathers together some resources in preparation for her visits. In what she calls her 'bag of tricks' she has a couple of counting strings, letter and sound cards, spare learner workbooks, some plain paper and pencils along with some activities and games to make learning fun! She remembers that, during COVID 19, materials could not be shared between learners, but it didn't stop the fun!

Practice:

Appreciating this next phase of **learner engagement** as **part of an ongoing journey** is helpful. Working 1-2-1 and in small groups **offers the opportunity to get to know your learners well** (this can sometimes be very difficult in large classes). You might think of yourselves as travelling educators capable of **creating learning environments** wherever you go. As you move between learning environments you are not abandoning the good practices you have already developed as educators, rather you will be transporting them from one setting to another. So, it is important to be prepared, be equipped and to also note the progress and achievements of your learners along the way.

Top tips:

- **Maintain contact records:** These assist you in getting to know your learners and their needs.
- **Be prepared:** If you are organised and have considered the learners needs you will be better placed to support them.
- **Do not leave arrangements open ended:** Agree dates and times to contact learners and keep to them.
- **Think about the time you have:** You will have less time with the learners than when at the learning setting. Choose the activities most helpful to the learners in the same way that you have done with your telephone conversations.