



CLEVELAND
SCHOOL SPORT PARTNERSHIP

CASE STUDY 2 2021-22

Competition

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Background

Competition in the Cleveland area has traditionally been the main focus of schools. The same schools tend to win the cluster competitions and the same schools generally end up last. As the new SGO, (started in September 2021) the first thing I was told was that competition is what the schools value, competition is what the schools want and that is all we need to concentrate on, particularly as most schools buy in to the Cleveland School Sport Partnership.

The Cleveland SSP had an extensive competition programme, which followed the format of cluster competition, Partnership, and County finals. There were four clusters of schools. Up until the point I was appointed SGO, each cluster had a one-day-a-week School Sports Coordinator in post. Two retired as they had heard that the School Games and felt that the time was right to retire.

Due to the retirements, the new SG Outcomes and the appointment of a new SGO, it gave me the confidence to make changes sooner than I otherwise would have.



My first question was 'how do the schools know that all they want is competitive events, if that is all they have been offered'.

At first it was difficult to change the culture of 'competition' and winning being the focus at every event.

I needed to explain WHY.

Intent

The intention was to change staff perceptions of what a competitive event is, and to implement some of the changes to competition events into next year's Events Calendar. This focussed on outcome 2, to create positive experiences ensuring our events are designed to reflect children's motivation, competence and confidence and has clear intent.

I made some bold changes on day one.

Gone were the SSCo roles.

Replaced with an SGO & Partnership Manager, a Teaching & Learning Lead, and a Competition & Leadership Manager.

Gone were the four clusters of schools.

Replaced with The Cleveland Partnership. Cleveland is mostly a rural area, so we continued to work in the four areas, or close by, but stopped referring to them as clusters. For logistical reasons and the cost of transport, we have now created a Coast area and a Country area. Schools can enter in either area, usually choosing the one closest to them. This has meant that the events are bigger, but we now have fewer events that are the same, freeing up more time for different events.

Gone were the cluster Primary Link Teacher meetings.

Replaced with PE Subject Leaders Meetings for all schools in the area to attend. This was to facilitate more learning. Some clusters only had five schools, so they now had 19 schools to share good practice with. I could also explain the 'why' for the changes being implemented across the partnership, giving the same message to all PE Leads at the same time.



Due to Covid, the competition calendar had not been finalised for the year. That enabled me to make some changes at the beginning, which wasn't popular, and did create some stiff conversation which usually started with 'That won't work!'. My response was simply, 'How do we know it won't work if we haven't tried?'. I made it known that trial and error is all part of the process, and that we would change some things and keep some for this year, reviewing all events as we went and at the end of the year.

Impact

On the back of the successful Netball event, it was decided that the next development day would be for the cricket events in the summer term. The usual cluster events were renamed 'Coast and Country', with two events rather than the traditional four.

Local cricket grounds were used, and volunteer coaches recruited to help on the day. The schools whose children were highly skilled in cricket entered the competition and were not frustrated by the school teams who were not skilled, and vice-versa - the school teams who needed more skills development enjoyed a day of coaching and fun games. The local club was also able to recruit new members to their junior section.

As well as the success of the children, taking part in appropriate activity, the teaching staff were also very pleased with the changes taking place. They felt that their children were benefitting from the activity they were taking part in, rather than just another competition to attend.



Next Steps

At the final PE Subject Leader meeting of the year, I asked them if they would like to go back to how we used to run meetings and events, or continue on our journey to improve our physical activity and competition offer. It was a 100% thumbs up for continuing to improve our offer, and to keep the schools together and not return to cluster events or meetings.

Next year's Events Calendar has had a full re-vamp. There are events for every year group, from a story-book trail for Early Years, to ReActiv8 festivals to re-engage children into physical activity, to Development days, Fundamentals (Manipulation), and of course, the Fundamental Superhero Academy... and competition.

All we have done this year is catch up. We have educated staff, in-particular PE Leads, explaining why we are making changes. We have included CPD at every meeting, such as 'Reframing Competition' and 'Active 60 minutes'. Our journey is long, but when everyone we work with has bought in to the changes, it makes all the hard work worth it.



I have not done this on my own. Nor can I make claim to the ideas. All I did was implement some of the amazing work SGO's are already doing. I have had incredible support from the other Tees Valley SGO's, all of whom have a wealth of knowledge and experience and are always keen to share. In particular, I would like to mention my mentors and YST Development Coaches: Claire Tennyson and Dan Moody who have inspired me and have given me the best possible start as a new SGO. *Thank you.*