

CASE STUDY

GOLDMAN SACHS: ENHANCING LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

This case study outlines the partnership between Goldman Sachs and Ark Evelyn Grace Academy in Lambeth.

Background

Ark Evelyn Grace Academy was introduced to Goldman Sachs by BITC in 2016 and the two have developed a long-term relationship.

Goldman Sachs and its people are committed to helping communities where they work and live, and in places where opportunity can be multiplied, to make a difference. The school and Goldman Sachs have worked with each other in a variety of ways for the benefit of the pupils.

69.9%

of pupils are eligible or have been eligible for free school meals within the last 6 years

54.1%

of pupils do not have English as their first language

In the early stages of the relationship, Goldman Sachs attended a staff meeting with the Headteacher to help get to know the school and establish how the company could best offer support. It was at this meeting that the Head of Maths requested the creation of a Maths Challenge which would engage pupils in maths



and demonstrate real-world applications. The project would also support the school to demonstrate Gatsby Benchmark 4 (Careers in the Curriculum) and develop the essential skills of students.

"I DON'T EVEN THINK OF THEM AS GOLDMAN SACHS, THEY ARE OUR PARTNER AND THEY WILL DO ANYTHING WE ASK"

Francesca Hall, Ark Evelyn Grace Academy

What did Goldman Sachs do?

Over the course of a month, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 undertake the Big Data Challenge. At the project launch session, students are given fictitious transactional data and client issue reports to tell a story linking customer satisfaction to good business. Revenues are used to illustrate that if there are fewer client complaints then there is more revenue. The volunteers then use examples in everyday life where this would be the case and asked the students to imagine the

impact of poor customer experience upon their own purchasing choices. The volunteers also talk about the jobs they have at Goldman Sachs including how they use maths and computer skills to do those jobs.

The project promotes essential skills whilst developing maths and IT skills using Microsoft Excel. Students are split into teams and use the data for different fictitious client activity to calculate their ROI. This allows them to identify the lowest performing businesses and determines which of the datapoints correlate most strongly. To do this, they are asked to use Excel to analyse and manipulate large amounts of raw data.

The student groups are then given two weeks, with input from Goldman Sachs mentors, to consider the data. The students are tasked with problem solving; suggesting solutions for how the teams can improve performance.

Finally, the students are invited to Goldman Sachs offices to present their findings and recommendations. Senior staff from Goldman Sachs listen to the presentations, review the projects, provide feedback, and select an overall winner. All the participating students celebrate their hard work with refreshments and pizza courtesy of Goldman Sachs as their reward.

Factors for success

Process of co-creation

Initially, Goldman Sachs created the project and tested it with the Head of Maths. Some initial tweaks were made to ensure all the key terms were either explained or other language was used to ensure the content was accessible for the students. Responding to the school's request for the project meant that there was clear buy-in from the school senior leadership team for the project. The input and buy-in from the school were critical to the creation and ongoing delivery of the programme.

Ability to be flexible and adapt quickly

Whilst running the project, Goldman Sachs felt the students were finding it a little too technical and that some students needed to develop their Excel skills further to make a success of the project. Goldman Sachs adapted the project slightly to make it simpler and added some additional sessions with Goldman Sachs volunteers helping students to use Excel to review the data. Volunteers would meet their student group in the school computer room and the school also added some sessions to support the students to grow confidence in using Excel. Learning and adapting to these needs was really important to the success of the project.

Preparing and supporting student success

After delivering the project for the first time, Goldman Sachs identified that additional support should be put in place earlier in the project to ensure the students could make best use of the contact times they had with Goldman Sachs volunteers and maximise the benefits of the project upon their skills development. Goldman Sachs added additional preparation tasks for the students to complete and asked them to supply questions in advance. This enabled:

- the students to take time and think about the project including what would be helpful to gain from the contact time;
- the students to have greater ownership and management of their project;
- the students to progress at the right rate to ensure all of the work would be complete by the end of the project; and
- the volunteers to prepare answers and examples for the questions students may have in advance to make this as beneficial as possible.

Goldman Sachs volunteers also did some preparatory calls with the teacher before going in to see students, to check their perspective on how the students were progressing.

“IN THE FIRST YEAR THERE WAS A REAL MIXTURE OF UNDERSTANDING DEPENDING ON WHETHER STUDENTS HAD GOT TOGETHER IN ADVANCE TO REVIEW THE CHALLENGE OR LEFT IT UNTIL THE DAY. WE’D OFFERED AN OPTIONAL TELEPHONE CALL BEFORE WE WENT IN AND FOR THOSE WHO DIDN’T JOIN THE CALL, WE COULD SEE THEY WERE NOT AS WELL PREPARED OR ABLE TO ENGAGE AS WELL IN THE PROJECT. THE NEXT TIME AROUND WE MADE THE CALL MANDATORY SO WE COULD HELP COACH THEM THROUGH THE PROCESS. EMBEDDING THE SKILLS BUILDER SKILLS (ESSENTIAL SKILLS) INTO THE PROJECT ALSO ENCOURAGED SOME OF THE TEAM-WORKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING ASPECTS NECESSARY FOR THE MATHS CHALLENGE AND MADE THIS REQUIREMENT MORE OVERT AND CLEAR TO THE STUDENTS”

Liz Wilcockson, Goldman Sachs

Although initially somewhat intimidated by their surroundings, the students grew in confidence over the duration of the programme. Equally, their interactions with Goldman Sachs staff fostered a definite increase in confidence. Mixing with adults outside a school setting is unusual for many students and knowing that they could communicate efficiently and articulate their ideas coherently was a real boost. Presenting to some top Goldman Sachs staff was very encouraging.

Seeing maths in ‘action’ was a very real-life lesson of the application of academic learning to a data problem. Linking the classroom and the world of work answers the question, ‘why do I have to learn this?’ which was a common refrain heard among teachers.

Outputs and impact

Workplace visits are vital for students to see a setting and be able to envisage themselves working in such an environment. Such visits are aspirational and increase motivation.

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