

Pound shop pedagogy!

A challenge to use pound shop purchases in lessons to boost engagement and learning generated much excitement among teachers.

Mark Fitzgibbon explains

At The Marlborough Science Academy, a focus on teaching and learning is at the heart of everything.

Every week we hand over staff briefing to “Top Tip Teaching Tuesdays”, where new ideas and best practice are shared among staff. This briefing is also an ideal opportunity to share with staff feedback from our “Learning Counts” meetings. These are weekly meetings held by members of the leadership team with sample students from each year group (7 to 13), where innovative and creative approaches in the classroom are highlighted by the students.

With budgets being as they are, we launched a “Pound shop pedagogy” competition in one of our Tuesday briefings and were delighted when 47 members of staff signed up to take their chances.

The idea was simple – try to incorporate the use of items bought from pound shops into their teaching.

The day arrived when all the items purchased had been delivered. It was announced in morning briefing that a live draw would be made at break time in the staffroom. An air of anticipation built as we employed the classic FA cup-style draw. Staff names were pulled out of a hat and allocated with said items.

The atmosphere was fantastic and what was particularly exciting was the spontaneous dialogue that erupted from colleagues focused on how they were going to introduce pipe cleaners, balls of string, paper plates and so on into their lessons.

Staff were given a two-week window to implement their £1 item into a lesson of their choice and then return photos of what they had created, a synopsis of how it was implemented, along with student feedback of how they thought learning had been enhanced.

The atmosphere around the school was electric with

staff entering into serious but fun competition with each other to win the modest prizes we had offered, but also to incorporate their resources into their lesson in the most ingenious way possible.

We have since created a newsletter, which has been shared with all staff along with a resource bank of ideas. Planning for the next CPD challenge is already underway, with ideas already forthcoming from our staff.

Among the many examples from this easy exercise, a maths teacher was given a pack of paper plates to incorporate into their lesson.

She decided to paint them to create two large Twister mats. The students from each team had to answer square number/square root questions. If they got the question right they would spin the spinner and move to one of the corresponding coloured plates, if they got it wrong another member of their team would have to join them on the mat.

A music teacher incorporated a pack of silver party plates. He decided to compare the elements of music to cooking ingredients. He asked his students to mind-map what “ingredients/flavours” were the most important in the make-up of music. The students worked in groups and put as many ideas as they could on sticky notes attached them to the thinking wall (all 107 of them). After discussing the different suggestions the class selected the top 18 to be displayed on the “Party Plates of Progress”.

In a media studies lesson, a small wipe-clean memo board was used by students who had to design and develop the front page of a tabloid or broadsheet. The board was used by students to create success criteria for the task. A student would have to come up with appropriate success criteria and nominate someone else by passing the board on. The board was then placed at the front of the class for reference.

There were many more creative ideas employed during the exercise. Among the other items in the draw were a mini set of plastic drawers, raffle tickets, postcards, dominoes and dice, fluorescent stars, pipe cleaners, driving plates (L and P), foil party hats, plastic pegs, pirate balloons, fly swats, an egg timer, and 100 jumbo straws. One teacher even ended up with a One Direction duvet!

We were delighted with the response and the impact it has had across the school in many areas. And the



Innovation: (clockwise from top left) The Twister mat, the Party Plates of Progress, and wooden pegs being put to use

cost? The princely sum of £90, including £40 of prizes for staff. An additional prize was given to the English faculty who had all 10 of their teachers submit ideas.

To make the competition easy to set up and run, I took sole responsibility for choosing all of the items that were to be implemented into lessons. By visiting pound shop websites it made the choosing and ordering of items much quicker.

In total I spent 45 minutes to order all of the items. It is also important to have an idea of how each item you purchase could be used in a classroom setting so you can offer advice or start discussion if needed.

Once the live draw had been completed. The offer was given to staff to “repick” an item (we had spare ones left over) or to swap with another colleague.

Interestingly enough, no member of staff wanted to change any of the items they picked. Staff were also allowed to add to their item should they wish to do so.

And if you want to know, the One Direction duvet was used in a French lesson with students making as many words associated to the duvet in both English and French as a starter activity!

• *Mark Fitzgibbon is deputy headteacher of The Marlborough Science Academy in Hertfordshire. Email him at M.Fitzgibbon@marlborough.herts.sch.uk*