Developing a Communication Innovation Bank

What is a Communication Innovation Bank?

It's just a fancy way of saying you will share good ideas, but in a really consistent way.

A Communication Innovation Bank is a way to collect and share different ways you can support communication in your school. This can include things you have tried out in your school or ideas you have seen from others that you would like to try.

It can include: ideas, resources, approaches, strategies, and techniques. It could cover: things for the whole school, like communication friendly approaches; things for staff to try out in class or at other times of the school day; ideas for training and staff development. It's a great way to pull together all the fantastic ideas there are in your school, amongst your staff as well as working out what particular things work best for you.

You'll need to decide:

- Who is responsible for looking after the Communication Innovation Bank. This could be your Communication Champion if you have one, or another keen member of staff.
- If your Communication Innovation Bank is going to be real or virtual: would it work best online, or as a tangible, real set of resources - or maybe a combination of both?
- What you are going to include in there
- How you will keep the Bank 'alive' – how will you encourage people to look and use what's there, and to share their ideas and examples?
- Whether a common format for your Bank would be useful, so that all of the ideas follow a similar format
- What the system is for uploading to or including things in the Bank
- How you might get and share ideas from/with other commitment schools

Whatever you decide, it's a good idea to keep your Communication Innovation Bank simple. Headings are useful for people to share their good ideas and practice and could include:

- What it is or what I did
- What it is particularly useful for
- Which pupils it's best for
- What happened when I used it/did it
- What pupils thought of it
- Who else might find it useful

An example is given at the end of this fact sheet.

How can we share ideas in our Bank?

Here are some ideas:

- Have a short slot in each staff meeting, either for the whole staff or in teams, departments or faculties, for someone to bring and share an idea they have used
- Have an INSET day or similar professional development event to share ideas
- Hold a Swap Shop or network event for other commitment schools in your area – we know schools that have done this to really good effect
- Share ideas through a 'speed dating' type activity or Teach Meet
- Share ideas in short accessible ways using different media – such as a Prezi, video clip or podcast
- Organise a competition or incentives for people to share their ideas
- Include a rating scheme for how useful ideas are – perhaps 'Trip Advisor'-style star ratings?
- Present ideas as posters, leaflets or handouts
- Collate ideas into a booklet of good practice
- Nominate a 'resource reviewer' in your school – when a new resource is available or shared, they could review it. You could rotate this role so different people have a turn

Here's one we made earlier, using a well known strategy!

What I did

Some children lack confidence to answer whole-class questions. I'm not sure if this is because they are not confident or because they don't know the answer.

I introduced a traffic light system for my class. Each child had a sheet with red, amber and green on. When I asked a tricky question to the whole class, pupils could point to green if they were ready to answer, amber if they needed more time to think and red if they didn't know.

I could give more time if needed, or choose to rephrase my question if lots of children had pointed to red.

I demonstrated to my class how to use the system and practised it regularly.

What happened?

It seemed to focus attention on my questions. It was clear that sometimes my question was too hard for most of the class! It gave children the chance to have more time to think, and more children were then able to offer answers.

What it's good for?

Giving children thinking time; giving me a clear view of who is finding the questions particularly difficult; giving me an indication of when to adapt my question; encouraging more children to join in

What did the pupils think?

The class really enjoyed this – it works best in shorter bursts in the lesson.

Who else might find it useful?

This could work well in any lesson. It will support pupils with speech, language and communication needs to gain in confidence – I won't ask them to answer if they are pointing to red.