

NLP for Schools

CASE STUDIES



All of the following case studies have been supplied by teachers who have completed an introductory NLP course with inspired2learn.

They have all achieved a Diploma in NLP

Alison – subject teacher - 11-18 Comprehensive School

I am going to use my NLP learning at school to build rapport with colleagues and students to strengthen relationships to foster more trust and therefore reduce barriers to learning.

I have chosen to write my case study on a student that in September started reacted very badly to my methods of teaching although in the past I had had a very good relationship with her.

The child in the study is just completing Year 11. She has struggled with school boundaries and its rigidity and has a reputation of very poor and rude behaviour. Her mother is aware of her anger management issues but is ineffective and will exhibit the same behaviour when challenged. For both the student and her mother confrontation is a strategy readily used to address issues. However, the student is very able and when confident able to make progress.

My relationship broke down with this student at the beginning of year 11. A disappointing YR 10 result combined with a very challenging piece of coursework found us in conflict. My goal then became focused on regaining the trust of this student and making the progress with this student to reach her target grade or go beyond her target grade.

I therefore decided to focus on the following strategies:

- Changing language
- Creating choices
- Setting goals/dreams
- Self- fulfilling spirals
- Identifying her thinking preferences
- Limiting beliefs
- Feedback not failure

I decided that in the first instance it was important to identify her preferred modalities. I was then able to construct my questioning and general communication in class to suit her preference, which was visual.

Limiting Beliefs

After her poor result in the year 10 module, the student felt that she could not reach her challenging target limiting her own self beliefs. Her self image was very low. I wanted to be

able to help make the changes in her attitude to herself rather than allow external forces to dictate. Children are more sensitive to suggestion than adults therefore small changes at the root level of their belief will make profound changes in behaviour. In a one to one session I encouraged her to list all the characteristics she saw in herself, using single words such as honest, untidy etc but she had to write them down in her non dominant hand. We then took the positive characteristics and I allowed her to look at these visually in her mind, hearing them and feeling them. I then got her to do the same thing again, but using a negative characteristic. She now had both positive and negative visualisation the next stage was then to take these sub modalities from the positive image i.e. the seeing, the listening and feeling and transfer them to the negative image creating a greater belief and using this to change the negative image. This would then become the key to her control and choice. She could now create desired belief and change those that were no longer useful.

Setting Goals

This student was confused as to where she preserved her true ability lay at the beginning of Year 11 due to the mixed messages. I felt it was very important for her to set goals to measure her success. I wanted to get her to look at her dreams and ideas of the success she wanted to achieve. To do this we had to develop well defined outcomes.

Self Fulfilling Spiral

For me, I wanted to go into each lesson positively and carrying no negative baggage that could distract her from achieving her desired outcomes. I therefore introduced the 'swish strategy' to my own behaviour so that I would be able to recognise when I was about to engage in negative behaviour. I gave myself a replacement image that I could use if I felt my relationship with this student started to deteriorate. I also created an anchor of confidence that I used every time I started a new lesson. These I found most useful the swish strategy, I found being the most useful. On occasions I would forget to use my anchor until I had an issue, whereas the Swish strategy I could be more flexible and use it when and if I needed it. I also found I identified the early triggers to be able to utilise the swish effectively and before the issue had developed.

Changing Language

I used very different language to guide this student. She needed to see feedback instead of failure, and so through changing my language and creating choices over the last months she has begun to see that she has choices and therefore she is much more flexible in her

thinking. This has allowed her far more options, with less confrontations and able to realise her progress as something positive.

Summary/ Evaluation

To rebuild my relationship with this student I had to regain her trust. I therefore needed to feel confident in my own mind that I could do this. Having created an 'anchor' and 'swish' I was able to start to control my own behaviour, initially when working first walking into the classroom. It was important for me to create a positive working atmosphere from the beginning of the lesson that was non confrontational and pro active. I had identified triggers and was aware of how these moments affected my behaviour. As I wanted to be flexible in my handling of my own behaviour at these moments and be able to choose an effective outcome the 'swish' became a valuable tool. It allowed me time to create a frame, to create choices for this student prioritising her thinking preferences. The student responded relatively quickly to ideas that she could manipulate her behaviour and have choices. I have seen, over the last 8 months, moments of where she has created her own flexibility in her reaction to situations. She has positively moved a long way to understanding that feedback is positive and that her work cannot fail as without failure there is always feedback.

The student has now successfully completed her GCSE and is on target to achieve a grade higher than expected. She appears to be happy, relaxed in lessons and willing to answer questions and show off her knowledge. I feel we have come a long way to restoring the positive relationship we had in Year10 and as a result she has the opportunity to realise her potential.

Colin – Head of Year 0 11-18 Comprehensive School

Using VAKOG will be a benefit to me as a classroom teacher as it will help me to understand the type of learners that I have in my classes. Hopefully it will also help me to produce more varied, exciting and fun lessons.

Pupil's learning should also be improved as it will be more relevant to their particular way of learning.

Using 'stepping up' and 'stepping down' will benefit me in situations when as a Head of House I am in conversation with pupils. Often they do not always recognise their potential and these methods can help them realise their potential and the barriers to achieving them.

Using effective outcomes in parent interviews will make meetings more effective and using rapport techniques will also be helpful. Hopefully, using better rapport techniques and reading body language will help to communicate better with 'difficult parents'.

Case-study

One of my year 10 teaching groups contains a boy who is quite weak academically. Quite often, when finding work difficult he will start to engage in low level disruption of other pupils and lessons in general. During this particular time he was getting into more and more 'trouble' during many subjects and was being identified as a distracter. Many of his teachers were sending him out of lessons, giving him detentions etc and the more this happened the more he seemed to thrive on it.

In my group this boy was fine in practical but found some theory work difficult and had started to display his disruptive behaviour in theory lessons. I believe that this was to cover his weaknesses as he was embarrassed in front of his peers who found the work relatively easy.

In my lessons his 'inappropriate behaviour' was due to lack of concentration resulting in him distracting others whilst working on computers. I tried sending him out of the room to refocus but after returning he would be back to square one within a few minutes.

Why I used particular NLP tools or knowledge.

I had a conversation with the boy about his behaviour and tried to find out how I could help him to make improvements. During our conversation he explained that he couldn't do any theory work because he was 'thick' and found all academic work hard. As he was thick he

could not become successful at anything and so got bored. He then turned off and started to disrupt his mates.

I felt that the boy was interested in the subject and that he was more than capable of doing the work. What he lacked was a belief in himself and motivation to want to do well.

I decided to use 'timeline for a well formed outcome' and 'stepping down'.

In a one-to-one situation I started by asking him if he had any career intentions, which he had. He wanted to become a car mechanic. I asked if he knew what it would take for him to get there. He knew that he would need some qualifications, but said he wouldn't be able to get them because he was 'thick'.

I explained that I would like to help him by using some NLP techniques and he agreed to have a go.

As the pupil was a member of my old year group we had good rapport. I stood next to him and we talked about something he would like to have in the future, fun holidays, a car etc. I encouraged him to experience the look, feel, smell and sounds of a good holiday. I asked him to hold this as a picture if he could.

I then explained that we were going to walk along a line aiming towards a time where the picture was taking place. We walked the timeline and I asked him to hold the picture again.

We then turned around and faced where we had come from – the present. We talked about what was 'in between'. Next we walked back along the line to the present. The boy had identified some of what he needed to do to be able to achieve his outcome.

In our conversation he said he felt that there were some barriers to him getting to his outcome, he realised that he would need some qualifications to get a good job in order to realise his outcome.

My next use of NLP was using 'stepping down' in order to identify how to break down some of the obstacles that could make achieving his outcome difficult. He identified his behaviour as an obstacle and we discussed what he was going to do about it. One strategy was that if he felt that work was difficult he would ask for help and if his concentration was wandering he would ask for time to have a walk so that he could re-focus.

The impact on using the techniques.

Since that day the boy's behaviour has improved (he is not perfect, but no pupil is) in my lessons and in other areas too. He has improved motivation and has on occasion explained well what he finds difficult and so we have worked together to complete his work in different ways. Due to the nature of the course he can present work in different formats and now that he has improved motivation he wants to complete tasks.

Occasionally I have mentioned his targets when he lacks concentration and this has helped refocus him, but not always.

I have learned that using NLP techniques can be successful, however, you need to be organised and plan what you are going to use and how. You also need time to go apply the techniques effectively.

I could have followed this by working on anchors with the boy, I think that giving him ownership of an anchor when he felt his concentration was wandering would be beneficial to him.

Sandra – Assistant Headteacher - 11-18 Comprehensive School

By developing better relationships with the key stakeholders in the school, I should be able to communicate and share my vision within the school and manage the complicated process of change more effectively. I hope to be able to widen and deepen my positive influence of colleagues, SLT, governors and students to support the drive for school improvement. It is another leadership tool to use to support the development of teaching and learning at school.

Using NLP should also greatly support my work with individuals and groups of students by helping them clearly articulate realistic and motivational objectives: whether that relates to their progress in my subject areas, or their general academic attainment or their behaviour for learning.

I have been working with a member of staff (Mr. A) as a coach to support him in improving outcomes for the students that he teaches. Within a particular class, he has a number of very apathetic male students and from the outset I could see that the relationship between Mr A and a number of these students had broken down. In addition, I could sense that Mr A felt vulnerable with this class and needed confidence building.

First of all, I arranged to meet Mr A to have an initial discussion about the group and his perception of the current situation. In order to facilitate a discussion in which I was going to ask him to visualise well-formed outcomes, I chose an environment that was peaceful and neutral, away from the formality of my office and the negative association of that class in his classroom.

We chose a room near the library as a venue with comfortable chairs and a quiet confidential atmosphere. In order to build rapport, I was especially conscious of trying to mirror his body language and match his sensory preferences in language; in his case, he tended to sit back in his chair when tense and lean forward when he was feeling more relaxed. As a way of developing rapport, at the start of the conversation, I mirrored his body position but gradually started leaning forward more and more as a way of encouraging him to relax. In terms of his choice of language, he tended to use more auditory expressions: "I hear what you are saying"; "what they are saying is ..." etc which I attempted to match although my language tends to be more visual so it was more challenging for me to do this. Once there was better rapport and he felt more at ease, we started visualising what activities the students would do as they entered the classroom in an ideal situation. We built a clear picture of what the classroom would look like, feel like and most importantly sound like, as this seemed to be important to his ideal.

We established that in order to create the ideal starts to the lessons, students would need to have clear boundaries and rules which enabled them to get started quickly and quietly with a minimum of fuss, distraction and noise.

The following lesson, I observed him in his classroom as he established the ground rules with the students and tried to employ a restorative justice approach to take the focus away from him and more towards the outcomes of a negative attitude on the learning of other students.

Through my observation, I noticed that he also tended to phrase his instructions and comments in a negative way and laboured a point in order not to appear abrupt. This led to frequent exchanges of dialogue in which the students had achieved their goal of not completing the task set and the negative atmosphere was perpetuated.

As an example, he used phrases such as: "I know this is very difficult", "I don't expect many of you got this one right", "you're not doing it the way I wanted", "I doubt I will get many of you to understand this before the end of the lesson", "I'm not sure you'll agree with me". This contrasted with him almost pleading the students to "have a go" and "don't be shy".

In a follow-up conversation, we discussed whether the expectations that the students and he had come up with were appropriate and could support an improved start to the lesson. He was concerned that the students had viewed the exercise as negative. (One student had commented: "This is quite bad, isn't it, Sir?"). His response had been to agree with the student: ("Yes it is quite bad".) Using this as a starting point, we discussed other ways in which he could phrase his language so that it did not come across as being negative. He realised that the language he was using included negative pre-suppositions and we discussed ways in which we could help the students to improve their attitudes to learning by expressing instructions using positive pre-suppositions. Such examples were as follows:

Negative pre-supposition	Positive pre-supposition
I am concerned that you will not do your homework	I am confident that with the good effort you have all put in today, your homework will be of a high standard
Don't sit there because you will mess about	I'm really confident that you and X work well together so please sit here
This work is really difficult and I can see you are struggling	You are really trying hard to work out a complicated puzzle and I'm very impressed with your concentration and perseverance
Why are we doing this? It's really bad, isn't it?	This is designed to support your learning and we are putting in place measures so that you can be really successful and achieve your target grades. Who's going to tell me that this is not a good thing?

Back in the classroom, most of the students appeared to respond well to the tentative changes in language and positive approach to behaviour for learning through increased use of praise and confidence building. A couple of students reacted by pushing the boundaries which then involved discussions with them using visualisation techniques to focus on the 'What's in It For Me (WIIFM)?' aspect of their learning. After a few false starts, they started to come round to the idea that the renewed efforts in improving the starts of the lesson would improve their learning experiences all round.

It is early days in the process, but there are slow signs of improvement and more importantly a better understanding of more sustainable approaches to developing more positive learning environments. I used NLP consciously in each of the stages both with students and the member of staff to raise awareness of the impact of their choice of language and non-verbal communication. As a result of using NLP techniques, I have increased my positive influencing strategies.

Terri – Deputy Head - 11-18 Comprehensive School

I am always working to improve my Rapport with colleagues. This is a big piece for work for me. One of the barriers was that when people did not do what I asked or agree with me I rarely took the time, or felt that it would be a good use of my time, to try to understand them and their objections better. The tools I have used to help me with this have been all the things that we have done on the course, but in particular I have used recognising the meta-programmes people hold such as big picture vs detail , sameness vs difference and external vs internal references. I have also used the timeline work to help people with their development planning.

As a senior leader in the school it is important that I have good productive relationships with as many members of staff as is humanly possible. This makes it easier for me to share and live the vision of the school and we then experience a more cohesive and productive working environment.

I need to develop my use of the Milton Model Hypnotic language patterns in order to help stuck members of staff. In particular I need to work on embedding commands, using questioning skills more effectively, especially in coaching. I also need to use more presuppositions, metaphors and stories. I will continue to learn about NLP and try to attend some more training and practice groups.

Lorraine – Educational Welfare Officer

NLP will help me to relate to others in a professional and personal environment. I train adults and I am able to judge the way in which my learners will be receptive to the training if I use the NLP techniques to structure my training. I now use a range of the sensory acuities so that I can make sure I am relating to everyone in the session. I will also use NLP with the families and children I work with, I particularly like the time line which I have used to show children how they will be stuck in a situation if they do not move forward and by using this technique they are able to travel forward in time to see what they need to make a difference to a situation. This has worked very well with some of my year 11 cases who do not see there is much point in attending school until the exams, by showing them the time line and walking them through it, they can see that in order to be successful with their goal later on in life changes need to be made now at an early age. They then can focus on the next step.

Case-study

I have used the NLP with a case of a family with a history of non attendance which is always blamed on ongoing medical issues. The child in the study is a year 10 girl who has struggled with her social skills and also often reports of being bullied and having no friends. The parents are happy to accept that she is unwell and often take her to the GP for minor reasons.

When I first met the family I was unaware of the family background although I was aware that the school had trouble engaging with the family. I spent the first meeting gaining rapport with the family through body language and using different language skills to make common ground. This was very successful and they seemed to respond to me well, they started to engage with me by telephone which had not happen in the past although were still unsure of any school staff.

After two meetings gaining rapport with both the parents and the child we moved on to dealing with the bullying issue, we had long discussions on what had gone on in the past and that it had kept happening to the girl. I then started to discuss “if you always do what you have always done you will get what you have always got”. I said to the family that this did not excuse the other child’s behavior but we talked about different strategies and the way in which the incidents had happened. We then discussed with the child how things could change, i.e. not to go to certain areas of the field where the problems often arose, she often did not attend school the next day and said she was unwell without telling anybody that this was really down to the bullying issue. The rapport with the family also allowed me to discuss

the medical issues and if there was anything that the parents could do differently to support their daughter with her health. Again we talked about making a change to how the family dealt with the health issues and this empowered the parents to seek other advice on the Medical issues and not to accept what they were first told, this led to a referral to a separate consultant for an undiagnosed condition, and support with this.

Then talked to her about what it would feel like not to be bullied and after a few more sessions talked about being able to remember that feeling to make her feel better with herself. I did discuss making an anchor for this feeling but this did not really work as although she could see the point, she could not understand the anchor point. I wanted to try and give her a coping mechanism so that she had something, to rely on in these incidents although she did not want to do this, I do feel that it made her think about the incidents differently

After a few weeks her attendance at school started to improve and the incidents of bullying did drop and were reported to staff more regularly.

I then spoke to her about how things were going, the whole family thought things were better, although the incidents of bullying have not stopped she has a strategy to deal with it.

This process has given her the ability to see why she needs to attend school and deal with her difficulties. Her attendance has continued to improve with less incidents of non attendance. I feel that the student's self esteem is going up and she is happy to talk about her feelings to others around her.

I asked if she would like to try a timeline to see where she could be if she continued doing well with this, the family agreed the process would be interesting and the girl started where she is now and then said she wanted to eventually run a stables. We worked on this as the final goal and went along the process of what she needed to get to this goal in small chunks of time. School, College for business Studies, Specialist training and what this would look like, sound like and feel like.

I have learnt that using some of the NLP tools can have a great impact on a family's life. I feel that I have had to use a variation of the tools to achieve this, but I feel that most of them have worked well and I would use them again with other cases.

Mark – Educational Welfare Officer

I will use NLP because it will give me an additional tool to work with parents and children to improve school attendance. My job is reliant on a good understanding of people and the ability to communicate efficiently. I will be able to use NLP skills to offer more specific approaches to changing behaviour in both parents and children.

I anticipate that it will be particularly useful when working with school refusers when thought patterns have become particularly entrenched and families have become locked in repeating patterns of behaviour that have failed in the past. I hope to be able to offer these families better support and new insights.

A lot of my work involves mediating between conflicting parental/school perceptions of barriers to attendance. NLP skills will help me to influence meetings for a better outcome.

On a personal level I also want to be able to get out of “looped thinking” and be better able to tackle repetitive patterns of thought and behaviour. The same scenarios can present themselves and I find it difficult to come at things differently. I need to try something new in these situations and NLP will give me a strategy to work with.

I will use “chunking up” and chunking down” in meetings with parents and school staff where appropriate to influence outcomes. There are occasions for example where parents will go into minute detail as to why their child has missed school and it is difficult to get them to focus on the bigger picture. Similarly some parents offer very general comments and it can be difficult to establish the nub of the problem. Chunking will offer a tool to address this.

I will also use NLP when working with disaffected youngsters who are resistant to going to school and conforming. I can see that certain techniques such as chunking and time lines will offer benefits with this group. I need to be able to give them a vision that will take them beyond the day to day cycle of presenting difficult behaviour in school and an intrinsic sense of what they are working towards. Time lines will be one means of achieving this.

I will be more conscious of preconceptions when doing my assessments. This will enable me to address the causes of poor school attendance more effectively by focussing in on the unspoken underlying reasons. Alongside this, being aware of filters will also allow me to gain a more accurate picture of issues and to be able to challenge client’s current thinking.

Building successful rapport is essential to moving cases on. I tend to do this subconsciously. I would like to be able to use the NLP techniques consciously as a way to communicating and influencing more effectively.

Case-study

I work as a Children Missing education Officer with a responsibility to improve school attendance. I have a particular interest in school refusal. We have a small number of entrenched cases where children have been out of school for varying lengths of time, and cannot or will not attend. In most instances the parent(s) have battled with the situation for long periods of time, usually even before the problem became apparent to the school. These cases are usually therefore very entrenched at the time of referral to our service and it can be extremely challenging to effect change.

In one particular case I inherited a referral for AB who had been out of education for a period of 7 months, but there had been issues around his behavior and school attendance over many years. When I first became involved AB was in the home all the time, not even going out socially. His sleep pattern was reversed and he was awake most of the night, sleeping most of the day on the sofa. His behavior was very challenging and his mother (sole parent) was unable to influence him. AB was the middle child. Both his siblings were good attenders.

A local social service project were involved offering parent support, as were the local CAMHS (Child and adolescent Mental Health Service). However both were experiencing lack of engagement on the part of the mother. Appointments were missed regularly and often for spurious reasons.

I arranged to meet with the parent (C) to discuss the situation and gather some background and to understand the specific nature of the difficulty. C explained that she was not prepared to push AB out of his comfort zone and was not prepared to make him unhappy. She explained that AB had had a fall as a toddler and she had always felt responsible and wondered if this was the cause of his difficult behavior. When I asked her what future she saw for AB and how she envisaged that this would be resolved she replied that she had not given this any consideration. She told me about a period when AB had happily attended a special school where he was picked up by taxi and taken to school relieving her of the responsibility of getting him there. She felt he needed this more nurturing environment and ideally wanted to return to this as a solution (**Presupposition**). She had no confidence that he would successfully attend a mainstream school. She explained that she found school meetings overwhelming and avoided them (**every failure has a positive intent**)

C's belief was that if AB was required to return to his local secondary he would not have the level of support that she considered essential (**presupposition**).

By gathering information I therefore had a clear picture of a C's **map**. I could see that she would find it difficult to support any plan around mainstream education. It was clear that we would have to tackle the parental anxieties in addition to the issues around AB. It was also apparent that we would need to pace our interventions carefully.

I therefore decided to focus on C's map (**People respond according to their map of the world**) and bring amend it to a point where we were working to the same end. I offered to see whether a return to the previous school was a possibility and ascertained that this would not be supported by the authority. I fed back to C and established clearly in her mind that this was not an option. I spoke in positives about what we could offer to support his reintegration to mainstream and how this could be achieved. I spoke consciously about "when" AB was back in school rather than "if" so that there was an expectation of success. Because we had **rapport**, C accepted this as the long term goal

I also engaged the support of another parent (H) who had a son of a similar age with problems of anxiety and refusal. This parent had also been engaged with CAMHS and the same type of social services parenting support. This case had had a positive outcome. I offered this to C as a model. I then introduced the two mothers to each other over a cup of coffee. I let them talk and it was quickly apparent that they had common experiences. H was able to reassure C that she had also struggled but that through support from the agencies and careful planning with the school she had won through and that things were now a lot better (**Modelling successful performance leads to excellence**).

She offered C a vision of what the future could hold and that she could have confidence that change was possible (**if what you are doing is not working, do something different**).

I arranged for AB to have one to one support from a tutor to assist his reintegration. We set up fortnightly planning meeting with the school so that C was fully engaged in the planning process. We took care to match the pace so that it was achievable for C. I ensured that we took full account of her map as to what was possible and what would be difficult for her to achieve. The parenting support worker also attended these meetings and was able to follow up with sessions to support C with the next phase of the plan (**pacing**). (Over a period of 4 months AB moved from non attendance to attending school for 2 hours per day. Before Christmas he was supported to attend a school trip with his year group. He now sleeps at night in his own room. Clare now attends school meetings consistently and with less anxiety. She speaks positively and offers suggestions as to the next step.