

From Failing to the Top 5%

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SS Simon and Jude CE Primary School (SSSJ) is in a low socio-economic catchment area in Bolton, Greater Manchester, UK. 60% of the children come from ethnic minorities and over 24 languages are spoken by our 420 children. In April 2008, SSSJ was graded as a failing school and was put into the category “Special Measures” (the lowest possible category available). At that time, SSSJ was graded the 73rd worst school out of approximately 21,398 primary schools in the UK.

When the Head Teacher, Simon T. Bramwell, joined SSSJ as it went into Special Measures he soon realized that it was not the content of the curriculum being delivered that needed changing so much as the very poor quality of teaching, leading in part to some hideous behavior. He decided that behavior training for all staff was the first priority. Then in October of 2009 all staff received days one and two Kagan Cooperative Learning training from **Kagan United Kingdom** (T2TUK).



Staff now look back and laugh at those “bad old days.” Distance allows for humor, but all will say that the introduction of Kagan Structures was the seminal moment; the squeal of the educational tires could be heard as SS Simon and Jude started to turn around and head into a brighter future.

The boring but important bits go like this:

Schools in the UK receive a report from the Government each year on their performance. This report “Raise-on-Line” provides grading on all types of progress and attainment. Progress is measured on a normal curve for values from 97 to 103, with 100 being average. SSSJ in 2008 scored 97.4, putting it in the bottom 100 schools nationally. By 2011, this had risen to 102.4 for all subjects (top 5%) with each individual subset of children being defined as making outstanding progress.

Results from the UK 2011 report Raise-on-Line



Those children achieving the required National Level 4 in English and Math rose in the same period from 55% in 2008 through 69% a year later, through the 70% barrier and up to 88% in 2011. Breaking the 90% barrier is predicted in 2012. This against a National average of 78%.

After using Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures, the quality of teaching and learning improved. The Ofsted inspection report (November 2010) that took the school out of Special Measures and graded it with the second highest category of “good” with outstanding features, stated that the use of cooperative learning structures had improved the standards, as all of the teaching seen was graded as good or outstanding. (Ofsted is the UK's office for standards in education.)

In November 2010, the school applied to be a National Support School. The school was reinspected by two of “Her Majesty's Inspectors” (HMIs). This was granted in January 2011 and gave the school the ability to be deployed to assist struggling schools in the area. In February of the same year, SSSJ was approached to support Dukesgate Primary School and on 18th of April the two schools united. Before joining SSSJ, Dukesgate had failed three out of three of their Special Measures monitoring inspections.

Having taken over the leadership of Dukesgate, a plan had to be submitted to the Local Authority to outline our plans to improve the school. The first line of the plan was the easiest to write: “Introduce Kagan Cooperative Learning.”

Previously Ofsted had reported that the school needed to “Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by: accelerating the pace of learning during lessons, ensuring that pupils are more actively involved in their learning and making learning more relevant, practical, and motivating so that pupils are more engaged with their learning.” (Ofsted, December 2009).



Ofsted also reported that “there was not a consistent approach to teaching and learning which resulted in variations from year group to year group... Pace of learning was slow and time was not always well used ... They also noted that opportunities for discussion to extend understanding were being missed.” (Ofsted, March 2011).

During Dukesgate’s next monitoring inspection (June 2011) a teacher, Beatrice McColgan, from SSSJ was asked to support and stand in for a teacher that was off work ill. Without knowing the children, Beatrice was able to use Kagan Structures like **Instant Star**, **Timed Pair Share**, **RallyRobin** and **AllWrite RoundRobin** to increase the pace of the learning (something that the children were not used to) and engage the learners. This style of teaching impressed the support staff and positive feedback filtered to other members of staff which resulted in staff requesting more information and training on Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures. Whilst Dukesgate were waiting for Kagan UK to provide Kagan training, a staff meeting to introduce cooperative learning structures was arranged, to which all the support staff requested to attend. This positive attitude to new ways of teaching and Dukesgate staff observing Kagan Structures being used in SSSJ led to an improvement in teaching observations which followed the next term.



After **Kagan Cooperative Learning training days 1 and 2**, the quality of teaching improved. In the Ofsted report that took Dukesgate out of Special Measures, the report stated that “Teaching is now good and some outstanding, pace was good and weaknesses in teaching have been swiftly addressed. Well-planned training continues to improve the quality of teaching.” (Ofsted, November 2011).

The chair of the school board at Dukesgate left that position in January 2012 to take up a headship of her own, after assessing her school she contacted the head teacher of SSSJ. “Our teaching is uninspiring lacking pace. I wonder whether you could do something for me?” There are no prizes for guessing what she wanted, and of course we were happy to help spread the word. Kagan WORKS! It's just that simple.

SSSJ continues to move from strength to strength. This year our school has been nominated for "Primary School of The Year Award" by the Times Educational Supplement (Leading national educational newspaper in the UK). It was a great honor to be nominated out of approximately 22,000 primary schools in the country and to be shortlisted to the final six an extraordinary achievement. The results will be announced in July.

Not only have we been nominated for this prestigious award, we have also been personally invited by the Deputy Prime Minister to apply for a separate award "The Pupil Premium Award." This award recognizes our impact on raising achievement and attainment with children from deprived backgrounds to "close the gap." The Deputy Prime Minister wrote to our Head Teacher to congratulate our staff on providing equality of opportunity and success across the social divide.