



The Emotional Impact of Using Showbie with Students

By Chris Lawson

In today's educational climate, there's no escaping buzz words like 'Assessment for Learning' and 'Personalised Learning'. In reality though, one of the most important things to me as a teacher is this: are my students happy?

First, students need to feel safe enough in a classroom environment to know that they can share their thoughts, feelings and what may be going on outside of their school day. Second, as the teacher, I need to make a conscious effort to engage with these children, building relationships day-by-day. The issue with that is, one many practitioners can relate to: time. I would dearly love to know what each of my 32 students got up to on their weekend, or how they feel about an upcoming event, but in reality, it isn't easy to check up on them all. There has been many times where I arrived home after a long day, picked up a child's book to mark (or marked in Showbie!) and realised I didn't even get to talk to that student today.

This is where Showbie comes in. Not only am I highly fortunate to be resourced with 1:1 iPads for my class, but I have been able to use the Showbie App in a way that has really helped in my pursuit of a classroom focused around communicating how we feel while sharing concerns and worries.

“I need to speak to you about an incident that happened in the cloakroom yesterday”

Students feel safe reaching out to Chris about problems they experience in and out of the classroom.

Through Showbie assignments, I'm able to set weekly 'boxes' that allow children to communicate with me. It's a simple concept that is common in many school settings, but the impact on the classroom and the way I communicate with the children has been profound. Not only do I feel that I know my students better, as they are able to message me about what they've been up to or how they're feeling, but we can have a two-way dialogue that makes my students feel valued.



It's important to note that I'm not suggesting communication is done through technology only, but other than meeting with each student at a specific time.

"Yes its fine now nothing to worry about."

"Hope you are feeling better now..."

"Sir please can we talk"

Chris checks in on students to see if their problems are resolved, ensuring he's always keeping tabs on any issues they experience.

There was one moment a few years ago when a student came into school out of character, unable to say what was wrong. Later I found out that her Grandad had passed away the evening prior. When asked why she had said nothing about it, she replied that she didn't feel there was an opportunity to tell me and she wanted to keep it private. Fast forward to how Showbie has had an impact on students going through moments of grief. A child who had lost their mum asked to speak with me, and a long and purposeful conversation took place. This was instigated by the following message in Showbie:

"I will have a chat sometimes I enjoy it too I like talking about my mum"

"Good – I am glad. You know I am always willing to have a chat with you, I quite enjoy it when you talk about your mum – she sounds like she was a great person! Must have been to be related to you ;)"

"I just want to say thank you for that talk the other day about my mum it was great it made me feel a lot better thank you"



"It's the best way to know what all 32 of my students are thinking or feeling almost instantly"

Students feel good knowing they have a private place to discuss personal problems with their teacher.

This small, unintended feature of Showbie has truly changed the way I communicate with my students.

Later on in the year, another child asked to speak to me urgently. He was distressed and explained his home circumstances. Since I was able to act early and understand why he was distressed, the difference that made for him was priceless.

“Hello sir I was wondering if we could have a little time in the day were me and you could talk a little bit and get some work done, I just thought it would be a nice time having a chat”

Students can even schedule meetings to chat with Chris if they feel they need it.

Additionally, this exercise helped me learn about other problems like fall outs between students, home circumstances that a student may not have felt comfortable talking about in person, incidents of bullying, and even students with low self-esteem keeping a log of achievements and successes of which they were proud.

Such a small, unintended feature of Showbie has truly changed the way I communicate with my students, and most importantly ensures that our children are cared for and happy!



About the Author

Chris Lawson is a Year 6 Teacher, Vice-Principal, and Showbie Champion. His passion lies in using iPads to enhance and personalise learning, whilst enhancing communication between him and his students.