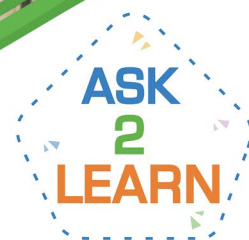




GRANDE
INNOVATION
ACADEMY

Ask2Learn Success Story

School Leaders & Teachers
Grande Innovation Academy



The Art of Asking Questions: How Grande Innovation Academy created a more engaging classroom experience

Background

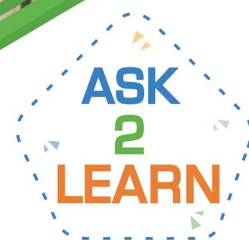
Grande Innovation Academy is a K-8 charter school near Phoenix, Arizona. The school emphasizes an innovative pedagogy that focuses the “whole child” rather than “teaching to the test.” To do that, Executive Director Patty Messer uses technology and data to provide teachers with the tools and feedback they need to improve student outcomes.

The Challenge of Traditional Teacher Observations

As the Founder and Executive Director, Messer’s goal is to provide some level feedback to each teacher every few weeks. “Educators know continuous feedback is critical to the continuing development of our teachers,” she says.

But with 35 teachers and the normal challenges of the typical school week, it’s difficult to provide useful feedback at such a frequency. “Frankly, we’ve struggled to meet our feedback goals consistently. On average, we are able to operate on a once-a-month cadence while making sure we’re prioritizing our newest teachers and those who might be struggling in certain areas,” says Messer.

Math Teacher Paul Adams adds, “Especially with COVID-19, somebody is always out so it’s even more difficult to allocate the time needed for a high-quality observation.”



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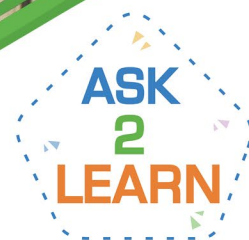
Still, for Messer’s Academic Coaches, between 30% and 40% of their time is spent doing regular classroom walkthroughs and the more formal, three-times-per-year full lesson evaluations. According to Messer, “Even though we struggle at times to deliver the frequency of teacher feedback that we strive to, we’re still doing a lot more evaluation work than most other schools where teachers are lucky to get one observation per semester.”

The problem, though, revolved around having actionable data for the teachers. “We wanted to be able to see trends—to chart how we were doing over time. Moreover, we wanted to *show* teachers what we saw. It’s one thing to write your opinion, but we wanted to coach using objective data that our teachers could see as well. For this, there has never really been an elegant solution until Ask2Learn.”

Eliminating the Blindspots in the Teacher Observation Process

One tactic that Messer had previously considered was video recordings. “It’s a great idea on paper,” says Messer, “but there aren’t enough hours in the day to record the lesson, watch it, type up your feedback, and so forth. Add in the fact that research shows that with this type of feedback, the teacher has to watch the lesson *three times* to extract any real value.”

As a result, it was easy to see why the idea of videotaping classes wasn’t practical or scalable in Messer’s classrooms. Instead, Messer turned to Ask2Learn, the Teacher



Growth Platform that records and automatically analyzes classroom audio and provides visibility into insights such as:

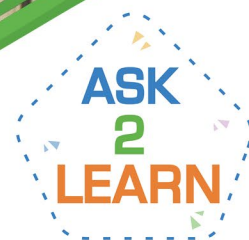
- Teacher Speaking Rate
- Speaking-to-Silent Ratio
- Statement-to-Question Ratio
- Question Type Analysis

“With Ask2Learn, the classroom recordings are the **inputs, not the outputs**,” says Messer. “Ask2Learn gives our teachers actionable feedback showing how often they’re asking questions, the quality of those questions, and if they are pausing to let students consider the possible answers. We can also see whether those questions produce the critical thinking we want to see.”

For Adams, it’s all about ease of use. “All I have to do is take out my phone, plug in the mic, and turn it on. It is that simple and it gives me so many opportunities to get actionable feedback on my teaching.”

“With Ask2Learn, I’m more intentional about the types of questions I’m going to ask, and what I like about the dashboards is that it’s not an opinion. It’s not biased. It tells you what’s happening in your class, and it helps you become a better teacher.”

English teacher Mascharney Jackson sees particular value in the Statement-to-Question Ratio report. “There’s tremendous value in understanding whether you’re *telling* your students or *asking* them,” she notes. “Straight-up lecturing has a time and a place, but it doesn’t result in critical thinking. With Ask2Learn, the emphasis is on asking questions—the right ones, and in sufficient quantity.



Using Ask2Learn, Messer, along with her academic coaches and teachers, can work on what matters most: *how the teacher delivers instruction*. "Our teachers have always planned their lessons," commented Messer. "But when they started diving into their Ask2Learn dashboards, they also began planning their questions as well. It was eye-opening for everyone."

Adams agrees. "Today, I'm more intentional about the types of questions I'm going to ask, and what I like about the dashboards is that it's not an opinion. It's not biased. It tells you what's happening in your class, and it helps you become a better teacher."

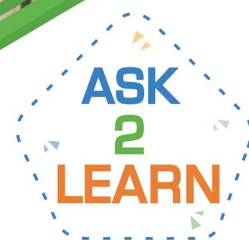
Planning for the Future Means Looking at the Past

"At the end of the school year, we're going to look at all of these Ask2Learn reports to see where we started and to see where we ended up," says Messer. "But it's more than what. When our teachers come back next year, we're going to examine those reports again so that we remember what we did. What questions did you ask when you were covering this topic or that topic. We want to see those great questions asked again because we know that makes a big difference in student achievement."

"When we ask better questions, we see better answers.
It's that simple."

According to Jackson, Grande Innovation Academy "is a very data-driven school. You have to bring the facts. Ask2Learn is an awesome data collector and is definitely collecting the information we need."

Adams sees the results as well. "When we ask better questions, we see better answers. It's that simple. This is helping our students be better learners, and it's helping us be better teachers as well."



"It's been a game changer for us. Gathering this data and acting upon it is going to be part of everything we do moving forward."

Up next for Messer is working with her teachers to continue to improve instruction delivery even further. "What's *great* in Year 1 may only be *good* in Year 2," says Messer. "Just like we expect our students to mature and progress over time, we want to see our teachers do the same. I see us continuing to use Ask2Learn because we want to be the best educators possible."

For Jackson, it's something she's already started to do. "After a few recordings, I said 'OK, I'm going to set a slightly higher goal and see if I can reach it.' You don't expect to go from a *B* average to an *A* average overnight, but you can only improve what you're able to measure."

As a school that's dedicated to continuous improvement—for students and teachers alike—Ask2Learn is providing actionable insights for teachers that are immediate, objective, and frequent. "It's been a game changer for us," Messer concludes. "Gathering this data and acting upon it is going to be part of everything we do moving forward."

