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Call for Researchers: Step-back Programme

Brief Description of Organization and Programme

Gwyn McCormack, founder of [Positive Eye Ltd](http://www.positiveeye.co.uk), has developed a ground-breaking whole school approach 'The Step-back Programme' to support diverse learners. Gwyn's background is as a Qualified Teacher of Vision Impairments in the United Kingdom and she is internationally known for her techniques in breaking down learning barriers. Gwyn has 40 years + experience of working with children with special educational needs.

What is the Step-back Programme?

Step-back is a whole school approach to enabling independent learners. Each stakeholder within the learner's education has a role and responsibility in supporting them to become as independent as possible. **Step-back** assists practitioners to understand their role in this.

It considers several questions

- Does the teacher, paraprofessional and learner understand the purpose of support?
- Is the learner over supported and over helped?
- Has the learner become used to high levels of support and therefore become over dependent?

The example shared below demonstrates how a paraprofessional/Teaching Assistant and a teacher have a lack of understanding of their role in maximising independence. Equally the learner lacks the self-advocacy skills to take control of the situation.

A teacher was talking to a member of staff when a learner walked past, she advised the learner to fasten his shoe lace. However, a

well-meaning member of staff stepped in and completed the task for him. The member of staff didn't ask if he wanted help, or, how would he prefer to be helped. Instead, they assumed automatic responsibility that it was their role to carry out the task for the learner. There was no opportunity for the learner to apply their own problem-solving skills to solve the task, or part of the task themselves.

The purpose of **Step-back** is to teach all school staff and practitioners HOW to scaffold and structure a step-in and step-back approach to enable the learner's independence. At the same time it provides a programme whereby the learner is involved in the planning of the **Step-back approach**. The learner's voice is listened to and responded to as part of the **Step-back** approach.

The **Step-back** programme builds confidence as a community for teachers, staff and learners. The programme supports learners by promoting their independence and giving them a voice using the [Easy-Easier Learner's Voice Resources](#). Plans are developed cooperatively between the students – teacher/staff.

Benefits of the Step-back Programme

- The entire school will use the same language when looking to support learners across all environments.
- Learners will know how to ask for help and how to “not” ask for help.
- Teachers, staff, support personnel will also better understand when they should move in to help a learner. Everyone's role is understood within the team around the learner.
- They will not have to guess if the learner needs help as the programme builds confidence in both learners and teachers/staff to work together to identify when support is needed.
- The **Step-back** programme also promotes a positive self-view of the learners as the programme brings the learners' voice into the forefront for planning.
- Providing an avenue for the learner's voice to be heard promotes self-advocacy

To date the Step-back Programme has been implemented across Wales to support the implementation of their new [Additional Learning Needs](#)

[Education Act](#) and continues to receive high honours with King Henry VIII Comprehensive School being the first school in Abergavenny achieving the Step-back Whole School Mark in 2022.

Please note that the Step-back Programme works for all children and young people and is not specific to one individual area of need.

Courses and resources within the Step-back Programme

Positive Eye has developed a significant suite of resources and courses. In this short clip, the main resources are highlighted.

<https://youtu.be/LtZ42xXDI8A>

Research Proposal Ideas/Suggestions

To look at the impact of the **Step-back** Programme on:

- Impact of Step-back on Learner's independence – autonomy, competence, inclusion (impact on learner's independence short term/long term – planning for the future)
- Impact of Step-back on school staff's ability to support learner's using strategies and approaches that promote their independence
- I am open to research suggestions.

School involvement

- Looking for one or two schools to participate in this research project.
- Positive Eye Ltd would present the online Whole School Step-back Course (5 x 1.5 hour sessions) for a primary or secondary school in return for working with the researcher to collect data required for the research project.
- No charge will be made for the presentation of this training and associated resources.
- Schools need to be committed to implementing this programme across their setting. Step-back is not an add on training, it is an inclusive programme for all learners.

- Positive Eye is seeking a school that are committed to make this significant change to their culture and who are prepared to plan and implement the programme across their school.
- The above offer is flexible according to the final research project requirements

To discuss further please contact:

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