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co**



MARTIN ROBINSON

*"Curriculum development
is political"*

TOO MANY TASKS?

What happens when
staff reach capacity

WORK LESS

Could the profession
adopt a 4-day week?

THE ONE CHANGE...

...that made me a
better teacher

JOSEPH COELHO

Why students should
be taught poetic form

Present and CORRECT

SMART STRATEGIES FOR TACKLING ABSENCE

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9

DC THOMSON

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SCAN ME!

FROM THE EDITOR

“Welcome...”



Well, it's happened. I can finally begin one of these leader columns *without* acknowledging the appointment of a new Education Secretary.

Last time we checked, Gillian Keegan remains in post – and was even joined at the DfE late last year by two familiar faces. Nick Gibb returned as Schools Minister, while former Education Select Committee chair Robert Halfon became Minister for Skills and Higher Education.

For all the apparent continuity, however, last month saw the striking – if not entirely unexpected – admission from Keegan that the government's Schools Bill was being dropped. Introduced by Nadhim Zahawi in the dim and distant days of spring 2022, it sought to give MATs an even larger and more influential role within the education landscape than they have already. It's been intimated by Keegan that the School Bill's core proposals have been postponed, rather than shelved completely – but with less than two years until the next general election, how likely is it that even a Schools Bill Mk. 2 will survive long enough to leave any lasting mark on the profession?

To find some *real* experts in long-term planning, simply pop into your local school. Given the crucial importance of, say, effective curriculum development, teachers and leaders can't afford not to be. On page 44, Martin Robinson reflects on some of the reasons as to why curriculum development is so complex, and how making the process a more collaborative endeavour can benefit everyone.

You'll also find plenty of careful planning with an eye to the future among those teachers who are serious about their professional development and the trajectory of their careers. I hope this issue's CPD and training special, starting on page 27, can provide some inspiration and motivation to aim higher and move closer to realising those long-term ambitions.

Finally, I like to think that non-specialists occasionally dip into our subject-specific features out of curiosity. Even if you know nothing about, or care little for poetry, I'd urge you to have a read of Joseph Coelho's wonderful survey of poetic forms on page 40, and find out what a professional composer makes of the GCSE music composition component on page 56. You'll never hear an ad for a travel agency in the same way again...

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

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Politics, people and the planet

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Nicola Brooks is a professional development co-ordinator for Reach South Academy Trust



Dr Alex Standish is a senior lecturer in geography education



Rebecca Leek is CEO of the SEAMAT trust



Ed Carlin is a deputy headteacher



Toria Bono is a class teacher and school coaching lead



Daniel Harvey is a science teacher and pastoral lead

KEEP IN TOUCH!

Sign up for the weekly TS newsletter at teachwire.net/newsletter

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Remote CPD can be freeing, but it can also blur the lines between our personal and professional lives, warns Rebecca Leek

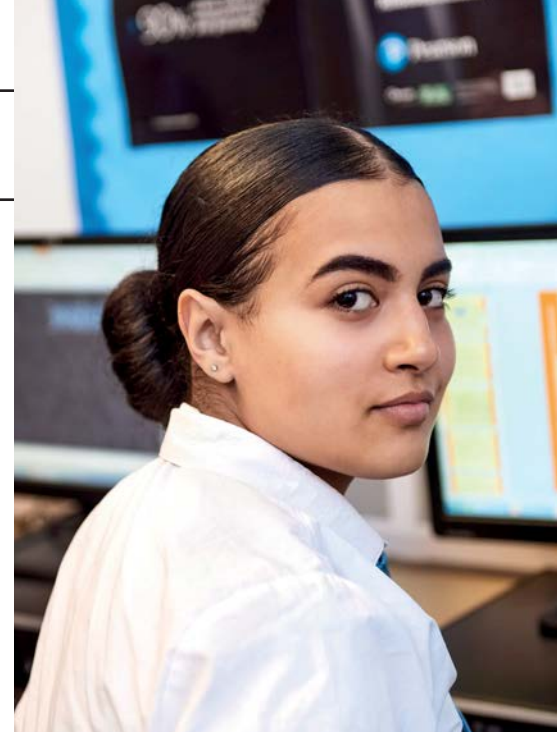
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The newsletter

Grab a coffee and spend five minutes exploring the lighter side of CPD...

The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...



CHATGPT

What follows is an abridged transcript of a conversation this author had via a messaging window at the website chat.openai.com/chat

How should I describe you, ChatGPT, to an audience of teachers?

I am an AI-powered language model trained by OpenAI. I am designed to assist with a wide range of tasks, including answering questions and providing information on a wide range of topics. I am a useful tool teachers can use to help answer questions and provide information to their students.

Will you one day put teachers out of a job?

It is unlikely that I or any other AI will ever be able to completely replace teachers. Teaching involves creating engaging and interactive lessons, providing personalized (sic) feedback to students, and building relationships with students and parents. These are all complex tasks that require empathy, creativity, and interpersonal skills that are difficult for AI systems to replicate.

Sweet dreams, everyone...



DO SAY

"A new frontier in conversational computing!"

DON'T SAY

"1011110101
11101110
1100111"

BEAT THE BUDGET



What's on offer?

Interactive online resources that include a digital world atlas, historic maps and imagery and breakdowns of census data.

How might teachers use the resource?

As an accompaniment to presentations and classroom discussions relating to topics such as changes in human society over time, natural hazards and disasters and climate change.

Where are they available?

bit.ly/ts121-NL3

What are we talking about?

Teach with GIS [Geographic Information Systems]

Who is it for?

Geography teachers



DON'T QUOTE ME...

"Schools judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted were previously exempted from inspections because the government decided that would be a good idea."

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the ASCL



Think of a number...

18%

of children aged 7 to 16 have a probable mental health disorder

Source: NHS

76%

of teaching assistants have experienced violence or assaults at work

Source: GMB London union

52%

of teachers believe they are seen as social workers by parents

Source: OnePoll polling commissioned by Academy21

teachwire.net/secondary

ONE FOR THE WALL

"Teaching, may I say, is the noblest profession of all in a democracy."

Kurt Vonnegut



Schools Bill axed

The government's Schools Bill is no more. In her first appearance before the Education Committee, Education Secretary Gillian Keegan stated, "I can confirm that the Schools Bill will not progress in the third session. Obviously there have been lots of things we have had to focus on, and the need to provide economic stability and tackle the cost of living [crisis] means the Parliamentary time has been reprioritised."

She went on to add, however, that the government remains committed to 'the many important objectives' that underpinned the Bill, and observed that those provisions not requiring legislation were already being implemented. As outlined in the Schools White Paper back in March 2022, the Bill's key proposals included a push for more schools to join strong multi-academy trusts, granting Ofsted increased powers to clamp down on unregistered schools and a register for children not in school.

Commenting on the move, NEU joint general secretary Kevin Courtney said, "Parents and local councillors want an education system which is well-funded, responsive to local needs and which works for their local context, without pressure to join a mega-trust. Now that it has dropped the Schools Bill, government has the opportunity to focus on the actual priorities and the real challenges around modernising assessment, identifying funding and addressing teacher retention."

▼ **SAVE THE DATE** ▼

SPEECHES AND CORRESPONDENCE

Forget the media-friendly soundbites – what else was in those announcements and letters you missed?



THE SPEECH:

Chancellor delivers 2022 Autumn Statement

WHO? Chancellor of the exchequer, Jeremy Hunt

WHAT? Announcement of additional funding for schools

WHEN? 17th November 2022

"As Chancellor, I want to know the answer to one simple question – will every young person leave the education system with the skills they would get in Japan, Germany or Switzerland? So I have appointed Sir Michael Barber to advise me and my Right Honourable Friend, the Education Secretary, on the implementation of our skills reforms programme.

But as we raise the skill levels of our school leavers, I want to ensure that even in an economic crisis, the improvement in school standards continues to accelerate. Some have suggested putting VAT on independent school fees as a way of increasing core funding for schools, which would raise around £1.7 billion. But according to certain estimates this would result in up to 90,000 children from the independent sector switching to state schools, giving with one hand and taking away with another.

So instead of being ideological I am going to be practical. Because this government wants school standards continue to rise for every single child, we're going to do more than protect the schools budget – we're going to increase it. I can announce today that next year and the year after, we will invest an extra £2.3 billion per year in our schools.

Our message to heads and teachers and classroom assistants today is thank you for your brilliant work – we need it to continue."

THE LETTER:

Zayn Malik calls on PM Rishi Sunak to extend Free School Meals eligibility

WHO? Zayn Malik, singer

WHEN? 7th November 2022



"Growing up in Bradford, I relied on Free School Meals. I personally experienced the stigma surrounding food insecurity. My hope is that in writing this letter we can all ensure that no child ever has to experience this hunger and stigma again, as my experience is not unique; it is a struggle that many children in England are sadly going through right now.

As I see it, extending the current threshold and giving Free School Meals to children from families on Universal Credit would be the best way to reach those who need it most. This would stop children from enduring the worst of the cost-of-living crisis, which in turn only creates bigger divides between the richest and poorest."

14 JANUARY 2023 IncludEd Conference 2023 | 21 JANUARY 2023 Creating the future with everyone on board | 29-31 MARCH 2023 Bett

16 JANUARY 2023

IncludEd Conference 2023
UCL Faculty of Education and Society, London
bit.ly/ts121-NL2

Organised by the children's inclusion charity The Difference, this year's event will bring together a number of noted school leaders, academics and specialists from within the profession and beyond to consider how schools can become more inclusive. Visitors will have opportunities to access examples of best practice, share advice with others and receive support in relation to improving outcomes for all students.

21 JANUARY 2023

Creating the future with everyone on board
Sarah Bonnell School, London
bit.ly/ts121-NL1

Curated by the BAMEd Network, this day-long knowledge-sharing and networking event is set to include a series of workshops that will cover matters relating to diversity, antiracism strategies and racial literacy, plus a series of exhibition stands. Keynote speakers announced so far include Dr Halima Begum, CEO of The Runnymede Trust, and the NEU's lead equality officer, Karen Chouhan.

29-31 MARCH 2023

Bett
ExCeL London
bettshow.com

The organisers of the venerable edtech showcase are shaking things up a bit for 2023. It still promises the usual lineup of speakers, product/service exhibitors and seminars, but the big innovation is Connect @ Bett – an online meetings system enabling attendees and exhibitors to mutually schedule 15-minute onsite meetings ahead of time or during the show, according to their availability.

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Get Into Film



THE PEOPLE VS CLIMATE CHANGE (2021, UNCLASSIFIED, 63 MINS)

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Geography, Politics, Citizenship, Science

This documentary film details how, for the first time in UK history, Parliament organised a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change formed of 108 ordinary people in order to tackle the biggest challenges facing the planet today.

Featuring input from Sir David Attenborough, we follow seven members of the assembly as they grapple with issues around collective and personal responsibility en route to reaching the government's target of net zero emissions by 2050. It's an insightful portrayal of how powerful collective action can be, and challenges viewers to set aside their personal politics in an effort to find common ground.

Discussion questions:

- What is the film's core message?
- Why might now be a good time to form a Citizens' Assembly?
- How much do the Assembly members' personal experiences inform their views of core issues?
- Does anyone change their mind throughout the process?

Head online to intofilm.org to stream the film for free and download our fantastic film guide, containing Teacher Notes on these discussion questions and much more. You can also find more related films and information at our dedicated Climate Change theme page.



Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

Kirsty @TeacherBusy

Year 7 parents evening tonight and I just want to say thank you to whoever suggested opening conversations with "This will be a quick, 5 minute catch up" & asking parents if there's anything they'd like to talk about first. It's the first time I've left on time in 10 years!

Miss @missdcx

Every school should have a periodic 'is this working?' discussion, at all levels. Filter out what's not working or needs tweaking even if it's what you think Ofsted wants/other schools are doing it/'outstanding' schools do it/we've always done it/it looks good etc.

Follow us via [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary) - and let us know what you're thinking!

TEACHER TALES

True stories from the education chalkface

Done up

I was once on duty at a parent's evening in the school's main hall, when my zip fly decided to break. I was blissfully unaware of this until one parent – a father, who I thought was nodding furiously in agreement with what I was saying about their child – finally drew my attention to the problem.

The following half dozen interviews were conducted with great care. At the end of each, I stood up and shook hands whilst angling my jacket strategically across the offending area. During the staff refreshment break, I managed to locate a long-arm stapler and a box of shiny, half-inch brass staples and fashioned a temporary repair down the front of my trousers and up along the zip.

Despite the front of my trousers now resembling some awful surgical mistake, I made my way back to the hall for my

next interview. And as I bent to take my seat, I let loose a shower of brass staples.

At the end of the evening, a concerned parent stopped me to ask if all was well, as he'd seen me bent double when leaving the hall earlier. I cautiously confided in him that my zip fly had broken, to which he replied, "Oh, that's okay then. Several parents thought you had the runs..."

Let me think...

One day, a teacher walked over to help a Y7 boy who was looking a little lost. The boy explained that he was looking for a member of staff. When asked for the teacher's name, the boy said that he couldn't remember, but that it was definitely a man.

The teacher suggested that the boy could perhaps think a little harder, as it might jog his memory. The boy thought long and hard, and then said very confidently, "It was a Mister something..."

Find more true tales and amusing anecdotes at schoolhumour.co.uk

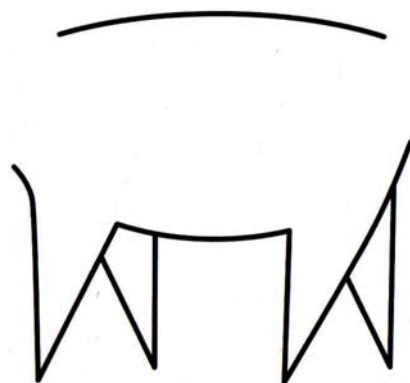
A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#25 FINISHING WELL

Redraw or trace the shape opposite.

The shape is unfinished.

Finish it in a logical and pleasing way so that the outline is continuous.



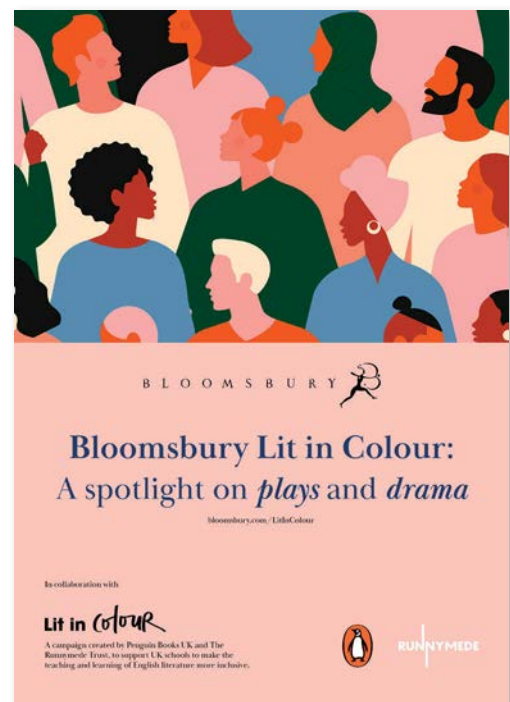


Lit in Colour

A spotlight on *plays and drama*

- In **2019** assessments, **0%** of English Literature students answered a question on a play by a Global Majority writer
- In **2022** assessments, **90%** of drama set texts available at GCSE English Literature and **96%** at A Level are written by white playwrights
- By **2025**, GCSE and A Level English Literature students in England and Wales will have the option to choose from **10** new modern plays by writers of colour

Change is coming. Be part of it.



Download the research report and find out more about how you can get involved at [Bloomsbury.com/LitinColour](https://bloomsbury.com/LitinColour)



The Vocab Clinic

Support your students towards better language use with the help of our resident word-wizard, **Alex Quigley**...

TRY THIS TODAY: 'BEST AND BETTER'

To use ambitious vocabulary in their writing, pupils need encouragement and consistent scaffolding. A timely point for scaffolding and enhancing their academic vocabulary choices is during the editing and revising process after drafting. A focus on 'Best and Better' vocabulary revisions can help pupils significantly improve their writing.

Too often, pupils edit a few spellings but won't revise their words to better meet the mark. 'Best and Better' asks pupils to circle/highlight their 'best' word choices, but also any words they could make 'better' with more sophisticated synonyms. By honing in on words to improve, it becomes a manageable step for all pupils.



Cracking the academic code



Some words and concepts matter more, and are featured more commonly in secondary school classrooms. One example is 'significance'. In history, pupils must explain the significance of sources. In English literature, we might cover the significance of themes and characters. In geography, pupils may explain the significance of physical phenomena.

Given the prevalence of 'significance', giving pupils synonyms for significance can provide them with a more powerful vocabulary to draw from. For instance, consider the words '*serious*', '*momentous*', '*convincing*', '*crucial*' or '*vital*', as well as the antonyms '*trivial*', '*meaningless*', '*minor*' and '*inessential*' – all of which can bolster pupils' options when writing or speaking about significance.

DO THEY KNOW?

Until about the 7th century, writing didn't include any spaces between words on the page – which made for tricky reading...

ONE FOR: ENGLISH STUDENTS

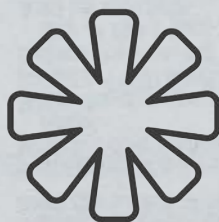
ASTERISK

Derives from: the root '*asteriskos*', from the Greek meaning 'small star'

Means: a typographical symbol first used to identify errors in writing, such as repetition

Related terms: asteroid, aster flower, astronaut, symbol, character

Note: In computer science, the asterisk is used as a wildcard character to denote repetition



**I DON'T
THINK IT
MEANS
WHAT YOU
THINK IT
MEANS...**

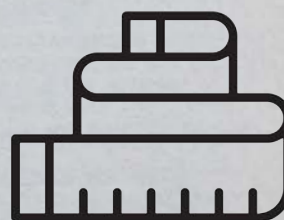
METRE

In English literature

A regular pattern of sound stresses for words and phrases in poetry

In physical education

A unit of length equivalent to 39.37 inches



One word at a time

Some words are themselves powerful, whereas others describe the power of words. 'Logophile' is a sophisticated word that describes someone who loves words – perhaps you, reader? It's a word that's unlikely to feature heavily in pupils' secondary school writing, but its roots are instructive and link to many other words in turn.

The word root 'phile' ('*philia*') from the Greek, meaning 'lover of', features in numerous useful words, and can be attached to a host of words old and new – including 'bibliophile' (book lover), 'technophile' (loves technology), 'autophile' (loves being alone) and so on. It's one word that can instantly and directly connect pupils to many more.



Alex Quigley is a former teacher and the author of a number of books, most recently *Closing the Writing Gap*; he also works for the Education Endowment Foundation as National Content Manager

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Linda Bradshaw,
City of Leicester College

”

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[MATHS PROBLEM]

SIGNIFICANT FIGURES

Students can often become confused over how to round a number to a specified number of significant figures, writes **Colin Foster**

In this lesson, students connect significant figures to other ways of rounding.

THE DIFFICULTY

Fill in the missing numbers in the table to the right.

Students may be confused about what 'significant figures' means and round to 1, 2 and 3 **decimal places** instead. Or they may be confused about whether to count zeroes or

not, so they might think that 30.5449 to 2 significant figures is 30.5. Or they may use incorrect 'successive' rounding when working out 30.5449 to 4 significant figures, rounding 30.5449 first to 30.545 and then rounding **this rounded value** to 30.55.



Number	Rounded to...			
	1 significant figure	2 significant figures	3 significant figures	4 significant figures
30.5449	30	31	30.5	30.54
0.030 544 9	0.03	0.031	0.0305	0.030 54
3054.49	3000	3100	3050	3054

THE SOLUTION

For each of these numbers, say which column **the most significant digit** is in.

30.5449 0.030 544 9 3054.49 5.3449 0.53994 534.99

This could be a quickfire activity, with flashcards and mini-whiteboards. Each time, all students need do is identify the column (ones, tens, tenths, thousandths, etc.) containing the digit worth the most.

It will always be the first non-zero column from the left. Students might incorrectly think that it is the **largest digit** – e.g., the 9 in 30.5449, even though this is actually worth the least.

To round to **1 significant figure**, we round to **this** column. So, to round 30.5449 to 1 significant figure, we round to the nearest **10**. To round 0.0305449 to 1 significant figure, we round to the nearest **0.01**. To round 3054.49 to 1 significant figure, we round to the nearest **1000**.

Write down 10 more statements like these, making the numbers as varied as you can.

Students can be allowed to abbreviate their sentences to avoid repetition, or you can just ask them to list the two numbers for each statement. Alternatively, a printable sheet is available at bit.ly/ts121-mp1.

Now look at what happens for **2 significant figures**. To round 30.5449 to 2 significant figures, we round to the nearest **1**. To round 0.0305449 to 2 significant figures, we round to the nearest **0.001**. To round

3054.49 to 2 significant figures, we round to the nearest **100**.

Students might need reminding that 'rounding to the nearest 0.1' or 'rounding to the nearest tenth' is the same as 'rounding to 1 decimal place'. Write 10 more statements like these, again varying the numbers and using several different numbers of significant figures.

Now complete the table below. The answers are included here in red – a blank table can be found in the task sheet.

Number	number of significant figures	...means that we round to the nearest...	...which gives this answer:
2160.32	1	1000	2000
962.34	3	1	962
48 647.5	1	10 000	50 000
921944	2	1	92
87.3759	3	0.1	87.4
6756.86	3	10	6760
43.2221	3	0.1	43.2
66.7856	4	0.01	66.79
247 406	4	100	247 400
802 571	3	1000	803 000

In this table, we have the number 247 406. Why would it be a problem if we change that number to 247 401?

This may be hard for students to answer, but the transformation 247 406 → 247 400 must be rounding to the nearest 100. However, 247 401 → 247 400 could be rounding to the nearest 100 **or** the nearest 10, leaving two possible answers.

Checking for understanding

To assess students' understanding, ask them to create a table like this for their partner, swap, complete, and then swap back and check.



Colin Foster (@colinfoster77) is a Reader in Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics Education at Loughborough University. He has written many books and articles for mathematics teachers. foster77.co.uk, blog.foster77.co.uk

Education versus advocacy

Dr Alka Sehgal Cuthbert makes the case for why schools shouldn't put their thumbs on the scales of social justice...

What principles should a teacher draw upon when deciding how best to proceed in his or her main task of educating? Should teachers put their thumb on the scales of social justice in favour of minority rights?

There are some educators who would openly advocate for the key tenets of critical race theory (CRT) – which sees British society as systematically racist, and maintains that to be truly anti-racist, you must accept this assertion. I would venture, however, that most teachers would rather avoid having to come down on one side or the other of a culture war in their classroom.

New orthodoxies

Yet as two recently published reports show, this may not be possible. While the explicit teaching of CRT, and/or wider critical social justice tenets is presently limited to schools in certain areas, there's evidence that certain key beliefs are fast becoming accepted as orthodoxies.

The 'Who's in Charge?' report (see bit.ly/ts121-tp1) produced by the campaign group Don't Divide Us (of which I'm director) examines the anti-racist school policies adopted by a national sample of LAs, according to their diversity

and inclusion policies, pledges and websites.

The report classes said policies as 'biased', 'at risk' or 'unbiased' based on the presence or otherwise of language referring to key CRT tenets, and explicit statements supportive of wanting to change society or cultural attitudes.

The report found that 56% of respondents were either biased or at risk – that their anti-racist or equality, inclusion and diversity statements endorse the beliefs, explicitly or implicitly, that Britain is 'systematically racist', and that the ethnic majority are inevitably bearers of 'white privilege' or 'unconscious bias'.

Public institutions

The second report, 'The Political Culture of Young People' produced by Policy Exchange (bit.ly/ts121-tp2), surveyed the attitudes of 18- to 20-year-olds, and found that 59% of respondents had been taught one or more CRT-related terms. Within that group, 68% had either not been presented with any counterarguments, or been told that any alternatives, such as colour-blind approaches, were 'not respectable'.

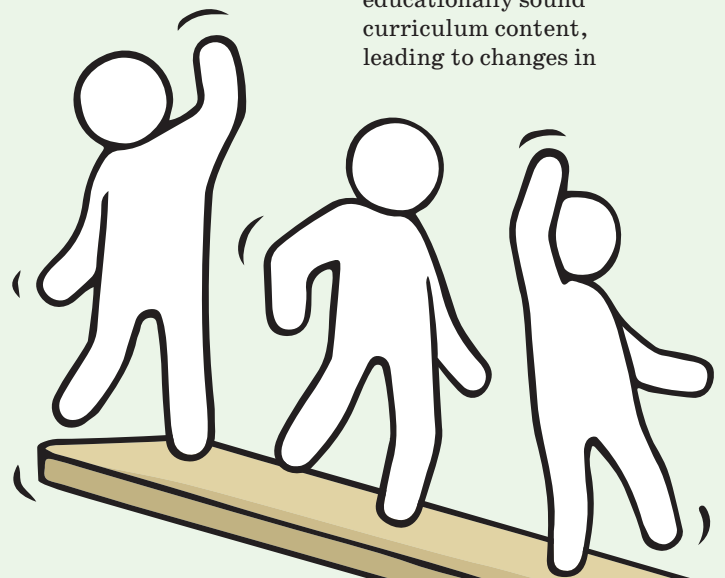
Schools might not be the biggest influencer on young

people's social and political attitudes – at least when compared to social media or peer groups – but they are public institutions, with an important role to play in the maintenance (or indeed disruption) of wider public norms.

In recent years there has been a growth in third-party, quasi-educational

organisations offering CRT-based, anti-racist advisory services to schools, often with little to no quality scrutiny of the content they produce.

There is, however, readily available anecdotal evidence to suggest that adopting such policies uncritically can shape the framing of otherwise educationally sound curriculum content, leading to changes in



“As schools embrace their role as deliverers of social justice, their educational role will become secondary”

Join the CONVERSATION

The Academy of Ideas Education Forum gathers monthly to discuss trends in educational policy, theory and practice. Find out more at academyofideas.org.uk/education-forum

practice. As schools come to embrace their new role as deliverers of (critical) social justice, their educational role will become secondary – with corrosive intellectual and ethical consequences.

Contested issues

When teachers come down on the side of social justice activism, the distinction between educational goals and the political interests of the teachers in question becomes blurred, breaching the duty of schools to teach impartially.

Consider, for example, a presentation slide sent to me by a parent. It related to a homework task their child had been set, about the attacks on statues of figures associated with slavery (other topic options were available), soon after the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol by protestors in 2020.

The parent had asked their child whether the class discussion had considered alternative views, and was told it hadn't. The only consideration of

'alternatives' in the task was

limited to *'Who do you think should replace these statues? Who should we celebrate instead?'* The notion that many people might legitimately disagree with the protestors' reasoning went wholly unacknowledged.

Of course, it's entirely possible for teachers to discuss contested social issues with older classes – but these discussions must be framed educationally. By, for example, comparing the removal of statues in different times and places. If the topic is one less focused on history, then it ought to include the fair presentation of a range of public views.

Pub argument

Failing to adhere to the educational principles of disciplinary knowledge and impartiality when introducing controversial

topics can backfire horribly. Take the recent fracas at Wood Green Academy, when the Muslim gay campaigner, Khakan Qureshi, was invited to speak to a class in a school with many Muslim pupils.

That's not to say that Mr Qureshi shouldn't have been invited, but the lesson – parts of which were filmed and shared on social media – consisted of little more than a heated exchange of opinions. A school version of a pub argument.

The teacher, who can be seen struggling to maintain control of the class, could have framed the discussion differently – educationally, with some deeper thinking and foresight. How and why do religions adhere to, or drop certain doctrines? She could have introduced Mr Qureshi in the context of a RE-based discussion on whether there can be an 'English Islam'. Based on what can be gleaned from the recording, it doesn't look like any such preparatory work was done.

Was Mr Qureshi invited to promote a muddled brew of British values codified in government and Ofsted documents? Or did the teacher believe that prior indications of homophobia in the class called for attitudinal change?

This prompts the question of what exactly university education departments propose as legitimate aims for education, and for schools. What are teachers being told about the reach – and limit – of their authority in relation to parents?

Heated arguments between religious conservatives and sexual

minorities aren't inevitable, especially in schools. But in the context of a multi-ethnic, predominantly secular society, a key precondition is that state school staff perform the role of public servants, not activists.

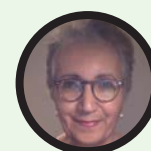
Relative neutrality

Teachers need to create an arena of relative neutrality, in terms of party politics, religion, and society's normative values.

It would help if the government and the profession can agree that schools be made exempt from certain social and political pressures. Schools have the unique task of nurturing the intellectual and ethical development of children, along universal principles with which the majority of the public (explicitly or tacitly) agree.

This means that any teachers wanting to change the political or ethical norms of society can do so in their own time, but not through the classroom. It means upholding the educational value of teaching impartially – a goal supported by 69% of parents in a recent YouGov poll.

Only then will we have a chance of preventing classrooms from becoming sites of ever greater division and chaos, and teachers losing the trust of parents.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alka Sehgal Cuthbert (@ASCphiled) is a teacher, independent academic and writer, and co-editor of *What Should Schools Teach?* – Disciplines, subjects and the pursuit of truth, 2nd Ed. (£25, UCL Press)



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Who has time for research?

Your schedule may be packed, but enrolling in research trials is a worthy and highly rewarding use of any school's time, says the EEF...

Teachers are the ultimate multitaskers. Over the course of a week, day or even the same lesson they'll wear many different hats – from subject specialist to behaviour management expert – to ensure the children in their care receive the best chance of success.

With so many competing priorities and only finite resources, teachers need ready access to information that can help them maximise the impact of their practice and the time they have with their pupils.

How research helps

Education research puts popular teaching and learning approaches and programmes under the microscope and evaluates their impact on pupil outcomes.

This allows school leaders to identify initiatives that have been successful in previous lessons, and gain insights that can bolster their professional expertise and guide their decision making around what might be effective in their setting.

It also helps us weed out those initiatives that show little to no evidence of impact, so that resources can be directed towards those strategies most likely to succeed.

Over time, the broader evidence base will grow with every new piece of research, creating a communal library that documents what works and what doesn't. Under what circumstances might a given approach work best? For whom? And what are the costs likely to involve?

Education research is complicated. It can be challenging to conduct robust studies amid the everyday realities of a typical classroom, but that shouldn't put us off. The more research we gather, the more we learn – not just about which approaches are effective, but how those initiatives should be best implemented.

At the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), a core part of our work involves testing the effectiveness of teaching and learning approaches. We commission independent research teams to undertake

robust evaluations, so that teachers and school leaders know their options when considering if and how to implement a new approach.

We're always looking for schools to take part in our trials. Most of our evaluations are conducted through randomised controlled trials, in which schools are randomly assigned to one of two groups – a 'delivery' group that will implement the approach being tested, or a control group that continues teaching as normal.

We will also scale up programmes that have previously shown a positive

impact on pupil progress so that more schools can benefit from them – thus giving schools opportunities to deliver programmes with proven track records of having had a positive impact on pupil learning, at a subsidised rate.

Why take part?

Schools that take part in research projects and trials make a valuable contribution to the education evidence base, and help support the profession as a whole improve standards of teaching and learning.

Most EEF-funded projects involve high-quality professional development and support resources. We contribute towards the delivery costs of all our projects, letting you access high-potential programmes at a heavily subsidised rate. Even schools assigned to control groups can benefit in the form of incentive payments for taking part.

By building up the evidence base together, we can drive improvements in practice right across the sector.

Find out which trials you could join, and which subsidised programmes are on offer where you are, by visiting educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk or following @EducEndowFoundn; you can also sign-up to our EEF News Alerts for details of other projects we'll be launching over the next few months

NOW TESTING



- Your school could take part in Embedding Formative Assessment – a programme shown to improve outcomes by embedding school-wide formative assessment strategies.



- Alternatively, you could consider signing up for our forthcoming trial of English Mastery and test the impact of a knowledge-rich KS3 English curriculum.

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Schools

5 REASONS TO TRY... MyPlace by The Safeguarding Company

Find out how your safeguarding team can avail themselves of a secure and supportive online space to call their own



30 SECOND BRIEFING

MyPlace is an online safe space that sits within the Safeguarding Community. It enables teams to share resources and communicate securely, thus enhancing your safeguarding culture, while allowing senior officers to access information and contact staff all from one central location.

1 CONNECTS SAFEGUARDERS

MyPlace, like all our products, is designed by safeguarding experts. Vikkey Chaffe, our Head of Community Relations, is herself an ex-safeguarding lead and knows first-hand the vital roles that community and communication play in safeguarding: "We know how challenging it is to be able to speak to your safeguarding leads in one central, safe place. MyPlace not only allows you to do that, but also gives you the chance to share calendars and resources, so that good practice is distributed throughout your organisation!"



2 UNLIMITED EASE OF ACCESS

Safeguarding topics are vast and varied, and we understand the need for multiple forums – sometimes even within the same subject. Unlike other internal programmes, MyPlace doesn't limit the number of virtual rooms that can be created for different topics, groups or themes, allowing staff within your organisation to communicate and share resources as they wish. When it comes to safeguarding, data protection is essential. All of our software and programmes, including MyPlace, thus carry Cyber Essentials Plus certification from Cyberlab (cyberlab.co.uk).

3 SHARE SCHEDULES AND DATA

MyPlace gives team members the ability to share resources, access shared calendars and even post team-wide news updates, complete with any pertinent articles or guidance your colleagues need to see. MyPlace can also help senior safeguarding officers communicate safely with other leads when geographically or logistically difficult to do so, and additionally give primary safeguarders the opportunity to securely share files, policies, and practices from one central location.

Contact:

thesafeguardingcompany.com
thesafeguardingcompany.com/myplace
info@thesafeguardingcompany.com

4 PRIORITISE YOUR WELLBEING

We care enormously for the people who work to keep our children, young people, and vulnerable adults safe – which is why we created MyPlace! We understand how challenging and demanding the role of safeguarding can be, and how crucial maintaining your own health and wellbeing is. MyPlace offers staff a means of easily sharing blogs and resources, as well as a space for chatting about any issues they have. Discussing the challenges safeguarders have can open up conversations that help others better understand the responsibilities and unique challenges safeguarders face each day – particularly in a post-pandemic world.

5 CONNECT TO OUR WIDER COMMUNITY

MyPlace is an extension of, and sits within, our Safeguarding Community, which currently includes over 5000 active members. This is a free and secure platform where you can raise questions, share best practice and discuss safeguarding issues with other 'Safeguardians'.

Praise for our community: "Genuinely, The Safeguarding Community has helped me feel not so alone! To know that I can ask those sensitive questions and be totally anonymous just gives me the support I need!" – Anonymous

KEY POINTS

Embed a proactive safeguarding culture in your organisation through improved communication and a spotlight on the importance of safeguarding

MyPlace can be fully customised with your own branding, colours and logos to make it look like part of your own collateral

"A great place to communicate with each other in a safe place, we don't have to email each other now!" – Luke Ramsden, Deputy Headteacher

Overlay your instance of MyPlace onto the wider Safeguarding Community for access to an even greater network of safeguarding professionals

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Is your school making the most effective and economical use of its learning technology?

Which of the many innovative learning solutions out there can deliver great outcomes for your students?

These are the questions we seek to explore in **Technology & Innovation** – a specialist publication by The Teach Co aimed at teachers and school leaders working across secondary school settings.

Inside this issue...

- Why Artificial Intelligence in classrooms is nothing to be scared of
- The memorable STEM lessons you can teach through school trips
- How to craft a blended learning approach that works for you
- Discover the hidden features and functions of the edtech you already use

The malign impact of the 11+ may be a memory for most, but they're a current concern for some – and now a new campaign group wants to end the practice for good...

Melissa Benn



How many Teach Secondary readers are familiar with the 11+? For the majority of you, it may evoke memories of a bygone age – the post-WWII period that saw a newly invigorated state education system built upon the grammar/secondary modern divide.

Children as young as 10 were assigned secondary school places according to the results of a test eventually found to be both scientifically flawed and socially divisive, before the ushering in of a comprehensive system of schooling.

Singled out

As a result, most of today's children don't take exams as part of their transfer to 'big' school. They can therefore begin their first terms full of hope and optimism, rather than feeling themselves cast out as failures – a common feeling among children who fail the 11+ – or singled out for academic success, which brings its own pressures.

However, these emotions will still be familiar to *TS* readers living in those counties, principally Kent, Buckinghamshire and parts of Lincolnshire, where the 11+ continues to hold sway. For these teachers, parents and pupils alike, the 11+ remains an ever present threat or opportunity; one that depends to a great extent on family background and wealth.

It's now well-established how some children entered for the test benefit hugely from intensive and expensive tuition. Some private preparatory schools coach their pupils in how to pass the test, thus ensuring that successful entrants effectively receive a selective secondary education for free. Only a tiny proportion of children on Free School Meals make it through the 11+ successfully.

Fierce opposition

Leaving aside for now the feelings of dejection that many young people can internalise and carry with them for a long time, sometimes even for life, those who don't pass the test are often assigned to schools that struggle to recruit and retain high quality teachers. Many such schools – which are no longer called 'secondary moderns', but are more or less functionally the same – do a fantastic job, despite their perceived 'second rate' status.

Yet the perpetuation of the grammar/secondary modern divide, and the test that underpins it, surely prompts us to ask, *why does it still exist?*

Occasionally, political figures will sing the praises of the old grammar school system and seek to expand it in the name of 'aspiration'. Indeed, grammar school places have actually grown incrementally in recent decades, under both Labour and Conservative governments.

But as Theresa May discovered during her time as Prime Minister, education policy advocating a

deliberate and extensive expansion of the grammar system can now expect to be met with fierce opposition from across the profession, and even from within the Conservative Party.

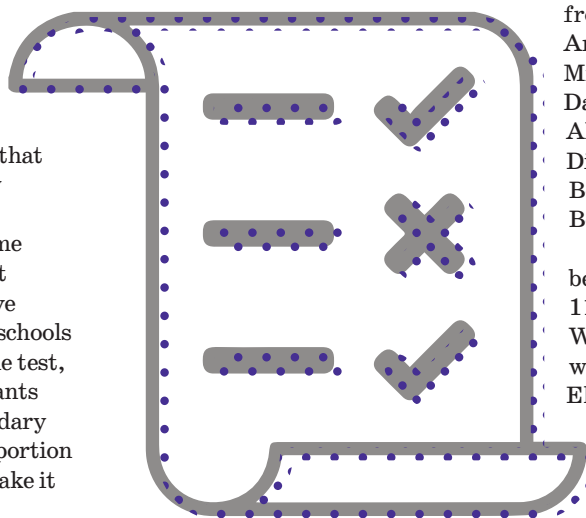
Antithetical to wellbeing

The bald truth is that no mainstream party now believes the division of children before puberty to be a good idea. Instead, such systems are widely acknowledged to be antithetical to wellbeing and opportunity. Even so, neither of the two main parties will publicly commit to phasing out the 11+ where it still exists, and complete a task of reform commenced nearly five decades ago.

Yet while politicians may not feel able to make that pledge, a new group launched late last year is calling for just that. 'Time's Up for the Test' is a coalition based around a single, simple idea – the phasing out of the 11+. TUFTT doesn't want to close good schools; it wants to open them up to all local children.

The Coalition has already assembled an impressive array of established educational groups and individual supporters, ranging from Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham to former HMCI Sir Michael Wilshaw, as well as professors Danny Dorling and Peter Mandler. Also on board is the former BBC Director General Greg Dyke and the Booker Prize winning writer, Bernardine Evaristo.

In the coming year, TUFTT will be campaigning for an end to the 11+ via a series of talks and events. With luck, it will change the political weather just as the next General Election looms into view, and encourage our political class to finally to bring *all* parts of England's school system into the 21st century.



For more information about TUFTT, visit timesupforthetest.org; a series of personal stories relating to the 11+ can be found at 11plusanonymus.org. Melissa Benn (@Melissa_Benn) is a writer and campaigner, and visiting professor of education at York St John University

Collins

Help every KS3 student become a confident reader

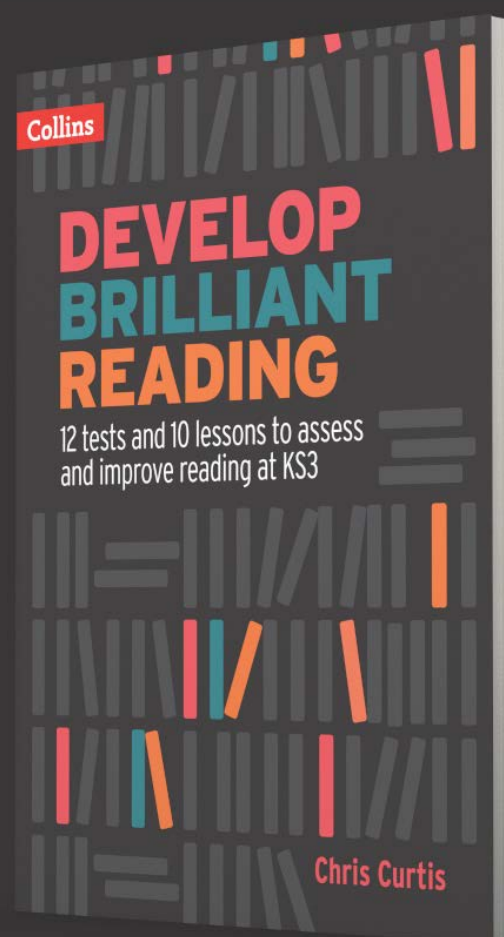
12 tests and 10 lessons to assess and improve reading at KS3

By **Chris Curtis**

Assess reading progress and improve reading skills with ready-made and photocopiable reading tests to spot problem areas, direct teaching and gain insights into reading patterns

"A very useful set of resources. It's so helpful to have assessments you can use immediately with Key Stage 3 students. Recommended!"

M Hatfield, 5 star Amazon review



Find out more collins.co.uk/DevelopBrilliantReading

3 things we've learnt about... TEACHERS' WELLBEING

Looking back from the other side of the holidays, what were teachers' thoughts at the end of the school year just gone – and how might this inform your preparations when the summer term next rolls round...?

1 High workload
The teacher wellbeing and retention crisis has many causes, but few can argue with the role played by workload. Addressing the issue isn't simple, however, given that it's an umbrella term. Teacher Tapp has been attempting to unpick different elements of workload, and its impact on teachers.

According to Teacher Tapp data, stress levels have increased dramatically compared to just last year, with three quarters of teachers now feeling that the stress levels of the job are unacceptable, up from 56%. Burnout is also at its highest levels since Teacher Tapp started its work in 2017.

To reverse these trends, we need to get to the root of the issue. When asked what their leaders should do to improve staff wellbeing, 63% of teachers wanted them to reduce administrative requirements, while 46% wanted them to work on improving student behaviour.

2 Behaviour
When asked to identify their biggest source of work-related stress, there was a clear winner among secondary teachers – behaviour. This applies across all ages, though younger, less experienced staff are naturally more likely to struggle with addressing and managing it.

The data reveals something curious, though. Anecdotally, teachers tell us that student behaviour has worsened as a result of the pandemic. 55% now say that behaviour has deteriorated since the start of their teaching career compared to 37% last year. Yet when asked whether their last lesson was stopped due to bad behaviour, 33% of teachers said 'Yes' – a lower figure compared to 2019.

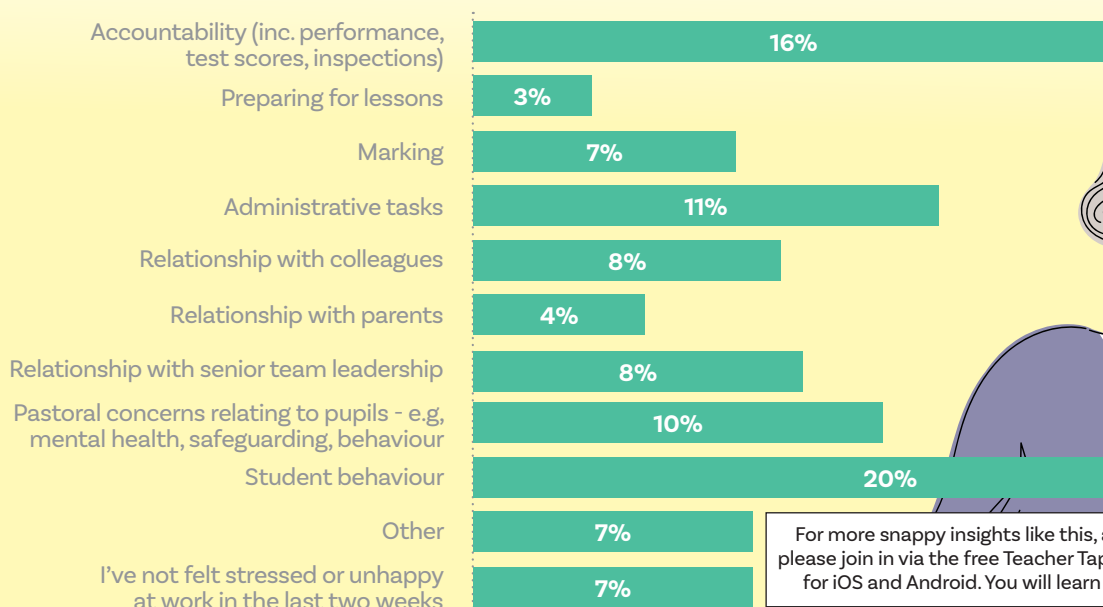
That may seem contradictory, but it demonstrates how behaviour within lessons is just one aspect of the issue, albeit perhaps the most discussed. Disruption outside of lessons is such that a quarter of teachers would willingly impose blanket silence in school corridors.

3 Resource tasks
Among the more traditional forms of workload are the tasks of lesson planning and gathering resources, and on this front, there's positive news. In October 2022, 40% of teachers said that they spent no time planning over a given weekend – the highest that figure's been since July 2019. Similarly, 62% of teachers (an all-time high) said they didn't do any marking.

Finding resources online has also apparently become easier. Back in 2018, 42% of secondary teachers said that they spent more than an hour each week looking online for resources. In 2022, that figure's markedly improved and now sits at 28% (though the increased availability of online resources throughout COVID has likely helped).

Despite some gains, then, it's clear that there remain significant areas needing attention – not least the stresses caused by student behaviour, and the volume of admin tasks taking up teachers' already time-poor days.

WHICH HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST SOURCE OF STRESS OR UNHAPPINESS IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS?



Question answered by 7,334 teachers on 01/08/22 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

For more snappy insights like this, and to be part of the panel, please join in via the free Teacher Tapp app available to download for iOS and Android. You will learn something new every day.

They've started – BUT WILL THEY FINISH?

School librarian **Sharan Kaur** shares her advice on how to provide the motivation and support some students need in order to get to the end of the books they pick up...

Midway through the 2021/22 autumn term, secondary school pupils were on average 2.4 months behind in their reading. That's according to research carried out by Renaissance and the Education Policy Institute commissioned by the DfE – research which further found that learning losses had increased by 0.5 months since the end of the 2021 summer term.

Even as we emerge from the shadow of the pandemic, persistent learning losses continue to present challenges to students and teachers across the country. Fostering a deeper enjoyment of reading promises to play a key role in closing this gap, and have an appreciable positive impact on students' progress and attainment.

Competing priorities

Reading will improve every student's comprehension skills, while enriching their phonics and writing abilities. Emotionally, it can even boost students' sense of wellbeing and reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety.

When students fail to take much enjoyment from reading, there's a good chance that they will become disengaged with any books they're reading currently and give up prematurely, before reaching the end. This not only deprives a student of the satisfaction to be had in completing a

text, but will also negatively impact upon their learning.

It's common for secondary students to experience competing education priorities as they advance into the senior years of school and prepare for their

final exams – a side-effect of which is that they'll frequently have less time available to dedicate to reading for pleasure.

Naturally, English teachers and librarians are especially sensitive to the many benefits of reading across the curriculum – so here, I've outlined a few areas to carefully consider when looking to boost reading engagement and enjoyment within your classroom.

Offer variety

It's really important that students have a range of material to choose from, be it genres, characters or styles of text. Offering a variety of texts will help to boost engagement and enjoyment levels by simply increasing the chances of students finding texts that are relevant to their interests.

For secondary students to enjoy the act of reading, it's necessary at some level for them to connect with what it is that they're reading. Prioritising variety makes it

that much more likely that everyone's personal likes are catered for to some extent.

Because as we all know, secondary students can and do hold a very diverse range of viewpoints, likes, dislikes and experiences. The books

they can read should be reflective of this. Instead of choosing one book for the whole class to focus on, let students choose from a set of available books. You could even facilitate peer-to-peer recommendations by having students share suggestions of books worth reading via ballot boxes.

One resource I've found particularly useful is myON – an online tool providing access to around 6,000 eBooks that can be made available to students, alongside a series of book-specific quizzes for them to complete after each read.

Aside from saving physical space, it's a useful way of ensuring you're able to provide reading material appropriate for different reading levels via digital devices that young people can confidently use.

Reading for pleasure, not practice

It's important to try and reorient the purpose of picking up a book in the

student's mind, and make reading an activity they can conceive of experiencing outside of their studies, as a pleasurable activity in itself.

By encouraging students to engage in fiction and/or non-fiction texts based on

their personal preferences, they can soon start to associate reading more with 'me time' than yet another teacher-set task they have to complete.

It's also important to celebrate the small wins in a student's reading journey. Another edtech solution we use is Accelerated Reader (see [renlearn.co.uk](https://www.renlearn.co.uk)), which sees students read and be quizzed on books expressly chosen according to their ability. Part of this involves coaching the most disengaged readers to select books that are accessible to them, rather than basing their choices solely on what their friends happen to be reading.

This means that they too get to experience the success and motivation that comes from scoring high in quizzes based on books

recommended to them, and are compelled to continue their reading journeys.

Books as diverse as your cohort

The fact that we live in a diverse society is something that can and should be reflected in the books our students read. If we fail to

provide access to books that do that, then it shouldn't surprise us if some students opt to disengage as a result.

Thankfully, we have access to more books than ever which portray stories, characters and events that honestly depict the world in which we now live.

Texts and characters that students can directly

relate to make it easier for them to form

a personal connection with the story being told.

Finally, it's worth exploring the potential to be had in turning reading into a social activity. Why not encourage your students to form a book club, or smaller groups based around reading the same book and delivering a presentation on it once they've finished?

This will allow students to interact with one another, share different viewpoints and, critically, challenge their understanding. Students will thus become more aware of how perception can vary among their peers, and benefit from the motivation that comes with working alongside others on a shared task.

In a world full of distractions, maintaining secondary students' motivation to read and ability to gain enjoyment from books continues to present a challenge, yet reading is foundational to young peoples' cognitive and emotional development. Enjoyment of reading at a young age builds skills that are useful across a whole

range of subjects – from boosted concentration levels, to enhanced information processing skills and expanded vocabularies. The communication skills attained from consistent reading will greatly benefit students in all aspects of their lives, both now and well into the future. Teachers and librarians can play an instrumental role in helping students excel in their reading journey – but we can't do it alone.

The declines we've seen in reading amid the

READING IN 2022

47.8%

of children aged 8 to 18 say they enjoy reading

28%

of children aged 8 to 18 say that they read daily

20.6%

of boys receiving free school meals say that they read daily, compared to 32.6% of girls receiving FSMs

24.9%

of 16 to 18-year-olds say that their parents encourage them to read

Source: 2022 Annual Literacy Survey carried out by the National Literacy Trust

pandemic has meant that students now need more support than ever if they're to remain on track, academically. The support of headteachers and SLTs is therefore hugely important when implementing an effective reading culture.

Introducing school-wide initiatives, and working with a team of reading teachers who routinely and consistently deliver on expectations are all contributing factors to reading culture we have here at Cardinal Wiseman.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sharan Kaur is a secondary school librarian at Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School in Kingstanding, Birmingham

5 REASONS TO TRY... Science Museum Group Academy

Find out how you and your colleagues can receive free, quality CPD from a trusted institution with plenty of knowledge and experience to share



30 SECOND BRIEFING

The Science Museum Group Academy offers research-informed training and resources for teachers, museum staff, STEM professionals and others involved in STEM communication and learning. Our sessions are available free for UK primary and secondary teachers, and can take place either in person or online.

1 EXPERIENCE IN STEM ENGAGEMENT

The Science Museum Group (SMG) has delivered STEM engagement training for over 25 years.

Drawing on our research and experience of engaging audiences in STEM subjects across five museums, as well as our outreach activities and events beyond the museum doors, the SMG Academy is well equipped to deliver training and supporting resources to help you engage students in the study of STEM.

All our courses are founded on our approach to learning and engagement, and are shaped by evidence gathered from audience and academic research.

2 FREE SESSIONS FOR UK EDUCATORS

Whether you choose to attend in person at one of our museums or participate in an online session, you can access inspiring and supportive CPD – all for free, thanks to the funding the Academy receives.

That includes all materials needed for the sessions – even lunch, if you're attending one of our full-day, in-person sessions.

3 UPCOMING COURSES IN 2023

Our in-person 'Science Engagement' course is due to



take place on multiple dates at the Science Museum (London) and the Science and Industry Museum (Manchester). Participants will get to try new techniques and discuss ideas for planning inspiring STEM experiences with their students.

Also new for 2023 is our 'Exploration and Discovery Clubs' session, at which those taking part will learn how to run

an engaging discovery club.

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THE TS GUIDE TO... CPD AND TRAINING

Teachers now have more options than ever when it comes to learning new skills and sharpening their practice – but deciding on the CPD that's right for you, and setting aside the time to complete it can still present challenges...

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IN FIGURES:

CAN WE PUT A NUMBER ON WHAT IT WOULD COST FOR ALL TEACHERS TO RECEIVE A SET AMOUNT OF CPD EACH YEAR?

£2,950

The average current spend on CPD per teacher across all schools in England

80%

of schools spend less than 3% of their budgets on CPD per year

£210 million

The cost to government each year of entitling all teachers to an annual 35 hours of high quality CPD

Source: 'The cost of high-quality professional development for teachers in England' – a report produced in 2021 by the Education Policy Institute and Wellcome

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TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

IMPROVE YOUR CPD WITH CHECKLISTS

Avowed checklist advocate and professional development specialist Harry Fletcher-Wood explains why both are ideally suited to one another

bit.ly/121special1

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CAREER

After years of stasis, the models schools use for their ITT and CPD needs have recently seen major changes – and Anthony David, for one, is entirely on board...

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HOW CPD CAN BEAT THE STAFFING CRISIS

Amid severe retention issues and spiralling recruitment costs, the need for more and better CPD has become especially pressing, argues Chris Pope

bit.ly/121special3



Be a contender

If you have serious aspirations towards attaining a leadership role, it's eminently doable, says **Ed Carlin** – just so long as you develop the right mindset, attitudes and habits...

Meet Jeff. He's a great tennis player. Having first lifted a racket over 20 years ago, he's since seen off countless opponents. His home is filled with local club awards.

Tennis has provided Jeff with confidence, success and numerous skills – and yet Jeff is miserable. At 53, he's witnessed several players from his club go on to join national and even international tours. He knows former players who turned professional and became coaches – some of whom even went on to build their own tennis academies.

Jeff doesn't understand why none of that ever happened for him. After years of dedicated service and commitment he's become frustrated and bitter, concluding it was simply circumstance, luck and bad timing that stood in the way of his dreams.

Reaching an impasse

Now, let's compare Jeff with the many teachers I've met who similarly feel that opportunity has passed them by. Most will have been teaching – and teaching well – for 10, 20 or even 30 years, watching as junior colleagues overtake them and speedily climb the promotional ladder.

Our veteran teacher – let's call them 'Teacher A' – and Jeff have something in common. While both have successfully developed their skills and honed their technique over time, they've rarely engaged with additional development opportunities. Both have

previously refused to listen to the ideas of others, and crucially, developed few skills outside of those required to perform well within a narrow context of their respective fields.

Teachers who fail to recognise that CPD is the means by which they will develop and progress in their careers will often stagnate. Oh, they'll continue teach well, and show up every day, fully committed to the tasks at hand – but their reluctance to engage in leadership opportunities, development initiatives or professional growth will inevitably lead them to an impasse.

As the years go on, those opportunities for progression will become harder to seize, until the day arrives when they sadly don't meet the professional requirements needed to apply

for certain positions or even attend particular courses. Their skillsets have become too narrow, their thinking too constrained within the walls of their classroom.

Foundation skills

To ensure teachers are receiving the best possible CPD experiences, school leaders must be architects of high-quality



professional learning, leadership pathways and wider school development opportunities.

An effective school leader will source and roll out learning programmes which allow teachers to think outside the box. Too often, blue sky thinking is expected only from individuals already in formal leadership roles. Imagine the possibilities if we could harness the creativity and innovation of whole staff teams, and provide the resourcing necessary for them to gain experience of driving forward key school priorities.

CPD linked to leadership development for staff at all levels will enable the seeds of greater professionalism and innovation to grow and flourish. I've spoken to many leadership colleagues who regret not having been offered more leadership opportunities prior to their promotion. A willingness to take the initiative and the ability to think on one's feet are qualities that school leaders will always need – but a solid foundation of leadership skills and abilities, developed throughout a teacher's career via CPD prior to promotion, will build both confidence and aptitude.

Growth mindset

Beyond school leaders providing teaching staff with leadership training and opportunities, what should teachers themselves be doing in terms of their daily habits and routines?

It all starts with a growth mindset. From the earliest stages of my own career, I committed to mentally preparing myself for the next level of leadership, in whatever form that might take. As a classroom teacher I'd

always seek out a mentor, or at least try to surround myself with aspirational people who were also looking for opportunities to grow and develop.

I knew that it would be from these people that I'd more likely receive recommendations for books or podcasts that might sharpen my thinking, and help get the most out of myself and others. I always sought to maintain a positive relationship with my heads of department, and would ask them for support in setting me up with training opportunities and CPD that would help me develop my own leadership potential.

Yes, that meant extra time and additional challenge – but I instinctively knew then

“As the years go on, opportunities for progression become harder to seize”

that one day, this would prepare me for the challenges, demands and responsibilities of a formal leadership role. I continued to do the same once I became a head of department, and still do so now as a deputy headteacher. Each day, I make time to place myself in the mindset of a headteacher and consider how I might improve a certain aspect of the school, or react to a current issue or problem.

Pursue greatness

It ultimately comes down to restlessness, and a drive to always seek out new opportunities for growth. After finding the solution to one problem area, I'll quickly move to the next and apply strategic thinking – assigning the right people to the right job, thus ensuring that the cycle of leadership continues to develop.

NURTURE YOUR INNER LEADER

What are the hallmarks of excellent leadership CPD that can result in career progression? The following topics would be a good starting point...

- How to build purpose-driven teams
- Strategic versus operational priorities
- What it means to hold courageous conversations
- Why commitment is more valuable than compliance
- The importance of collective efficacy and high impact

To any teachers who might be reading this, I'd urge you to seek out the very best CPD opportunities you can find. Surround yourself with positive mentors and like-minded, aspirational people. If you genuinely want to progress into a formal leadership role, then the journey can start

people to head out into the world, suitably inspired and equipped for success.

Too many jotters

Jeff is probably preparing himself for his next match right now. He knows that his local club are looking to develop coaches, but he doesn't have the time. He just wants to get on with playing the game.

Teacher A is busy marking work, while feeling tired and overwhelmed. They're aware that there are some interesting speakers appearing at an educational conference next month, but they can't find the time or motivation to go. There are too many jotters to mark and multiple reports to finish off.

And then there are those who are ready and willing to make the time, dig deep within themselves and seek out every opportunity for growth. *They* are the ones you'll see going from strength to strength – not just progressing, but also helping others around them grow and become the leaders that they too desire to be.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ed Carlin is a deputy headteacher at a Scottish secondary school, having worked in education for 15 years and held teaching roles at schools in Northern Ireland and England



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**SCAN TO
BOOK YOUR PLACE**



Growth strategies

Investing in CPD has never been more important – but happily, schools have never had as much flexibility when it comes to planning it, says **Nicola Brooks**

Teaching – the one career where you can spend all day concentrating on other people's development at the expense of your own.

There are many barriers preventing teachers from focusing on their own CPD – not least time, money and anxieties around setting cover. Prioritising ourselves in this way isn't selfish, however, but rather an investment in every child we teach.

Learn informally

As a profession, we're gradually becoming more workload-aware, with the result that there's less demand to extend the school day for CPD delivery. Teachers are great collaborators, however – so why

not provide a structure for the professional dialogue teachers engage in naturally?

This could take the form of 'breakfast briefings', or breaktime drop-ins where colleagues can pick up a quick strategy (and a biscuit). Putting out flipcharts or Post-it notes on which colleagues can quickly scribble responses to questions and prompts can be a great way of generating ideas. Collate and scan the responses, and you'll have a ready-made item for your next teaching and learning bulletin.

Another option is a termly 'bring and share' lunch, where attendees exchange and discuss interesting blogs or articles.

Consider also reviewing your use of directed meeting time. Are such sessions used to further staff knowledge and skills, or are they for sharing notices?

Meeting time is precious, so look at how operational information can be distributed using email or

messaging platforms, allowing staff meetings to focus more on CPD. Be sure to record, share and catalogue your professional learning, so that governors and non-teaching staff can access it too.

Use what you have

We've all heard the expression 'The best CPD is in the classroom next door'. Professional learning needn't involve pricey courses in fancy hotels when there's already a range of expertise all around you.

Try setting yourself the challenge of keeping all of your school's CPD internal for one half term. Invest time in collaborative activities, such as joint lesson planning or instructional coaching, allowing extra time to observe.

Look at ways of providing staff with personalised pathways or a choice of options. If you're concerned about accountability, think creatively about how staff can evidence their learning. An end of year celebratory teachmeet, a 'speed dating' swap and share session or podcast recording can all be more effective and inspiring than requesting written accounts.

Longer-term, you could review which classrooms teachers are assigned to, giving careful thought as to which colleagues might benefit from

being clustered together – particularly important if you have several ECTs.

Invest carefully

We live in a golden age of online professional learning, spanning Twitter to Mastodon and Slack to Instagram. Yet as great as the internet is, don't forget the brilliant support offer that's available to you locally, such as Teaching School Hubs and Research Schools. These provide access to high quality, low cost CPD rooted in local context – perfect for when time and money is tight.

Membership of professional organisations can also enhance your school offer, be they individual subject bodies or associations such as the Chartered College of Teaching. Teachers are busy people, so promote your offer with a visual display in the staffroom. Providing QR codes for staff to scan and one-page overviews they can take away will boost engagement.

Investing in ourselves isn't a luxury, but vital for keeping our teaching up to date. The next time your thoughts turn towards learning, why not take a moment to reflect on how you can maximise your own?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicola Brooks is a professional development co-ordinator for Reach South Academy Trust, and a founding fellow and network lead for the Chartered College of Teaching

Blurring the BOUNDARIES

The explosion in remote CPD has been hugely enriching – but it's also made it harder for many to stay organised and focused, observes **Rebecca Leek**...

There's a watercolour technique which involves painting onto already wet paper. It's quite magical – as the tip of your paintbrush hits the page, the colour floods outwards, like a flower in bloom. Add another colour, and you'll witness a slow amalgamation as the two tones blur with one another.

I learnt about watercolour techniques during lockdown. In those first few weeks, despite my children's schools mobilising

wanted them to develop a facility in one *really well*. Watercolours are affordable, so every child received their own watercolour set.

Self-sourced CPD

Unwittingly, I'd arranged some self-sourced CPD for myself. It was interesting, cheap and could be fitted around childcare and emails. It really taught me something, contributed to my sense of purpose and wellbeing, and ultimately improved the quality of education the children received at school.

a day's training – to the tune of £150 for the train ticket alone – is very low. It does happen, but has become far rarer.

The range of what you can presently access online is kaleidoscopic. If I was someone with money to invest I'd be putting it in the e-learning sector, as the growth rates are eye-watering.

Dividing lines

But just as watercolours can flow into each other across a page, so too can the boundaries between work and school. We can access CPD modules on our phones. Who else has sat in bed completing online safeguarding training when the last thing our tired eyes need is blue light messing with our circadian rhythms? I know I have.

Already exposed to long work hours, our dividing lines can start to blur. Teachers are constantly being told to build up their professional network, read the latest research, listen to podcasts, even write their own reflective blogs. These are laudable activities, but how can we prevent this online activity from seeping into our every waking hour?

When we fire up our phones or laptop to, for example, participate in a webinar, we're also opening the door to all our other work

– emails, that policy we're updating, Twitter. It's tempting to hop between tabs and rattle off a few different tasks simultaneously, but this lack of boundaries produces

“Who else has sat in bed completing online safeguarding training?”

magnificently, there was still lots of time for us to fill. I ordered an 'art-in-a-box' watercolour set, watched some YouTube videos and planned some activities to do with my three daughters. I still have some of the art we created together.

I also applied my newfound knowledge back at the primary school where I was appointed headteacher following lockdown. We had settled on watercolours as one of our 'mastery building blocks' – the children would visit different media during their time with us, but we

Since I first started teaching, the nature of CPD has changed dramatically. A year into my career, I remember travelling all the way from Hertfordshire to York for a one-day course on attaining higher grades at English GCSE. I can still remember some aspects of it now, 16 years later, so it certainly had an impact. Upon my return, I had to fill in a one-page sheet outlining what I'd learnt. This was filed away somewhere by the deputy headteacher, and I never saw it again.

The likelihood of me, or indeed any teacher now ever spending more than five hours travelling to and from

diminishing returns. Since we're not really focusing on anything, neither the work nor the learning will be as efficient or as effective as it should be.

Compartmentalise

The solution is to reduce the seepage between different parts of your work and personal life. Set aside



specific times for marking and your professional studies, and enter them in your diary. If a webinar is being recorded, allocate a slot for watching it at a time that suits you.

Plan homework over a cycle of lessons, not just one at a time. Check in with emails at set intervals over the course of the day, and establish a new norm of only responding at 8.15am and 4.15pm (or whichever times suit you best).

Use productivity apps like Forest (forestapp.cc) to help you stay focused on the task at hand, rather than constantly checking your phone. As you systematise your working days, you should soon find that your upcoming tasks start receiving the attention they deserve at those pre-planned, allotted times.

Innovate and improve

I've attended some terrible webinars. Some were too long, others lacked any form of interaction built into the delivery. In essence, they were demonstrations of very poor teaching – which for a teacher, is infuriating.

When delivering anything online, be it a staff briefing or in-school training, make sure you *do it well*. Invite responses in the chat. Integrate some quizzing. Send out some pre-reading. Maybe even encourage some friendly heckling.

Similarly, be brave and give feedback following any events you

attend. The craft of 'e-teaching' is still quite new, and we have a responsibility to improve how it's done. Let people know what went well and how the session could have kept you more on your toes. If at any point you drifted into checking your inbox, it probably wasn't good enough.

Choose wisely

The menu of what's out there is truly vast and can be difficult to navigate. Before anything else, think carefully about what you want to learn, achieve and become in the next two to three years.

You might be considering something substantial, like a postgraduate qualification, or conversely, some bite-sized sessions in a few key areas to strengthen your subject knowledge. If you're planning on working through an online video series, keep a log and build in some peer reflection time to talk about your learning.

Also, don't assume that providers which specialise in education training are the only platforms worth considering. If you're interested in pursuing leadership, completing cross-disciplinary courses in areas such as HR and change management might well set you apart from other candidates.

Most importantly, think carefully about how you're

FIND YOUR FOCUS

DEEP FOCUS

My favourite app for aiding focus whilst working is Forest. While the app is running, it will grow a small tree, and over time, a virtual forest – but when you try using your phone for something else, the tree will die. Subscribe to the paid version, and you'll contribute to trees being planted in the real world.

BUDDY UP

There's a strategy in ADHD circles known as 'Body Doubling'. People have discovered that they're more likely to focus on tasks if there's a second person in the room also focussing. Try finding a buddy and sit together. You can be working on different things while wearing headphones, since it's the physical, focussed presence that has been proven to help.

going to fit all this learning into your already busy working week. A desire to go above and beyond is admirable, but there's no honour in finishing the day knowing you've spent much of it unproductively hopping between screens or inefficiently multitasking. Set yourself some boundaries, compartmentalise your time – and leave the blending and blurring for when you next get the paintbrushes out...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca Leek has been a secondary and primary classroom teacher, head of department, SENCo and headteacher; she is currently the CEO of SEAMAT – a trust of three schools in South Essex



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Hard taskmasters

If school leaders demand the completion of valueless tasks, teaching staff should be within their rights to concentrate instead on more pressing priorities, says **Adam Boxer**...

Annette is a new head of history and has been asked to produce a curriculum roadmap for the subject in KS3. The roadmap is supposed to be in full colour, have icons for each topic and show the links between the various sub-topics.

She hasn't a clue where she's going to find the time to do it.

Surface features

This isn't an unfamiliar scenario. In recent years, workload in many schools has seen a slight reduction in expectations around data and marking, and a pivot towards curriculum-related projects. This work is often crucial – departments without a clearly structured curriculum, or a long-term plan for learning and retrieval practice, need to make immediate changes.

But not all of this curriculum-generated work is welcomed. Some has little, if any, effect on student outcomes, and bears worrying similarities with old accountability measures that only ever focused on surface features of lessons, rather than substantive questions of student learning.

Annette is feeling the brunt of this. She has a million things to do before breakfast – arrange cover, analyse Y8 assessment scores, prepare a Y9 unit of work that went inexplicably missing, deal with three students who didn't attend detention, and speak to two parents fretting about whether their Y11 children will finish the course in time for mocks. All before she even

has the chance to think about her own classes and planning, or her steadily growing pile of essay marking...

A static sector

Annette isn't sure why she's been asked to produce a curriculum roadmap, as she doubts that any students (or colleagues) will even read it. She knows it will take a long time, and yet she already has a perfectly serviceable list of topics the department uses across KS3.

She's aware that Ofsted apparently now care a lot about curriculum; that her school has recently appointed a new assistant head for curriculum impact; and that the head of English – who's practically perfect in every way – has already produced a beautiful, full colour curriculum map that currently adorns the English corridor.

Annette has many tasks to carry out, each with varying timescales and deadlines, and isn't convinced by their utility. At a fundamental level, she hasn't the time to

execute them all to a good standard. She's worried, frustrated and concerned that people will doubt her competence or work ethic. She takes work home, causing her evenings and weekends to become dominated by work she neither enjoys nor values.

Annette is far from alone. Her story is replicated in schools across the country, and nobody is immune. Senior leaders, middle leaders, frontline teachers and LSAs can all quickly become tangled in an ever-tightening net of work, with easy solutions hard to come by. We can't magic more time, money or colleagues. We're a static sector in that we have what we have, and stuff needs to get done. Or does it?

Beyond capacity

What if... said stuff didn't get done? What if that curriculum roadmap never gets written? What difference would it make to the students? What's the purpose behind the activity, and who does it help? If the

answers to those questions are unsatisfactory, then Annette simply *shouldn't do it*. Not out of bloody-minded belligerence, but simply because she's already at capacity.

We shouldn't be asking teachers to go beyond their capacity. They have a finite amount of time; the jobs they're assigned should fill that time, but go no further. Asking more of them when they're at capacity isn't just mean, it's counterproductive. You'll soon find Annette's resignation letter on your desk as she seeks employment elsewhere.

Annette shouldn't have been asked to do this task. And now that she has, *Annette should not do this task*. If she's challenged on not having done the work, she should simply say, *"I'm struggling with my workload at the moment. I do not currently have the time to do this. Please let me know if you can meet with me to look at my current to-do list and help me remove things so I have time to do the curriculum map."*

If the response isn't supportive, she should get cracking on that resignation letter – because there are plenty of schools out there that will value her more.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Boxer (@adamboxer1) is a science teacher and co-founder of the online quizzing tool Carousel Learning; he blogs about education research and evidence informed teaching at achemicalorthodoxy.wordpress.com

A day's difference

Gordon Cairns looks at why adopting a four-day school week could prove not just practical, but even advantageous for staff and students alike...

Amid a pile-up of problems – from rising inflation, to impending power shortages that threaten to leave homes in the dark and shut down businesses for hours at a time – now might not seem like the best time for educational establishments to be adopting radical new ideas.

And yet, there's one innovation that could potentially turn the problems we face into an opportunity to develop a better way of educating our young people – a thoroughly planned, four-day secondary school week.

Dire warnings

The dire warnings that trusts and LAs have received regarding winter 2022/23 – power blackouts, prohibitive fuel bills and all – could be tempered somewhat by reducing the school week by one day. Doing so would immediately cut energy costs by up to 20%, but the potential gains would extend beyond the financial benefits alone.

Trials of four-day school weeks carried out in the US have appeared to show some improvements in students' reading and writing outcomes, though the overall picture is so far inconclusive.

In long term, beyond the mental health benefits of a three-day weekend for students and staff, we would also likely see a significant reduction in schools' collective carbon footprint, given that the thousands of often old and energy-inefficient school buildings across the country wouldn't need to be lit or heated for as long.

Then there's the environmental saving to be had by not having to transport 9 million children to school and back as often, which could well be the biggest benefit of all.

Interesting patterns

For those sceptical at the idea, be aware that it's already happening elsewhere in the economy. A growing

Annenberg Brown University did find some fractionally negative effects on average maths and English outcomes. These amounted to less than 1%, following analysis of the standardised spring tests for students in grades 3 to 8.

Digging deeper into the report's numbers, its authors discovered some interesting patterns. Non-rural students didn't perform as well as

which examined rural school districts only – found that a four-day school week actually had a positive impact on two subjects with identical scores. One of its authors, Mary Beth Walker, dean of the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State, suggested that just as workers on a four-day week have been found to be more productive, extended weekends may result in teachers instructing more enthusiastically.

Understanding disparities

However, a further report noted that since US schools and districts had

“For those sceptical at the idea, be aware that it's already happening elsewhere in the economy”

number of UK businesses have started to embrace what was once considered wishful thinking, by keeping their staff on the same pay while instituting a four-day working week. Crucially, the majority of these workplaces have reported no drops in productivity, despite their reduced staff hours.

At the same time, there's been a steady rise in the number of US schools that have opted to extend their weekends. Within just the past two decades, numbers have risen sixfold – from 257 at the turn of the century, to over 1,600 across 24 states last year (albeit mainly for financial or staffing reasons, rather than strictly educational, environmental or mental health factors).

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, providing students with one less day of schooling each week hasn't correlated to a 20% drop in grades – though a multi-state, student-level analysis published in August 2022 by researchers at

those who lived in the country, and girls were more likely to be negatively affected by the four-day week than boys.

Conversely, a separate Georgia State University study dating from 2015 –



chosen to implement a four-day week differently – with some extending the length of the remaining four days to make up for the loss of the fifth – it was difficult to definitively gauge what the policy’s impact on academic outcomes actually was.

The Annenberg Brown University team concluded that a better understanding of why disparities in marks might occur and adapting accordingly would be key to successful adoptions of a four-day week.

As many schools discovered during the COVID pandemic, it’s possible to deliver education flexibly in ways that aren’t tied to the 9-4 weekday model. Has it ever been calculated by educationalists that the optimum number of hours spent learning for young

people equates to 32.5 per week? Did we arrive at that number because it broadly mimics adult working hours? Or simply because ‘that’s how it’s always been’?

What’s easier to predict is that a three-day weekend would increase the number of hours that secondary-age adolescents spend sleeping. This was confirmed by three students involved in another study, who all lived in different US states, and found they were able to reduce the ‘sleep debt’ they built up on school nights. The end result of this would presumably be a greater number of students coming to school well rested and ready to learn.

Sleep researchers have previously observed a correlation between lack of sleep and depression, along with an increase in risky

behaviours among adolescents. Giving students a sanctioned extra day off could help reduce the school-related anxiety that affects an increasing number of students, while simultaneously lowering the stress and anxiety levels of teachers – assuming the schools in question modify their targets to reflect the change in teaching days.

Educational priorities

Simply getting a one-day reprieve from the rush hour each week would likely have a positive impact on teachers’ mental health, while the longer weekend might serve as a carrot for boosting teacher retention.

Of course, for a four-day school week to become a reality, some parental objections would also need to be overcome, requiring as it would adjustments to many families’ weekly childcare and working arrangements. In 2021, the RAND Corporation commissioned a survey into the proposed introduction of a four-day school week in rural communities across the Western United States. The resulting ‘Can Four equal Five?’ report showed that parental focus

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- Schools’ collective carbon emissions amount to roughly the combined energy and transport emissions of Manchester, Newcastle and Bristol

groups generally responded positively to the new timetable, and the opportunities it allowed for families to spend more time together.

However, it’s worth noting that a previous RAND study in 2019 estimated that a four-day school week would bring about an 11% reduction in employment for married mothers with children aged 5 to 13 – though it found that there would no significant impact on fathers or single mothers.

Ideally, a four-day school week would pave the way for a long-term change in our educational priorities – perhaps one that might see adoption throughout wider society, allowing people to do more with less time at work.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gordon Cairns is an English and forest school teacher who works in a unit for secondary pupils with ASD; he also writes about education, society, cycling and football for a number of publications



Balancing act

As recent events fuel a range of student attendance issues, **Paul Buckland** looks at how schools can tackle those absence figures

The post-pandemic challenges facing secondary schools are many and varied. As a leader, it's daunting to have to prioritise and plan when so many issues demand your urgent attention.

The funding announced in last year's Autumn Statement, while better than expected, still won't cover teacher pay rises and schools' utility bills, nor the costs of food, materials and estate maintenance. Leaders will be stretched to the absolute limits of their resourcefulness to ensure the continued financial viability of schools.

The most important priority will always be students' wellbeing, of course – but where to start with that? Well, we can begin by making sure they're actually in school...

Absence rates

We need to address the attendance crisis that's affecting the profession – from EYFS right up to sixth form. Literacy levels, maths ability, socialisation, verbal skills – low attendance exacerbates all these, while compounding the disadvantage gap. Data from the government's attendance dashboard shows that during the 2021-22 academic year, secondary attendance dropped to as low as 82%, peaking at 92% in the summer term – an absence rate of between 18% and 8%.

The most up to date absence figure for state secondary schools is 8.7% (5.3% authorised, and 3.4% unauthorised), compared to an overall rate of absence of 4.7% in 2018-19. The data

for SEND students is even more of a concern.

We know that persistent absence (amounting to 10% or more of all sessions) has a significant impact on GCSE performance. Pre-pandemic, pupils who failed to achieve the benchmark 9-4 in English and maths had an absence rate of 8.8%. Among those who did, the absence rate was 5.2%. Only 35.6% of students deemed persistent absentees achieved the threshold.

If we want to avoid limiting young people's life chances, we have to find ways of getting them back into classrooms and reverse these trends.

“Persistent absence is easy to fall into, especially post-pandemic”

Attendance strategies

Various creative and innovative ways of achieving this have been attempted. I've listed a few below which have met with some success, but context is key – what works well in school A may have no impact at all in school B. That said, it's also the case that every child is unique, and that it's difficult to know what will work on an individual level without first trying it out.

1. Know your data

Analyse the platform you use for recording attendance and try to identify patterns. Is it Y8 girls? Does attendance decline on Friday mornings? Might there be a timetabling issue? How are

the FSM figures? Focus on any readily identifiable hotspots and individuals.

2. Talk to families

Ensure that parents and carers understand the importance of attendance and its impact on outcomes. Information events in school and targeted parental communications should highlight the consequences of missing even small periods of time, especially in key years.

3. Celebrate attendance

There are many – myself included – who are guilty of reprimanding poorly

other strategies outlined here, her attendance subsequently improved and she later turned up for all of her exams.

4. Make it an occasion

In-school events around attendance, such as assemblies and awards ceremonies, can help emphasise the impact of absence on life chances, while rewarding those with good and improving attendance. Certificates/postcards sent home will ensure parents and carers are involved, and help them see that attendance both matters and is rewarded.

I organised end of term/year raffles and prize draws for those who hit their targets, and even attempted to adapt the quiz show *Deal or No Deal* for those students with the most improved attendance. The latter caused mayhem in the hall, but was great fun...

5. Acknowledge the issue

Persistent absence is easy to fall into, especially post-pandemic. Children have become accustomed to being at home, and to a degree, parents have become used to having them home. Many have been stressed by their return to school and the vicious cycle of falling behind and feeling they can never catch up.

It's therefore vital that teachers take time to talk to returning students about any gaps in their learning, and offer additional support in lessons so that

they don't feel isolated. Students I've spoken with in lessons often describe missing the previous lesson and not knowing what's going on. I saw this just recently in a Y10 science lesson. A student wasn't writing anything during the 'fast four'

starter, so I wandered over to them – she'd switched off and looked glum.

If these students are unable to participate in retrieval exercises, then the battle is effectively lost at the start of the lesson. It's tough for colleagues to do, but a quick word from

the teacher that they will speak with them later, or pairing them with another student will show that they're acknowledged, and that the problem will be addressed.

6. Watch out for family holidays

Family holidays can present significant problems. Hopefully, outlining to parents and carers the likely impact on their children in terms of outcomes will prevent the issue from coming up, but many parents do ultimately prioritise financial concerns over their children's education. There can also be complicating factors in some cases, such as siblings at schools with different holiday times – an issue exacerbated by the freedoms academies have to set their own term times at variance with LA dates. Sticking to the LA timetable, and attempting to ensure consistency with other schools throughout the catchment

area may at least reduce the impact.

A safeguarding issue

We mustn't forget that attendance is a safeguarding issue. Children not in school are likely to underachieve, and it's not possible to know if they're safe, so it's our responsibility to ensure that doesn't happen.

My approach has largely involved securing cooperation and compliance through debate and encouragement. When this doesn't work, schools and LAs have the option to impose fines under the 1996 Education Act, though this can be a double-edged sword. Relationships with families are the cornerstone of effective education, and should therefore remain positive wherever possible – yet taking a formal, punitive route shouldn't be discounted, especially when a child's safety may be at risk.

Above all, school staff have to be resilient, consistent and persistent. At times, it can feel immensely frustrating to take two steps forward and four steps back. You might crack it with one group after months, only for data to emerge from elsewhere that puts you back at square one.

Finally, remember that for some children, 100% attendance is an impossible and unfair expectation. Certain mental and physical health conditions demand sensitive handling, variation of timetabling and alternative provision where appropriate. It's a delicate balancing act, but if you put the children first, you won't go far wrong.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Buckland is a recently retired secondary headteacher; for more information, visit bit.ly/ts117-PB

Form, function and fun

Joseph Coelho explains how students and teachers can discover the true freedom of poetry by exploring the creative possibilities of different poetic forms

Poetic form is hard. It's obscure, and involves iambic pentameter and something about feet!

That's what often goes through the mind of someone confronting the syllable- and beat-ridden world of poetic form – frequently for good reason. Form can indeed be hard. It may well involve meter, and feet, and strange creatures like spondees and trochees – but it doesn't have to. And even when it does, it doesn't have to be hard.

There are a huge variety of poetic forms that we can play with. Some involve stressed and unstressed syllables. Others might involve curving a line of text to create a shape. Others still can entail repetition and play, or even dives into other modes of writing entirely, like prose (haibun) and letter writing (epistolaries).

At its heart, poetic form is about having fun with words; about pushing what a line of text can do, and can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be. Here, I'd like to share some of my own favourite forms that you can use in the classroom, which I hope will reveal to you and your students just how broad the creative possibilities of poetry really are.

One-word poems

First, let's look at some one-word poems – the simplest form of all. The

trick to writing a one-word poem is to have a long title...

**The Sad Tale Of A Fly
Splash!**

**The Day I Fell Down The
Toilet
Splash!**

**The Last Time I Cried
Mum.**

“Poetic form can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be”

A one-word poem can be funny, silly, sad or anything in between. It's always the first form I'll share with a class because it's so accessible and fun. Young and old alike get the 'game' of this form very quickly, and can't help but want to start creating their own.

It's a very non-threatening form that never fails to raise a smile in a classroom. It's also a great way of getting students to sum up an experience, feeling or topic by whittling things down to a single title and a single word.

Acrostic poems

No doubt many readers will have encountered the acrostic poem and possibly become sick to death of it. It's the go-to poetic form for when we need a quick poem where a word is written vertically down the side of the page...

**Just reach for the clouds
Utilise the air beneath your feet
Make a breeze your stepping stone and
Push up into the sky.**

No doubt you'll have made a class write many of these during the holiday seasons. Yet while it can be a wonderful and accessible

form, perhaps you and your students are ready for something a little more challenging. Therefore, may I introduce...

The mesostic

Now, we have our starting word down the centre of the poem, meaning we must find ways of incorporating its letters mid-sentence. This can be far more challenging, and thus far more rewarding to pull off successfully:

The diving board **J**uggles my fears of falling,
the water below **U**ndulates my worries
the blue pool's **M**irror swirls,
tempts me to jum**P** into its wet hug.

If you've ever tried to give one of these a go, you'll have probably found that instead of worrying about the poem being good, bad or 'poetic', you start focusing on finding

words that can not only convey your meaning, but also fit the (creative) restraints of the form.

The little editor we all have living in our heads – that voice that whispers '*You can't do that, that won't be good, that's a silly idea*' – gets distracted trying to fit letters into words, letting you get on with the business of creating.

I see this distraction as the real value of the mesostic. It enables us to be freer in the creation of poetry, rather than getting tangled up in worries of '*Is this good enough?*' It's especially great for nervous writers – those who get so worried about the quality of their final piece that they never get to start!

For me, finishing a form poem often feels like coming up for air, and seeing afresh the dramatic landscape of the shoreline around you. That landscape, those crashing waves – they all make up the final poem, but you only get to fully appreciate that once the poem itself is complete, because you've been so focused on its creation. It's a beautiful feeling, and can be quite addictive.

The ballad

Once you get the bug for form,

you can start searching out yet more ways of writing a poem and begin to see how the strengths of different

forms reveal themselves.

The ballad is a simple rhyming form traditionally used to tell a story, and it's easy to see why. Its regular rhythm lulls you into that sweet landscape

of narrative. It's often written in four-line verses that intermingle tetrameter (four stresses per line: *ti-tum ti-tum ti-tum ti-tum*) with Trimeter (three stresses per line: *ti-tum ti-tum ti-tum*).

But, as with everything relating to poetry, that's entirely down to choice. As the old saying goes, once you know the rules you can start to break them.

**This is a tale about a mouse
that tried to eat a cat
It chased the cat about
the house
now what'cha think
of that!**

It's quite a seductive form. Once you get its rhythms in your head, you'll want to hear or write more.

**The cat did run, the
mouse did grow
Its mouth became
a hole
The cat did plea "please
don't eat me"
The mouse swallowed
him whole.**

The villanelle

As you dive deeper into form, you'll find that different forms can support the intention of what you want to say in surprising ways.

The villanelle is a beautiful form, consisting of five three-line verses and one four-line verse. The first and third line of the first verse repeat alternately as the last line in each subsequent verse, before coming together in the final quatrain.

This regular repetition, along with the use of only two rhymes, for me, mirrors circular thinking – those times when you can't stop pondering something due to a worry or fear going round and round your head, or following some great

epiphany that wows you with its certainty.

A prime example is 'Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night' by Dylan Thomas, where the narrator is certain in their belief that one should "Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

The pantoum

A pantoum shares some similarities with a villanelle, in that lines are repeated between its five quatrains. Here, however, each line is repeated only once, before being abandoned for a new repeating line and rhyme.

The effect of this pattern of repetition and abandonment is to create a sense of an evolving idea; a concept that's developing, growing and changing form. For me, a pantoum mirrors the act of hashing out an idea, or discovering what it is that you truly believe.

By allowing young people to discover themselves as poets, showing them different entry points into poetry and revealing how different forms can help them share their voice, we can break down the fears often associated with poetry.

Perhaps then poetry can stop being a medium that's only analysed and appreciated from afar, and instead become a tool that we can actively appreciate and use for ourselves.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Coelho is a poet, performer and the current Children's Laureate; for more information, visit thepoetryofjosephcoelho.com

CLASSROOM LIFE

“We are focused on where we want to go”

Principal **Dominic McKenna** unpacks the thinking behind St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy's ongoing school improvement journey



As a school, one of our key values includes concern for the poor and social justice. We have a number of students from low income family backgrounds, who have difficulties and challenges to overcome that are far greater than those faced by their peers in other parts of the country, yet there's only so much we can control. One thing we can do, however, is make sure they receive the best possible results they can while they're here with us.

Back in March of 2019, we

came to recognise as a staff that there were a series of issues throughout the school that we weren't happy with, and conceded that we needed to come together and make a change.

Our first step was to set up a voluntary meeting for all staff, where colleagues could gather together and come up with some ideas about where we wanted to be, what we should do, and what we wanted the experience of learning at St Margaret Ward to look like. In the event, everybody ended up staying well into

the evening, sitting as groups with large sheets of paper and pens and making lists of everything they wanted us to put into practice. It turned out that there was a surprisingly large degree of consistency in what came back, even between the ambitions of teachers and SLT.

At around the same time, I went with my deputies to visit several other schools around the country, including settings in Birmingham and Great Yarmouth, and bring some external influence to bear on what we were doing.

We then sat down as an SLT every Thursday for a term, and proceeded to map out our school improvement plan and the processes we would implement in time for the following September.

The St. Margaret Ward Way

What emerged out of this process is what we call The St. Margaret Ward Way – a clear system of processes, supported by our moral purpose, which were shared across the school. Starting in the latter part of 2019, we



In November 2021, the school received a British Council International School Award in recognition of its cross-curricula links with the De La Salle Santiago Zobel School in the Philippines, collaborative projects with primary schools across its Newman Catholic Collegiate, and celebrations to mark the European Day of Languages

established a new hierarchy of sanctions and rewards for behaviour, and established consistent messaging to try and change the culture of the school and ensure buy-in to a different set of expectations.

That involved adopting practices like centralised detentions at the end of each day, specific support and integration for students facing particular challenges



and ensuring everybody is able to concentrate on working in every lesson without disruption.

Since then, we've put in place a challenging academic curriculum, maintaining a strong emphasis on behaviour, and seen to it that students arrive at school each day knowing that they're here to be successful. I'd say we've been largely successful in doing that over the last few years, and have certainly seen a positive change in the culture and attitudes shown by students.

Controlled routines

What we wanted to achieve with the St. Margaret Ward Way was a means of imposing set methods and approaches across the school that were consistent and fully-thought through, backed up by consistent planning and implemented in such a way that everybody understood what was required of them.

One of our main concerns throughout the COVID pandemic was a sense of having things imposed upon us, often at quite short notice, which required a great deal of planning. That inevitably took away some of our autonomy, which we were initially resentful of, but there were certain steps taken during that period that I believe actually enhanced what we were trying to do.

These included the measures we put in place to ensure that strictly controlled routines and behaviours were observed by all students upon morning arrival. All students reported to specific zones depending on their year group, and then lined up in alphabetical order, in silence. We would then deliver the messages

for the day, after which everybody applied hand sanitiser before entering the building and heading to their base for the day.

Because of how regimented everything had to become with those COVID measures, I think it actually helped us in long-run, which is why we chose to keep some of those practices, including the line-ups. Students still gather with friends in specific areas when they arrive each morning, and when the whistle is blown, they will go silent and move into their lines. There will then be a prayer and a couple of messages to start the day, before they're led to their form rooms.

Transforming lives

Another important aspect of our change programme concerns the revising of our curriculum, which was inspired by a phrase attributed to St Jean Baptist de la Salle – *"Teaching minds, touching hearts and transforming lives."*

We've split our school curriculum into two parts: 'Teaching Minds' and 'Touching Hearts'. The former refers to our academic curriculum, which we've worked to carefully sequence and rigorously structure. The latter covers everything else – from the formation of the child, to our PSHE, careers support and what's needed for us to foster students' development.

Something we notice now is that when we receive visitors, they're often interested in how calm the



school is, the politeness demonstrated by our students, and how friendly and happy they seem to be. It's not perfect, of course. We still have our moments, like every other school, and continue to work carefully with some challenging students and families – but the vast majority of students are delightful.

We remain on a long-term school improvement journey and are focused on where we want to go, but it's also important for us to identify any areas of deficiency. Literacy has recently

emerged as one area we intend to work on more.

More broadly, however, the main challenges we face at the moment largely stem from uncertainties. We've observed the impact that the cost of living crisis is having on some families, as well as the effect it's having on our suppliers and our costs as a school.

The situation with school funding is now perhaps not quite as bleak as we thought it might be, but we still have some concerns over what the future will look like. It's those things out of our control that currently concern us the most.

Time to reflect

Jen Eardley, pastoral lead for KS3, describes the school's unique take on form time

Myself and another colleague developed Signum Fidei (from the Latin for 'sign of faith') as a replacement for the traditional form time found at other schools. This is a 30-minute period every morning used as time for pastoral care in the truest sense, in that we give students spiritual and personal guidance.

Students start each day with prayer, and then work on various activities. They might look at a Gospel or saint of the week and complete some activities based around that, hold a weekly discussion on a topic relating to events in the local area or the wider world, or look at ways of raising money for local charities and causes. Students also receive one-to-one mentoring conversations with their Fidei tutor on a rotating basis each week.



Team effort

What does it take to successfully involve teaching staff and leaders alike in the complex process of curriculum design?

Martin Robinson has some ideas...

Curriculum design can be undertaken at any speed, by small or larger groups of people working together on its entirety, or on specific components only.

However, subject departments come in many different sizes – from some that are sprawling, down to others that are run by one person on their own – which will in turn affect who has direct input into the curriculum design process.

Happy medium

There's a longstanding divide between two popular conceptions of curriculum development. At one end are the scripted curricula that many people seem fearful of – see the recent debates around Oak National Academy – due to a suspicion that there will always be others telling teachers what to do.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is complete anarchy – everyone doing their own thing, with teachers enjoying near total creative freedom, but with little thought given as to how what each teacher is doing, or how a child's overall experience of their schooling, ultimately connects together.

In my book *Curriculum Revolutions* I make the case for trying to find a happy medium (albeit one leaning slightly more towards the 'planned and scripted' end) and finding within that a place where people can see the need for

joined-up thinking, while also recognising the creative aspects of what it is to be a teacher.

I believe that over a period of time, it's entirely possible for schools to create their own curriculum collectively, in a way that ensures buy-in. That way, teachers feel that it's *their* curriculum, rather than one ultimately belonging to someone else.

departments will typically form the 'curriculum design team' for a given subject, but occasionally a single department may be so large that it's necessary to whittle down the number of team members.

What schools should avoid is appointing a specific teacher to 'do' Y7, Y8 or KS3, and allowing them to become 'the' person in charge of that particular

that are fundamental to the subject in question – explanations that pertain to the make-up of atoms, for example, or what a sentence is.

Teachers who already possess that fundamental knowledge may be unable to appreciate just how digestible and easily internalised that knowledge can be when broken down into elements that are explained and repeatedly re-explained.

For pupils who are moderately well-informed or well-read, a lack of prior explanations may present less of a problem. For those who hang on their teacher's every word, however, the security of having those explanations will be far

“It's incredible how often a new teacher will take over a class and dismantle carefully structured lesson content”

Making connections

Many teachers can happily pick up a textbook and simply go with it. Others may opt to use only certain parts, often in conjunction with other materials and resources. And then there are the teachers who prefer not to use textbooks at all, as they feel their way of tackling a subject is the right way. Curriculum development involves navigating a path through these different attitudes, and highlighting the need for teachers to think about how what they do connects to the work of their colleagues.

When it comes to deciding on which staff can and should contribute to curriculum development, the first step will usually be your subject departments. The members of those

curriculum area on their own. Without any connections to others, there's a strong likelihood that they'll simply go with what's been done before, with only minor changes.

Prior explanations

Teachers can sometimes reject or dismiss material that pupils have been taught previously. As a teacher, parent and latterly observer of teachers, it's incredible to me how often one sees a new teacher take over a class and dismantle lesson content that has been structured quite carefully over time by a teacher before them.

We can mitigate this by including prior explanations in our teaching and curriculums



preferable to having what they know thrown apart whenever a new teacher takes over.

Gentle evolution

It's also common to encounter the opposite problem, where a curriculum becomes 'stuck' through inertia. This is often down to resourcing, and schools simply lacking the money or time to overhaul their curriculums as they'd like to.

That said, the book might be titled *Curriculum Revolutions*, but I hope to make it clear that curriculum development doesn't have to be a full-blooded revolution from day 1. It can be an evolutionary process, even a very gentle one.

For starters, it's perfectly okay to feel that if something isn't broken, it doesn't need to be fixed. At the same time, however, there will always be elements of churn by dint of the fact that *knowledge itself changes*. Peking became Beijing. Books get removed from the exam syllabus. Sometimes, a syllabus switching from one book to another can even

alter what you need to teach *before you get to that book*.

That's why it's important to always consider the knowledge that comes before, at an earlier stage, and the extent to which that might need updating depending on decisions made at a later stage of the curriculum.

New scientific discoveries are always being made. A subject like art will always see the emergence of new ideas, approaches and techniques. Curriculum development is a political process as well, of course – things change. You can't set them in stone.

Robust collegiality

Schools also need to maintain an atmosphere in which people can have robust conversations. By that, I don't mean confrontational exchanges that verge on the point of fighting, but rather conversations that are strong enough to bear disagreement.

That extends to the relationships between teachers and leaders. If we're frightened of

our line manager, we're going to try and guess what they want us to do. We therefore remain silent until we receive that message and feel secure in it, whereupon we'll nod our heads in agreement with whatever their plans might be.

A compliance culture can then take hold, where people stay quiet, nod things through and try not to rock the boat. Or, indeed, you can have the complete opposite – a culture where everyone's out of control and feels emboldened to behave in non-collegiate ways.

Instead, I'd like to see schools engender a type of 'robust collegiality', where the disagreements individuals have with each other don't undermine their collective efforts, but actually strengthen them. It's worth remembering that people are often willing and able to compromise. They might not always get their way, but they will always appreciate being listened to.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS

- Does the curriculum work in practice?
- Is it communicable?
- Do staff have a shared understanding of what the curriculum consists of?
- Is there a way to tell whether what's being taught is qualitatively good?

The trouble senior leaders can have is that they don't understand every subject, and therefore can't work out whether the curriculum they're using is actually good. A former maths teacher might easily see and understand a school's proposed maths curriculum – but what if they're shown a drama curriculum?

That's why it's important to maintain an element of trust, by encouraging a positive working culture and establishing curriculum narratives. If fellow teachers – or even pupils – can describe to leaders what a curriculum is, demonstrate its consistency and explain its narrative, that should give those leaders a fairly qualitative idea as to whether a curriculum is any good or not.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Robinson is an education consultant specialising in curriculum design, teaching methodology and culture, having previously worked in East London state schools as a teacher, head of department, head of faculty, advanced skills teacher and school leader

His latest book, *Curriculum Revolutions: A Practical Guide to Enhancing What You Teach*, is available now (£15, John Catt)



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Just the job?

With Ofsted now reviewing schools' careers provision, it's worth re-examining the regulator's previous forays into this space, says **Adrian Lyons**...

Readers may have seen the DfE's recent announcement that Ofsted will "Carry out a thematic review of careers guidance for young people in schools and further education and skills providers" (bit.ly/ts112-ocg1). This is interesting and welcome – but given that the personal development judgement in each Ofsted inspection already includes 'careers', you could be forgiven for wondering why there's the need for a thematic review.

A random sample of 10 full (Section 5) inspection reports published across Ofsted regions from mainstream secondary schools in one week in November contained just three references to careers, of which two were descriptive, rather than evaluative. Pupils received impartial advice, yes – but was it any good? Did the inspectors think to ask how the school knows?

The Baker Clause

In the last few months, inspection reports have noted (as a standardised sentence in 'Information about the school') that, 'The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships'.

This seems to have become the required wording, after the Chief Inspector was questioned at the Education Select Committee and clearly had no idea what the Baker Clause required. In my

experience, having spent over 16 years as an HMI, that statement is unlikely to be always accurate.

Indeed, as a serving HMI told me just recently, "I had two inspections, two weeks running, where I had to give the secondary specialist inspector looking at careers a quick tutorial on what the Baker clause was, as neither of them had heard of it before. And they were secondary inspectors! To this day, we've had no training on inspecting careers, or specifically the Baker clause."

'Realistic information'

One thing inspectors should be checking is a school's progress to meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks. It's been my experience that schools are generally now able to say that they meet most of the Gatsby Benchmarks, but that the main

barrier to meeting them all is work experience – chiefly the difficulty of securing placements in environments where COVID continues to pose workplace risks.

Ofsted has carried out national surveys of careers before. When Sir Michael Wilshaw directed me to lead a survey entitled 'Getting Ready for Work' in 2016, my team of HMI visited over 40 secondary schools across the country. Despite the survey ostensibly being about how well schools were preparing their pupils for the world of work, the DfE asked us to not look too closely at actual career information and guidance.

This was because the DfE had recently launched the Careers & Enterprise Company, in response to Ofsted's previous thematic review of careers provision.

I was the deputy lead HMI on this one, which was led by an inspector from the Further Education and Skills Division. This survey's final report, 'Going in the Right Direction' (see bit.ly/ts112-ocg2), was published in 2013, back in the days when Ofsted was prepared to be highly critical of government policy.

The report begins thus: "It is vitally important that young people have access to good and realistic information and guidance about the full range of career pathways available to them. However, the new statutory duty for schools to provide careers guidance is not working well enough. Of the 60 schools visited for this survey, only 12 had ensured that all students received sufficient information to consider a wide breadth of career possibilities".

There isn't the space here to include all the key findings that followed – but it's well worth revisiting that report, and checking for yourself as to whether things are any better in your school now, than they were nine years ago...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adrian Lyons was one of Her Majesty's Inspectors between 2005 and 2021 and now works with MATs, teacher training providers and LAs to support education; find out more at adrianlyonsconsulting.com

Lessons for a trouble-free trip

You may think that you're thoroughly prepared for that upcoming foreign excursion, but you can never be too careful, counsels **Daniel Harvey**...

You've met with parents, secured the cover and made best friends with the rep from the travel company.

Yes, the day of the foreign trip is finally here. Having fixed your teeth in a rictus grin when responding to comments from non-teacher friends wishing you the best for your all-expenses-paid 'holiday', it's now time to get serious.

What are those final oversights and pitfalls you should plan to avoid, so that everyone can come back safe, sound and, frankly, sane? Read on to find out...

1. Don't forget your passport...

The mantra here is check, check and *check again*. It's a good idea to request photocopies of pupils' passport information pages – ideally much earlier, at the signing-up stage. That way, you can check they definitely have a valid passport with enough time remaining on it to meet the entry requirements of your chosen country.

It's important to remember that post-Brexit rules now mean that passports have to be in date for a certain amount of time beyond your intended date of return. Follow gov.uk advice to the letter for a smooth entry and exit. Don't forget that obtaining any necessary visas is up to parents, so make sure that

you get in touch and inform them of this in good time. No visa equals no travel – and whether or not a pupil has one is largely beyond your control.

On the day of departure, don't let pupils look after their own passports or boarding cards at any point, except when actually passing security, boarding the plane or entering passport control. If you do, you can pretty much guarantee that someone will

waiting list – and that's before factoring in the multiple toilet stops. By comparison, herding cats is a breeze.

The thing to stress here is that your allocated 'time buffer' is liable to disappear quicker than the average free lesson, leaving you contemplating the very real horror that is Missing Your Plane.

Don't scoff, dear reader. This is no urban teaching myth, but a lived reality for

leaving you free to deal with the airline in an attempt to find a solution that works for your students. Don't be fobbed off with their first offer and try to stick to your guns. Even the most cut-throat budget airline won't want to be on the front page of tomorrow's papers for abandoning your little dears.

3. Mind the gap!

Back at the planning stage, when you and your colleagues were excitedly leafing through Lonely Planet guides, using public transport like the locals seemed like a great idea. Return tickets all round!

However, the practical reality of this is somewhat stark, since shepherding children on and off buses, trains and metro lines can be a hair-raising experience.

Firstly, just as Sartre promised, hell really *is* other people. Every member of the public who uses the metro, in fact – blithely going about their business while paying no heed at all to your Very Important School Trip.

How dare they get in the way! Why are they all boarding the train at the same time as you? Don't they understand that Kian (who gets cross very easily) won't have a seat?

But here's the thing – of course they don't care. Public transport isn't your playground, and the general public are obviously under

“Shepherding children on and off buses, trains and metro lines can be a hair-raising experience”

lose theirs, resulting in a situation that will cause you to enter a whole world of administrative pain.

Count the passports out and count them back in – and then lock them securely in the accommodation's safe while you're away. Only return them to pupils after your final stop on the way home. Job done.

2. Don't miss the plane

It is a truth universally acknowledged that when trying to move 40 Y8 students through a busy airport, you can expect a rate of progress that's comparable to an NHS

a close friend. It turns out that there is, in fact, a protocol for when you've missed your flight due to reasons outside of your control (e.g. slow passport queues, airport strikes, poor security procedures and so forth).

If faced with this situation, the first thing is to *remain very calm*. There will be a solution. Deploy your staff to look after and amuse the students while you and a trusted colleague go and sort out the hot mess that your school trip is rapidly turning into.

Check in with your school so they can deal with the inevitable parental hysteria,

no obligation to make your life any easier while they go about their entirely legitimate daily business.

If you must use the metro, tram, bus or train, divide the students into small groups, each with an adult in charge. Make sure each group leader knows where they're going and brief the students as well, in case the doors shut before everyone manages to get on.

Your risk planning should always include a 'What if?' component in the event of worst-case scenarios. Ensure that your in-group communication is strong, see that all students have saved the relevant emergency contact numbers into their phones, and make they know what to do if things go awry.

Finally, if you're leading a coach trip, enjoy the bliss that comes with having everyone accounted for and

sat down with their seatbelts on at the end of a day's sightseeing. The trip back to the hotel will give you some time to recharge your batteries while everyone is safe. Which brings us to...

4. 1,2,3,4 ... 1,2,3,4!

People often assume that school trips abroad tend to involve heavy input and support from the MFL department, but it's actually numeracy that most frequently saves the day – specifically, the ability to count.

Every adult on your trip should be *au fait* with the 'Magic Number' – that is, the number of children you're taking with you.

Count them everywhere you go – onto the coach; off the coach; into the museum; out of the museum, and so on.

Split the whole group into smaller registration groups, each with a teacher in charge. Eight is a good number, as it's possible to tally the count quickly, remember everyone's name and take a register at speed, if needed. If travelling by coach, instruct pupils to always sit in the same seats – this makes it easy to see if someone's missing.

Make the students active participants in looking out for each other, and tell them until you're blue in

the face to NEVER leave anyone on their own.

And of course, when preparing to leave a location and travel elsewhere, make sure two people do the final counts and check that both numbers tally.

There's a now legendary tale of how the UK coastguard were once scrambled to attend to a suspected 'child overboard' situation, while the pupil in question sat forlornly abandoned by his party at a French motorway services 100 miles to the south. It may be an apocryphal story, but I don't want to risk that ever happening to me. And you won't want it happening to you, either...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Harvey is a GCSE and A Level science teacher and lead on behaviour, pastoral and school culture for an inner city academy



Learning isn't linear

Colin Foster wonders whether the inherent messiness of learning is something to be resisted or actively embraced...

I often hear people remark that 'learning isn't linear'. What I think they mean by this is that learning can often be messy, complicated and unpredictable.

After all, human beings are complex creatures. The process of learning anything complicated can quickly become a dense, involved journey full of twists and turns. We can't simply and directly control another human being's thinking and shape it in exactly the way we desire – which, on balance, is surely a good thing for preserving our sense of freedom and agency!

Is a curriculum linear?

We therefore shouldn't try to operate as though learning is simply a straightforward process of incremental progress – like building a wall, where one brick is placed atop another, and then another, until the desired endpoint is reached. Learning is much more problematic than that.

There may be times when we have to go back and unpick something that we thought our students had already learned. In the process of doing so, it might seem that we're not making much headway, yet taking this step could prove essential for our students' long-term benefit. Teaching can sometimes feel like taking one step forward and two steps back, but that doesn't necessarily mean we're doing anything wrong.

I tend to agree that this is often the case, but I also believe that the 'learning is linear' mantra can sometimes have a disempowering effect when it comes to teachers' planning. If the process of learning really is as complex and uncontrollable as it seems, then what can teachers possibly seek to do, other than turn up in the classroom, hope for the best and attempt to deal with whatever occurs? What's the point of carefully planning and sequencing the details of your lesson or curriculum if 'learning isn't

lessons are guaranteed to come at them one after another, in a specific order and sequence.

Students may well take different paths before arriving at a deep understanding of the subject, but each of those winding paths will necessarily unfold through time, with one event happening after another. It therefore seems to me that we don't need to be apologetic about offering a 'linear' curriculum, providing we recognise that students' movement through it may involve some

that we can support them as effectively as possible in moving forwards.

A one-size-fits-all approach clearly won't make sense if it fails to respond to what the teacher sees in front of them – but I would also advise against going too far in the opposite direction, by exaggerating the differences between our students.

Avoiding linearity

One of the major ways in which students differ is in terms of their prior knowledge. This doesn't necessarily mean that they're on different 'tracks', and therefore need to journey through different 'curricula' – they might simply be at different positions along similar trajectories.

There might need to be more intensive support for some students, to help accelerate them along and build securely on what they know, but this needn't amount to them taking a substantially different path. In fact, there are likely many more similarities between most students' trajectories through any given subject than differences.

Postmodernists tend to talk negatively of 'linear thought', as if it's something that's old-fashioned and outdated. Instead, they talk highly of 'non-linear' thinking that's based more on

"It's a serious obstacle to good curriculum design if we conceive of 'linear' as always being a bad thing"

linear'? Should we instead simply offer students a wide variety of 'rich' experiences, and trust them to make whatever sense they can out of what we provide them with?

Taking account of differences

I personally think that teachers are capable of achieving much more than this. Regardless of whether learning is indeed linear or not, one thing that definitely *is* linear is time. However 'non-linear' a given student's experiences of a subject may be, their

circling back and revisiting of areas at a later date. As Pete Griffin observed, "Teaching takes place in time; learning takes place over time*".

No teacher with more than five minutes of experience will naively assume that students will immediately understand and retain everything that they're taught, with instant success the first time they encounter any given topic. The point of regular formative assessment is to try and remain in touch with where students are at each moment in time, so

intuition and subjectivity. Yet I think it's a serious obstacle to good curriculum design if we allow ourselves to conceive of 'linear' as always being a bad thing.

Carefully plotting out the knowledge students need to develop at different points, while taking serious account of the necessary prerequisites, is just sensible curriculum planning, and still seems like the best bet for ensuring that as many students as possible can

progress successfully in their learning.

Of course, there can be no guarantees that Student X will definitely learn Content Y on Day Z, and never need to go back and look at it again. The whole idea of retrieval practice is built on the notion of forgetting. As teachers, we're aware of how important it is that we return to previously-covered ideas so as to reinforce them and build on them.

Yet at the same time, it's necessary for us retain a clear sense of the big-picture learning path we want students to take, if we're to effectively plan for students' progression.

Keep to the path

It might not be as catchy as 'learning isn't linear', but '*learning isn't monotonic*' might better capture the intended point.

'Monotonic' progress is unidirectional – for example, always getting better each day. That might seem like an unrealistic expectation at first glance, but while there will inevitably be ups and downs as students move through

the curriculum, zooming out should reveal a general progression along an intended path.

Planning for this doesn't equate to making simplistic assumptions around 'linearity'. It simply acknowledges that we have a clear goal in sight for our students, and that we've carefully thought through how best to help them get there.

When this is backed by effective formative assessment, we can rapidly identify where particular problems might arise for certain students along the way. That's the point at which we can take the opportunity to circle back, revisit things and intervene.

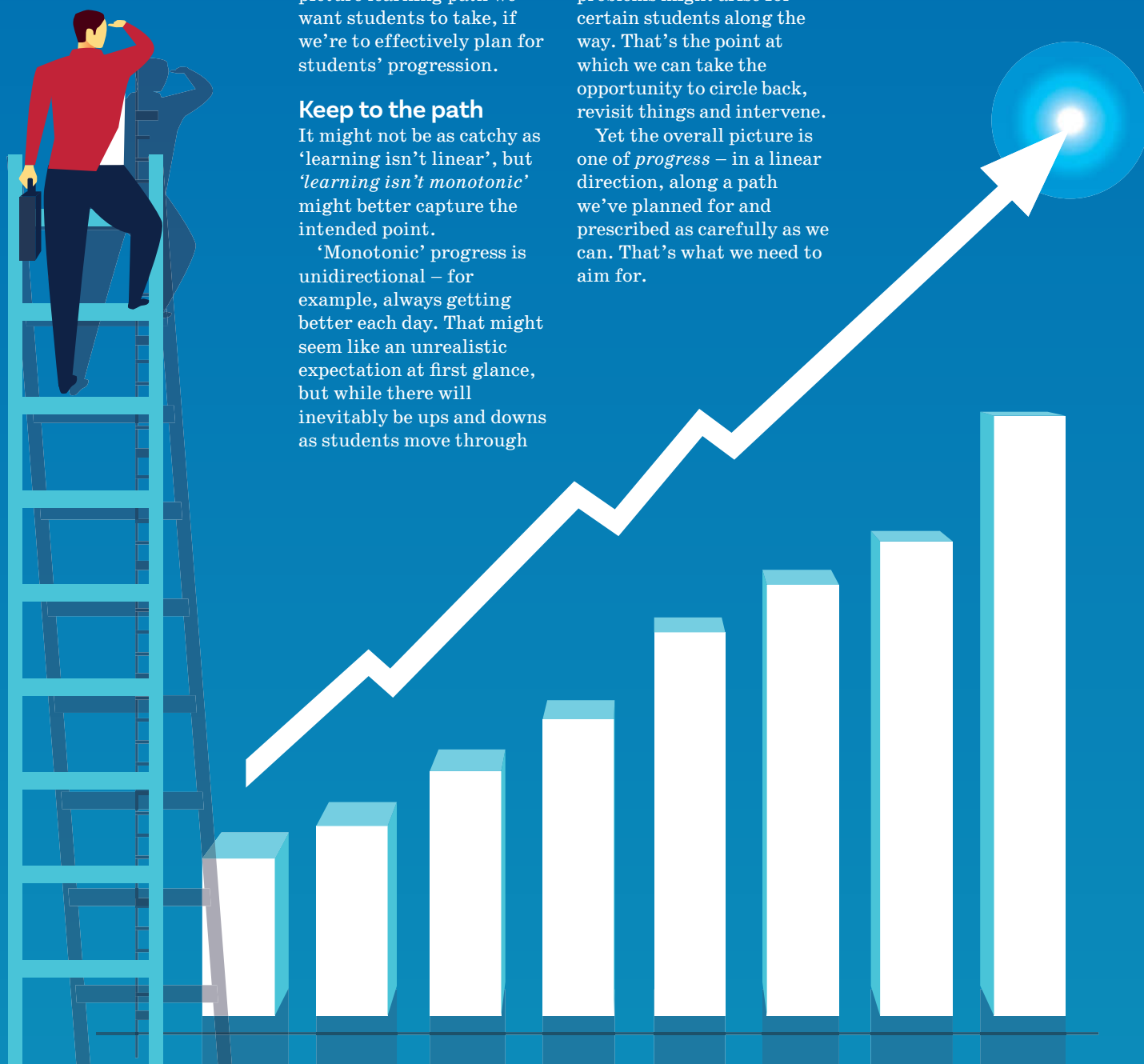
Yet the overall picture is one of *progress* – in a linear direction, along a path we've planned for and prescribed as carefully as we can. That's what we need to aim for.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*Griffin, P. (1989). Teaching takes place in time, learning takes place over time. *Mathematics Teaching*, 126, 12-13



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FOCUS ON: THE ARTS

Over the next few pages – help students come out of their shell in drama lessons, why you don't need a darkroom to explore the possibilities of photography, and a professional composer's take on how composition skills are assessed at GCSE...

How can schools better engage better reluctant students with arts education?

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Drama for the shy

Drama lessons can be difficult for those reluctant to perform – but what they learn in the studio can help them across a number of other subjects, says **Martin Matthews**...

Turn those gas taps off and put that Bunsen burner down.”

As my words echoed across the lab, I looked frantically for the gas isolation valve. This wasn't a science lesson, but actually Y9 drama last thing on a Friday, back when I was an NQT. The only room available that period had been a science lab overlooking the staff car park on one side and a brick wall on the other. It confused the heck out of my Y9s too. “We can't do drama in here, sir – it's for science.”

The obstacle course presented by assorted stools, raised desks and ominous gas-related fixtures did admittedly make a

even staff – most in need of drama, or who might appreciate its value the most, tend to be those who are least forthcoming in engaging with it.

Scorching ordeals

Many years have passed since I was an NQT. In England, we now live in a world of Ebacc and STEM, prompting people to increasingly ask ‘What is drama, and what is it for in schools today?’.

When we speak of ‘drama’ are we referring to the study of ‘pure’ drama or theatre, such as we might find at theatre studies A Level? Are we talking about the broader performing arts and what

then we all should do more to appreciate the importance of drama in our lives.

But how can teachers of drama – or indeed teachers of other subjects – help encourage students who aren't ‘natural’ performers to stand up, perform and realise that they can grow and develop into more

confident human beings?

We can measure qualifications, but we can't measure the process children go through in terms of their development as a

“The students most in need of drama tend to be the least forthcoming in engaging with it”

conventional drama lesson more difficult, but not impossible. Though the brick wall metres from the window seemed an apt metaphor for the response I typically received most weeks from this particular class...

As is often the case, the hardest part of the lesson was convincing the Y9s that our time together in this hour designated ‘drama’ was worthwhile, and that everyone could get something out of it – from the outstanding performer, to the shy child hiding behind stacks of science textbooks using a tripod for a shield.

It's often struck me that the students – and perhaps

students will need to apply to acting school? Or are we seeing drama more as a device for helping students learn and grow?

Drama should, and usually does have a place on the school timetable as a subject to be studied and engaged with, but it can also exist across the curriculum. A little-known playwright once noted that “All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players” – if true,



'performer'. It takes time. Sometimes, it can hinge on one-on-one support a student receives from a teacher. Others may come to appreciate the joys of working with peers that drama provides. Or it can come through the many scorching ordeals that humans journey through from childhood to adulthood.

Students can struggle in drama mainly due to nerves, or a simple lack of desire to engage. Having said that, though, the students in your drama class will inevitably run into other teachers. English teachers trying to get students to complete speaking tests. Science teachers expecting presentations on set topics. History teachers wanting verbal contributions in group discussions – the list goes on.

Little jobs

Whatever your subject, you're a teacher of human beings. Encouraging students' confidence in their own ideas, and ability to speak in front of others whilst deepening their

critical thinking, takes time and careful nurturing.

Some students will inevitably require more support than others, and often, your response will have to involve putting yourself out there first and leading by example. Over the years, I've been known to tell some students, "If you're worried about how you'll look, you're not going to look half as daft as me – so come on, let's try this..."

Now, not all students are going to become the next famous star of stage or screen, and nor should they put pressure on themselves to be. Instead, it should be about setting realistic goals. A wise person once said to me, "You've not got a big task – just lots of little jobs."

Applied to drama lessons, these 'little jobs' can be used first to help students build up to the performance they want to deliver: *Job 1, stop hiding in the costume cupboard. Job 2, stand up. Job 3, relax your arms. Job 4, work on this...'* Just lots of little jobs.

The 'Hollywood effect'

I'm often inspired by a collection of four lectures by Peter Brook, published as the book *The Empty Space*. In it, Brook talks about the dangers of what he calls the 'Broadway Crisis', which leads to a 'deadly theatre'. Everything looks great, from the costumes, to the lighting and the famous actor playing the lead role – but something isn't right. The play just isn't good.

This prompts me to think about the spread of what I call the 'Hollywood/X Factor Effect' into our schools, where students' conceptions of 'performance' are inextricably linked with fame and stardom. They want to raid the costume cupboard; use numerous coloured lights onstage; assemble elaborate

sets and have their favourite songs playing in the background.

As Brook reminds us, all that's really needed for a piece of theatre to be engaging is for an individual to cross an empty space. Sometimes, starting with that very simple premise can help all students, especially those most scared of performance, to focus on what they need to – themselves, and the little steps they need to take to improve their work or confidence.

Acting confidence

This doesn't just apply to students, though. Some years ago, there came a knock on the door of my office (i.e. the cramped, windowless cupboard sandwiched between the drama studio and the outside corridor). A history teacher – who had previously often complained that we were making 'Too much noise' in our lessons – walked in. "Just wondering", he said, "if you've got some drama I can do?"

"With your class?" I replied.

"No, for me."

He went on to explain how he'd often spent lessons not knowing how to perform at the front of the class, and wanted some

tips on how to 'act like a confident teacher'.

Every now and then, teachers can benefit from stripping away the paraphernalia associated with 'great teaching' – the fancy PowerPoint, beautiful displays, impeccably marked exercise books – and consider how they want to approach that notion of crossing the empty space. How should they stand there, and build faith in themselves to perform and engage their audience?

In many ways, we all know how it feels to be that shy student at the back, because nearly every teacher will have once been similarly shy or nervous themselves at some point. Many still are.

I've taught in secondary schools for nearly 20 years. While I can't definitively answer the question of how students and teachers can become performers in drama – or anywhere else – I do feel the words of the late theatre education pioneer Brian Way have some resonance here; that 'drama is to simply practise living'. Maybe that's a good starting point for us all.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Martin Matthews is a deputy department leader of English at an 11-18 secondary school, having previously been a head of drama and temporary head of English

HELP THEM OPEN UP

- Ask the students to speak to you and listen to them carefully. What barriers are stopping them performing?
- Set students achievable goals – 'It's not a big task, just lots of little jobs'
- Celebrate little wins with students
- Remind students that we all feel nervous, that it's part of being human and that nerves can be good by driving us on
- Set rules for your drama/teaching space that will ensure all participants are included
- Drama is fundamentally about a person's continued development – and it's for everyone

Taking notes

Helen Tierney asks **Matthew Kaner** for his thoughts on how GCSE composition is taught, what's changed since he was at school, and whether music departments should approach it differently...

For many music teachers, GCSE and A level composition coursework is the most challenging aspect of their teaching. Students likewise consistently find composition modules stressful to complete.

The way the topic is typically presented in various music syllabi for GCSE and A level has drawn criticism for imprecise wording, the weighting in marking criteria, and the quality and relevance of set composition briefs. What should be a process of discovery and delight in the musical imagination can often lose its charm and purpose – not least due to the pressures on all concerned relating to deadlines and target grades.

Teach Secondary talked to composer Matthew Kaner about his route into composing for a living, and what advice he would offer for any students struggling with the demands of GCSE and A Level composition.

Kaner is an award-

winning composer, as well as a Professor of Composition at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. His past works include a collaboration with the Poet Laureate, Simon Armitage, which saw Kaner's setting of the poem *Pearl* performed during the 2022 Proms season. His music has garnered critical acclaim both in the UK and internationally, and his debut album, *Chamber Music*, was released in November 2022.

Educational value

Did you start composing early on in your school days?

I wrote a few pieces when I was at primary school! I'm not sure I really knew I was composing – just having fun at the piano, really. I wrote them by ear, and wouldn't have known how to notate them at that point.

There was a very inspiring choir mistress who ran my local church choir, which I sang in as a treble. I was fascinated by her

ability to sight-transpose, improvise and compose; seeing her at work made me want to try writing music myself.

What help and support were you given in composition whilst at secondary school?

I only became more serious about composition when I began studying for my GCSEs. I was a terrible violinist, but my head of music seemed to notice that I wrote more interesting music. It wasn't until I got to A level that we actually sat down together and talked through some of my pieces – but even then, it was very 'light touch'.

The first one-to-one composition lesson I really had was in my final year at university. Though I can

still remember how an ensemble came into our secondary school and showed us how to use some techniques found in the music of Shostakovich and Bartok.

How restrictive do you think the composition modules are at GCSE and A level music?

I teach an undergraduate module at the Guildhall that prepares students for teaching composition, so we look quite closely at the GCSE and A level syllabuses. To be truthful, we often laugh at the criteria, sample papers and 'commissions'. The requirements can be quite far-fetched and restrictive, and it seems that rather than emphasising the step-by-step acquisition of

Image courtesy of Foxbrush

skills, exams focus on the students achieving an end product that's completely unrealistic for that stage in their creative and musical development.

I see it when students apply for the degree course – huge orchestral scores for travel agency adverts was something we had a lot of one year. It takes years to learn how to orchestrate, and is a travel agency advert really that inspiring a task for an aspiring young composer? What's the educational value of that kind of task?

Helen Grime on BBC4. Steve Martland was a regular guest in the BBC TV box too, and would often comment really thoughtfully about any new works being performed.

That made me realise how composition was a viable career path and something I might at least try to aspire to. Straight out of school I was also very fortunate to do a couple of weeks' work experience with the then learning manager of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Lincoln

Who were your own composer role models and inspirations as a teenager?

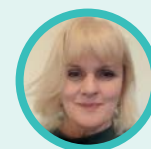
As a teenager I was fascinated by all sorts of things, ranging from contemporary jazz to Indian classical music, new and older Western classical music, dance music – anything I could get my hands on, really.

Obsessions have always come and gone for me, but I still try to maintain that eclectic mindset – I can never predict where the next exciting discovery is going to come from, and always try to listen with open ears.

If you were to give one piece of advice to student composers, what would it be?

Listen to as much different music as you can! Keep an open mind, and try to challenge yourself to engage with things you might not necessarily understand on first listen – some things take time to appreciate.

When it comes to your own music, have the courage to try things and take risks, but also look closely at others' music. There's so much you can learn from looking at scores and trying to work out how a composer creates and manipulates sound and musical material.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Tierney has run music departments in comprehensive schools for over 25 years, was an advanced skills teacher for secondary music in Barnet and now works freelance in music teaching, examining and dementia work; her book, *Music Cover Lessons*, is available now (Rhinegold Education, £39.99)

“We often laugh at the criteria, sample papers and ‘commissions’”

Eclectic mindset

Are there any life experiences, or aspects of your teenage years, that you draw on in your music now, or which have particularly inspired you?

Yes, many. My aunt is a cellist in the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and I often got to see her perform and rehearse, including lots of new music, throughout my teenage years. I also took a lot of inspiration from jazz musicians around that time, and attended some incredible performances by artists like Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock at the Barbican during my late teens, which left a very strong impression on me.

In the early 2000s, the BBC Proms season was still widely televised, and I vividly recall watching long interview segments with composers as eminent as Mark Anthony Turnage, Oliver Knussen and

Abbotts, and gain insights into day-to-day activities of the orchestra, the amount of new music it performs and the educational work it does.

Where would you direct any aspiring school-age composers looking for further support and experience?

There are some fantastic summer courses out there for aspiring young composers, including one run by my colleagues at the Guildhall School, as well as another at the wonderful Sound and Music – the UK's national organisation for new music.

Lots of new music groups also run special educational workshops across the UK, such as Birmingham Contemporary Music Group and Riot Ensemble. If you can make it to any live performances of new music, there's nothing quite as exciting as hearing something for the first time.

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No darkroom? No problem!

Hannah Day explains how the lack of a school darkroom needn't stop you from exploring some fascinating techniques from the earliest era of photography...

School darkrooms are spaces of wonder, but are also few and far between.

Thankfully, your students can be introduced to the following four processes, and a noted practitioner of each, in a hands-on way without a full darkroom set up...

1. Caynotypes – Anna Atkins

Atkins is best known for her 1843 book, *Photographs of British Algae* – though the images are actually caynotypes, an earlier form of light-based image making.

This is an easy process to try, requiring minimal set up. Simply open a pack of pre-coated Caynotype paper, lay a series of objects onto it and expose it to the sun, before washing the print to reveal the striking blue that the process is known for.

For a more advanced lesson, make your own chemical mix and apply it to a range of different papers and fabrics. Just be sure to prep away from sunlight, and as close to the time of use as you can. You could also try trapping items under glass and seeing how compressed objects produce images differently to those not made to lie flat.

2. Pinhole – Nancy Breslin

You won't need a full darkroom for this, but you will require a light-sealed, preferably well-ventilated room, red safety lights, trays, tongs and chemicals. If a fan isn't available, try setting up in a space with light-blocked windows that can be easily opened.



We use Quality Street tins for our pinhole cameras, since their multiple flat sides allow for considerable experimentation – our students' favourite is the 'eight-exposure spiral'. Be advised that very sunny days can present difficulties with exposure times.

Pinhole works best with subject matter that offers high contrast – such as a white building with black fencing in front, for example, or brickwork next to smooth render. Nancy Breslin's most notable images were captured in cafes, contrasting the movement of people against static surroundings. This can be recreated to great effect in any classroom.



3. Photograms – Man Ray

Photograms are produced via a cameraless process that sees objects laid onto photographic paper that's exposed to light, before developing the results.

This method lets students explore the physical qualities of objects and how they may affect the end results. As before, there are variations to explore, from the properties of the objects themselves, to attempting double exposures, applying paint during the development stage and so on.

Many of Man Ray's most well-known works came about through unexpected events. In his explorations of the then-nascent medium of

photography, he came to recognise the embracing of chance as a creative tool. Teaching students to simply wander and see where a medium takes them can be one of the hardest, and yet most vital, parts of our job.

4. Cliché Verre – Hannah Höch

This process entails first creating a collaged image. This is photocopied in monochrome onto acetate, which is then placed on photographic paper and exposed to light. The result is a photogram created from an existing image, rather than solid objects. Have the students play around with your photocopier's various settings – coloured copies and overprinting can all produce interesting combinations.

As with most of these processes, high tonal contrast and good definition will lead to better pictures. Base starting images will need to be crisp and lend themselves well to monochrome reproduction.

The work of Hannah Höch, while strictly photomontage, is a great starting point for learning about Cliché Verre. Her concepts are sophisticated, but her execution intentionally not, making the work accessible to students at all levels.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Day is head of art, media and film at Ludlow College



Pump up the VOLUME



If you're struggling to keep your KS3 cohort engaged in music lessons, introducing students to music production can help you meet them where they are, says **Kaya Herstad-Carney**

Music has wide appeal and plays an important part in many people's lives. As an academic subject, however, it can see wildly varying levels of engagement in class – particularly at KS3, where there can often be a strong culture of non-learning driven by peer pressure.

Whilst navigating the requirements of the curriculum, we should seek out opportunities for personalising students' learning as much as possible. Student-centred teaching can be challenging, but the payoff is worth it. It involves teaching according to how the student learns, and tailoring the delivery accordingly.

Ensuring that lesson content is relevant to the individual is, I believe, the most effective way of harnessing their intrinsic motivation to learn in music lessons and enabling them to thrive. Allow learners to participate in ways that are meaningful to them.

One way of doing this can be to incorporate different music genres into lessons. Do they listen to rap music on their way to school? Do they attend indie-rock gigs at the weekend? Are they into drum and bass? Everyone will have their own interests, so try to meet them where they're at, rather

than imposing upon them a style of music that sounds alien to their ears.

Practice needn't make perfect

If you're a professional, or have ever spent considerable time perfecting a skill or talent, it's easy to forget how hard it can be to practice, and how deflating the process can be. You may well have some students who are applying themselves to mastering an instrument, but also many more who have no interest in bettering their music skills, and feel under pressure to perform.

You're not going to have a homogenous student group, and it's not necessarily everyone's goal to become the next Jimi Hendrix or Freddie Mercury – but they *can* all contribute to creative tasks.

If a student has ownership of their learning, they'll be that much more motivated to engage – so try turning the process of practising into a hands-on, problem-solving exercise that involves peer-to-peer interaction and teamwork.

The wealth of technology now available in classrooms opens up the possibility of 'gamifying' students' learning with the aid of interactive music tools such as Soundtrap, or music-based apps such as Groovebox, iReal Pro, Piano Motifs, Chord Wheel, InTune, Amazing Slowdowner, Topline, Nail The Pitch and many more.

The bigger picture

Studying music can facilitate further learning in other subjects too. Music can be an integral part of a student's educational journey, so help them to make the most of this across the board. Try drawing upon other subjects in music lessons and vice versa.

Allow students to gain an understanding of how music is made not just through listening and performing, but also through analysis and producing a broad range of musical styles, genres and instruments. The playing and

performance side of the subject might leave your students cold, but as technology and communication expectations have improved, the processes of music production may appeal more.

Moreover, this can be achieved without an eye-watering price tag. According to Stu Brewer, a production and guitar lecturer at the HE music teaching provider WaterBear, "I've worked in secondary education at



various schools, and have seen the curriculum and budgetary pressures schools are under. However, a combination of cloud-based resources, and music technology companies shifting their focus to future music makers, has led to cost-effective, often even free solutions that are suitable for schools wanting to engage their students in the world of music production.”

Ease of access

Established companies such as Ableton and Roland now offer free web-based resources to aid in beat creation and recording techniques – meaning that any internet-capable device can access quality recording resources without the need for additional expenditure.

Akai is a company that’s become synonymous with the process of sampling and its adoption by urban genres. It has developed a free to access, online version of its legendary MPC sampler, MPC Beats, which introduces students to pattern-based music creation and also provides learning tools to help students further explore musical techniques relating to recording and programming.

Ableton, meanwhile, provides a ‘Lite’ version of its renowned Live software, enabling students to learn about clip-based recording. This approach is good for students unfamiliar with traditional music theory, with its emphasis on creating and manipulating blocks of sound, rather than the more linear layouts of other recording software.

These companies also produce feature-rich versions of their recording

software specifically designed for tablet devices, and fully compatible with desktop setups. These not only put a multitude of different sounds at students’ fingertips, but also enable them to create complete tracks using only the kind of tactile, touch-based interface they’ll already be familiar with.

Get creating

By exploring alternative approaches to recording, students can become highly engaged in the methods and techniques used to create the music that speaks to them. See Trap music, for example, and how its trademark frenetic hi-hats and distinct rhythms can be perfectly re-created using the sequencer function found in all of the aforementioned software packages.

This can be instantly gratifying for students, while fostering their creativity – and also lets students decide where they want their adventures in production to go, rather than always being led by the teacher. It reduces the amount of time teachers need to spend one-on-one with each student, while at the same time boosting their

sense of personal satisfaction and achievement.

In terms of hardware, the cost of recording interfaces – modules that enable computers to make high quality recordings of microphones, keyboards, guitars and other instruments – has plummeted. Focusrite’s Scarlett range lets users connect multiple mics and instruments into one device simultaneously, and works with both computers and tablets. And if the cost of a sound interface is still too prohibitive, you can still get usable results from your recording device’s in-built microphone. There are whole subgenres centred around lo-fi recording techniques and found sounds. In my own experience, non-traditional capturing techniques that utilise a smartphone’s microphone, for example, can do lots to spark students’ creativity.

The impact of easily accessible recording technology is really being felt at further and higher education. What we’re seeing at HE are producers who have few ‘traditional’ skills at playing an instrument, but can still

WHOLE SCHOOL HARMONY

Maths

Time signatures, especially compound time, can aid understanding of division – for instance, via rhythmical activities based around dividing bars and demonstrating this through clapping.

Science

Why not use music to explore the science of sound? The physics behind how instruments function is genuinely fascinating.

Art and design

Task students with creating an artwork that depicts a song of their choice or one chosen for them, taking into consideration style, colour and texture.

English

Encourage students to analyse and/or create song lyrics in their favourite musical genres.

History

Add a different dimension to history lessons with learning activities centred on musical genres through the ages. Encourage class discussion, and set students the challenge of matching music clips to specific eras.

produce fantastic music. The common consensus from my students is that the spark for this exploration often begins at secondary level. It doesn’t need advanced tech to make that happen – but an emphasis on music making that’s immediate and accessible certainly helps.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kaya Herstad-Carney is singer, songwriter, senior lecturer and performance coach; for more information about WaterBear, visit waterbear.org.uk

What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1

Stacking Bins encourage recycling in schools

From Leaffield Environmental, the award-winning manufacturer and designer of recycling and litter bins, comes the EnviroStack stacking recycling bin, which is currently supporting many schools' sustainability activities.

Available in either a 32- or 52-litre capacities, it can be stacked in a combination of ways to suit your requirements and is ideal for small spaces, its narrow footprint allowing it to fit in corridors, canteen areas or classrooms without taking up too much space. It's able to collect general waste, paper, mixed glass, aluminium cans, plastics, mixed recycling, or food waste, and features a WRAP colour coding scheme to make waste streams easy to distinguish and prevent contamination.

Suitable for internal use only, it can be located individually or in a group, with WRAP colour-coded apertures and graphics included as standard. It features a sack retention for discreet plastic bag fitting, but can also be used bag-less. For more information, contact 01225 816 541, email recycle@leaffieldenv.com or visit leaffieldrecycle.com



4

Can't hold it back

Prepare to fall in love with Disney's Frozen all over again, as a theatrical experience – and winner of seven WhatsOnStage Awards – at London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Incredible special effects,

stunning costumes and jaw-dropping scenery all help to bring Elsa and Anna's journey to life in a whole new way.

Featuring all the beloved songs from the movie, as well as a few surprises from the writers behind 'Let it Go', you'll be transported to Arendelle from the moment the curtain rises. Frozen is brought to the stage by an award-winning creative team, with direction by Tony® and Olivier Award winner Michael Grandage and a book by Academy® and BAFTA Award-winner Jennifer Lee.

The show features the cherished songs from the original film, alongside new songs by Grammy® and Academy Award-winning writers Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez. Visit frozeneducation.co.uk for a range of free lesson plans and enrichment resources for schools.



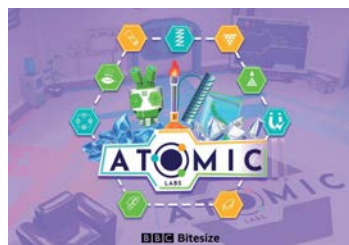
Photo by Johan Persson © Disney

2

A bigger bite

KS3 teachers – we've got you! BBC Bitesize continues to support teachers and students with new and updated KS3 guides in English, maths, biology, chemistry, physics, history and geography.

All-new courses include video, quizzes and infographics for greater interactivity and engagement, supporting progress



from Y7 through to Y9 with step-by-step and structured content. The content is perfect for homework and classroom tests, not just end of year revision.

Also recently launched are two new interactive games for history (History Detectives) and science (Atomic Labs, pictured), with new games for geography and maths coming soon. For more information, bbc.co.uk/bitesize and click on the 'Secondary' button. and maths coming soon. For more information, bbc.co.uk/bitesize and click on the 'Secondary' button.

3

Mental health monitoring

STEER Tracking measures, tracks and improves the mental health and self-regulation of students aged between eight and 18. Self-regulation is our ability to choose an appropriate and measured response to life's everyday challenges.

Through an innovative and unique online assessment carried out three times a year, the tool alerts schools to students who may have emerging mental health risks, but are not showing visible signs of vulnerability. It also identifies students who may be hiding safeguarding concerns.

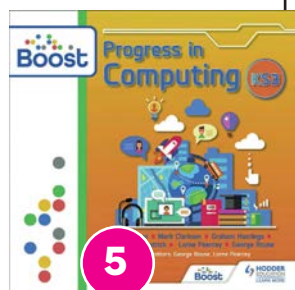
The assessment tool provides schools with guidance tailored to each student, so that they can act early to prevent problems escalating. Find out more at steer.education/contact-us



Digital know-how

Hodder Education has listened to how you teach computing at KS3 and designed a fantastic new toolkit of digital and printed resources around you, containing everything you'll need to confidently deliver the National Curriculum in computing and develop your students' ICT and digital media skills.

Progress in Computing: Key Stage 3 combines ready-to-use lesson plans, presentations, videos and animations, multimedia assets, interactive resources, quizzes and assessments with an expert-written Student Book. Want to find out why it won the 'Technology and STEM' category in the 2021 Teach Secondary Awards? Visit hoddereducation.co.uk/PiC to register for a free trial of Progress in Computing: Key Stage 3: Boost and request an inspection copy of the Student Book. For more details, contact computing@hoddereducation.co.uk



6 Computer science, flipped

Craig 'n' Dave is a comprehensive package of GCSE and A Level computer science resources designed to be delivered via a flipped-classroom learning model. The contents include schemes of learning, student workbooks, supporting videos, model answers, end-of-topic tests, programming activities and more besides, thus helping to reduce teachers' planning and preparation time.

The package's resources aim to facilitate self-starting lessons and get students engaging immediately. The included homework activities meanwhile encourage students to demonstrate independent learning, helping them to grow in confidence and take ownership of their unique learning journeys. To find out more, visit craigndave.org or contact admin@craigndave.co.uk

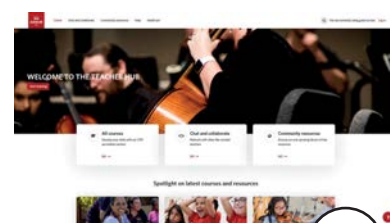


8 Safeguarding connections

The Safeguarding Company is pleased to announce our launch of a brand new online community. Free to access, this community is intended to be a space where safeguarders can connect in order to seek support, share resources and receive advice.

The Safeguarding Community has three different rooms: a 'Staff Room' for day-to-day communications, an 'International Room' and a 'Safe Room', in which anonymous questions can be posted.

We understand that safeguarding can often be a challenging and lonely job. We believe this community will be beneficial to the mental health and wellbeing of those involved with safeguarding, giving them a much-needed safe space in which to connect with others who understand what they're feeling. For more details, visit thesafeguardingcompany.com



10 Enhance your skills

Whether you're a music specialist looking to enter the teaching profession or already teaching, the courses and resources available at the ABRSM's new Teacher Hub online platform will help you to build and hone your skills.

Developed with input from our network of global music educators, the Teacher Hub can provide you with the tools you'll need to deliver a world-class learning experience for all pupils studying music.

The Teacher Hub hosts CPD-accredited courses developed by experienced music educators, user forums for discussions around teaching and learning, and a 'community resources' section containing useful downloads, expert-authored blogposts, instructional videos and other resources.

Visitors can get started with a free 'Reflecting on your Practice' taster course for all teachers.

To access the ABRSM Teacher Hub, visit abrs.org/teacherhub



7 Left to their own devices

It's never been more important to keep children safe and responsible online – so step forward, BCS Level 1 Smart Digital Award in e-Safety.

Ofqual-regulated and aligned to the National Computing Curriculum, this qualification will give your students the tools to build themselves a responsible digital footprint and a solid learning foundation for their education and daily digital lives.

Supplied complete with teaching resources and automated testing, it's ideal for KS3 learners and also ESFA-funded for 14- to 16-year-olds. What's more, on successful completion of the Award, your students get certified. Find out more at bcs.org/esafety-award

Helping hand

The Independent Diabetes Trust offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals on the issues that are important to them. Our helpline offers a friendly understanding ear when the going gets tough.

IDDT also supplies information packs to parents and teachers to help them better understand the needs of children with diabetes in school, and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries.

Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications – with a cure still elusive, IDDT additionally funds essential research. As a registered charity, IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations. For more information, or to join IDDT, contact 01604 622 837, email martin@iddtinternational.org or visit iddtinternational.org



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Edtech advice cuts both ways

When it comes to edtech procurement, don't just buy from providers – try collaborating with them too, says **Helen McLean**

At Archbishop Temple Church of England

High School, each student has their own iPad. They access all their learning materials via our virtual learning environment, with parents able to keep track of their children's tasks and access progress reports via a dedicated portal.

Edtech represents a big investment. As a 790-pupil, 11-16 secondary located in Preston, we share the same desire as any other school to extract as much value as we can from our edtech spend – but this can fall short of expectations, unless there's genuine collaboration between the school and edtech provider in question.

The research seems to back this up. A September 2022 report from the DfE into the implementation of education technology in schools and colleges (see bit.ly/ts121-ep1) highlighted how important it is that teachers be closely involved in the development and design of edtech.

We've certainly found that with our own VLE and parent portal, and how the latter is used for sharing teacher feedback and end of term reports. Having successfully used the platform for a number of years, we've recently started working with its developer, Firefly Learning, on changes it's making to the user interface and



navigation bar. This collaboration illustrates how schools' direct experience of using edtech can feed into future product development, to ensure that new solutions are even more user friendly and relevant to users' needs.

Beginning a collaborative relationship with your edtech supplier can seem daunting, but adopting the following key principles has worked well for us:

1. Develop a strong digital team

These are the people who will bridge the gap between the edtech company and your teachers. As well as being head of ICT and computing, I also lead on school-wide IT services, linking the IT needs of our teaching staff with our network manager and technician.

2. Feedback matters

It's all about picking up the phone or sending an

email, saying what you want and asking if they can do it. Don't see edtech development as a walled garden you can't enter; like many things in life, if you don't ask you won't get! You might be surprised at where such an approach might take you.

If something isn't technically feasible, a company will tell you. I've given many companies extensive feedback on their products, and remain in regular contact with their customer services teams. This helps ensure that tech companies develop a more detailed understanding of our priorities as a school, which can then go on to influence the development of products we may well use in future.

3. Remove barriers to good

There have been instances where a partnership approach hasn't worked as well for us as it should –

usually due to a lack of two-way communication. One company I previously worked with bounced me around different people in their help centre. When I told them how frustrating this was, I was passed on to one of their design people who immediately suggested we thrash out the problems in a webinar. After a half hour chat, it was soon sorted out.

4. Be open

There are many tech companies out there that would similarly like to work more closely with schools. In most cases, they simply need to reach out; we will then do our best to schedule a time convenient for them to visit.

5. Encourage internal dialogue

Before trialling any edtech, have a clear picture of your needs. Talk to staff, and keep seeking their feedback throughout the pilot stage and into the rollout. Their questions may alert you to common issues, which can then inform your dialogue with the edtech company.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen McLean is head of ICT and computing at Archbishop Temple Church of England High School, Preston

For further details about the school engagement platform Firefly, visit fireflylearning.com

Just one THING

Six educators share their recollections of the single change that did the most to reshape and alter their practice for the better...

Sometimes, all it takes is making a single change – just one alteration – to have a sizeable impact on students' engagement, understanding and outcomes.

We hear from several educators who were fortunate enough to locate that elusive, singular adjustment to their practice or professional circumstances that made all the difference. Here are their stories...



HELEN MILNER – Head of humanities at Jerudong International School, Brunei

MAKE RESOURCES MORE ACCESSIBLE

THE PROBLEM:

Our textbooks were outdated and in short supply. There was a lack of bespoke resources available to students before, during and after lessons had been delivered.

THE CHANGE:

I created a Google Site for each teaching group with lesson-by-lesson objectives, resources, further readings and keywords, as well as links to revision materials.

THE RESULT:

Students are now able to access the resources used in lessons both beforehand and afterwards. EAL learners, for example, can read material before lessons if they wish, and all can go over work independently afterwards, or when lessons are missed.

This has made pointing students to other helpful resources more streamlined, and ensures that all material shared relates to their course, limiting the likelihood of confusion, or students going off on tangents.



CHANGE UP THE SPACE

LUCY ALYS – Head of art & design at Crickhowell High School, Powys

THE PROBLEM:

Lack of student ownership in the classroom.

THE CHANGE:

I've always made space for my sixth form learners to work in my classroom – but after essential work forced us to clear out our art room, I made it my priority to review how we used the room, and make sure every sixth form student had their own mini-studios.

THE RESULT:

This changed my learning environment and the ethos of my classroom, and I'm never going back. Our new sixth form art studio space, 'Y Stwdio', is a wonderfully messy hive of experimentation, with lots of work left out for unplanned critique by peers and to inspire K3 and KS4.



PUT THINGS IN CONTEXT

HANNAH DAY – Head of art, film and media at Ludlow College

THE PROBLEM:

A lack of understanding as to how topics sat together, with no sense of historical context.

THE CHANGE:

We started by creating a timeline with students, pinpointing key technical developments, artists and art movements which we then linked to each unit. We supported this with excerpts from a documentary looking at the history of photography.

THE RESULT:

Students now understand much better where an artist's work or processes sits in terms of the development of photography, as both a technical medium and an artform. A similar approach could be applied to other subjects involving ideas that have developed and grown over a period of time – be it physics or philosophy – where many involved in the subject are building on what came before.

Realising that choices were different and more limited for many who came before led to a greater sense of the world these artists lived in, and so helped students create more informed and relevant analysis.



TAKE TIME ON TERMINOLOGY

EMELIA TAYLOR –
Head of geography at
Trinity High School and
Sixth Form Centre, Redditch

THE PROBLEM:

Students struggled to remember subject terminology and structure clear responses to exam questions.

THE CHANGE:

I designed a stepped writing approach encompassing a range of strategies, including cubing questions, structuring

responses, developing key terms as a class, sentence starters and providing opportunities to answer questions. Students then received feedback and a chance to redraft their responses.

THE RESULT:

It's been a great tool for promoting the modelling of work in the classroom and collaborative learning. Students have become more confident at answering the exam questions, since they know more what to expect and have become increasingly independent with their

responses over time.

It's been a great way of supporting all students – those of lower ability, with SEND, receiving Pupil Premium or of higher ability – who need to work on their structure. I've observed an increase in engagement from students, better structures in their responses when it comes to topic assessments and a rise in student attainment for higher mark responses.



CHANGE YOUR SOURCE MATERIAL

CAROLINE BIRKS – Content creator and
tutor for English, Media and Film at

likemaria.co.uk

THE PROBLEM:

Lack of student understanding within one particular exam unit.

THE CHANGE:

When preparing for an exam on gender representation, I'd always used *Fawlty Towers* and *The Office* – two great texts that both the students and I loved, but which perhaps didn't enable good comparisons to be made within the topic. Instead, I sought out sitcoms based more on how they represented their chosen themes, rather than perceived 'quality', and changed to using *My Family* and *Everybody Loves Raymond*.

THE RESULT:

The new texts were easier to compare, enabling students to develop a deeper understanding gender depictions. Soon afterwards, we achieved our best ever results on that paper.

MOVE SCHOOLS

ANONYMOUS

THE PROBLEM:

A low quality of student work, made worse by a lack of senior leadership support.

THE CHANGE:

After struggling at the school I was working in – having received very little management support, and seeing issues with student work and behaviour go unresolved – I realised I had to move schools.

THE RESULT:

My new school has clear sanctions and support in place, and set actions to follow when work isn't completed. Parents are kept regularly informed, so that any issues can be resolved when they arise.

I wish I could have done more with the students at my last school, but without better support, moving schools was the one change I simply had to make.

THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Some streamlined, yet helpful ways of canvassing feedback on your lessons from students

EXIT POLLS

At the end of each lesson, give students a token – a simple button will do. As they leave, they must place their token in one of three pots, labelled 'I understood the lesson', 'I understood parts of the lesson' and 'I understood little of the lesson'. See how your students did on average, and then re-work any lessons that prove problematic.

THUMBS UP

When covering a tricky concept, ask students to hold up their thumbs to indicate their level of understanding. A full

thumb up shows they've got it, a thumb down indicates that they're stumped, while a thumb held sideways communicates that they've partially understood it. Use this to gauge a class' average level of understanding so that you know when to go back.

1 TO 10

List the 10 aspects of your subject you feel are most important to get right – such as the teaching space, the physical and electronic resources you use, levels of homework set, lesson tasks, etc. Ask your students to then rank these in order of which they like the most. Do certain elements get repeatedly placed at the bottom? If so, this is where you should place your focus.

Raise your voice

As an individual teacher your voice may be small, but your experiences, ideas and insights are no less valuable than those of #edutwitter's big beasts, says **Toria Bono**

Have you ever sat in a meeting and wanted to say something, but couldn't find the courage to? Have you ever shared an idea with someone further up the proverbial ladder, only to have that idea dismissed without discussion?

Have you ever sat on social media, ready to tweet or post about something, only to delete it at the last minute for fear of the potential backlash?

If so, then you're like countless other educators I speak to every day, who have become quiet, sometimes even silent in their schools. Sadly, we work in a profession where the loudest voices are often those of people who aren't teaching every day, while the quieter voices – those of practising teachers and TAs – will frequently go unheard.

The same people

In 2020, I rejoined Twitter and tweeted a question. I waited and waited, but no one answered. I felt despondent. In January of that year, I'd committed myself to becoming an active member of the Twitter education community, after hearing great things about it – but how could I become 'active' if I was speaking into a void?

'Tiny Voice Talks' was born out of frustration. One February evening, I decided to create a Twitter thread for those quieter voices – a place where questions could be asked and answered, a Cheers-like place where everybody knew your name (a reference there for the over-40s among you).

Yet very quickly, things became complicated. I'd

created the Tuesday thread #TinyVoiceTuesdayUnites and the question hashtag #TinyVoiceTalks, and built up a group of people who could answer questions via the hashtag #TVTTTagTeam – and then COVID hit.

On an average Tuesday in spring/summer that year, over 500 people were regularly joining the Tuesday thread, just to have their voice heard. This confirmed for me that I wasn't the only frustrated teacher out there; that there were others who had questions and thoughts of their own, and just wanted to be listened to.

“What you want to say matters – it's often just a case of figuring out how you want to say it.”

Around this time, I was also attending a lot of virtual educational events, and found it was often the same people speaking at them. It was interesting to me that many of these speakers weren't actively teaching, and often hadn't for a number of years. I wanted to counter this, by amplifying the voices of actual classroom teachers and educators with amazing ideas, who simply weren't being heard.

Big ideas

Not long after this, I was approached with a proposal to start a podcast devoted to featuring the voices of quieter educators. 'Tiny Voice Talks' launched in August 2020, and has since gone on to highlight the voices of over 140 educators spanning early years to FE.

The podcast has seen discussions of core subjects,

foundation subjects, wellbeing, SEND, inclusion, race, sexuality, gender, disability, empowerment, coaching – I could go on, but you get the idea. People want to talk, and others really do want to listen.

My guests are mostly not well known. They don't have huge social media followings, but they do have big ideas and immense passion for giving their children, our young people, the very best start in life that they can.

As the podcast has rippled out, I've received messages from other teachers who have taken the step of speaking up

in staff meeting and TAs who have voiced ideas to their teacher. They've felt empowered to use their voice because of Tiny Voice Talks.

In January 2021, I reverted to using the hashtag #TinyVoiceTalks for all of my Twitter activity. We still get together every Tuesday on the ever-lively #TinyVoiceTalks thread where, for the most part, everybody really does know everyone else by name.

Powerful messages

At the end of October 2022, Tiny Voices Talk was published. It's a book filled with quieter voices and powerful messages, again ranging from EYFS practitioners to FE teachers, and covers myriad themes.

What I've discovered over the past two years, is that when a tiny voice speaks, three amazing things happen:

1. They share surprising insights and ideas
2. They realise they are not so tiny
3. They empower other tiny voices to talk too

To all the readers out there – do you feel empowered to have your voice heard? What is it that you wish you could say? What do you want to change? What things are you unhappy with?

The first step is to write these thoughts down – they might be work-related, but may just as easily be about your wider world-view. You may be one of those rare people that has no trouble speaking up, but to everyone else – getting such thoughts down in writing lets you see everything you wish you could voice at a glance.

If I were coaching you, I'd ask you to rate the importance of those thoughts. Whichever one ends up at the top will be the one that you need to voice the most.

Changing the habit

What you want to say matters – it's often just a case of figuring out how you want to say it. That's why I undertook a coaching diploma and apprenticeship, after realising over the

course of my podcast interviews just how many people needed help in getting their voices heard.

If you've rarely, or never spoken up before, changing

the habit isn't easy – especially for introverts. If you're finding it hard to express what you want to say, I can't recommend coaching enough.

The difference between louder voices and quieter voices is often not that the former have a better message or even know more – it's that they've simply learnt how to use their voice and are

confident in doing so. They know what they want to say, and have learnt how to articulate it in a way that compels other people to listen.

Remember – your voice matters just as much as theirs does.

We can't stop the bigger voices from talking, but nor should we want to. We just need to learn how to balance their louder voices with our own. Your voice matters, so use it!

If you're feeling sufficiently brave, then get in touch. You could come on the Tiny Voice Talks podcast and have your voice heard – because we would love to listen.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Toria Bono (@ToriClaire) is a class teacher, coach and the coaching lead in her school, as well as the host of the Tiny Voice Talks podcast (tinyvoicetalks.com) and author of *Tiny Voices Talk* (£16.99, Crown House Publishing)

4 TIPS FOR FINDING YOUR VOICE

- 1 On social media platforms, build up a community of like-minded quieter voices around you – others you can listen to, and who will listen to you. Talk about what matters most to them and to yourself.
- 2 In school, practise using your voice by sharing your ideas with a trusted colleague who you know won't be judgemental.
- 3 Know what matters to you and raise your voice about that. Even if you only talk in staff meetings on topics that really matter to you personally, people will listen.
- 4 Ask others to share their views with you, and when they've finished speaking, share yours with them. Actively listening to one another will help to develop a space in which people feel heard, and will actively want to listen to others.

A critical perspective

How should geography teachers present the complexities involved in climate change and natural disasters in the face of often overheated media coverage? **Dr Alex Standish** shares his thoughts...

More than most subjects in the curriculum, geography engages with media reporting of current affairs – from the hosting of the World Cup, to Brexit, migration, poverty, racism, earthquakes and hazards relating to weather and climate.

Engaging with contemporary issues, both here in the UK and around the world, is important for understanding the nature of a place, its interconnections and the challenges its people face with respect to their location and environmental interactions. So how should teachers approach topics that are political in nature, and often reported in frightening terms?

Prevailing biases

In 1979, writing in the context of television becoming increasingly influential in young people's lives, American educator Neil Postman distinguished between what he called the 'media curriculum' and the 'school curriculum'. He surmised that the school curriculum must take students beyond the media curriculum and "Make visible the prevailing biases of a culture."

He suggested that intellectual and cultural advance is made not through argument, but through argument and counterargument, since "The counterargument makes the deficiencies of the argument visible, and makes improvement and synthesis possible."

In the online age, where reporting is often agenda-

driven rather than committed to accuracy and neutrality, making sense of the news and getting to the truth of the matter can be highly challenging for young people and adults alike. I expect most teachers and parents would want to see schools provide opportunities for media and critical literacy in the curriculum – but what does that mean in the context of media reporting around weather and climate-related events? The recent floods in Pakistan and Bangladesh, for example, California wildfires or heatwaves affecting Australia, Europe, China and the UK?

Apocalyptic framing

In the UK, most weather-related hazards are typically reported as evidence of climate change, and indicative of us being on track to a climate disaster induced by human greed and modern lifestyles. In 2018, *The Guardian* stated that we have "12 years left to limit climate catastrophe." The COP27 summit was opened by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres proclaiming to the world that we're on a "Highway to climate hell."

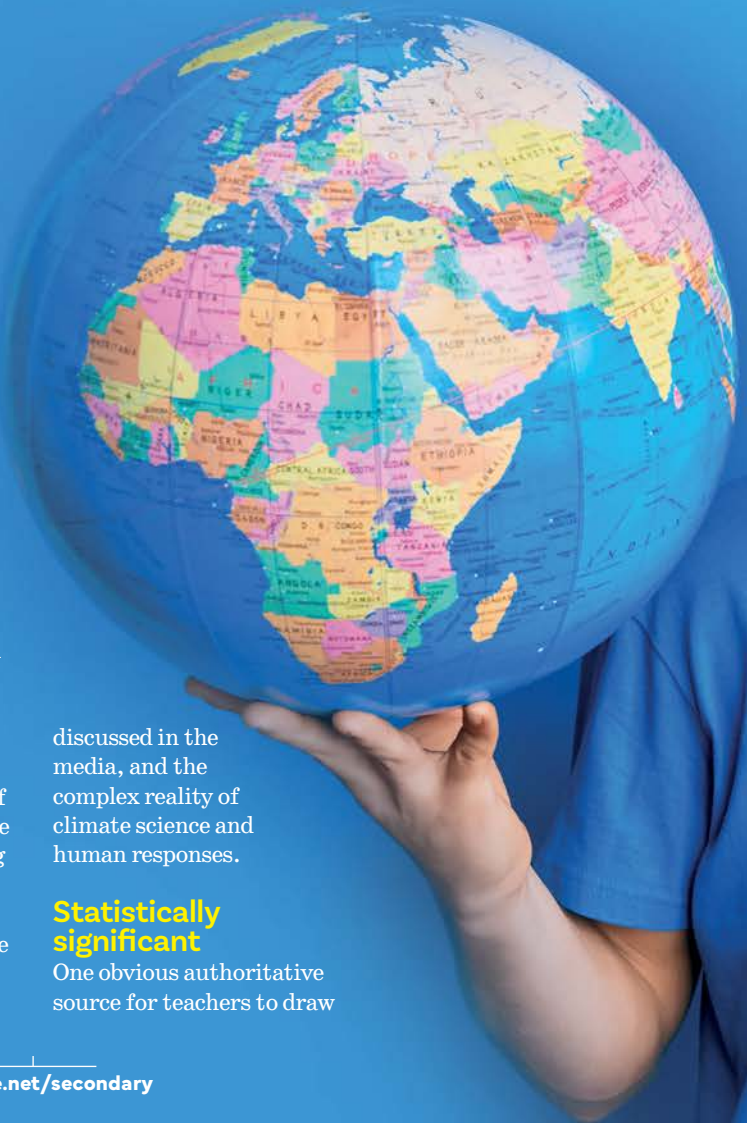
There is growing evidence that young people have been (understandably) frightened by the shrill nature of media reporting, and often apocalyptic narrative framing of global warming discourse. A recent survey of the attitudes towards climate change held by 10,000 young people across 10 countries found that 76% of respondents agreed that 'The future is frightening'. 56% thought that 'humanity is

doomed', while 39% were "hesitant to have children" of their own (see bit.ly/ts121-geo1).

Hype and scaremongering aren't conducive to constructive discussion of how best to mitigate and live with climate change, which is why schools need to move away from lessons that present issues and hazards in simplistic and moralistic terms – such as those that entreat children to reduce their carbon footprints. Instead, they should do more to close the gap between the way climate change issues are

upon in place of media reporting is the IPCC. In its report, 'Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation' (see bit.ly/ts121-geo2) it's stated that:

"Globally, in many (but not all) regions with sufficient data there is medium confidence that the length or number of warm spells or heat waves has increased since the middle of the 20th century. It is likely that there have been statistically significant increases in the number of heavy



discussed in the media, and the complex reality of climate science and human responses.

Statistically significant

One obvious authoritative source for teachers to draw

precipitation events... in more regions than there have been statistically significant decreases, but there are strong regional and subregional variations in the trends.”

This fits the recent pattern in Europe, with hotter summers, milder winters and a slight increase in heavy precipitation events. With warmer oceans, we can expect to see more moisture in the atmosphere as the water cycle intensifies, but precipitation won't be evenly distributed. For other weather phenomena, such as tropical cyclones, however, the trend is less clear: “There is low confidence that any observed long-term (i.e. 40 years or more) increases in tropical cyclone activity are robust.”

The true extent

Highlighting the differential regional patterns of climate change gives students a better understanding of its complexity and impacts on people and wildlife.

Warming has actually had beneficial effects in some high latitude countries, in the form of long growing seasons and milder winters, resulting in fewer deaths from cold. Conversely, the effects in mid and low latitudes are widespread and adverse – more extreme heat and heat-related deaths, increased water and food insecurity, as well as greater spread of disease via food, water and other vectors.

Indeed, in the IPCC's assessment, “Climate change has caused substantial damages, and increasingly irreversible losses, in terrestrial, freshwater and coastal and open ocean marine ecosystems.” Quotes like this can help explain the true extent of climate change and its impacts. Yes, there's cause for alarm – but also a recognition that much of our extreme weather is down to climate variability rather than climate change, and that humanity has a long history of dealing with it.

Environmental management

Teaching young people about the geological history of the planet, cycling between glaciations and interglacial periods over thousands and millions of years, will enable them to view recent warming in the

context of past change.

They should be taught about how homo sapiens lived through the last Ice Age (the Pleistocene) and survived when temperatures were 5°C to 10°C cooler than today, while using primitive technologies and working as communities. When examining more recent history, students can study how societies have used environmental management, infrastructure projects and other technologies to reduce people's vulnerability to extreme weather and climate.

This includes drainage basin management, flood defences (rivers and sea), central heating and air conditioning, water storage and irrigation, improved transportation safety and advances in weather forecasting and warning systems. In the 1920s, on average almost half a million people each year died from a combination of storms, floods, droughts, wildfire and extreme temperatures. As the Danish academic Bjørn Lomborg observes, thanks to human development and environmental management, this has since dropped in the 2020s to 18,000 people a year – a decrease of 96 % (see bit.ly/ts121-geo4).

Even as the climate has warmed and populations have risen, fewer people are dying and we've continued to increase agricultural production. Though given that thousands of people continue to experience the effects of storms, floods, heatwaves and droughts, more clearly needs to be done to improve the resilience of people and ecosystems.

Open debate

Looking at historical trends, and outlining for students the progress countries have made in improving public safety, access to education and healthcare, sanitation and life expectancy illustrates the benefits of modern societies, and provides a counterbalance to the

NUMBER CRUNCHING

A survey of 10,000 young people across 10 countries found that...

76%

agreed that
‘The future
is frightening’

56%

thought that
‘humanity is
doomed’

39%

were ‘hesitant to
have children’ of
their own

doom-mongering of the media curriculum.

Finally, I would argue that teachers have a moral obligation to offer their charges hope for the future – to show them how we will live with, and manage climate change. That means teaching students about the steps that have already been taken by countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the development of alternative energy sources – like nuclear fission and hydrogen – that can potentially produce the cheap and abundant energy modern societies require.

This should be an open debate to which young people should be encouraged to contribute.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Alex Standish is a senior lecturer in geography education at the UCL Institute of Education and co-editor of *What Should Schools Teach: Disciplines, Subjects and the Pursuit of Knowledge* (£25, UCL Press)

WHY I LOVE...

How one trust makes novel use of the iPads supplied to it by Sync

ABOUT ME:

NAME:

Gwyn ap Harri

JOB ROLE:

CEO of XP School Trust

SCHOOL:

XP School

WHY IPAD?

"It was a no-brainer to go with iPad. I wanted creative technology to be central to our educational provision."



refreshes as well. So it just works brilliantly."

“ Our kids learn through what we call learning expeditions.

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Some call this project-based learning; we call it 'expeditionary learning'. Students create things like books, films, documentaries and videos which we then make public."

“ The child going to university has the same equipment as one going for an



apprenticeship, or a student with SEN.

They've got the same devices as each other, and therefore access to the same level of opportunity as each other. It's then up to them to see how high and how far they can reach."

“ There are two sides to the educational battle – conformity versus creativity.

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sync

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LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

- + How to tackle discussions of relationships in RSE
- + How presenting students with closed choices can help you manage misbehaviour
- + Why the makers of the game show *Taskmaster* are turning their attention to schools
- + What's the best way of cultivating self-efficacy in your lessons?
- + The NFER's latest findings on how students are faring post-COVID
- + The V&A outreach project bringing unique historical artefacts into classrooms
- + How a new DfE/LGfL-developed tool aims to streamline the Prevent Duty self-assessment process
- + Reframing behaviour in the classroom – part 4 of our explainer series on how recurring behavioural issues can be met with effective responses

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PE teacher and school achievement leader



Thinking about ...

THE SQUEEZING OF PE

PE is slowly being squeezed from the curriculum. Over the last 10 years, 36,244 hours have been lost, with 73% of this drop impacting young people in KS4 alone – yet these are the young people who are most in need of PE's transformative powers.

Following the release of the Youth Sport Trust's 'Secondary PE – State of the Nation' report, we wanted to create a picture of the current situation for schools in England. What we found out was dire, to say the least.

Secondary schools are only offering an average of 92 minutes of PE to KS4 – well below Ofsted's recommended 120 minutes per week. In the northwest, we heard examples where students in Y7 to Y9 were only getting two hours per week of PE for half a term, and then stopping completely due to rotations with D&T. The situation is even worse for Y10 and Y11 students in some schools, with Y10s accessing one hour per week and Y11s receiving no PE at all.

The issues this causes for students' physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing are profound – especially when they're experiencing some of the most stressful years of their adolescent lives. This is the curriculum schools are being forced to

create, due to pressures such as those relating to the EBacc and Progress 8.

Schools tell us they want government to be more vocal on the value of PE. As a charity, we have long been campaigning for better school investment in the subject, to support schools in reducing the amount of PE time that's taken away for other subject interventions.

So how can we start to address these challenges? Senior leaders – consider alternative options when planning interventions and exam preparation. PE staff understand that spaces like sports halls may need to be used for formal and mock exams, but could informal assessments not be hosted elsewhere?

Where Y11 students need additional support, vary the lessons/days when students receive them so that they don't keep missing PE or after-school clubs, which may send the message that PE is less important than other subjects.

PE teachers – listen to your students, particularly the least active, to help you understand their attitudes and barriers. You can then use this feedback to inform your curriculum design, track the impact and get better engagement. Senior leaders will be interested in this, so show them your results in order to get their buy-in.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Walker is a development manager for secondary PE at the Youth Sport Trust; read the 'Secondary PE – State of the Nation' report in full via bit.ly/ts121-LL1

DISCUSSION – WHAT MAKES ‘THE PERFECT PARTNER’?



As children grow up, they'll face a range of new experiences and challenges. Classroom are ideal environments for conversations around what healthy relationships look like – particularly given how behaviours such as gaslighting, verbal abuse, put-downs and humiliation are becoming increasingly normalised in friendships and relationships, both in person and online.

Such experiences can have a serious impact on young people's social development, academic achievement and long-term life chances. Learning about healthy relations in the safe environment of a classroom will help them learn how to spot signs of toxic behaviour and make better, more informed choices.

When introducing the topic, stress that it's an open discussion around what your students

understand about relationships. Be clear from the outset that we can all have differing ideas and opinions, and that there are no right or wrong ideas or answers – that this is an exploration of what we believe, think and feel.

Set some ground rules regarding the key issues before you start, including confidentiality limits. Tell your students about the themes you'll be exploring so that they have a sense of where things are going and how they can expect the topic to progress. Encourage them to keep their own personal experiences or stories private. If they'd like to share something private, they can do so via a question box, or with you directly after the session.

The discussion can then proceed in pairs or across the whole group. Encourage the students to consider what key

messages about relationships all young people should know, what they are and how best to convey them to their peers. Set up a small box in which students can ask questions discreetly and/or anonymously, and include a 'Closing Comments' check-out at the end, so that they can pen their reflections anonymously.

If you don't know the answer to a question, there's no shame in that. If the teacher can model this, students will feel safe in admitting they don't currently have an answer, and feel supported in seeking out information with which they can reach an answer for themselves.

Be sure to hear everyone's views and ideas. There shouldn't be any sense of shame to an idea or belief shared. The subject can feel sensitive or difficult to discuss – but that's no reason to avoid it.

DO THIS

CLOSED CHOICE

EXERCISE BETTER CLASS CONTROL WITH THESE TIPS FROM ROBIN LAUNDER...

When it comes to dealing with misbehaviour, you may well find it useful to present students with a *closed choice*. That is, a choice where one of the options you give them is plainly going to result in a more favourable outcome all round, compared to the other:

“Chloe, do you want to do the maths questions now, or during break?”

“Adriana, would you like to stand here next to me during break, or would you prefer to play kindly with Alice?”

“Faisal, would you like to help Peter tidy the work area now, or would you like to do it at the end of the lesson on your own?”

If Chloe chooses not to do the maths questions now; if Adriana chooses not to play kindly with Alice; or if Faisal chooses not to help Peter tidy the work area, then you must duly go ahead with enacting the less favourable option – even if the outcome is ultimately less favourable for you as well. (Spending the break with Chloe, for example.)

Closed choice is a strategy that definitely works – but only if you actually mean what you say and follow through on the consequences.

Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – see behaviourbuddy.co.uk for details

CATHY PRESS HAS WORKED AS AN INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND CLINICAL SUPERVISOR FOR OVER 25 YEARS, SPECIALISING IN DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE; FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CATHYPRESS.CO.UK

43%

The decline in take-up of IT and computing courses at GCSE since 2016, when entries peaked

Source: Education Policy Institute

Viewers of the popular game show *Taskmaster* – wherein Greg Davies and Alex Horne challenge celebrities to complete a series of taxing tasks – may be intrigued to hear of a new collaboration between the show's creators and the children's mental health charity Place2Be.

Coinciding with this year's ninth annual Children Mental Health Week (which runs from 6th to 12th February 2023),

'Taskmaster Education' will encourage children and young people across country to solve problems and master puzzles in a remote recreation of the show.

Co-host and *Taskmaster* creator Alex Horne will set daily tasks for students to join in with, either at school or at home, which can be adapted to suit various learning objectives – be they curriculum-focused, or aimed more at fostering participants' social development.

The week will also include a treasure hunt, complete with daily clues. Any schools, families or other groups that successfully figure them out will earn a place on a Wall of Fame and be in with a chance of winning a Taskmaster Treasure Hunt Grand Prize.

Organisers are presenting the event as a way for participating children to develop teamwork, problem-solving, lateral thinking and communication skills, by applying themselves to tasks that will test both brain and brawn.

To find out more and register your interest, visit taskmastereducation.com

YOUR GUIDE TO ...

SELF-EFFICACY

Encouraging students to be independent is a complicated task. We'll often seek to build their confidence through modelling and scaffolding, but for some reason, when it comes to them applying the concepts themselves, they encounter challenges.

Building self-efficacy is one of the most effective ways there is of helping learners overcome misconceptions and succeed in exams.

Frameworks

Chunking complex tasks into their constituent parts, and then repeatedly running through these parts means that students will become habitual in their approach. This might seem almost militaristic, but giving students the opportunity to repeatedly work within a framework of parameters will build their confidence as their thought processes become second nature.

Combine this with metacognitive strategies, and you'll soon find that your learners are able to face complex problems without support.

Independent practice

A key part of the process is affording students an

opportunity to apply what they've learnt. Traditionally, this would come at the end of a lesson – but in actual fact, it's important that learners have frequent opportunities to try out what has been learnt.

This not only helps with identifying misconceptions, but also provides them with a chance to synthesise what's been learnt. This doesn't need to be in the form of extended writing – a simple summary sentence or a quick-fire task should suffice.

Instant feedback

Getting feedback while you're doing something will allow you to modify your processes before misconceptions get embedded. After all, you wouldn't watch somebody bake a cake without eggs, and then only tell them at the end that they should have put eggs in.

Giving students feedback while they're working will help to build their aptitude for self-critique as they go. Narrating your process and thinking further amplifies the impact of this live feedback – the ultimate aim being to get learners thinking about their work so that they're capable of critiquing themselves.



ADAM RICHES IS A SENIOR LEADER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING; FOLLOW HIM AT @TEACHMRRICHES

88%

of ITT providers report that the cost-of-living crisis – particularly in the areas of fuel/transport and energy – is affecting the ability of trainees to complete teacher training courses

Source: National Association of School-Based Teachers

Need to know

According to a recently published study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), secondary-age girls were more likely to have experienced a decline in their mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to secondary-age boys, with the latter actually showing some signs of improved mental health over the same period.

Those findings were arrived at following a new analysis of previously published UK COVID data, in which NFER researchers sought to identify common trends based on age, gender and disadvantage. The study drew on a variety of sources and utilised a range of definitions and approaches – resulting in mixed, and occasionally conflicting findings which, its authors advise, should be treated with caution.

With that in mind, the research further suggests children and young people with SEND had lower wellbeing and mental health prior to the pandemic which largely persisted throughout, and that the COVID restrictions imposed in early 2021 had a more pronounced negative impact on mental health and wellbeing than those introduced between March and June of 2020.

The full study can be accessed via bit.ly/ts121-LL3



ACTIVITY SPOTLIGHT THE V&A GOES TO SCHOOL

Schools in East London are being invited to take part in a series of workshops that will see unique items of historical interest from the V&A Museum collection brought into classrooms.

The 'Your Collection: V&A East in Schools' programme forms part of a wider cultural outreach and engagement project ahead of the opening of two new V&A museum sites – V&A East Storehouse, which is due to open its doors at the Here East cultural centre and business hub in 2024, and the V&A East Museum, scheduled to open in 2025 at a dedicated location on Stratford Waterfront.

According to V&A East director Gus Casely-Hayford, "Students will have the unique experience to engage with museum objects up close and have their voices heard as we discuss the rich global stories behind the objects."

"We want to share our love for what we do, and for what is coming in our two new sites, so that local young people feel a part of V&A East and be among some of our first ever visitors when we open in 2024."

The featured objects are set to include a West African cast gold badge dating from 370-1874; a 'Free Zulu' pendant designed by Kenny Zulu Whitmore and made by inmates in Louisiana State Penitentiary in 2014; and a 17th Century Silver Scent Pomander, historically worn during pandemics to protect wearers from disease.

While developing the programme, organisers took on board the views and advice of teachers via an advisory group, and have run a series of pilot sessions. A representative of Mossbourne Riverside Academy, one of the schools taking part,

remarked, "It was very insightful and engaging. The students really responded to not only seeing the artifacts up close, but also the stories behind them, which were diverse and fascinating. The workshop was a nice extension of the talk. Students learnt what it meant to be a curator, and drew objects that mean something to them that they would want to add to a museum."

Participating schools will be able to opt for assembly talks, classroom handling sessions, careers and skills workshops informed by the Gatsby benchmarks and CPD sessions for teaching staff. The organisers aim to initially target the programme at schools in the four 'Olympic boroughs' of Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, before opening up participation to as many schools as possible in the coming years.

Sarah Green, V&A East community engagement and outreach lead comments: "East London is one of the most vibrant and creative areas of the UK, with around 45,000 of 1.2 million residents working in the areas' thriving creative industries – however, the boroughs' diversity is not reflected in the workforce. We are working with our communities to address this inequity. We want to use the collection to spark change, innovation, and creativity for the future."

Any schools wanting to receive more information and express their interest in taking part should contact va-east-engagement@vam.ac.uk



On the radar

Prevent Duty Self-Assessment Tool

The DfE has partnered with the edtech charity LGfL - The National Grid for Learning to produce a new resource aimed at helping DSLs and SLTs implement the Prevent Duty.

The Prevent Duty Self-Assessment Tool for Schools comprises a spreadsheet and accompanying guide, intended to give schools a practical overview of areas to examine throughout the school year. Leaders are being encouraged to use the tool when assessing how well their Prevent policies and practices have been embedded, and when identifying any potential challenges, gaps and

areas for improvement.

The tool is moreover modelled on the grading of Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework, so that SLTs and DSLs are clear as to the seven areas they will need to gather and input evidence for:

1. Leadership and Management
2. Risk assessment
3. Working in partnership
4. Training
5. Online safety
6. Safeguarding school premises
7. Building children's resilience to radicalisation

According to Mubina Asaria, safeguarding consultant at LGfL, "Online safety requires consistency, common understanding and clear communication. Unless all stakeholders are involved and staff know what others are doing – including technical teams – there will be gaps. The evidence schools record on the spreadsheet should be robust and include actions, details and dates."

The Prevent Duty Self-Assessment Tool for Schools can be downloaded via bit.ly/ts121-LL2

TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and launches teachers might find useful...

IT'S NOT OK

The NEU has launched a new toolkit aimed at supporting schools' efforts at preventing sexual harassment. The free 'It's Not OK' toolkit contains guidance on tackling sexual harassment among students and staff, a questionnaire, posters, pledge cards, video case studies and a range of other resources.

neu.org.uk/end-sexism-sexual-harassment

NATIONAL EDUCATION NATURE PARK

The Natural History Museum is leading a new nationwide 'National Education Nature Park' scheme, designed to encourage schools in England to transform part of the green space at their site into a Nature Park that can support increased biodiversity. An accompanying resource pack includes lesson plans and schemes of work spanning EYFS to KS4.

bit.ly/ts121-LL4

TEACHER WALKTHROUGH

REFRAMING BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM

PART 4 OF AN ILLUSTRATED EXPLAINER, BASED ON A TWITTER THREAD FROM @IANWHITE21 ON HOW WE CAN APPROACH PERENNIAL BEHAVIOUR ISSUES USING A MORE MEASURED RESPONSE

1



GIVING UP

When that class has defeated you, it's tempting to call it in. Don't. Seek help. Start the next lesson with a 20-minute silent task. Get SLT in the room. Call home. Speak to the troublemakers after the lesson. Remember – we've all been there...

2



NEGLECTING RELATIONSHIPS

If you leave all relationship-building to the classroom, it may be a struggle. Transitions, breaks, lunch, and periods before or after school all contain brief moments when relationships can be further developed.

3



DON'T FRONT-LOAD

A common error. Be explicit in your instructions. Compare 'Right, you know what you need to do – off you go' with 'You have two and a half minutes to complete questions 1, 2 and 3.' Keep in mind that students need clarity from you.

4



CLASS NARRATIVE

If you don't tell a story to the class about where you're going and why, you risk that narrative becoming negative: 'We're one step closer to our aim – everyone in this room will be writing fluent essays by the next assessment. Let's make it happen.'

5



PUNISHING THE WHOLE CLASS

Just don't. You know you shouldn't. You know it's unwise. You know it doesn't ultimately work. So next time you're tempted to... Just don't.

ZEPH BENNETT IS A PE TEACHER AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT LEADER WITH 25 YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE; YOU CAN FIND MORE OF HIS EDUCATIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FOLLOWING @PEGEEKSCORNER

Got a great learning idea? Email editor@teachsecondary.com or tweet us at [@teachsecondary](https://twitter.com/teachsecondary)

ENTERPRISE EDUCATION

10X Challenge

A practical initiative designed to develop the entrepreneurial skills of students aged 11 to 19

AT A GLANCE

- A free, four-week, structured programme based around launching a business with just £10
- Created by Young Enterprise
- Supported by accompanying online and downloadable resources
- Develops sustainable, community-focused commercial expertise
- Challenge runs from 27th February until 24th March 2023

REVIEW BY MIKE DAVIES



Judging by recent events, this country needs all the financial acumen and business skills it can get. There's certainly ample scope for an injection of new talent in the years to come – assuming we still have an economy by then...

It's most opportune, then, that efforts are currently being made to inspire our next generation of entrepreneurs. Take the 10X Challenge, for example. Run by the charity Young Enterprise, this thoughtful and stimulating initiative is designed to get youngsters thinking commercially, yet realistically and with a sense of social responsibility. The objective is to research, create, plan, promote and run a successful business, from an initial investment of just £10.

Thanks to the range of resources permanently available from a supporting website, the programme is something that students can do all year round at school, in teams or remotely as individuals. There's also a chance to participate in a four-week challenge and enter weekly national competitions that test both specific skills and overall performance.

The challenge is due to commence at the end of February 2023, and is split into two age-groups – 11 to 14 and 15 to 19. Many participants will, of course, be motivated by the prospect of securing the top accolades. Nevertheless, the whole programme is essentially a vehicle for anyone to develop

valuable life skills that could really make an impact on their future success, fulfilment and prosperity. In that sense, everyone will be a winner.

The 10X Challenge breaks down the process of launching a business into a series of distinct tasks – from devising their product or service, through to researching the market, promoting their offer and setting up a sales event. Ultimately, they'll count up their earnings, repay their investors and decide what to do with their profit.

“The real value is in the skills and experiences they'll pick up”

However, the real value is in the skills and experiences they'll pick up along the way, and the support they'll be given to focus their thinking. There are activities to help them channel their ideas and sharpen their commercial senses. There

are also other useful resources to help them maximise their performance, such as exercises in budgeting and tips for effective marketing.

Even if they don't turn out to be the next Richard Branson, students will still have the chance to explore other talents they might not realise they possess. For example, they might discover that they have a flair for impactful design, or for delivering a compelling sales pitch.

Whatever the commercial success of their venture, students are sure to profit one way or another from participating in the 10X Challenge. Now that's something worth investing in.

**teach
SECONDARY**

VERDICT

- ✓ Free to enter
- ✓ Commercially realistic
- ✓ Productively competitive
- ✓ Develops useful life skills
- ✓ Instructive and socially responsible



UPGRADE IF...

You want to inspire your students to develop valuable, practical and commercial skills within a realistic, yet risk-free context.

10X Challenge resources are available for free via an online platform at 10xchallenge.org.uk

SAFEGUARDING

Mentor

The complete package for any leaders wanting to improve the readiness and capability of their school's safeguarding provision

AT A GLANCE

- Practical advice and learning for safeguarding leads
- Combines advanced technology and sophisticated practice to produce successful outcomes
- Developed by staff with backgrounds in policing, council administration, social care and education
- Staff get to choose between on-demand, self-guided sessions or tutor-led live training
- Trainees gain access to a personalised learning platform

REVIEW BY JOHN DABELL



All staff need to possess up-to-date safeguarding and child protection training, so that they can capably discharge their responsibilities within a modern school setting. But for this, they require high quality, accredited CPD training and specialist support services from those in the know.

The Safeguarding Company would be my first port of call, since they offer a comprehensive training programme delivered by staff who possess a deep knowledge of essential safeguarding processes and strategies.

Their aptly named Mentor service provides schools with exactly what they need to manage the wide spectrum of challenges teachers can face in the course of their duties – including digesting the voluminous quantity of statutory guidance and legislation out there, and translating it into usable resources and handy summaries.

Mentor provides schools with an impressive suite of training courses designed to enable all staff to confidently carry out their roles while effectively safeguarding the children and young people in their care. They offer a choice between self-paced, on-demand learning delivered online, or interactive online tutor-led sessions that run throughout the year.

The courses themselves come in different forms to suit the various needs of teachers, and any support or volunteer staff working regularly with children. As such, the individual training can be introductory, general or specialist in nature, though there

are also offerings designed with whole staff training in mind, including refresher courses that cover the 4 'R's of 'Recognise', 'Respond', 'Report' and 'Record'. Beyond that, there are further courses geared towards yet more specific needs, be it those of DSLs, governors or even staff at international schools.

For those seeking an all-inclusive safeguarding training solution, The Safeguarding Company's Mentor Pro option includes access to its full range of on-demand, CPD-accredited courses and specialist safeguarding resources, as well as a useful download library that includes INSET packs, policy templates and guides for handling child abuse disclosures. If, on the other other hand, you're looking for something more specialised, bespoke training and services can be arranged via the Mentor Plus package.

Common to all Mentor options are online community rooms and calendars that can be used to share best practice, obtain support and gather resources, as well as access to a host of materials that include case studies, presentations, guidance documents, glossaries and explanatory booklets.

Safeguarding is a complex and demanding area, in which schools need all the help they can get. With its high quality training and impressive array of resources, The Safeguarding Company's Mentor service can provide such help in spades – thus ensuring that school staff can develop and retain the vital skills and knowledge they'll need to keep children safe at all times.

teach
SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Offers a depth and breadth of training that's second to none
- ✓ Provides staff with informed, practical knowledge and the skills they'll need to ably safeguard students
- ✓ Helps ensure compliance with the latest statutory guidance
- ✓ All course content is supported by a host of high quality resources
- ✓ Can optionally support the delivery of whole-school safeguarding training

UPGRADE IF...

You're looking to change the behaviours, attitudes and skills within your school in a way that creates a better safeguarding culture, or are wanting to equip safeguarding leads with the confidence to oversee consistently high safeguarding standards.

For more details and to obtain a quote, contact 0330 6600 757 or visit thesafeguardingcompany.com/mentor

LITERATURE

Bloomsbury Lit in Colour: A Spotlight on Plays and Drama

A guide for teachers and theatre companies on how they can improve the range and diversity of plays studied at GCSE and A Level

AT A GLANCE

- Suggestions for widening the scope of plays studied at GCSE, AS and A Level
- Helps build a more inclusive English literature curriculum for all
- Familiarises students with a more broadly representative range of literature

REVIEW BY MIKE DAVIES

Diversity means having a seat at the table. It also means being able to secure a place on the bookshelf and being heard in the curriculum.

All learners should have an education that acknowledges and celebrates the achievements of people from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. Exam boards ought to ensure that at least a quarter of authors in their GCSE English literature specifications are from different ethnic minority backgrounds.

Presently, however, this isn't happening. Around 90% of the drama set texts available at GCSE English Literature are written by white playwrights. Representation and reframing matters – which is why Bloomsbury is supporting the Lit in Colour campaign originally launched by Penguin Random House and the Runnymede Trust.

Lit in Colour seeks to support schools in diversifying the teaching of English, and increasing students' access to texts by writers of colour and from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Under its Methuen Drama imprint, Bloomsbury has been spotlighting plays that can be used to provide more representative and inclusive drama experiences within the English curriculum – especially new plays by authors and playwrights from diverse backgrounds. It's a process that involves re-examining our collective past and revising the curriculum to better represent and reflect our school populations.

The Bloomsbury Lit in Colour research report aims to kickstart dialogue and conversations between educators and the theatre industry, so that the latter can better understand what

teachers and students need in order to study a more diverse range of writers.

The report finds that teachers want more support when teaching texts that tackle issues relating to race and ethnicity. It also identifies a desire on the part of students to study the work of more ethnically diverse writers. One of the report's key recommendations is to thus expose students to a diversity of thought, while opening up a safe space for thoughtful classroom discussions and open questioning.

The report further highlights a number of interesting case studies, including a collaborative project between Tamasha Theatre Company in London and Methuen Drama that resulted in the former devising some superb online resources for schools. Also highlighted as examples of best practice are the National Theatre's Connections and New Views programmes, plus the 50 filmed performances it made available for viewing via Bloomsbury's Drama Online digital platform.

Bloomsbury's involvement in this space is doing much to diversify the plays studied in schools, in a way that helps teachers better understand the blind spots of their existing provision. Our society may have grown considerably more diverse over the years, but that's not been sufficiently reflected in the texts our students are taught. Bloomsbury is therefore playing a key role in raising awareness, championing diversity and ultimately creating positive change.



teach SECONDARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Helps ensure all students get to study an English curriculum they both enjoy and see themselves in
- ✓ Helps classrooms become places where each student feels that they belong
- ✓ Supports student voice
- ✓ Promotes inclusivity, innovation and collaboration

PICK UP IF...

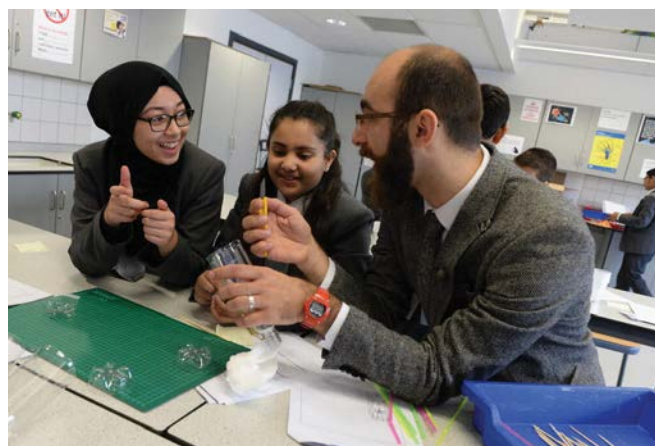
You're looking to overcome the barriers that stand in the way of a more representative English curriculum, and diversify what you teach by celebrating plays and texts by writers of colour, thus creating real change both inside and outside the classroom.

For more information, visit bloomsbury.com/LitInColour

SCIENCE

CREST Awards

Find out how you can help nurture a sense of scientific curiosity among your students by taking part in the CREST Awards...



AT A GLANCE

- A comprehensive science-based activity programme with accompanying resources
- Lets students experience what it's like to conduct their own scientific investigation
- Encourages independent thinking and self efficacy
- Research-informed, science-focused planning and pedagogical approaches
- Aspirational and founded in real-life contexts

REVIEW BY ADAM RICHES

CREST is the British Science Association's project-based learning programme that can be used during enrichment activities to encourage open-ended investigations in science, technology and maths. At secondary level, the CREST Awards in particular are designed to inspire young people to think like scientists and engineers via specific project-based inquiry, thus allowing young people to develop a love for science.

This is principally done by giving students the chance to develop key skills, which will in turn encourage them to build up their self-efficacy. The real world contextualisation of the CREST resources that accompany the activities work to foreground the need for problem solving and independent thinking, in a way that lets learners directly apply what they've learnt to processes and phenomena they will have encountered in their everyday lives.

This not only helps to further develop their understanding of the science at hand, but will also hone their decision making and critical thinking abilities, while getting learners to reflect more deeply on the world around them.

The CREST Awards are divided into three age categories of Bronze (11+), Silver (14+) and Gold (16+). The task set at each level is the same – undertake a research-based project that looks at how the appliance of science and engineering can be used to solve real world problems.

Students have the option to devise projects of their own, or select one from a pre-existing library. Suggested titles include the likes of 'How rockets work', 'Building robots' and 'Understanding how athermerans float' – a real lure for inquisitive minds.

Factor in the resources designed to accompany each session, and you're looking at enough material for around 45 minutes to one hour of teaching time. One thing that stands out most for me is the student workbook, which enables learners to record findings they've obtained from each stage of their

investigation project in an ordered and straightforward way. This emphasis on self-study and independence is consistently strong, scaffolding for learners how to conduct a real research investigation.

While the ultimate purpose of the activities is only made implicit to learners, it's abundantly clear that the activities are intended to get young people thinking like scientists.

In the course of their research and gathering of information, learners engaged in a CREST project will be called upon to reflect on and share their findings with others, before undertaking their own evaluations. It's a form of structured learning that goes a long way towards helping young people derive genuine satisfaction and enjoyment from exploring scientific topics.

“A real lure for inquisitive minds”

**teach
SECONDARY**

VERDICT

- ✓ Exceptionally intuitive resources
- ✓ Self-study workbooks help build the metacognitive skills of learners
- ✓ Enables the use of instructive, student-led investigations
- ✓ Builds learners' research skills and inspires their curiosity of the wider world

TRY IT IF...

You're looking to build upon your science offer, or present project-based inquiry as part of the curriculum



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Lawson is a former secondary teacher, now serving as a foundation governor and running a tutoring service, and author of the book *The Successful (Less Stressful) Student* (Outskirts Press, £11.95); for more, visit prep4successnow.wordpress.com or follow @johninpompano



THE LAST WORD

Land of the free?



John Lawson reflects on how the American High School system deviates from UK schooling – particularly when it comes to the sense of agency retained by teachers...

The remarkable theologian, St Thomas Aquinas, once defined the seven sacraments as ‘outward signs of an inward grace’.

It’s a brilliant definition that aptly describes any graduation ceremony. The communal razzmatazz of airborne caps, gowns, scrolls and speeches externally symbolise the inner achievements of those who toil in our educational vineyards.

American families rightly celebrate their children’s achievements when they complete a four-year high school programme from the age of 15 until 18. Most parents aren’t celebrating outstanding successes in public examinations, since the majority don’t take any. Instead, they’re acknowledging the character it takes to show up for school regularly and give one’s best.

An annual PSAT test will give children a national STEM ranking, but this doesn’t directly affect one’s graduation. (Not that children’s worth should be reduced to academic grades.) To actually graduate, students require a minimum ‘D’ grade (60%) in every class they’ve taken throughout the four years, along with acceptable attendance, community service hours and a good disciplinary record.

Most American schools offer three tiered programmes: Advanced Placement (externally assessed), Honours, and Regular. If students undertake rigorous AP courses, their grades, behaviour, and effort must be exemplary. Should they fall behind, they must quickly catch up via extra work or else drop a level.

American parents rarely oppose streaming, because they believe schools must identify and nurture their most academically able students if America is to remain a global superpower. Today’s future scientists, surgeons and senators are therefore encouraged from an early age. Places at society’s top tables may be theoretically open to everyone, but in practice they’re earned by those who diligently pursue their own ‘American dream’ with an effective gameplan.

The US system isn’t flawless or entirely stress-free, but it does serve families well – and we in the UK could learn from some of its strengths.

Seeking honours

Americans broadly accept that only 25% of students will go on to study at the highest academic level. Creating a more equitable world requires us to address a few universal realities more honestly – including the fact that whatever system we operate, some

children will always be ‘book-smarter’ than others.

Seen in this light, American high schools are where the rigour of British grammar schools is incorporated into a comprehensive model. Among children not yet at AP level, parents will often remain ambitious for them to get into honours classes. About 40% succeed, with these hard-working students then going on to apply to reputable universities.

That leaves around 35% of teens taking regular courses that provide a flexible, collaborative and relaxed pace of learning. The emphasis on regular classes allows students to acquire a solid foundation in the basics of core subjects. Subject teachers, supervised by administrators, will determine and adjust the curriculum for these classes, with diligent students often upgraded into honours classes. Undergraduates can also be upgraded to higher-ranked universities after two years.

Thanks to this graduation system, the 18 years I spent teaching in Florida gifted me an autonomy denied to most UK educators. I was obligated to teach church history and global ethics, but what we covered was my choice. US teachers are encouraged to create and submit their own honours and regular courses to their principals. All assessments, including final exams, are entrusted to teachers, rather than academic boards.

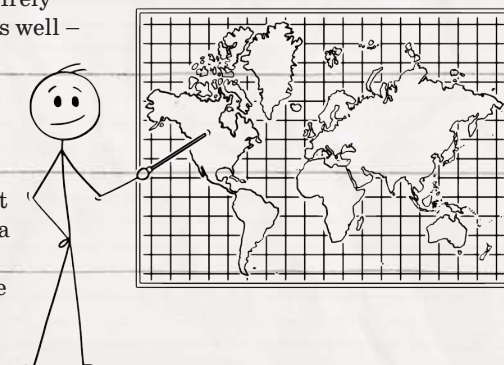
The tremendous benefit here is that teachers are able to select material that engages their students – and if possible, will bin the boring bits. When teachers teach to their passions, students learn far more.

Conversely, teachers in the UK will often observe students struggling to cope with the straightjacket of GCSEs, but lack recourse to options that will alleviate such pressures and make courses more relatable. American educators have the freedom to honour the ‘spirit’, rather than the ‘letter’ of academic laws.

My greatest concern for UK students falling short of GCSE standards is that they’ll become disillusioned

or disruptive and stop trying. Many teenagers leave school with nothing comparable to an officially recognised graduation certificate that symbolises and celebrates their abilities and best efforts.

As I’ve seen first-hand, internal assessments enable teachers to respect, cultivate, and reward the emotional literacy and resilience of their students, as well as the cognitive skills measured by traditional exams.



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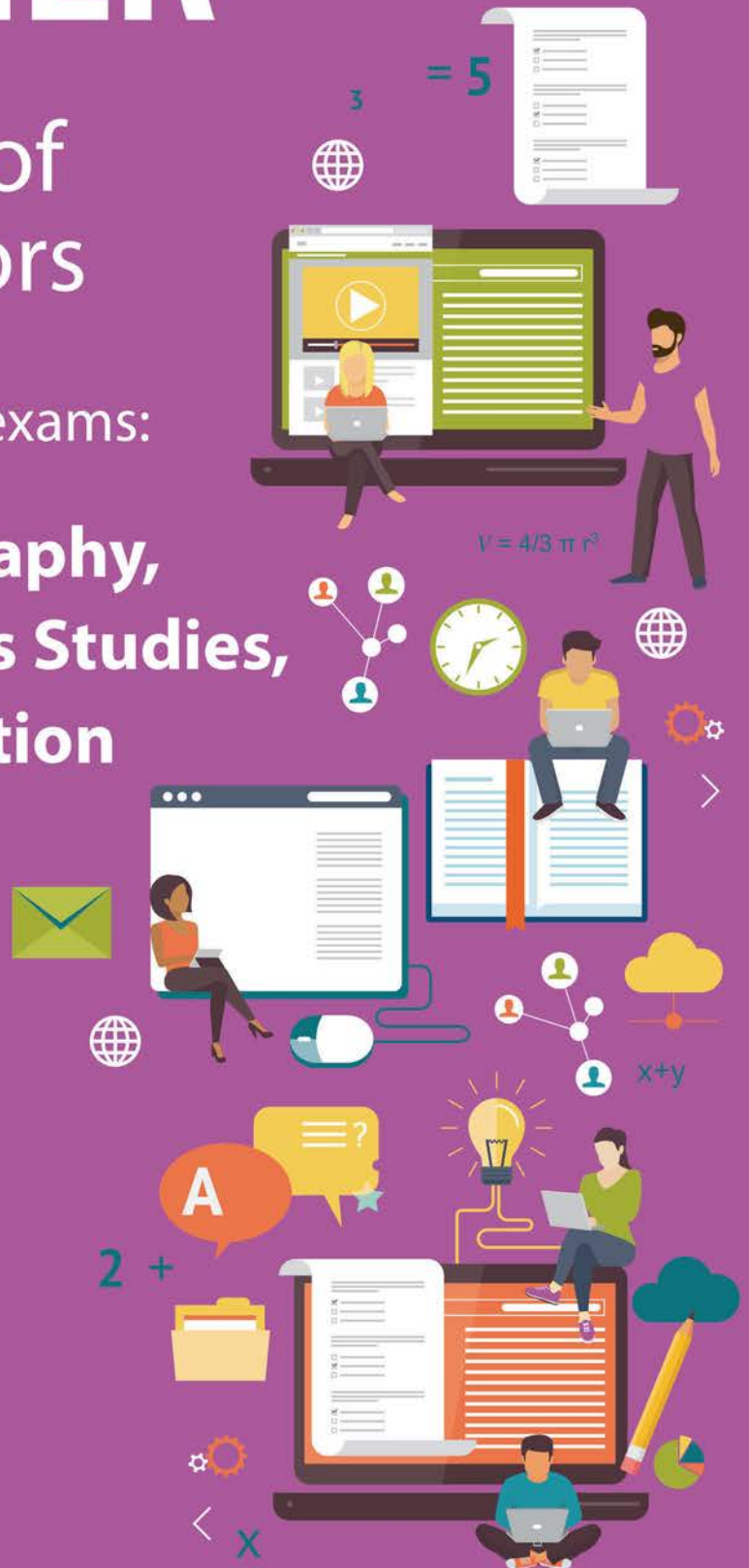
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