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INTERVIEW

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Katie-Jane Morris, Art Manager, TT Games

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FROM THE EDITOR

"Welcome...

Finally, school corridors and classrooms are alive to the sounds of chatter beyond that of vulnerable students and children of key workers. Yes, schools are fully open again, and we can breathe sighs of relief … through the masks.

We're still very far from the 'normal' we used to know, of course, but The Great Return will have nevertheless given students and families an enormous boost. Albeit one only made possible by the herculean efforts of leadership teams, teachers and support staff up and down the country to prepare schools' COVID testing arrangements, co-ordinate year group bubbles and pivot back to classroom teaching, on top of numerous other checks and duties.

Now is about the time when the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 will start coming into clearer focus – not least on the Y7 cohort starting this September. This issue we hear from Rhiannon Packer and Amanda Thomas (p60) on what schools can be doing to work around the pandemic protocols and facilitate smooth primary to secondary transitions.

Beyond that, of course, there's the devastation that the pandemic has wrought on the wider economy, and what that might mean for students' job prospects. We've yet to see how fast the economic recovery will be – assuming there is one – but in the meantime, students will still benefit considerably from good careers advice.

In this issue's careers special (p31) you'll therefore find one school's thoughts on how to hold a successful online careers fair, and some advice for overcoming the barriers that stand in the way of equality of opportunity. Elsewhere, however, there's also a sobering warning (p14) that the market for those much-ballyhooed '21st century skills' we've heard so much about might not actually be as big as many seem to assume.

As ever, all of us here at *Teach Secondary* wish you and your students the very best, and hopefully at least a slightly more settled, if certainly no less busy summer term...

Enjoy the issue,

Callum Fauser
callum.fauser@theteachco.com

On board this issue:

Sarah Davis is a head of English and lead examiner

Colin Foster is a Reader in Mathematics Education at the Mathematics Education Centre, Loughborough University

Matthew Nichols is head of drama at Manchester Grammar School

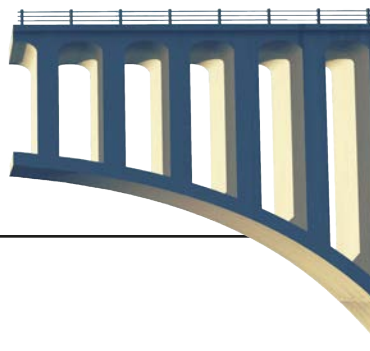
Nick Hurn is CEO of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust

Dawn Cox is a head of RE

Amy Higgins is head of English at a London secondary school

KEEP IN TOUCH!
Sign up for the weekly TS newsletter at **teachwire.net/newsletter**

Essential reading:



APR/MAY '21

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THE teach COMPANY

Group editor: Joe Carter

Editor: Callum Fauser, callum.fauser@theteachco.com, 01206 505115

Head of commercial solutions: Richard Stebbing

Advertising manager: Ria Bentham, ria.bentham@theteachco.com, 01206 505240

Deputy advertising manager: Louis Stephenson louis.stephenson@theteachco.com, 01206 5054777

Account manager: Demi Maynard, demi.maynard@theteachco.com, 01206 505962

Account manager: Ashley Lower, ashley.lower@theteachco.com, 01206 505926

Art editor: Rick Allen

Designers: Ben Kemp, Clare Brasier

Photography: CLiQQ Photography cliqq.co.uk

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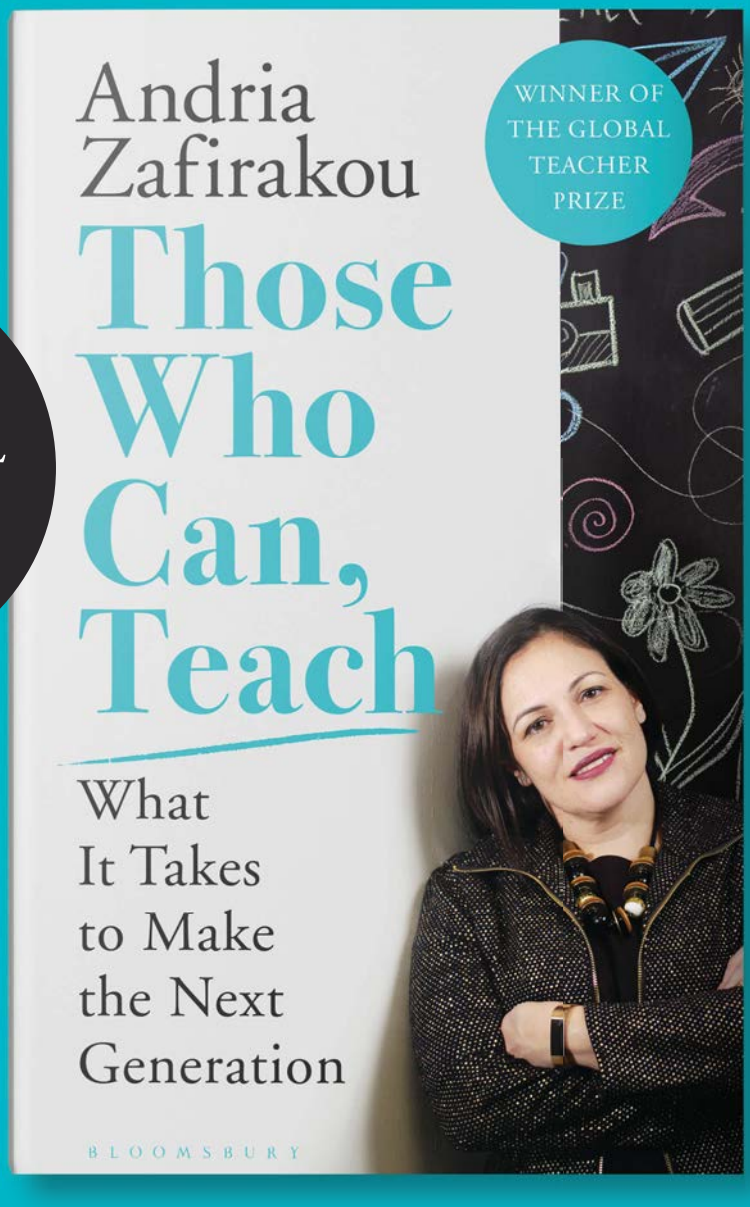
What does it take to work on the frontlines of education today?

WINNER OF THE GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE



'Warm, honest and raw with passion. Andria Zafirakou is here to tell it how it is in British schools, and also what a born teacher can do about it. I am full of admiration'

Kate Clanchy

'Achingly humane. Searingly wise. Totally riveting . . . Unmissable'

Michael Attenborough

BLOOMSBURY

The newsletter

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

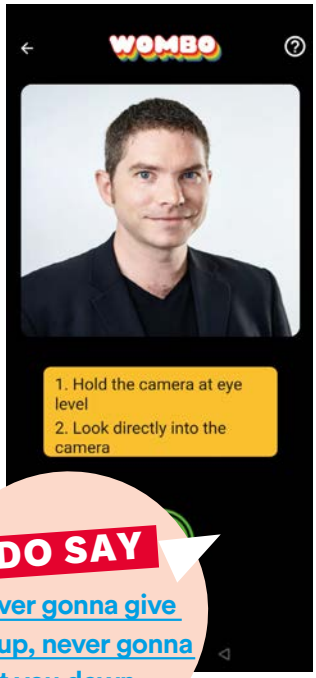
The UNINFORMED teacher's guide to...

WOMBO

Sure, it's another online distraction with a daft name, but there's a joyous magic to Wombo that makes it strangely compelling. The pitch is simple – upload a selfie or existing photo to the Wombo app, choose from one of around 30 well known and meme-famous pop songs, and then watch in wonder as your uploaded picture suddenly springs to life, mouthing the lyrics of your chosen song while going heavy on the head-bobbing, shimmying and shrugging, all via the power of artificial intelligence.

Yes, it's the sinister technologies underpinning those 'deep fake' videos the news keeps warning us about put to the most trivial use imaginable. Or as Dan, the head of IT, would describe it through furrowed brow, "A really effective way of hoovering up the personal data of millions of people."

Gee, don't be such a buzzkill, Dan. Look, we've used the staff headshot gallery on the school website to make you sing 'Boom, Boom, Boom, Boom' by the Vengaboys! Tee hee!



DO SAY
Never gonna give you up, never gonna let you down...

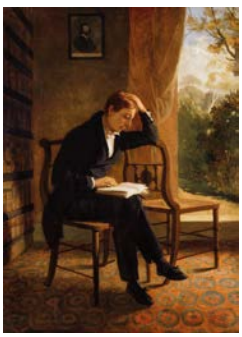
DON'T SAY
You know it works with photos of pets, yeah?

BEAT THE BUDGET

What are we talking about?
A Thing of Beauty – an exploration by poet Rachel Piercey into the life and work of John Keats

What the targeted age range?
14- to 18-year-olds

What's on offer?
An 11-page resource aimed at KS4/5, which tells the story of Keats' life through six paintings and objects belonging to the collection of Keats House, London; part of the Keats200 bicentenary celebration of Keats's life, works and legacy



How might teachers use the resource?
The resource contains six separate exercises, each accompanied by a suggested poem, class questions and reading and writing tasks; exercises 1 to 3 are pitched at a lower level, while 4 to 6 are more complex

Where are they available?
poetrysociety.org.uk/projects/keats200

DON'T QUOTE ME...

"We've created a system in which I think there are good incentives to allow teacher judgment to flourish"

Simon Lebus, acting head of Ofqual

Think of a number...

£7.7 million
The reduction in funding for school-based drug, alcohol and volatile substances support since 2014/15
Source: UK Addiction Treatment Group

2,300
The number of schools affected by fire within the past five years
Source: Analysis of Home Office data by Zurich Municipal

£7,200
The compensation paid by Leicestershire County Council to a Y10 student denied a school place from January 2019 until June 2020
Source: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

ONE FOR THE WALL

"I was born not knowing and have had only a little time to change that here and there"

Richard Feynman

Selective SEND support

The Education Policy Institute has highlighted a lack of consistency in how children with SEND are identified and supported across England. The organisation's 'Identifying pupils with special educational needs and disabilities' report paints a picture of a 'postcode lottery', whereby access to SEND support provided by schools and LAs is dependent largely on the school a child attends, as opposed to their individual needs and circumstances.

The report outlines how pupils attending academy schools are less likely to be identified with SEND compared to similar pupils attending other settings. The report's authors also note that children in the country's most disadvantaged areas are less likely to be formally recognised as having SEND compared to pupils in more affluent areas, and describe seeing a 'rationing of support' in many areas of high need.

The report goes on to show that many vulnerable pupils are at risk of SEND 'under-identification', including children moving schools and frequently out of school, as well as children suffering from abuse or neglect.

The authors acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic won't have helped matters, further compounding existing issues with SEND identification and likely adding to the number of children who need SEND support, but won't receive it from their school or LA. The full report can be downloaded via bit.ly/ts103-epi-send

KEYNOTES AND CORRESPONDENCE

Forget the media-friendly soundbites – what else was in those speeches you missed?

THE HEADLINE:

Education Secretary addresses FED National Education Summit

WHO? Gavin Williamson
WHERE? Online
WHEN? 12th March 2021

Improving and maintaining good discipline in schools is absolutely vital at any time but even more so now that many children will have fallen behind in their education.

This is often not children's fault. We have all been through a tremendously disruptive time and none more so than children. Even with the very best support from parents, children will need to get used once more to sitting in class, working together, the routine of the school day. And of course for many children, who have less support, the challenges will be much greater.

That is why the Government will be backing teachers in ensuring children return to a disciplined, safe and orderly environment. We know much more now about what works best: evidence-backed, traditional teacher-led lessons with children seated facing the expert at the front of the class are powerful tools for enabling a structured learning environment where everyone flourishes.

But whatever method a school uses, consistency is the foundation of everything. All children must know that the standards will be maintained, fairly, and consistently. Teachers are responsible for maintaining good behaviour and discipline; and leaders must be responsible for making sure teachers can, and do.

Behaviour isn't always something that can be changed by just telling children what to do; it must often be taught. Patiently, explicitly, consistently, over time.

THE HEADLINE:

NEU comments on NFER's 2021 Teacher Labour Market in England Annual report

WHO? Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary of the NEU
WHEN? 22nd March 2021

The NFER is right to note that any improvement in teacher supply due to the pandemic will be short-lived. They are certainly not enough to compensate for the long period of missed recruitment targets and the increasing problems with teacher retention. Attacks on teacher pay contributed to those problems and the planned pay freeze will create new problems.

The NFER is also right to highlight the adverse impact of the Government's planned pay freeze for teachers. The impact of the pay freeze is not just a 'medium-term problem' as described in the NFER report. The pay freeze will hit teachers hard in September 2021, when they will see their pay cut yet again in real terms.

SAVE THE DATE

26 MAY Next steps for tackling child poverty and hunger in the UK | 16-30 JUNE Festival of Education | 21ST SEPTEMBER Free and Equal?

26 MAY

Next steps for tackling child poverty and hunger in the UK
Online
westminsterforumprojects.co.uk

Organised by the Westminster Social Policy Forum, this keynote seminar will hear from Alison Garnham, chief executive of Child Poverty Action Group, and Anna Taylor, executive director of the Food Foundation, plus other speakers on the steps needed to tackle child poverty and hunger. Discussion areas are set to include Universal Credit, and how groups most affected can be best supported.

16-30 JUNE

Festival of Education
Online
educationfest.co.uk

This mainstay of the education calendar may have once again been forced out of its regular Wellington College venue due to COVID-19, but the second virtual Festival of Education promises to deliver another array of thought-provoking panels and renowned guest speakers, plus two CPD-packed 'Friday Fest' days, across a busy two weeks in June. As was the case last year, access to the event's sessions will be entirely free.

21ST SEPTEMBER

Free and Equal?
Lytchett Minster School in Dorset and online
beyondthis.co.uk/stand-up-conference

Organised by teacher and speaker Peter Radford, in liaison with Amnesty International UK and Unicef UK's Rights Respecting School Award, Free and Equal? is a conference for schoolchildren and teachers that will examine strategies for tackling racism and inequality. Attendees will hear first-hand accounts of growing up in the UK as a person of colour, and reflect on how prejudice and unconscious bias perpetuate injustice.

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OXFORD

MATHS CORNER

Intriguing problems to inspire curiosity

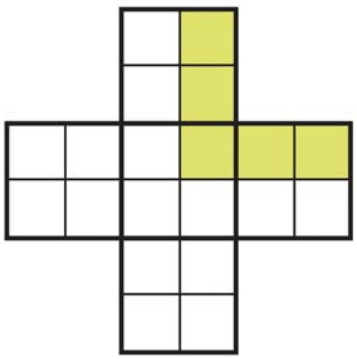
Quarters, quarters

(Wild Maths Pathway: Open spaces)

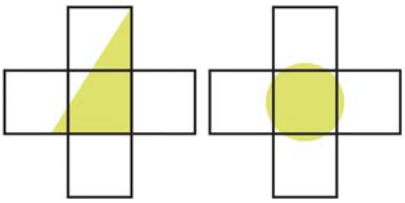
How would you colour in a quarter of 5 squares?

How do you know it's a quarter? Maybe you can prove it's a quarter.

Here is one way to start this task. You may like to continue it, or create a new one of your own...



Raj took that idea in a slightly different direction and explored using different shapes to find thirds of 5 squares:



- He made a triangle that has a base of $1^2/_3$ and height of 2, which gives an area of $1^2/_3$ – a third of the 5
- He made one circle, so $\varpi r^2 = 1^2/_3$, $r^2 = 0.53$ and $r = 0.728$

- Abel decided it would be good to put the 5 squares in the form of a cross (or 'plus' sign)
- He divided each of the 5 squares into 4 smaller squares, giving him 20 smaller squares altogether, meaning he then needed to shade the equivalent of 5 small squares

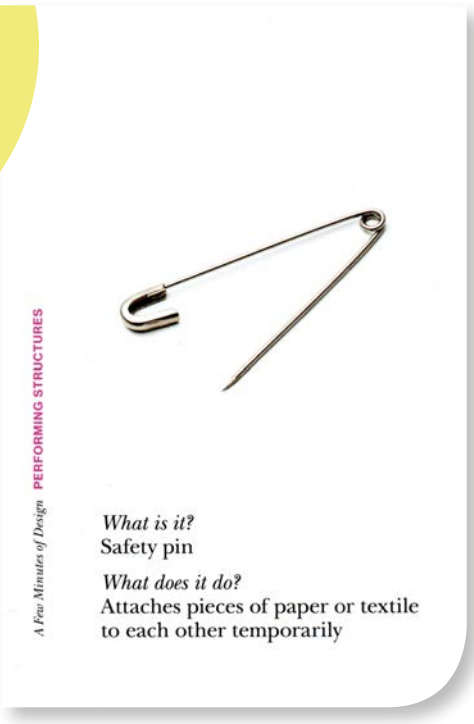
You can find more maths problems like this at NRICH's Wild Maths website – visit wild.maths.org; your students can easily share their thoughts and solutions; email their work to wild@wildmaths.org and it may even feature as part of the regular Wild Maths showcase!

A FEW MINUTES OF DESIGN

#14 PERFORMING STRUCTURES

The image here shows a device we use to perform a task. The caption says what the device is and what it does.

Your task is to say, in your own words, and in as much detail as possible, how exactly the device works. What parts of the structure contribute to the success of the function, and how?



Get Into Film

CURRICULUM LINKS:
Geography, Design & Technology

Filmmaker Damon Gameau, inspired by the question of what his young daughter's life might look like when she would be aged 25 in the year 2040, goes on an exploration of the modern world's environmental issues. He sets out to address concerns surrounding transport, energy, farming, education and more besides – looking for existing solutions across continents, and aiming to set out his vision for a better tomorrow.

This an insightful and thought-provoking piece, with a hopeful message of how we can all make a positive difference to the world in ways both big and small.

Discussion questions:

- What did you think about the filmmaking style? Why do you think the filmmaker chose this approach when discussing climate change?
- What are the essentials that every human needs, as detailed in the film? What are some of the solutions offered by those the filmmaker meets?
- The film includes a surprising solution to climate change that involves gender equality. How would this change impact the environment? How do you think this can be achieved?

Head online to intofilm.org to discover more inspiring films and associated information.

Retweets

Who's been saying what on Twitter this month?

David@Nautilus @DavidNautilus1
'How to lead a school through a pandemic.' This was never in the job spec or leadership training for any headteacher. I'd just like to take a moment to acknowledge this effort. And to say thankyou.

Bill Ferriter @plugusin
Know that young teacher on your learning team? Don't discount what they know. Odds are they have their nose buried in your curriculum AND have been thinking carefully how to teach your core concepts. Sometimes, fresh eyes can point out gaps in 'what you've always done.'

Follow us @teachsecondary – and let us know what you're thinkin

Get your whisks and mixing bowls ready!

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[MATHS PROBLEM]

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Understanding how inclusive definitions apply to shapes is difficult, says **Colin Foster** – here's how to use these technical names with confidence...

The idea that all squares are parallelograms, but that not all of the latter are the former, is something students often find difficult. They'll likely see parallelograms as wonky shapes with unequal adjacent sides and no right angles; applying the same term to a square therefore feels wrong.

THE DIFFICULTY

This task helps to make the students' difficulties with inclusive definitions visible:

True or false?
A. Every square is a parallelogram
B. Every parallelogram is a square

Many students will be unsure about this. They might reject both statements, believing that squares and parallelograms are mutually exclusive. Or they might get muddled and think B is true, instead of A (The correct answer is that A is true and B is false).

If students answer correctly, you could ask, '*Make up five more examples of true/false statements like this, using different shape names that you know.*'

THE SOLUTION

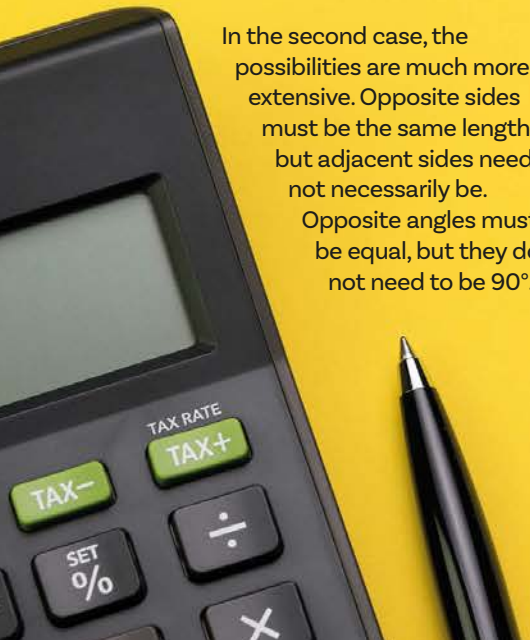
Here are some tasks that will help students make sense of inclusive definitions:

1. Draw some examples

• *Draw 5 different examples of a square. Make them as different as you can.*
• *Now, draw 5 different examples of a parallelogram. Make them as different as you can.*

In the first case, with a square there is not much that can be varied. Students can change the length of the sides and the orientation (and things like the colour, perhaps), but that is all.

In the second case, the possibilities are much more extensive. Opposite sides must be the same length, but adjacent sides need not necessarily be. Opposite angles must be equal, but they do not need to be 90°.



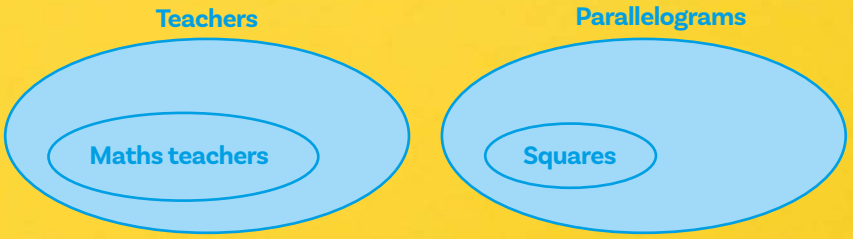
Now, you might ask:
• *Could one of your parallelograms actually be a square? Why / why not?*
• *Could one of your squares actually be a parallelogram? Why / why not?*

2. Use analogies to familiar things

Inclusive definitions aren't just a strange 'maths thing' – they're all around us, so switching to a more familiar context can be helpful. Consider the following statements:

True or false?
A. Every maths teacher is a teacher
B. Every teacher is a maths teacher

Here, it's pretty obvious that A is true and B is false. 'Maths teacher' is a specific example, a particular type of 'teacher'. Venn diagrams might help:



Check for understanding

These tasks will help to assess how students' understanding has developed:

• *Think of 3 more examples of true/false statements like this that are* ***not*** *to do with maths*
• *Think of 3 more examples of true/false statements like this that* ***are*** *to do with maths*
• *Draw Venn diagrams to illustrate your examples*

Students might come up with statements such as:
• *Every dog is a mammal, but not every mammal is a dog*
• *Every multiple of 6 is an even number, but not every even number is a multiple of 6*

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

TEACH SMARTER WITH ICDL SMART DIGITAL

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ICDL The Digital Skills Standard

Find out more at
bcs.org/esafety-award

The Vocab Clinic

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

TRY THIS TODAY: REPLAYING AND RECASTING

Academic talk is one crucial way to develop the vocabulary our pupils. Whether it's via remote teaching or in the classroom, we know that the teacher plays a vital role in encouraging and nudging the use of more sophisticated vocabulary.

As such, the strategy of 'replaying and recasting' vocabulary in classroom talk is a helpful label for scaffolding academic talk. For example, if a pupil uses the phrase 'fancy language' to describe Shakespeare, the teacher replaying the key term can then recast it to 'Can we give an example of that *sophisticated language*?' There are countless opportunities to recast language in every classroom exchange.

Cracking the academic code

Much of our pupils' capacity for success is rooted in their ability to develop a deep and broad vocabulary they can use and understand. As we encourage pupils to use more sophisticated vocabulary, we must be careful not to encourage an overuse of elaborate word choices when simple, clear word choices will do.

'Thesaurus syndrome' is the term used to describe an over-age use of complicated words. Pupils need to learn how to continuously calibrate their word choices, since dictionaries and thesauruses can often be used badly. We therefore need to train, model and practise making careful word choices.

DO THEY KNOW?

The shortest '-ology' word is 'oology' – the study of birds' eggs!

ONE FOR: ENGLISH STUDENTS

WEIRD

Derives from: Old English 'wyrd', meaning 'the power to control fate'
Means: The suggestion of something unearthly, supernatural or odd
Related terms: Strange, bizarre, eccentric, outlandish, freaky, aberrant
Note: The 'Weird Sisters' is a perfect description of *Macbeth*'s three witches, given the conjecture over their control of the hero's fate

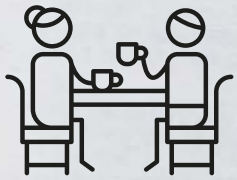
I DON'T THINK IT MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS...

GROSS

In mathematics and economics
= a total of profit, interest or income without any deductions (such as tax, overheads, etc.)

In English or history
= very obviously unacceptable or wrong; ugly or sick-inducing

One word at a time



How does the word 'trivial' connect with the word 'trio' and the word root '-tri'? Words like 'triangle' or 'triumvirate' are commonly connected by our students, but their link with 'trivial' is one that's easily and often overlooked.

'Trivial' derives from Latin, originating from the word '*trivium*', meaning 'a place where three roads meet'. People would often meet at such places to chat, so over time the word 'trivial' came to denote something unimportant or commonplace. Though rare in pupils' writing, it can be deployed effectively across a range of subjects.

Alex Quigley is a former teacher and the author of *Closing the Reading Gap* and *Closing the Vocabulary Gap*; He also works for the Education Endowment Foundation as National Content Manager

Same as the old boss

We've all heard how important '21st century skills' are meant to be for today's students, says **Harley Richardson** – but given current employment trends, they may be in for a rude awakening...

There's a claim that's been made every few months by Britain's business leaders for as long as I can remember: 'Schools and universities are failing to equip young people for the workplace!' With lockdown now making young people's employment prospects especially gloomy, there's a heightened urgency to that message.

Many educationalists hold our knowledge-based education system responsible, claiming it produces unimaginative young people whose heads are filled with redundant facts. The solution? Devote more energy to teaching young people transferable '21st century skills', such as creativity and problem solving, which can be applied to whatever problems the future holds in store.

Yet my experience on both sides of the recruitment fence suggests this paints a misleading picture of the modern world of work – one that teachers and students would be well-advised to ignore.

Don't get me wrong, independent thinking, creativity and problem solving are hugely important traits that should be encouraged at every turn – but anything that undermines knowledge in the name of 'work readiness' will likely be counterproductive. As Robert Halfon, chair of the Education Select Committee recently put it, "Skills are only useful with the knowledge to underpin them."

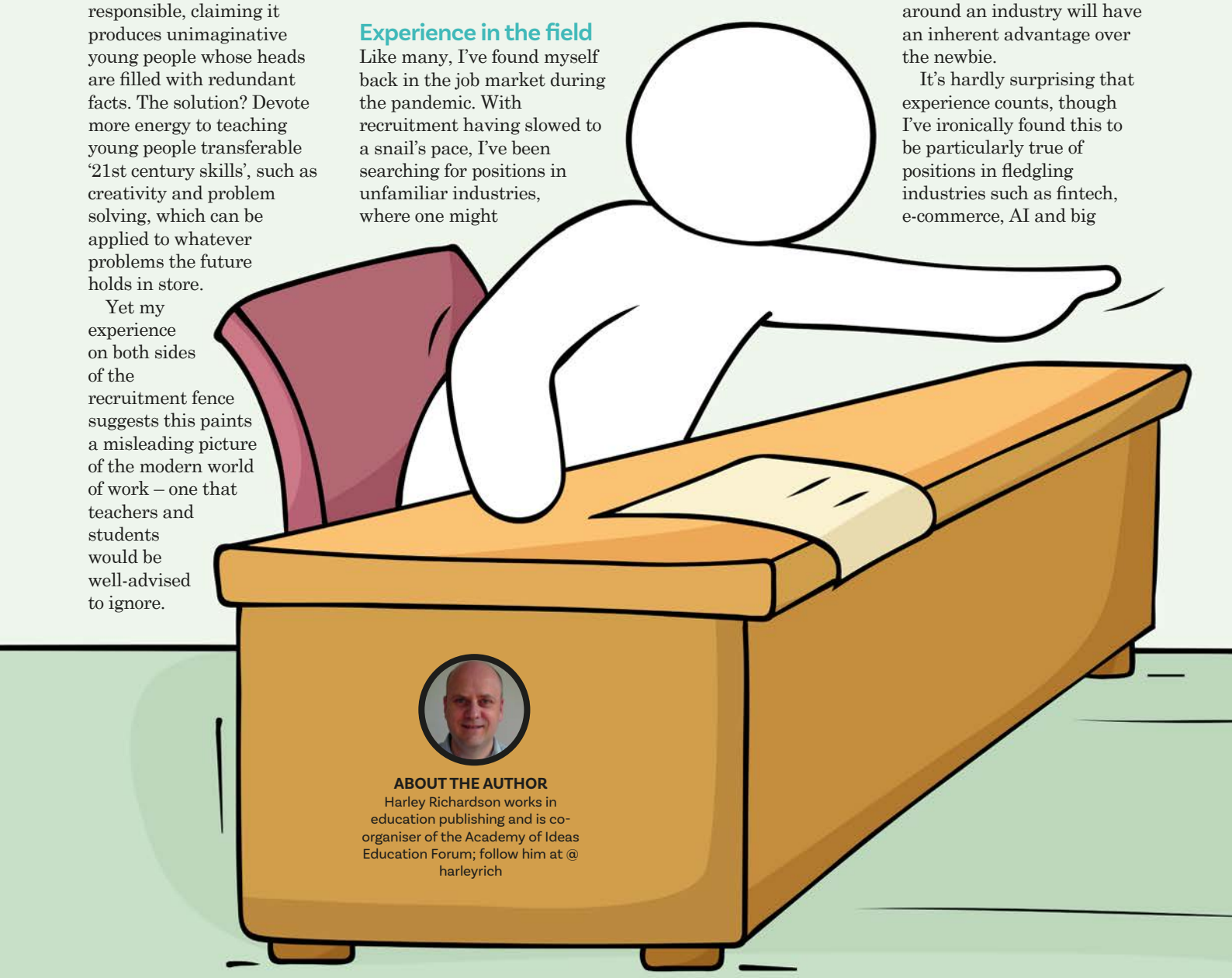
Experience in the field

Like many, I've found myself back in the job market during the pandemic. With recruitment having slowed to a snail's pace, I've been searching for positions in unfamiliar industries, where one might assume my own transferable 21st century skills would stand me in good stead.

Yet over the past six months, I've read thousands of job descriptions for a wide range of roles and been struck by how the overwhelming majority have specified 'industry knowledge' as a core requirement. 'Problem-solving ability' and 'communication skills' get brief mentions, but almost always alongside caveats such as "Must have two to three years' experience in this field". Transferable skills aren't much help if opportunities to actually transfer them are rare.

So what about those roles describing sector-specific knowledge as a 'Nice to have?' One recruitment agent I've worked with tells me that many companies look to bring in fresh blood with the best of intentions – but when push comes to shove, the candidate who already knows their way around an industry will have an inherent advantage over the newbie.

It's hardly surprising that experience counts, though I've ironically found this to be particularly true of positions in fledgling industries such as fintech, e-commerce, AI and big



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Harley Richardson works in education publishing and is co-organiser of the Academy of Ideas Education Forum; follow him at @harleyrich

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data. Aren't these meant to be the sectors most in need of 21st century skills...?

Magicked into existence

When someone says "The jobs of the future don't yet exist," the implication is that teaching specific skills or knowledge is a waste of time, since tomorrow's roles will demand new skills that are yet to be even conceived of. However, I know from my own experience how unlikely this is.

I've spent most of my career in online education publishing – an industry which didn't exist 25 years ago. I was lucky to get involved just as it was beginning to take shape, which led me into a string of paradigmatic 'jobs that previously hadn't existed.' Yet these weren't jobs magicked into existence out of nowhere; they all developed out of existing jobs.

Colleagues from the diverse worlds of textbook publishing, television production, magazine illustration, product design, software programming, research, marketing, sales and teaching came together to figure out the skills and knowledge that would be useful in this new arena, and what should be discarded or rethought.

This sometimes fraught process saw people frequently draw upon existing knowledge and experience, so that leaps into the unknown were minimised. As the industry matured, new roles became established – 'UX researcher', 'scrum master', 'full stack developer' – but they all called upon traditional skills and knowledge with long roots. Knowledge rarely becomes redundant – it just gets put to new uses.

Permission to think

In place of saying that 'Employers want creative thinkers', it would be more accurate to say that employers are primarily looking for people who will do what they've been asked, and do it well. This usually involves some combination of aptitude, intelligence, knowledge, judgement, initiative and, yes, sometimes even creativity.

Crucially, however, these are all expected to be exercised within the confines of each role, and jobs are often highly confined in nature. Even within thriving and explicitly creative industries, such as computer animation, most roles are narrow and specialised, with limited scope for personal input.

It's fair to say that only a small proportion of the total workforce has ever really had 'permission to think'. This needn't be a bad thing, as it's how people will typically gain professional experience and confidence. Scope for autonomy usually grows as employees 'learn their trade', at least in theory. Besides, many people see their work as simply a means to pay the bills, and will look elsewhere for creative fulfilment.

More concerning is a prediction made back in 2008 by academics Phil Brown, Hugh Lauder and David Ashton, in the paper 'Education, Globalisation, and the Future of the Knowledge Economy' (see bit.ly/ts103-c21-knowledge). They argued that modern management theories would increasingly restrict this permission to think to an ever smaller number of employees. This seems to have been borne out by the rise of the gig economy, where jobs are typically more prescribed, regimented and micromanaged than at any time in history.

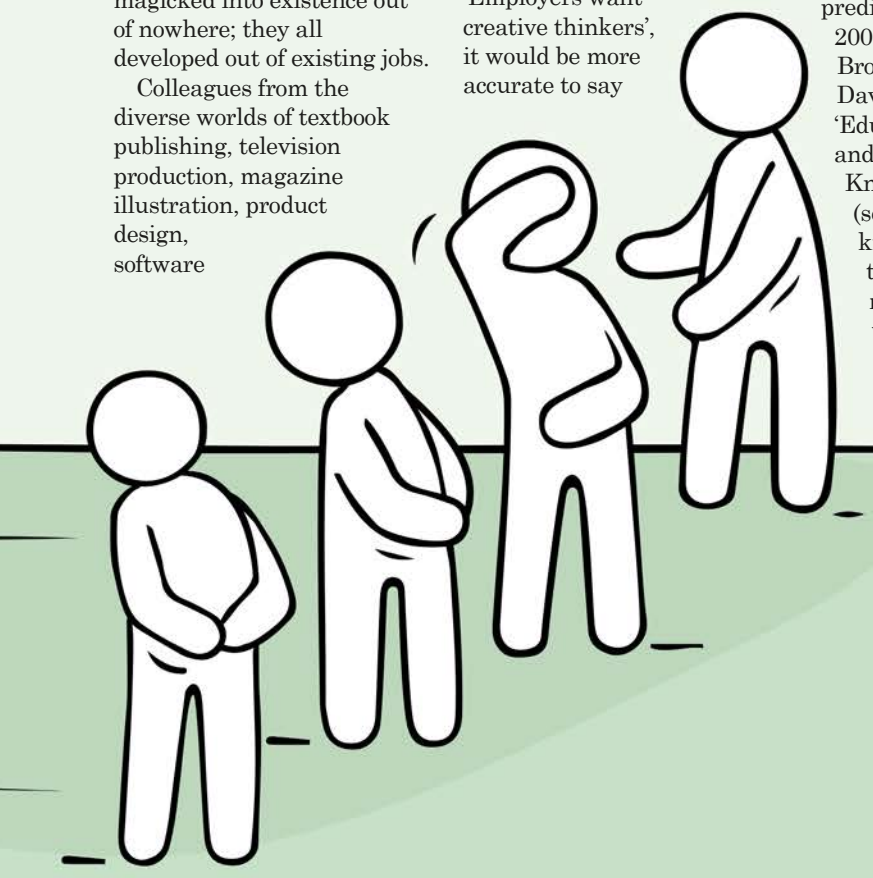
Perhaps this all points to a problem with the *demand for*, rather than *supply of* creativity. The early days of the pandemic showed that people can be hugely adaptable and resourceful when the occasion calls for it, whether it's entrepreneurs producing ventilators with 3D printers, or teachers pivoting to online lesson delivery with just a few days' notice.

Deflecting the issue

The real '21st century skills' issue is that the modern world of work provides insufficient opportunities to use them. As with so many societal issues, this is deflected onto the education system, rather than addressed at source.

Meanwhile, businesses respond to a decades-long productivity slump by cutting staff training budgets, refocusing R&D on sure bets and taking fewer risks.

Next time we hear heads of industry complain about education being unfit for purpose, maybe teachers could throw the ball back in their court and challenge them to apply some bold creative thinking to their own problems. It might even make work more interesting for us all...



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WHAT I LEARNT AT SCHOOL

Journalist and broadcaster Katty Kay recalls how her experience of school was rather more itinerant and cosmopolitan than most ...

My father was a diplomat and we used to move around a lot. I went to six different schools in the space of five years, across three countries and in two languages, so it's amazing I can read and write.

Before then, I'd attended a village school near our home in Blewbury, Oxfordshire. Just before my 10th birthday, in the middle of term, our family moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and I started at a local American school. I found it very difficult there, so after a term my parents moved me to a smaller British school in Jeddah, where I stayed for around a year. I then returned to the UK and went to a boarding prep school in the New Forest for the following year, which I hated – I was terribly homesick.

By then, my parents had moved again from Saudi Arabia to Morocco. I stayed on in the UK at a different secondary boarding school in Surrey, before eventually moving to where my parents were and attended a French lycée in Casablanca for a year. I then returned to Surrey to complete my O Levels and A Levels.

Despite my schooling being very atypical, in other ways my experience of moving from primary to secondary school was similar to what many girls go through – namely an onset of cautiousness. I can remember becoming more careful about what I said in class, and more concerned as to whether I'd got answers right. In that respect I was the classic 'good girl' who wanted to get good marks, do everything perfectly, be well behaved and gain teachers' approval.

I was very self-motivated and wanted to succeed – not a 'workaholic', but certainly diligent. I can still remember an incident around the time I started at the French lycée, after being thrown into a class of 13-year-olds in Morocco, despite having previously never had so much as a French lesson in all my life. The teacher singled me out to answer a maths problem on the board. I was actually quite good at maths, but kept getting the answer wrong because I didn't know the French words for 'odd' and 'even'.

I remember coming home from school later that day and bursting into tears, feeling as though the teacher had been looking and talking at me like I was stupid. In the end, my mum had to visit the class and explain the situation to the teacher, who evidently hadn't figured out that I couldn't actually speak the language.,,

Myself and my co-authors decided to write our book *Living the Confidence Code* as a way of passing on some of the inspiring stories involving teenage girls that we'd come across while researching our previous book *The Confidence Code for Girls*. For example, there's Yekaba, a 12 year-old girl in Ethiopia who was told by her father that she would be marrying a 20-year-old village priest she'd never met before. Some of the challenges the girls in the book confront will never be faced by girls in, say, the UK or the US – but the steps they go through of meeting those challenges and developing their own confidence in the process is universal.

A lot of girls tend to underestimate their abilities compared to boys. In my career, one of the most important lessons I've learnt is to take risks. What tends to happen with with young girls, particularly as they enter puberty, is that they become very afraid of failing. But if that's the case, you won't be trying new things, overcoming hurdles and doing what's necessary to develop your confidence.

Usually, the downside of any risk you're considering – be it raising your hand in class, auditioning for the school play or trying out for a sports team – will be far less than your overactive brain makes it out to be. Chances are, the worst that will happen is that you simply don't succeed – but you'll still be there. There's just so much more you can do if you're prepared to deal with setbacks. If you can accept that at some point you will fail, it liberates you.

Katty Kay is the anchor of BBC World News America, based in Washington, D.C., and a frequent contributor to the US news shows Meet the Press and Morning Joe; Her book, *Living the Confidence Code*, co-authored with Claire Shipman and JillEllyn Riley, is available now (HarperCollins, £10.99)

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COVID-19 has highlighted the urgent need for a more responsive education system that takes account of every student's needs – not just those among the Oxbridge-destined elite minority...

Melissa Benn

I can still vividly remember Michael Gove's first speech to the House of Commons as Secretary of State for Education in 2010. A blast of oratory in which he charged the outgoing New Labour government of failing poor children with talent.

During Labour's 13 years in office, Gove thundered, on average only 45 children on free school meals had won a place at Oxford or Cambridge – a 'shameful record'.

Talking the talk

In the decade since then, this theme of social mobility has continued to dominate public and political debates regarding the success, or otherwise, of our school system. But what about the educational experiences of the many hundreds and thousands of young people not considered conventional 'winners', particularly those with SEND? Here, the debates become rather more muted and evasive.

Most politicians talk the talk of inclusion, but their rhetoric sits uneasily with the decade-long drive to increase exam results come what may, and the overhaul of SEND funding that took place in 2014 amid the swingeing cuts of the austerity years.

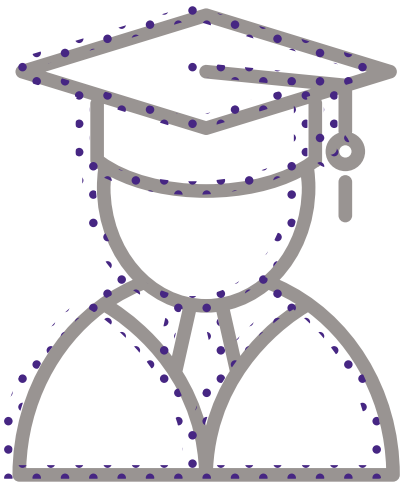
Things have worsened still in the wake of COVID-19. A recent poll of a thousand parents highlighted a 'widespread failure' to restore SEND provision when children returned to school in September 2020, leaving a 'sizeable' proportion of SEND children unable to return to school at all.

Yet there are some bright spots on the horizon. The issue of SEND provision in English schools is increasingly coming under the spotlight, thanks to a form of parental campaigning that's much louder than before, more effective and better at shaping the debate and shaming policymakers.

Existential uncertainty

In 2018/19, the Education Select Committee looked at SEND provision in what was one of the longest and most wide-ranging inquiries ever undertaken by a Select Committee, receiving over 700 submissions in the process. According to Committee Chair Robert Halfon, the resulting report showed up how, "Families continue to face a treacle of bureaucracy, a postcode lottery of provision, buck-passing and confusion in a system that breeds conflict."

But we mustn't forget those on the frontline – the skilled and experienced practitioners continually developing new approaches to learning. The central argument of Clare Ward and James Galpin's inspirational new book, *The Anxiety Workbook for Supporting Teens who Learn Differently*, is that uncertainty lies at the root of many difficulties for neurodiverse teens. Ward and Galpin gently remind us that understanding this takes us to the heart of the common human experience; we all struggle with existential uncertainty, now more than ever.



A new book by Adele Bates, *Miss, I Don't Give a Sh*t*, meanwhile offers lively guidance from an expert in behaviour management. Bates is a sharp critic of mass school exclusions and an advocate of setting clear boundaries, but also stresses the importance of understanding what lies behind the difficulties exhibited by troubled teens – be it hunger, or an unstable and unhappy home life. Again, given the disruptions of the past year, wider society is now more receptive to such approaches.

The inevitability of difference

Bates also stresses the necessity of putting in place the right sort of support in schools. For this, we could look to Finland, where every classroom has a full complement of teachers (all often educated to Masters level) who possess a deep understanding of the full spectrum of special needs.

Finland is no utopia, but we can certainly learn from its measured approach to the inevitability of difference among children. The Finnish experience further encourages us to develop a different narrative around what a successful school system might actually look like – one in which there's room to celebrate, rather than merely manage difference.

Michael Gove was right to claim that our school system lets down too many children, but his ambitions were too limited, too narrowly focussed on a select few. We'll never truly flourish as a nation until we have an education system that genuinely nurtures the many different kinds of intelligence possessed by our young people – not just the 'Oxbridge kind'.

Melissa Benn is a writer; her latest book is *Life Lessons: The Case for a National Education Service*, published by Verso

The government should bear in mind that raising student aspirations and outcomes as part of a post-COVID levelling-up agenda may require different solutions to those that have proved successful in London...

Nick Hurn OBE

The North East area I serve has a particular set of challenges that differ from other challenging areas in England. Typically, the more disadvantaged children in our region are predominantly from white working-class backgrounds, with several key factors at play.

Firstly, pre-school support and education is often either limited or non-existent. Disadvantaged families are able to access fewer opportunities for their children's language development, with the result that they start school behind their peers.

Moreover, disadvantaged children generally receive less support from parents who either don't support their child's learning, or are keen to help but simply don't know how. Many students who aren't supported at home additionally won't do much, or indeed any work at home or outside of school, exacerbating existing learning gaps. Mental health issues and lack of motivation will also be more prevalent within this group, most likely because these children are often concomitantly our most vulnerable.

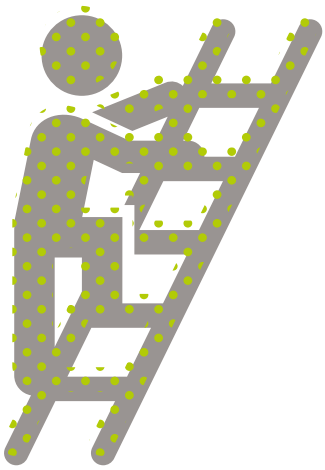
Enabled to succeed

It was therefore with considerable admiration that I read a news report in March, concerning an outstanding East London state school that has overtaken Eton College and other top private schools in the fierce competition for Oxbridge offers. 55 of the school's pupils had received conditional offers to study at Oxford or Cambridge – a stunning achievement by all involved, and a clear illustration of what's possible when you're able to instil a drive, desire and motivation in young people to aim high and work hard.

These students won't have had their Oxbridge opportunities handed to them on a plate, of course; all will obviously be highly motivated, incredibly hard-working and very bright individuals. It's worth considering, however, whether the support they received from the school, their parents and wider community enabled them to succeed in ways that students from other, equally deprived and disadvantaged parts of the country have not.

Are there factors at work here that can't be replicated in predominantly white working-class areas outside of the capital with similar deprivation indices? Is it possible that the students from this particular inner city community benefited from being more ethnically diverse, or from immigrant families? Is it reasonable to assume that many of these families will have highly motivated parents who value education and what it can do for their children?

Another point to consider is that many families in ethnically diverse areas often speak more than one language, potentially resulting in better developed language skills among their children that provide a sound foundation for pre-school. I'd also venture that the high-powered commercial environments of London offer a far greater sense of possibility for young people, compared to the urban deprivation and narrow employment opportunities of many northern towns.



Raising the bar

The government has tried tackling these issues through a range of initiatives and programmes, notably the £24m Opportunity North East programme launched by the DfE in October 2018. As an Opportunity North East strategic board member, I'm proud that the programme has targeted £12 million on approaches aimed at improving student transitions from primary to secondary, and helped to improve post-16 outcomes.

Yet more must be done. I'd personally suggest a comprehensive strategy for engaging parents and the development of character development opportunities, particularly for groups with impoverished aspirations.

Our trust has received support from the Challenger Trust Charity, which helped us offer our Pupil Premium and disadvantaged students a range of superb character-building activities, including outward-bound courses, business and industry mentoring programmes and cultural visits.

Well-crafted, fully-funded character development initiatives like this can do much to raise the confidence and motivations of all – giving left behind children across the country a far better chance of emulating the achievements of their East London peers.

Nick Hurn is CEO of the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust

When praising the outstanding work performed in our school communities during the pandemic, let's not forget the comparatively unsung heroes without whom our schools would grind to a halt...

Vic Goddard

I'm not sure it's the right time to be writing this; straight after the loss of our school site manager, Alan. I'm not going to spend the whole article talking about him, but needless to say, he was a vital lifeline of support for staff in both in, and on many occasions, outside school.

This is, however, an opportunity to acknowledge all those people who keep our schools going, but very rarely get mentioned. Because let's face it – if you've yet to buy your site manager, cleaner or the cook a decent Christmas present, you're hardly recognising just how much they contribute to making your life better, just when you need them most.

As well as bailing you out when you have a flat battery, or have had a particularly messy classroom day, they're often likely to be more 'local' than teaching staff, and therefore a key source of community feeling.

Providing the oil

How the site staff, cleaners, *et al* keep our sites in any sort of operational state – let alone complete the flourishes you see around so many schools – is remarkable. School buildings regularly take a hammering, not because of deliberate damage, but just through the sheer volume of traffic around them. It's almost surprising that they're not routinely reduced to rubble.

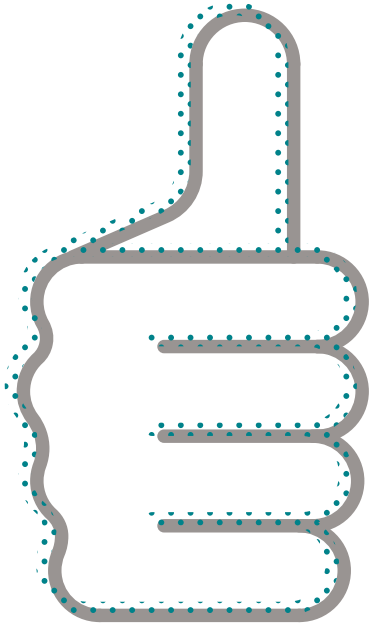
The last year has obviously been difficult, and we'll all have our own opinions on the level of empathy and recognition we've received from the government. However, as teachers have focussed on online learning, those staff often in school the most have been colleagues in the finance team, the reception staff, the cleaners and co-educators (LSAs etc).

Co-educators have been supervising the children of key workers and vulnerable students. The finance team has been busy ensuring that free school meals vouchers have gone out, that salaries have been paid and that incoming bills have been processed. The reception staff have been on the frontline, frequently dealing with anxious, and sometimes angry parents and carers. The cleaners have overseen relentless cleaning regimes in an effort to keep our environments as safe as possible. It's been a remarkable team effort.

Schools are big machines. The people who provide the oil that ensures we all keep moving forward are too often those seemingly forgotten whenever anyone talks about the work that 'education staff' have done over the past year.

As we come through the pandemic, I know that for many of us, the bond between our parent/carer communities and schools is stronger than ever, having grown from a mutual understanding of how hard teachers and families at home have had to work together. Young people and their families have appreciated the struggle it's been to improve our own skills in the digital world; lots of teachers have received thank you messages as a result, which have been a great lift.

How many other vitally important members of staff feel similarly appreciated?



Keeping us going

As people working in education, we're all highly aware of the many ways in which we've been lucky – our greater job security, for instance. Having a purpose is, and has always been, a major privilege, but it's never been as tough to balance being 'in work' whilst also managing one's family life and our own anxieties. Knowing that our efforts have been recognised has helped many of us to keep going – so it's equally important that we find time to recognise the efforts of those who have been in the background, doing their jobs quietly and without fanfare.

We might know the value of those who support us, but do they? With so much focus on home learning, and then the return of students to face-to-face education, the media coverage surrounding teaching has been plentiful (not all of it positive, of course), but I'm yet to read the articles about the involvement of everyone else.

So let's make sure we thank those performing the vital tasks that keep us all going, with the lowest salaries and least public recognition. The loss of Alan has made it crystal clear to me that we must never underestimate the work that he, and others like him, do for our communities every single day.

Vic Goddard is headteacher at Passmores Academy – as seen on Channel 4's *Educating Essex* – and author of *The Best Job in the World* (Independent Thinking Press, £14.99)

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Creative careers

Careers in theatre are broader in scope than many assume, and can instil a wide range of transferable skills, says **Kath Geraghty**

National Careers Week isn't the only employment initiative to have been held this past month. Taking place alongside it has been Discover! Creative Careers Week – a nationwide initiative run in parallel by the UK's creative industries, aimed at inspiring young people to learn about careers in the creative sector, and how transferable creative skills can be for many different career paths.

Prior to the pandemic, the creative industries were growing at three times the rate of the rest of the economy, contributing £111.7 billion to the UK economy in 2018. We already encourage young people to take part in theatre as audience members and participants, but we also need to make sure we're creating and maintaining routes into the industry and beyond, so that we can rebuild and strengthen the creative workforce of tomorrow.

We've often heard from people working backstage, onstage and offstage about how their career ambitions were initially inspired by a drama teacher or youth theatre leader. It's important that we can continue providing these discovery opportunities for young people, who will go on to become the actors and theatre-makers of tomorrow.

Routes into the industry

As things currently stand, many young people remain unaware of the numerous roles involved in the running of a theatre – from finance, marketing and learning departments, to hands-on roles that can variously involve metalwork, maintenance and carpentry.

There are also many different routes into the industry; whilst academic study and university is the more traditional route, practical approaches, such as apprenticeships and vocational training programmes, are more suited to different learners.

Our current cohort of apprentices played an instrumental role in supporting the NT to re-open during summer 2020, from working backstage on new shows, to transforming the space for a socially distanced audience. The NT's Apprenticeships Scheme provides an opportunity to learn key skills and gain practical experience for a creative career, as well as transferable skills relevant to many other career paths.

Many skilled practitioners across the industry, from artists and prop-makers to set designers and builders, have benefited from vocational training, such as the Performing Arts BTEC, which provides the technical skills training that's essential for many roles. The government's recent proposal to remove funding for creative qualifications, including the Performing Arts BTEC, is concerning, as this is a valid and effective qualification that continues to open doors for young people who may not consider A Level drama.

Nell Allan graduated as a technical theatre apprentice in 2012 and now works at the NT as a senior stage technician. "I was good at school, but never saw myself as very academic," he remembers. I knew I was practical, and that I wanted to work in the arts. The great thing about apprenticeships is that you get to work and learn doing the job. You're going to learn something, meet new people and have some great times and experiences. Even if you don't end up in that industry, the fundamental skills you learn as an apprentice are invaluable."

Creativity in education

Participation in drama and arts has countless benefits for young people. It's a medium through which they can explore and express new ideas, develop empathy and curiosity, collaborate with others and develop transferable teamwork skills.

With theatres remaining closed, and online learning often reduced to a focus on core subjects, there's a risk that creative subjects such as drama and arts may be sidelined yet further. We need to make sure that opportunities for creative learning can continue.

Some teachers have responded by adapting their subject delivery in various creative ways; we can help by providing accessible resources to keep the spark of theatre alive, be it in the classroom or via remote learning – and perhaps inspire more young learners to consider turning their passions and interests into successful careers.

National Theatre

The NT makes theatre for everyone, staging productions in London, on tour nationwide and worldwide and via digital broadcasts, while supporting creative education through nationwide learning programmes

Kath Geraghty is workforce development manager at the National Theatre; find out more about the NT's home learning resources at nationaltheatre.org.uk/learning/at-home

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3 things we've learnt about... TEACHERS' GCSE ASSESSMENT CONCERNS

Now that the government has confirmed how it wants schools to assess this year's GCSEs, how do teachers feel? **Laura McInerney** samples the profession's mood...

1 Teachers recognise a good compromise

Working out how to give students a grade using a hodgepodge of assessments is ridiculously difficult. When the government announced this year's GCSE and A-level awarding plan, most teachers agreed it was a 'good compromise' – though maths and science teachers were the least happy, with just 43% seeing it as an adequate fudge. Maths and science teachers often find it challenging to assess pupils in non-examined ways, and with pupils in those subjects likely to be sitting tests, it would make sense for an external body to set them.

Conversely, arts and PE teachers were much happier with the government's proposals. These are subjects that still involve controlled assessments, though arts and PE teachers are more likely to feel that exams don't always accurately reflect their students' abilities.

2 Younger teachers are less confident about grading

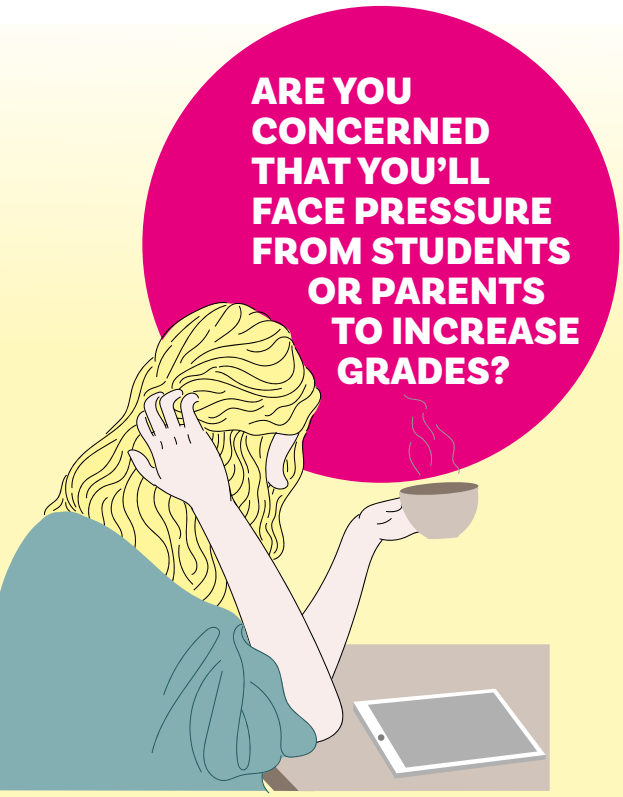
The extent to which teachers feel confident in being able to meet the government's new assessment expectations varies by age. Older teachers are more likely to have worked as examiners and moderators, or have marked coursework and assessments that call for judgments based on 'grade descriptors' rather than boundary scores. Younger and less experienced teachers may have only taught one or two exam classes in a single setting, and thus seen a narrower range of student work.

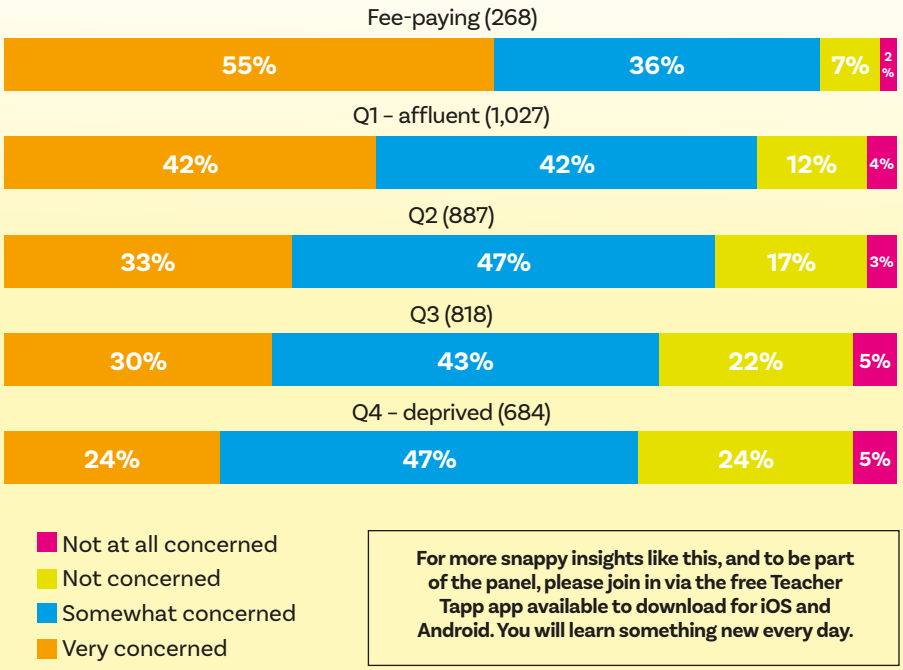
Only 20% of teachers in the job for five years or less said they were very confident in their grading abilities. Those with 20-plus years' experience were nearly twice as confident, with 38% very sure they could carry off the task. Again, maths and science teachers were the least certain, with 1 in 10 maths teachers not at all confident they could manage it.

3 Public school teachers feel apprehensive

One quirk of the new grading system is that students must be told what evidence will be used to determine their exams, and will have the right to explain any mitigating circumstances they feel ought be considered. Teachers fear this will lead to pressure from sharp-elbowed parents to inflate grades beyond what the evidence allows.

Over 90% of private school teachers were concerned about such parental and student pressures, with 55% saying they were anxious about it. Half as many teachers in the most disadvantaged state schools (24%) were very worried, but a majority still had some concerns. Headteachers across all schools displayed a high level of worry – given that they must sign off on all grades, it's little surprise that so many feel that way.





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.

CLASSROOM LIFE

Turning a corner

From performing at well below national standards to exceeding them in just three years, **Paul Cook** unpacks for us the successful improvement strategy adopted by Bishop Young Church of England Academy

When I joined the school now known as Bishop Young Academy in 2017, it had been in Special Measures for two years. Fixed term exclusions were five times higher than the national average. Attendance was significantly lower than the national average, and student outcomes were among the lowest 5% in the country.

Behaviour in lessons and in the corridors was poor. There was little in the way of support for the most vulnerable children, and nothing in place to support students with SEND. It was very much a case of us having to virtually rebuild the school from scratch.

Rather than adopt a 'sticking plaster approach' and throwing everything at our Y11 results, however, we decided to lay the foundations for what would hopefully be years of success for the school and its community.

More balance

Bishop Young Academy is located in an area of Leeds that has high deprivation. It's a wonderful part of the city, with a wonderful community, but also a tough area.

One of the first things we did was initiate a full curriculum review, and took the brave step – considering our student outcomes – of taking time away from core subjects and giving it to PE and the arts, to ensure we had a broad and balanced curriculum at both KS3 and KS4. We wanted to give all students opportunities to take part in music, art and PE lessons, and put in place a broad range of extracurricular activities. We also began to offer visits abroad, including an Italian ski trip for 55 students and a trip to Barcelona. Broadening our students' horizons in this way was an important part of the jigsaw.

In that first year, however, our student outcomes didn't improve as much as we'd hoped. It was a case of holding our nerve – we knew we were doing the right things. Subsequently, though, we did see a significant improvement in students' behaviour. Fixed term exclusions went from being five times the national average to being below the national average, alongside a 70% reduction in the number of students being removed from classrooms due to poor behaviour.

There were far fewer instances of poor behaviour in corridors and at breaktimes – in part because students and staff alike were more polite, and because the students were now frequently involved in meaningful activities during lunchtimes and after school.

Investing in character

As school leaders, we also had to focus on the quality of teaching and learning, which we set about doing in a systematic way. We developed a consistently high level of teaching and learning, so that students were getting more good teaching more often.

It was a combination of these factors that ultimately resulted in our improvements, but it was only in year two, in 2018, that this translated into a significant leap in student outcomes. We saw a 0.5 improvement in Progress 8 over the previous year, and our improvement trajectory has continued at pace since then.

In some ways, our vision has remained consistent from day one. We've always set incredibly high standards in terms of the basics – uniform, behaviour, manners – but what's changed as the quality of teaching and learning has improved, is that we're now in a position where we simply expect the very best from our students in terms of their contributions to their learning.

We've since reached a position where we're being asked to support other schools in certain areas. From a SEND offer that was previously almost non-existent, we've now developed a really superb offer for students with SEND and other vulnerable students, and are supporting other schools both within the trust and further afield to achieve the same.

Beyond that, we've placed a particular focus on SEMH and wellbeing, for both staff and students. Our wellbeing programme for staff is embedded into everything we do, with the result that staff absence is low – we've gone from spending over £300,000

IN NUMBERS

Established: May 2017, upon joining the Abbey Multi Academy Trust

Location: Seacroft, Leeds

Student population: 730

Staff: 100

IN THAT FIRST YEAR, OUR STUDENT OUTCOMES DIDN'T IMPROVE AS MUCH AS WE'D HOPED. IT WAS A CASE OF HOLDING OUR NERVE – WE KNEW WE WERE DOING THE RIGHT THINGS.

PAUL COOK, EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

a year on supply teachers to less than £20,000 – and retention is high. We've invested heavily in staff CPD, and through appointing people who are passionate about working with disadvantaged students and making a difference, brought about positive changes in our staff culture.

Alongside that is a multi-layered approach to the support students receive within the classroom. Teachers fully understand the needs of every child, and will plan how to meet those needs through high quality pastoral support. It sounds simple, but we're investing in our students and their character, and showing them the ways in which we genuinely care for them.

Out of the comfort zone

It was during the second year of our improvement journey that we began to develop our own character curriculum, as we felt it was important for us to really get to know the students and what made them tick.

Using intelligence we'd gathered over the previous year from real world observations, school data and figures pertaining to the local community, we identified those areas we'd need to focus in if we wanted to develop our students' character. We knew, for example, that a significant proportion didn't do very well in exams because they lacked self-esteem. It sounds counter-intuitive, but if they actually made an effort to succeed in an exam but failed, then that would be 'their fault'. If they didn't bother to try, then the fault would lie elsewhere.

Out of this work came the Bishop Character Curriculum, which seeks to support students in developing the following: **B**enevolence, **I**ntegrity, **S**elf-fulfilment, **H**ealth and happiness, **O**neness and **P**erseverance. That runs like a thread through everything from our academic curriculum, down to our extracurricular offer and PSHCE provision.

Every student across all year groups has a pathway throughout the school year, along which they have to meet certain challenges. In Y7, for example, the students' challenges include having to speak in front of at least 150 other students, as part of an assembly or in a similar context. There's an emphasis on taking students out of their comfort zones, because that's when they're most likely to develop those character traits.

Overcoming barriers

Throughout the pandemic we've done as much as we can to keep in contact with our students and their families. In the first half term we completed over 5,000 welfare checks involving phone calls and home visits. We also had a number of support and teaching staff volunteers come in on specific days to carry out food drops, deliver work parcels where needed and help distribute DfE laptops.

To ensure we can provide a strong remote learning offer, we've seen to it that every child has received an appropriate device they can use to access remote learning. We've then utilised Microsoft Teams to deliver a combination of live lessons and other forms of remote learning to meet specific needs. We've tracked our engagement levels very closely – the families of any students found not to be engaging would be contacted by phone the same day, and if we didn't get an answer, we'd arrange a home visit.

It's easy to presume that students aren't engaging in remote learning because they can't be bothered, but that's often not the case – there can be other barriers, so we'd be going out, identifying what those might be and putting plans in place to overcome them.

Otherwise, we've continued to deliver what we usually would – just remotely. We've been pleased with the offer we've been able to put in place, and gratified with the uptake from students, as well as the support we've received from parents. But it's certainly not been easy.

DOWNLOAD

Bishop Young's full character curriculum document at

teachwire.net/bishop-young

Stamping out the stigma

Emily Kempthorne, vice principal for inclusion, safety and welfare, breaks down the school's distinctive wellbeing offering for staff

At Bishop Young Academy, staff wellbeing is just as important as student wellbeing. The introduction of specific wellbeing roles, such as our SEMH and Wellbeing lead and Mental Health First Aiders, has been instrumental in raising the profile of mental health support within the Academy. The addition of wellbeing as a specific agenda item in all meetings has ensured each member of staff has access to regular wellbeing check-ins.

Calendared 'wellbeing weeks' – where staff are guaranteed to not have any meetings after 3pm, data deadlines or internal observations – has allowed time to be dedicated to stamping out the stigma surrounding mental health, and provided staff with opportunities to build relationships, try out new activities or the chance to simply spend more time with their families.

Staff voice has been instrumental in evolving our offer, with a '*You said, We did*' approach. The introduction of 'Wellness Wednesdays', with a specific focus on wellbeing and mental health strategies, keeps the conversation constant and loud. Staff can access bespoke training, as well as signposting to external agencies and referrals to professional counselling.

"Work hard and be kind"

David Watson OBE reflects on how Venturers Trust intends to emerge from the pandemic as a stronger, yet more empathic learning community

As schools across the country reopen to all pupils, in Venturers Trust we're focusing on positive language to help our school communities thrive once more. Instead of 'catching up', for example, we talk about 'continuing to progress'. We actively avoid suggesting that students may have 'fallen behind', as we recognise that every student will have experienced lockdown differently.

For some young people, 12 months in lockdown will have presented rich opportunities to spend quality time with their families, explore the area they live in – with the luxury of time to really absorb and appreciate their surroundings – study hard and learn many new skills.

For others, lockdown will have been hard. They may have felt isolated, lonely, anxious, even hungry and afraid. For these young people, their return to school will be a lifeline that allows them to reimagine their future and start realising their ambitions.

Re-engaging with routines

The pandemic has impacted to varying degrees on the mental health and wellbeing of our young people, which we are addressing in parallel with a focus on academic work. Young people need to develop strong social and emotional skills if they're to succeed in society, so across all of our schools we have been helping students rediscover and strengthen some of these core skills that have been impacted by lockdown.

Successfully re-engaging with the routines and expectations of school life is a necessary first step towards ensuring that every student achieves their full potential. As we collectively confront our 'new normal', it's clear that we've entered an era where the concept of working hard goes hand in hand with the importance of being kind.

I joined Venturers Trust in January 2020, back when no one had any idea that a pandemic was about to turn life as we knew it upside down. My first day as CEO coincided with our first ever Trust-wide development day, which saw me give a presentation on what success looks like, and how we would achieve it.

The overarching theme of my presentation was to 'Work hard and be kind'. The phrase was quickly embraced across our school communities, and soon came to define our pandemic response. Our schools became a focal point for multiple communities, providing on-site care for vulnerable students and the children of key workers, but also ensuring that local families had enough food and other forms of support. Our teachers adapted quickly and were able to provide engaging remote learning resources, while simultaneously retaining the camaraderie unique to their classes, and most importantly, their students' appetite for learning.

Resilience and determination

We also launched a 'We are listening' initiative to support our staff, creating various channels to encourage the flow of two-way dialogue. We listened, took action to address any concerns and worries and focused on making improvements. The initiative has proved to be so beneficial that we now intend keep it going after the pandemic.

In February of this year we were selected as a teaching school hub – a wonderful boost for our talented staff, who have worked incredibly hard and are eager to develop their careers and collaborate with others.

To achieve our Trust-wide goal of ensuring all children from all backgrounds succeed, we have to develop and retain the very best teachers. Ours have shown remarkable resilience and determination throughout the pandemic, refusing to be phased whenever the goalposts move yet again. They are our greatest asset, and we'll continue to support all of them to be the best they possibly can be.

As our students and staff settle back into their familiar routines, that 'Work hard, be kind' sentiment remains at the forefront of everyone's mind. Much has changed since March last year. Many positive connections have been made in the face of adversity. Schools and families have developed a greater understanding of each another, leading to improved relationships. All of us have learned to appreciate those things that really matter.

In education, however, standing still simply isn't an option. Young people only get one chance, and we'll continue to develop and implement improvements across all our schools as we emerge from the pandemic, stronger and more determined than ever.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Watson OBE is the CEO of Venturers Trust – sponsored by the Society of Merchant Venturers and the University of Bristol, it comprises one all-through, one secondary, one special and five primary schools across Bristol; for more information, visit venturerstrust.org or follow @VenturersTrust

CLASSROOM VOICES

"Let's not focus solely on catch-up classes"

Amy Higgins looks back on five hard-earned lessons from a year of remote teaching...

I can still remember standing by the photocopier when a wide-eyed colleague looked up from his phone to share the news that schools in Ireland were keeping their students at home. I'd recently started as head of English at a new school and had been pouring my heart into the job, determined to establish myself. The previous few months had been a blur of 12-hour days, countless new faces and Excel spreadsheets.

But at that moment in reprographics room, I knew. We all knew. Exams season – arguably schools' very raison d'être – was now off the table. Teaching would continue, but not as we knew it. I couldn't help but feel apprehensive. and a little bereft.

One year on, and with schools on the verge of re-opening for the second time, here's what I've learnt...

1. LESS IS MORE

It seems even Luddites like myself can become confident online practitioners. More significantly, having to deliver lessons in a radically different way has compelled us to critically reflect on the basics of effective teaching. Between unreliable internet connections and competing distractions, we've had to refine our lessons, stripping them back to the fundamentals as we strive for simplicity and clarity.

2. WE HAVE MORE FREEDOM

Lockdown may have limited our personal freedoms, but the cancellation of exams and a pervasive sense that all bets were off created space for more creative approaches to the curriculum. We adapted our Y7 poetry unit, with less focus on analytical paragraphs and more opportunities for students to write their own poetry. These included uplifting poems in the style of Maya Angelou, odes in praise of everyday items inspired by Pablo Neruda and haikus on the theme of urban nature.

My colleagues and I have rediscovered our passion for the subject and transmitted this back to students, with many now flourishing as a result

3. STAY BUSY

You might think the school closures would have limited students' opportunities for personal development, but in some ways the opposite is true. Determined to inject some excitement into our students' lockdown, we had some of Y7 participate in a national children's poetry contest. We also set up our own 'Letters from lockdown' writing competition, transforming the tedium of lockdown into an opportunity for creativity. The results have been humorous, insightful and moving, and included an encouraging number of entries from some of our typically least engaged students.

4. STUDENTS ACTUALLY LIKE US

With fewer opportunities for classroom disruption, there's less need for reprimands. We've seen how our students, when not forced to attend school, have quickly discovered that they actually value their teachers and education much more than they realised. The social media models adopted by a number of teaching platforms – such as the facility to 'like' posted messages – have also encouraged students and teachers to communicate in a more informal way.

The increased frequency of emails and phone calls has enabled private dialogues quite different to those rushed chats at the end of lessons or in the school corridor, which would often have been had within earshot of students' peers. There's an intimacy to teaching and learning from home that's reminded both sides of their shared humanity.

5. SCHOOLS CAN'T BE REPLACED

Nevertheless, the importance of returning to 'real' school remains clear. Remote attendance figures may have improved, with many more students having now received laptops, but overall access and engagement remains patchy. Gaps in attainment have increased, perhaps irrevocably, and we mustn't forget that there are those for whom home is a place of distress and danger.

Schools provide our students with safety, positive relationships and opportunity. Let's not focus solely on catch-up classes for our students when we return, but also do our best to provide excellent teaching, a rich curriculum and a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities, while building transformative relationships.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Amy Higgins is a head of English at a London secondary school

REASONS TO TRY...

5 The Inspirational Learning Group

Enterprise challenges that can enhance your careers curriculum and develop your students' soft skills

30 SECOND BRIEFING

Home of The National Enterprise Challenge, The Inspirational Learning Group is committed to delivering world-class enterprise and employability education that raises aspirations. To date it has worked with 300,000 young people across the UK!

1 RAISE STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS

The Inspirational Learning Group (TILG) develops and delivers innovative and engaging enterprise challenges, working in conjunction with some of the UK's biggest companies and universities. Its engaging challenges raise aspirations and help young people demonstrate entrepreneurialism, whilst developing key soft skills for the workplace.

TILG offers a wide range of unique and exciting Business, Enterprise and Personal Development activities, including The National Enterprise Challenge, The National Primary Challenge, My Perfect University, The Stocks and Shares Challenge and Alien Apocalypse Teambuilding Day, which can be used with groups ranging in size from 25 to 250 students!

2 BOOST SELF-ESTEEM

TILG recognises that not all students flourish in an academic setting. Its enterprise and employability challenges therefore focus on allowing students to recognise and develop their strengths wherever they may find them, regardless of their academic ability or background.

Students are free to develop their ideas in any direction they choose, with most challenges calling on them to use their creative and digital skills in developing and promoting a brand new product or service. We've seen students stand before auditoriums and rap about their 'perfect university experience', and on stage at Wembley Stadium presenting to an audience of global business magnates. What might your students achieve with TILG?

3 DEVELOP SOFT SKILLS

All of TILG's business-led challenges offer students the experience of setting up and running their own businesses, whilst developing the key transferable skills they'll need for success in later life – including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management and much more! In every challenge, students are encouraged to work together, recognise one another's strengths and support each other to succeed. Through working together, students will also develop important leadership, initiative, and delegation skills, as well as the confidence to speak assertively in front of their peers when pitching ideas.

4 FLEXIBLE DELIVERY

The last 12 months have called for unprecedented flexibility from the education sector. TILG possesses more than a decade's worth of experience delivering in schools which, combined with its exciting new TILG Virtual learning platform, allows for a flexible and blended approach to delivery.

TILG is able to schedule safe, in-school deliveries, but can also offer fully virtual deliveries for teachers needing to deliver challenges as and when. TILG can even offer a blended delivery option that allows students to engage with live facilitation staff via the safety of its virtual platform.

5 ACHIEVE THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS

All TILG programmes are mapped against the Gatsby Benchmarks, They can be of particular help in supporting the delivery of learning from career and labour market information (benchmark 2), linking curriculum learning to careers (4), encounters with employers and employees (5), experiences of workplaces (6) and encounters with further and higher education (7).

THE INSPIRATIONAL LEARNING GROUP

Contact:
01785 550 160
info@tilg.co.uk
tilg.co.uk

KEY POINTS

The winning team in the 2020 KS4 National Enterprise Challenge saw their idea for a new protein bar go into production, thanks to sponsors, Grenade!

Past ambassadors of The National Enterprise Challenge have included Lord Sugar, *Dragon's Den* star Theo Paphitis and Moonpig.com founder, Nick Jenkins

Every TILG challenge includes an additional mental health awareness session that can help students deal with the stress and anxiety of presenting to their peers

Teach Secondary readers will receive £100 off any premium TILG programme when enquiring online and using the code **TEACH2ND**

THE TS GUIDE TO... CAREERS

Today's school leavers face the most uncertain jobs market in generations – all the more reason to raise their ambitions and provide them with careers advice they'll find genuinely helpful...

IN THIS SECTION

IN FIGURES: HOW HAS COVID-19 AFFECTED YOUNG ADULTS' CAREERS PLANS?

37%
Percentage of 16- to 21-year-olds stating that the pandemic has reduced the likelihood of them entering higher education
Source: Redrow

27%
Percentage of HE students and graduates who have changed their career plans due to COVID-19
Source: Prospects Student Survey

11.6%
The percentage of young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK currently not in education, employment or training
Source: Office for National Statistics

3 TEACHWIRE ARTICLES FROM THE ARCHIVES

HOW TO MEET THE GATSBY BENCHMARKS FOR CAREERS PROVISION
Need some help meeting those critical Gatsby benchmarks for careers provision? Take the advice of an 11-year-old, suggests Andy Pickles...
bit.ly/103special1

HOW EVERYONE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CAN CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS CAREERS EDUCATION
Careers education is a whole-school responsibility – Liz Painter has some short- and long-term suggestions for ways to contribute, whatever your role
bit.ly/103special2

CAREERS EDUCATION IS STUCK IN THE PAST AND IS FAILING STUDENTS
Actual, meaningful work experience is invaluable in ways you may never have considered, and could conceivably shape choices, careers and ultimately lives, says Edd Williams
bit.ly/103special3

Raising the bar

Gordon Cairns finds out how one school in a deprived part of Glasgow has successfully convinced its students to aim higher in terms of their career aspirations

Calling Castlemilk a 'mountain village' might conjure up a bucolic image of goats frolicking in the main street and distant cowbells – but for local headteacher Elaine Seery, that descriptor refers to the remoteness of this housing estate high on a hill on the edge of Glasgow, rather than its setting.

In fact, the statistical evidence paints a picture that's far from idyllic. Life expectancy is below the national average, and the proportion of residents claiming out-of-work benefits above it. Until a few years ago, only a quarter of the local population had a qualification at Higher level (Scottish A level equivalent) or above.

It's a community that's been adversely affected by poor town planning and lacks a good infrastructure, having neither a supermarket nor a train station – one consequence of which is that local residents typically haven't seen higher education as a priority.

A positive narrative

Despite these unpromising surroundings, however, pupils at Seery's school – St Margaret Mary's High School – are, for the first time in its history, heading to Britain's top academic institutions. One former pupil is already studying at the University of St. Andrews, while another has an unconditional offer from Cambridge University.

These students aren't outliers, but part of a trend reflected in a doubling of the number of pupils going onto higher education over the last five years, rising from 16% to 38% in 2020.

Seery, who joined the school in 2005, has observed a shift in the self-esteem of her charges, who in the past would have seen university as a destination for others, but not for them: "I remember speaking to a particularly talented fifth year student about 15 years ago. When I suggested higher education, he replied, '*University? You're getting a bit ahead of yourself there, Miss.*'"

"We might have been a school with a poverty of ambition in the past, but that doesn't exist any more, as the aspirations and expectations of the young people have changed in the time I've been here."

Concrete examples of success are now encouraging others to aim beyond their own previous expectations. Seery points to two current students who have recently been offered places at St Andrews – one of them to study astrophysics, who she believes wouldn't have previously bothered applying to that prestigious institution if they didn't have a former classmate already studying there. She points out that the school uses these successes to create a positive narrative: "If you look at our UCAS applications, St Andrews is now a place where our young people believe they can go.

> *"We might have been a school with a poverty of ambition in the past, but that doesn't exist any more"*

"The biggest stories we have to celebrate are those of our young people. When there's a successful pupil working with us, who also has credibility among their peers, it encourages the others to achieve."

Financial awards

For young people from poorer backgrounds, ability and aspiration often aren't enough to secure the next steps on their learning journey. That's why the school invests time in developing partnerships with grant-making bodies, such as the Sutton Trust, the Robertson Trust and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and securing bursaries to support students for the duration of their academic careers.

As Seery explains, "Our pastoral care and our senior management team are relentless in pursuing financial awards for our students, as bursaries make going to university achievable."

She recalls a situation where the school had to intervene, after one student took on a part-time job to make their higher education ambitions a more realistic possibility. "We had a diligent and hard-working pupil studying for five Highers working in a burger chain restaurant that had been quite negligent in allocating her shifts. I could understand why the employer would want to get her in, but this badly impacted on her education.

"She became fixated on buying a car she could use to travel to university. We had to explain that no car in the world would get her to university if she didn't have the qualifications."

Staying on

Before the school could consider sending pupils on to higher education in greater numbers, it had to ensure they were able to stay in secondary education long enough to achieve the necessary qualifications – which in Scotland, means staying on for a sixth year.

One simple but effective change was to emphasise the importance of staying on from the very start of each pupil's school career. In the past, St Margaret Mary's young people would tend to leave school early in order to contribute financially to their families' budgets. To alter this mindset, the school first had to work with parents, before challenging the young people's preconceptions about school and university.

"The parents are our first partners," Seery says. "We have to get them on board and be joined up in our working with them, to get them to see that higher aspirations are right for their children."

Then came the young people themselves: "Through our transition work and celebration of former pupils, we've changed our staying-on rate. The young people who are now in our sixth year came through school with the consistent message they are expected to stay for those six years. They were told that they didn't opt out of primary school after four or five years, and wouldn't at secondary."

Weaknesses as strengths

The school currently has a roll of around 400 pupils, and has became adapt at addressing its shortcomings. "It's often thought being a small school is a disadvantage," notes Seery, "which it can be when you consider one-teacher departments. However, we have a joined-up campus with [local school] Castlemilk High, allowing our pupils a full curricular experience, not possible if we were located in a remote area. This means that while size might be considered a weakness, for us it's a strength.

"Another positive of being a small school is that every teacher can stand at the front door and welcome each child by name. We know the families, and the families know they're known and cared for, with tough love if necessary. School is a place of safety for them."

Ultimately, St Margaret Mary's improvement in student aspiration came from a variety of sources. "It's not down to one single ingredient," Seery concludes. "We have a talented group of teachers, relentless in their pursuit of excellence for a motivated group of pupils from the very beginning, alongside partnership working from primary schools to universities and colleges, with our youth worker going out into the community to offer support if needed. Everyone has the pupils at their heart."

THE MAGIC FACTOR

Last September, the first former St. Margaret Mary's pupil to attend the University of St. Andrews enrolled in her first class. Seery recalls that from her very first day at school, she aspired to attend one of the country's top universities and wasn't afraid to voice her desire.

The student in question was also an integral part of her home community, and didn't see any contradiction between her background and ambition, "She was one of 'the girls'," notes Seery, "but when she was in class, she was focused and driven. That's the magic factor."

The progress of another student bound for a top university shows the importance of partnerships in supporting the aspirations of pupils from low-income backgrounds. The student had been offered an unconditional place at Magdalen College, Cambridge to study medicine, and will be the first medical doctor to have attended to the Castlemilk school upon graduation.

The student's father, originally from Malawi, still works there, while the student's mother brings up four children in Glasgow without the spare cash to support a child at university for at least three years – something the school has been able to address by arranging a funding offer with one of its partners.

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

PAVING THE CAREER PATH

Paula Deighton talks us through the careers provision in place at The Stanway School, and how her team responded when COVID-19 made key aspects of that provision all but impossible...

Today's learners need to be taught soft skills, how to behave in an interview, what their experience of the real world is actually going to be like and the behaviours expected of them.

It was with this in mind that I first organised a day-long careers programme for the Y10 students at The Stanway School, which would involve them engaging with adult employees so they could get a better sense of the world of work. The students spend the day in non-uniform, learning interview skills, finessing their CVs and writing application letters.

The students then spend two hours conversing with 30 to 40 actual business people at different stations, rotating around them and asking questions about the work these individuals do and how they got to where they are.

This helps to lay foundations for a separate event later in the summer term, once they've started considering their post-16 options. This is our taster day, where representatives from local education and training providers will perform taster sessions that students can opt into based on their interests – perhaps a psychology lesson, or even a session on lambing from a provider of agricultural courses, such as Writtle University College.

That's then followed by a careers event that we hold around late September and early October. This is open to the six other schools within the Sigma Trust that we're part of (as well as special schools in the local area, whose pupil populations and limited resources prevent them from organising similar events), with the students from each school getting to spend an hour there.

Tracing the route

There were 95 stands present at our last event– five up on the year before. Our aim is to give Y11 students opportunities for engagement activities with both post-16 providers and employers, as is required by the Gatsby benchmarks, but crucially, we look to clearly highlight the routes into different careers.

For instance, we had a local restaurant exhibit with us. The students were able ask the restaurant's representatives various questions relating to the hospitality and catering trades, and the exhibitor could respond by pointing the students towards local education providers at the event offering courses which could give them a solid foundation in the skills they'd need before potentially joining the company.

What we present to students is less, '*This is what you're going to do*' and more '*Here's a potential career – what's your route into it?*' The Sigma Careers Convention has been a place where students can learn how to progress, discover what they're able to and decide on the direction they want to go in.

Plan B

Of course, we then got to March last year and began considering our options in response to the pandemic shutdown. We'd already started planning that year's event, inviting exhibitors and provisionally booking stands; we now had to pivot to asking exhibitors what they could provide us with in the event of us having to host the event virtually. Our wonderful careers advisor partnered with another advisor at a different school and assembled a huge spreadsheet of information and contacts that we were then able turn into a virtual careers event.

With support from some senior IT staff, they built a website, complete with a video explanation for students on how to use it, and structured the event information into different careers areas, such as construction, health and beauty, engineering, hospitality. These in turn linked to a number of businesses, associations and other organisations, as well as video clips of individuals talking about their experiences in different professions.

We consulted with The Careers & Enterprise Company on the nationwide links and information we could include, but at the same time, our view has always been that a project

> *"If students know where they're heading, it can inspire their learning"*

like this has to be bespoke for your locality. There are certainly many international roles and jobs out there, but often the reality is that the majority of students won't want to move away, and will want to know about the opportunities available to them in their local area.

In-person versus online

The response to our virtual event was very positive. We did admittedly receive some comments along the lines of '*...but you haven't got my career on there*', but in most cases we actually did – students often wouldn't have followed the relevant route, or have searched for it in the right way.

That does, however, highlight the difference between walking round a room containing 90 stands, full of people looking to entice you with what they're offering, and holding an exhibition online. With the latter, people will tend to gravitate towards those things they already know, or think they want to do. In a large, physical space, they might see something 'blingy', meet an engaging person who shows an interest in what they want to do and consequently stumble upon something entirely new to them.

We also obviously haven't been able to arrange any one-to-one meetings, or organise our usual in-person careers day – at present, we're looking at what we can put in place after 21st June. One idea we're looking at is holding a virtual mock interview day, where the students will take part in on-site video calls with those mentors who would previously have come into school for face-to-face meetings.

Our staff and students are quite comfortable now with virtual exchanges, but it's my belief that students really benefit from having that physical face-to-face experience. It will have to wait for now – and they won't be able to shake hands, at first – but face-to-face meetings can underline for students the need to be conscious of their body language and take notice of things like their tendency to fidget. The advice a real interviewer can give students following a face-to-face interaction is extremely valuable, and the students gain a great deal from discovering what interviews actually feel like.

Longer term, our plan at the moment is to hold two smaller events for the trust's schools later in the year. These will be combined live and virtual events that we hope to keep open into the evening, so that parents can attend, as well as students from Y8 to Y10.

It's paramount that we're able to help children with their careers progression. If students know where they're heading, it can inspire their learning – and not just in the sense of knowing how many GCSEs they need to pass. It's about encouraging students to think more deeply about what they might end up doing for the next 50 years, while also keeping their minds open to the fact that they may well have four or five different careers over the course of their lives, all offering different opportunities and rates of progression.

UNDER ADVISEMENT

- Our team includes an in-school level 6 careers advisor, which enables us to meet the Gatsby target of having someone qualified on staff who can give informed careers advice to our students.
- Children engage differently with dedicated careers advisors, compared to teachers. Teachers can be more like parents in some respects, in that they're seen as 'nags', whereas careers advisors are more rooted in the 'real world' in the eyes of the children.
- The school's careers office is situated directly opposite student services, so its location is well known. It's easily accessible, open at break and lunchtimes and also available for any parents concerned about their child's destination.
- Our careers advisor is further responsible for monitoring and supporting students once they've left, in line with statutory government guidelines which state that schools are responsible for students for six months after they leave.
- Another of our advisor's roles is to help us recruit business mentors. We currently have 25 of these – individuals from the world of work who come in to mentor our Y10s and Y11s once a fortnight for half an hour, dispensing advice that will help them in their future careers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Paula Deighton is careers lead at The Stanway School in Essex; for more information, visit stanway.essex.sch.uk

5 REASONS TO TRY... ScreenSkills

The screen organisation offers comprehensive online resources that can help your students learn about exciting and rewarding careers in film and TV

30 SECOND BRIEFING

ScreenSkills is the skills organisation for the screen industries (film, television, animation, visual effects and games). We support screen professionals nationwide with training and, for students, provide careers information and signpost industry-relevant FE/HE courses.

1 JOBS IN SCREEN

There are hundreds of different job roles in film, TV, games, animation and visual effects, and the range of skills they require is wide. At ScreenSkills.com students can read about what each role entails and how to get in, starting with the right subjects to study and the relevant A Levels, Highers or vocational qualifications. You can also download our career maps, which give a good overview of how the industry is organised and routes in while also looking great on your classroom walls.

2 LESSON PLANS

We have created ready-made lessons plans to help you introduce your students to a creative career. Why not give our animation lesson plan for Y5 to Y8, featuring *The Tiger That Came To Tea*, a try? It not only comes with PowerPoint slides and project books, but it is also cross-curricular with maths and science. Whether taught over three hours or as a six-week project, it's a great first taste of what working in screen could be like.

3 ENDORSED COURSES

With so many colleges and universities to choose from, it can be tricky for students to find out which course will be best for them and their future career. ScreenSkills Select endorses higher and further education courses that equip students with industry-relevant skills experience. Before they are listed on the ScreenSkills website, endorsed courses are assessed by respected industry evaluators to make sure they are of the highest quality, to make it easier for students to secure jobs after graduation.

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4 FIRST DAY ON SET

Students can find out what it's like to work on a film or TV production right now by watching our 360° video, or by enjoying our VR experience. Let a third assistant director show you and your class what you can expect to run into on a set. From a working sound stage, to the sound, camera and lighting, art, costume, hair and make-up departments, this immersive film demonstrates the diversity of roles in screen.

5 ONLINE OPPORTUNITIES

ScreenSkills works with partners across the screen industries. We co-founded the Discover! Creative Careers website and week, which includes events and opportunities your students can take part in.

Other activities include supporting the Young Animator of the Year contest, which helps young people learn animation skills. We also host information sessions to help career advisers have a better understanding of the jobs in the screen industries. ScreenSkills' careers work is supported by the BFI with National Lottery funds.

Contact:
020 7713 9800
careers@screenskills.com
ScreenSkills.com

For more information, please visit the ScreenSkills website or follow @UKScreenSkills on Twitter

KEY POINTS

At ScreenSkills.com you will find a range of resources, including lesson plans and videos, that will help you meet multiple Gatsby Benchmarks

1 million new jobs could be created by 2030 in the UK's creative industries – use our job profiles to introduce students to an array of screen opportunities

With employers looking for STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths) skills, encourage your students to match their skillset with roles in screen

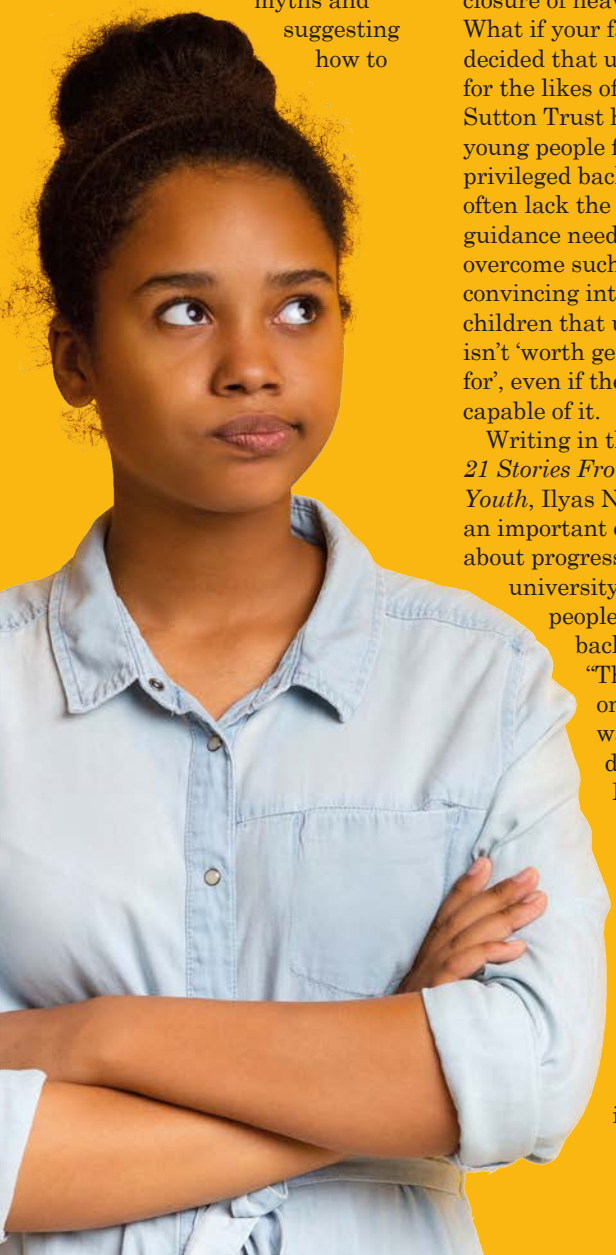
Discover apprenticeship, university and trainee schemes at the ScreenSkills website, plus useful events in our 'Training and opportunities' directory

Inequality of opportunity?

Andrew Bernard calls out the fallacies underpinning the notion that the UK enjoys 'equality of opportunity'...

In Britain we like to feed the idea that every child has equal access to the tools of success, and the chance to access the career of their choice, regardless of background. Sadly, this notion doesn't hold up under scrutiny.

In my book, *The Ladder*, I devote a whole chapter to dispelling some of these myths and suggesting how to tackle them – some of which I'll share with you here...



Myth 1 – where you're from doesn't affect your life chances

What if you're from one of the 'cold spots' identified by the Careers and Enterprise Company (see bit.ly/ts103-myths1) with high unemployment since the closure of heavy industry? What if your family has decided that university 'isn't for the likes of us'? The Sutton Trust has found that young people from less privileged backgrounds often lack the support and guidance needed to overcome such attitudes, convincing intelligent children that university isn't 'worth getting into debt for', even if they're perfectly capable of it.

Writing in the book *RIFE: 21 Stories From Britain's Youth*, Ilyas Nagdee makes an important observation about progression to university for young people from BAME backgrounds:

"The university on my doorstep was very different to the Manchester I grew up in … quite often in cities like Manchester, huge universities are close to areas with low progression into university, and the communities nearby benefit least from these gigantic institutions."

University outreach activity is important, but it needs to focus on supporting specific communities around each institution. After attending a Manchester University open day, 'Lured by the promise of food,' Nagdee found that he enjoyed the experience, understood that he belonged there and became determined to go to Birmingham University. Once there, he joined the university's Black Ambassador scheme and went on to become Black Students' Officer for the NUS.

Action: *Research your local universities and their outreach programmes to find out how your students might benefit from visits, sessions on student funding and so forth.*

Myth 2 - The 'less academic' option is apprenticeships

Research by the facilities company ABM UK in 2018 found that among 4,000 parents and students, 43% of parents saw apprenticeships as a poorly paid, second-rate option for young people who had 'failed their exams' (see bit.ly/ts103-myths2). In fact, apprenticeships support the acquisition of higher skills, are focused on employability and leave young people debt-free. There's one aspect of apprenticeships that betrays the social mobility cause, however. In many instances, higher apprenticeships will affect any family incomes that are conditional on tax credits, Universal Credit and housing benefit. Professional careers education, information, advice and guidance advice is therefore essential when deciding on pathways.

Action: *Consider local employers' apprenticeship offerings, ask them to speak to your students and ensure your careers team are up-to-date on how apprenticeships may affect a post-16 student's family finances.*

Myth 3 – Stereotypes aren't an issue

For its 'Drawing The Future' research project, the Education & Employers charity tasked 20,000 7- to 11-year-olds with drawing a range of people and their careers. The researchers observed that gender stereotyping was very much alive and well, and firmly established among 7-year-olds.

Action: *Stereotypes need to be tackled consciously. Gender, race, age, disability – all need to be considered when broadening the horizons of the children we work with.*

I would argue that every teacher is, in some ways, a careers teacher, since all teachers leave an impact when supporting children in their development of knowledge and confidence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew 'Bernie' Bernard is an entrepreneur and director of both Innovative Enterprise and National Careers Week. *The Ladder: Supporting students towards successful futures and confident career choices* is available now (Crown House Publishing, £16.99)

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REASONS TO TRY...

5 Secondary Language Link

Upskill your staff and support your KS3 cohort with this speech and language intervention package

30 SECOND BRIEFING

An online assessment and intervention package aimed at supporting the SLCN needs of KS3 pupils. The only support package of its kind, it provides schools with standardised assessment, planned interventions, progress tracking and teacher training.

1 IDENTIFY SLCN

A significant proportion of pupils identified with SLCN in primary school are later identified as having a different kind of SEN – or even no SEN – at secondary. Difficulty in understanding language is described as a 'hidden difficulty', with children more commonly noticed for presenting associated difficulties with literacy, academic attainment or behaviour, which then often become the focus of interventions. Secondary Language Link's standardised assessment, used universally in Y7, identifies those children having difficulty understanding language, thus ensuring that resources can be targeted more effectively.

2 BOOST ATTAINMENT

The long-term impact of unidentified and unsupported SLCN is well established, often leading to significant attainment gaps in schools and remaining with pupils throughout their education. Secondary Language Link enables a whole school focus on developing language and communication skills. Development of speaking and listening skills has been shown to not only boost pupils' ability to understand and communicate, but also their literacy skills, academic attainment, SEMH and behaviour.

3 BUILD SLCN KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE

Secondary Language Link is designed as a whole school package that can build the SLCN knowledge and expertise of all staff. Teacher training is built in to develop understanding of SLCN, including the impact of associated difficulties and

effective support strategies. Pupils with SLCN make the most progress within communication-friendly environments, where quality first teaching strategies are in place within the classroom. Many children can be supported using these strategies alone, without the need for more targeted interventions.

4 DEVELOP KEY COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Planned and resourced intervention groups will support pupils identified with SLCN to develop functional and cross-curricular speaking and listening skills. These sessions are designed to improve pupils' understanding of spoken language, enabling them to better access learning within the classroom and develop the oral communication skills that underpin writing and are needed to participate in learning. With employers reporting increasing difficulty in finding employees with suitable communication skills, the development of such skills is crucial for improving pupils' life chances.

5 REGULAR SUPPORT

Research shows that school staff can make a huge difference to children's language skills with the right support in place. However, since language skills are highly complex, school staff will likely require advice on the best forms of support for their students. Our Speech and Language Help Desk can be contacted daily via phone or email to answer any queries; where needed, school staff can obtain advice directly from a speech and language therapist.

Contact:

speechandlanguage.info/secondary
0333 577 0784
office2@speechlink.co.uk

Schools can sign up for a no obligation, 14-day trial and receive an 'Ultimate Guide to SLCN' ebook by registering for our free newsletter

KEY POINTS

- Secondary Language Link is the only comprehensive SLCN support package of its kind, combining rigorous assessment, interventions, and teacher training
- The package is developed by speech and language therapists and regularly updated to reflect both changes in practice, and feedback from schools
- Pre/post-intervention assessments provide comprehensive progress measures; guidance notes and printable resources help to minimise prep time
- Pricing is based on the size of a school's Y7 cohort; schools can then use the package for continuing support into Y8 and Y9 entirely free of charge

Hearing you LOUD AND CLEAR

Now more than ever, oracy can help our students to find their voice, says **Sarah Davies**

How do you see oracy in the classroom? Is the way your students communicate something you feel compelled to approach with a sense of educational rigour? Or does it cause heart palpitations, and make you fear the disgruntled looks of colleagues when they walk past your noisy classroom?

At the start of the pandemic, the removal of the spoken language component from GCSE English language could be seen as an almost condescending pat on the head that we didn't need. Far from allowing practitioners to breathe a sigh of relief, what it did was expose the distorted value of oracy in terms of its place amongst the skills triad.

In contrast to its older literacy and numeracy siblings, there remains a lack of explicit reference to oracy skills, leading to them being perceived in some curriculum styles as merely a means to an end, rather than a foundation of opportunity.

Now more than ever, communication and the building of oracy skills can be a guiding light that allows our students to boost both their social skills and academic confidence. It's time for us to recognise the positive effects of embedding explicit oracy skills, put them under the spotlight and start making some noise.

Everyday oracy

Embedding explicit oracy skills can allow students to appreciate the value and importance of having a voice in today's society.

No matter what career path our students choose to follow, the elephant in the room is that communication is key to their future prospects. Constant reference needs to be made to the significance of these skills outside the confines of the classroom. We should embrace the learning opportunities that oracy affords. By reflecting with students on everyday scenarios, such as the breakdowns in communication that can occur in any workplace, we can open doors through which students can gain highly informative glimpses of life beyond the school gates.

Oracy can also do much to encourage academic confidence, by improving students' ability to articulate their ideas prior to commencing written work.

Students approach learning in different ways. By saying that, I'm not pushing any new-fangled pedagogical approaches, or outlandish strategies that require hours of preparation for a 5-minute learning task. Instead, I'm suggesting we focus on their ability to explain and reason in order to embed the knowledge that they're gaining or retrieving.

For some students, the ability to respond to a given task may come with ease, while others may be more reluctant to put pen to paper. Whether that's due to a lack of understanding or low energy levels, oracy can be the Lycra-clad superhero that saves the day! Incorporating discussions into both pre- and post-written tasks will not only help students sculpt their responses, but also start to reflect on and develop them with less apprehension.

A workload wonder

Being able to provide verbal feedback could result in a reduction of workload – though note that I said 'could'. Unfortunately, this elusive unicorn will be completely dependent on your setting's standpoint.

In peak conditions, however, a grounding in oracy will deliver the gravitas of effective feedback, without having to use six differently coloured pens and creating a key with highlighters. It will allow for dialogue that identifies how progress can be made. When done correctly, your students should still have a clear focus for progress, without the need for you to burn the midnight oil. Even starting off with a whole-class feedback discussion or a visualizer demonstration can be a positive step in the direction of managing your time more effectively.

Modelling effective oracy skills will do much to support both colleague and student conversations, and promote focused and meaningful dialogue.

The key term here is 'focused dialogue'. Allow me to let you into a little secret I've picked up from my time as both a parent and a teacher – children know how to lead you down the proverbial garden path of conversation in order to ease their workload.

Indeed, they're already light years ahead in realising that oracy can ease their workload burden! The fact is that both students and practitioners can benefit from taking a moment to reflect on their classroom discussions.

The first step is to establish whether your modelling of oracy skills is truly based on a dialogue, or

whether you have in fact embellished your monologic teaching in a manner that would rival a Shakespearean play.

The next lesson is one we all need to master – the age-old habit of thinking before you speak. This goes back to the problem some students may have with understanding what communication actually is. The explicit reference to 'thinking first' derives from the fact that listening is a compulsory component of communication. It's the thought process that goes into deciding our next utterance, which usually clouds our understanding of what has actually been said previously.

The downfall of many a positive relationship is rooted in an inability to communicate effectively, at the heart of which is often the (in)ability to listen!

Embracing oracy skills can also promote established behaviour management strategies, and provide opportunities for restorative dialogues.

'I don't know'

Think about the last time you asked a student a question and they replied with 'I don't know'. What you must consider is whether you read this statement as a lack of understanding on their part, a fear of attempting to answer the question or a lack of engagement.

This can often explored in more detail through further subtle questioning and development. By adopting this technique, students can be taught to recognise that seemingly simple, throwaway comments and remarks can actually be investigated more closely in order to determine a root cause.

Other examples may arise from comments such as 'No', 'Yes', 'I'm fine' and 'Okay', all of which can be interpreted in a variety of different ways, depending on the context.

As practitioners, it's important that we're able to identify and consider such factors in order to maintain positive relationships with our students and resolve any issues that may arise.

The main thing to remember in this respect is that we're all human. We all have emotions, and may sometimes make such comments ourselves. At the same time, we may well find ourselves becoming frustrated and agitated if we happen to be the recipient of such utterances from someone else, particularly when combined with body language or a tone of voice indicative of defiance.

It's our ability to recognise, diffuse and reflect on this which makes us practitioners.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After working in recruitment consultancy and HR, Sarah returned to her passion for teaching. She has also gained a Masters in English Literature and is now a lead examiner for one of the leading exam boards. Since qualifying as a teacher, Sarah has gained experience as both a lead practitioner, and as head of English for a secondary school that is part of a multi academy trust.

A better window on THE WORLD

From 'normalising' to 'usualising', **Katy Lewis** looks at how you can diversify your English curriculum...

If we think of literature as a window on the world, then an English curriculum lacking in diversity will provide only a narrow window for pupils to look through.

If we want to help our pupils recognise, understand and celebrate the UK's multicultural life, we need to provide access to it every time they walk through the classroom door. And yet, at last year's Pearson Edexcel Diversity Webinar, some 32% of attendees stated that diversity is an area that needs more attention across the school curriculum.

Over the past two years we have run a number of such webinars and similar events, aimed at giving teaching staff practical guidance on how to diversify their English curriculum. Here, I would like to pull together some of the great tips and suggestions that have been shared.

Equity versus equality

Bennie Kara, an English teacher and deputy head who joined us as a guest speaker last year, put forward some ideas for how we can diversify the curriculum in a meaningful way, not merely as a bolt-on. She commented that: "It is no longer acceptable to claim your school celebrates diversity because there are posters of Black sportspeople in the PE department corridors, or because there is an effort to put on an assembly on Black history in October every year."

Bennie went on to highlight three things to consider when thinking about a diverse curriculum. Firstly, the need to be an ally, and how supporting someone outside of your own personal experience can be a powerful contributor to the creation of a more cohesive society. Secondly, the importance of embracing equity – not equality – when building a curriculum that embraces, celebrates, highlights and foregrounds diversity. Equity recognises fundamental difference, but then allows for and caters to that difference.

Finally, the necessity of using diverse representation early and throughout the curriculum, to 'usualise', rather than 'normalise'. 'Normal' suggests a standard against which we can all be judged; usual simply *is*.

Telling questions

We were also joined last July by Lauren Binks – KS5 coordinator of English and film, and a shortlisted nominee for 2020 TES English Teacher of the Year. Lauren shared her experience of decolonising her school's curriculum, and explained how she had worked with colleagues across all subject areas.

She described how, "Every child should see themselves in what they are being taught, and every child should be exposed to a wealth of experiences and voices. The more diverse voices we hear, the more we learn."

Lauren then highlighted four questions that her department had raised about the curriculum they were offering to their students:

- Does our current curriculum reflect the diverse society we live in?
- How does it define Britishness?
- What does it show intelligence to look like?
- Does it present under-represented groups as 'other' or 'less than'?

These are questions we can all ask ourselves about any subject, and which can start to give us insights into the size and shape of that window on the world we are giving students to look though.

Lauren also outlined the role students can play in helping to define and shape curriculum changes, and explained how her school's students were encouraged to think of questions they would like to ask their teachers about the content of their curriculum.

The questions students ask might tell us a great deal about how they view the content they are being

taught, and perhaps show us something important about themselves. What would your students ask, and how would you respond?

As Lauren put it, "How is what you teach representative of the class that you see in front of you? Is the white male presented as the pinnacle of intellectual thought? What did you learn at school, and what are you teaching now – and what does that tell you? Do you only look at victim narratives? Do your topics perpetuate or challenge stereotypes?"

Cause for reflection

Ahead of the launch in March this year of Pearson's Lit in Colour Pioneers programme, Esther Menon, lead adviser at Russell Education Trust, shared her reflections on leading curriculum change across the trust's five schools.

Esther encouraged us to think about our own experiences, personally and professionally – how these have shaped us as educators, and how they may influence the stance we adopt during conversations around diversifying the curriculum.

She also shared some of the resources that had fed into the trust's thinking, including talks and writings by Akala, and a range of articles interrogating established literary texts such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men*, which had encouraged them to reconsider their KS3 curriculum. Many schools took the opportunity to remove those previously standard GCSE set texts from their KS3 curriculums following their removal from GCSE specifications in 2015.

That sentiment was echoed by webinar participant Joe Harris, who remarked, "I am not sure in good faith I can continue to teach *Of Mice and Men* due to the explicit and repeated racist language in it. Personally, I am quite conflicted on this one, as I think it is a superb text that unflinchingly confronts the intersectional prejudice in the USA at that time, which arguably still continues today. However, I am starting to think that perhaps it is not my place to tell members of our school community what is and is not offensive."

Esther also shared some questions for use in departmental contexts during conversations on diversifying the curriculum:

- How far has awareness been raised amongst your English teachers?
- What do they bring, personally and professionally, to this thinking?
- How diverse are the authors/texts studied in your courses?
- Are there pockets of staff enthusiasm that can be harnessed to seed change?
- How far will text changes reflect an engaging uplift to curriculum content and promote positive messages?
- What support will they need to develop resources?

There can be barriers on the road to changing a curriculum – not least time, cost and resources – and even when there is a will to affect positive change, there can still be challenges to overcome. If, however, you can act on some of the practical suggestions outlined above, the important work of transitioning to a more diverse curriculum can proceed apace.

THE CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU

Bennie Kara also shared with us some practical strategies on how to build a more diverse curriculum – here are three relatively simple ideas that you could try:

1. REPURPOSE WHERE POSSIBLE

Look at what you've already got and ways in which you can expand the literary universe, rather than necessarily creating a whole new curriculum from scratch. Make sure links are made to texts from different cultures that enrich what you are presenting to students, and show them that different cultures have similar connections – myths, magical creatures, epic journeys, origin stories, etc.

2. EXPAND YOUR GLOBAL HORIZONS

If we only ever signpost to texts that are about white Western Europe, we're implicitly implying that that is what is important, so think about what is being shown and seen. With war poetry, for example, why not use diary entries written by Asian soldiers in order to present a diversity of experience?

3. TACKLE OTHER DOMINANT NARRATIVES

Diversity is not just about race, so take the opportunity to also counter other dominant narratives. You could, for instance, include positive representations of women who are not simply portrayed as victims or deemed evil – the act of showing characters in a positive light, without drawing attention to their victimhood, is one that continues to be important.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katy Lewis is Head of English, Drama and Languages at Pearson; for further information on how you can diversify your English curriculum with Pearson Edexcel GCSE (9-1) English Literature, visit quals.pearson.com/newtexts

Mix and match

To what extent should a school's leadership try to ensure that its teaching staff is sufficiently diverse? Three headteachers share their views with **Adam W. Hunter**...


DOMINIC BERGIN

Your school should have a diverse teaching staff.

That's a pledge enshrined in the government's 2018 Statement of intent on the diversity of the teaching workforce (see bit.ly/ts103-diversity1), which talks of wanting to see 'More women and ethnic minority teachers' in leadership, and doing 'more' for teachers from the LGBT community and those with disabilities.

What national statistics miss, however, are the nuances at play within individual schools, where headteachers must appoint, develop, and empower staff who serve their own distinct community. Every teacher must look at their own school and ask – have we got this right?

I spoke to three London headteachers – Mouhssin Ismail of Newham Collegiate Sixth Form, Katharine Birbalsingh of Michaela Community School and Dominic Bergin of The Elmgreen School – about the diversity challenges they have faced when recruiting and supervising staff.

Cultural capital

"I personally like hiring ethnic minority teachers, just because the kids are 95% ethnic minority," says Katharine Birbalsingh. "If this were a majority white school, then I might not be concerned. And it would be a bit hard if all the teachers were men, or were women. I suppose I'd go out of my way at that point."

For Dominic Bergin, having teachers and students who share heritage allows school to be a more relevant and positive experience: "There are such complexities around these communities' achievements, around their families' experience of schooling and the rich cultural capital those families have," he says. "The school should reflect that."

For these three headteachers, a key consideration is having adults who can share relevant experience, and for students to see role models they can identify with.

"I actually think it's less important when it comes to their teachers," Birbalsingh says. "It's more important that lawyers, doctors, management consultants and so on come and talk to them, so that they can imagine that those paths are also open to them."

Mouhssin Ismail adds, "It's important to have a diversity of views and perspectives, because it enriches the conversation. There are some students who don't think Oxford University is for them. Part of it is seeing someone who looks like them, but more importantly, it's seeing someone from a similar background and realising what it's possible for them to do."

The be-all and end-all

None of the three, however, have any explicit policy on the make-up of their teaching staff, their sentiments largely echoing each others'. "What's more important is that they're being taught by a good teacher," asserts Birbalsingh.

Similarly, Ismail observes that, "For me, whilst diversity is important, the first thing is having talented people. I think sometimes we can get caught up with diversity for diversity's sake, and miss out on talented people as a consequence."

Bergin meanwhile concludes that, "You can't just throw somebody in, or presume they think [ethnicity] is the be-all and end-all of who they are, because it won't be. Every person is different."

Bergin goes on to suggest that governors can often be overtly anxious about diversity among staff, but maintains that it takes time to build the right people, and for those people to come through.

Birbalsingh repeatedly brings the narrative back to her students: "In my earlier days I did surveys with kids, asking whether gender mattered to them, race mattered to them, and so on," she says. "Every time, 98% of kids would say they just didn't care. What they wanted was a good teacher."

The bigger picture

If it isn't the demographic make-up of their colleagues, then, what does diversity actually mean to these three headteachers?

"It's not just about gender or race," maintains Ismail, "it's also about socioeconomic background. Social class isn't talked about much, which is a massive issue in terms of glass ceilings. On another level it's about diversity of thought. I want people challenging my thinking, because if they don't, you miss things. Clearly, if you've got people with different viewpoints and experiences, you'll have a more enriching education."

Birbalsingh, meanwhile, prefers to consider wider societal issues when it comes

KATHARINE BIRBALSINGH

to maintaining a balanced staff room.

"Too often in education, you can sort of predict what people think – on politics, or the environment, or which newspapers to read," she says. "I would find it very difficult to predict what my staff think, and the school tends to attract diverse thinkers. You could have had a different job, come from a working class background, or from the countryside or the city. You want children to be exposed to a real variety of people."

For Ismail, it's not necessarily the teacher's background that matters, as much as their commitment to the young people of Newham. "It is about high expectations," he says. "If you have an Oxbridge degree, and you've had privilege your whole life, that's less important than if you have that passion and drive for supporting disadvantaged people getting to Oxford and Cambridge.

"You can say, 'This is what my peers did when I was growing up, this is what you need to do to bridge that gap.' I quite like the phrase 'meritocratic hubris' – the idea that people get to certain positions supposedly because of their talents alone, but fail to realise it's also due in large part to other people supporting them. It's important to say to young people, 'Whether you're from a middle-class background, or you're white, male or female – they're all there to support you.'"

Pulling the levers

And yet, individual headteachers will still find themselves faced with certain choices when appointing and promoting staff. All three seem to agree that diversity is important, so I ask what levers, if any, they can pull in matters of recruitment and staff development.

Without an explicit policy being put in pace, the make-up of Bergin's staff room has nonetheless changed markedly over his seven-year tenure. This is an organic result, he says, of values expressed in "Internal structures, how you advertise and the language you use about the school."

In Ismail's view, "It's still about meritocracy. If there is an area where there isn't representation, then we encourage more people from a particular group to [apply], if they have the talent and experience. Identifying gaps is one thing; supporting people to think they should be applying is another."

For Birbalsingh, the issue is a complex one with no correct answer. "It's never cut and dried. You're looking for the right fit at that point in time. I would consider diversity, just as I would consider whether I need more presence in the corridors, or stronger organisational skills."

Teachers must therefore examine their own staff rooms, and consider whether the school truly represents their values, and is ultimately doing as well as it can by the students its care.

MOUHSSIN ISMAIL

VITAL STATISTICS

According to findings from the Education Policy Institute (2020) and the latest government data, around 35% of secondary teachers are male (around 15% in primary schools) and the number is falling; around two-thirds of headteachers are female

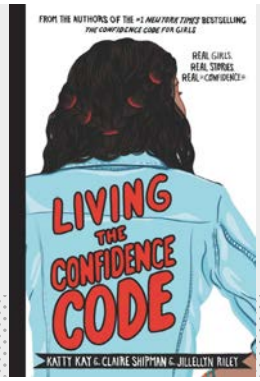
Government data from 2019 shows that 85.7% of all teachers (and 92.7% of headteachers) in state-funded schools in England were White British, compared to 78.5% of the working age population in the 2011 Census

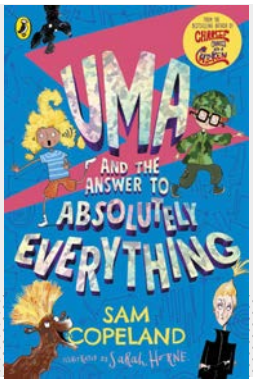
Reliable data describing other measures of diversity are difficult to find; a TeacherTapp survey of voting behaviour dating from 2019 showed that out of 3,317 respondents, 56% supported Labour, 14% Conservatives, 13% Lib Dems and 5% Greens

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Adam W Hunter is a former teacher turned writer, journalist and musician; follow him at @adamwhunter

Off the Shelves

Brilliant titles for you and your students to explore





Living the Confidence Code

(Katty Kay, Claire Shipman and JillEllyn Riley, HarperCollins)

Aimed at a teenage audience, this companion piece to the same authors' 2018 title *The Confidence Code for Girls*, *Living the Confidence Code*, brings together a series of concise biographical sketches that convey the achievements, persistence and vision of 30 remarkable girls. Famous names doubtless familiar to readers (Greta Thunberg and Amika George both make appearances) are featured on an equal footing with Guatemalan schoolgirl Celia Suceni Azurdia Sebastian and The Afghan Dreamers – a six-strong, all-girl group of robotics enthusiasts hoping to establish a STEM school in Kabul. Their stories are told in an approachable and relatable way with accompanying illustrations, photography and the occasional comic strip. Whether it's pored over for instructional life lessons, or used by teachers as a handy collection of inspiring contemporary narratives, your school library would benefit from having a copy.

Those Who Can, Teach

(Andria Zafirakou, Bloomsbury, £16.99)

Readers will likely recognise the author's name from her triumph at the 2018 Global Teacher Prize. This book is a memoir, of sorts – kicking off with a preface that places readers at the Downing Street meeting she had with Nick Gibb in the immediate aftermath of her headline-generating win (and possibly eliciting a cheer from government skeptics when said meeting goes dramatically off script). The book proper takes us on an inspiring tour of Zafirakou's years spent teaching at Alperton Community School in the London borough of Brent, structured around her recollections of individual students. There's plenty of frank insight into Zafirakou's practice and teaching philosophy, but with the students' experiences and stories occupying centre stage. From Fatima, the Syrian refugee with an irrepressible talent for drawing, to the PlayStation-addicted Aaden, recipient of one of Zafirakou's many memorable interventions, there's much here to provoke both familiarity and admiration.

Uma and the Answer to Absolutely Everything

(Sam Copeland, Puffin, £6.99)

This sparky novel grapples with up-to-the-minute concerns surrounding modern technology, while lobbing in plenty of jokes. Our narrator is Uma Gnudersonn – a bookish, inquisitive girl grieving the recent loss of her mother. As if that wasn't enough, she also has to contend with the machinations of the sinister Minerva Industries – a manufacturing company that's threatening to forcibly remove Uma and her neighbours from their homes. Things take a turn for the weird when Uma and her friend Alan Alan (not a typo) witness a car accident involving a drunk alpaca, and come into possession of a wireless earpiece that turns out to be an advanced AI by name of Athena. The pacey caper that follows is shot through with well-judged absurdist humour, accompanied by liberal use of sardonic footnotes, making for a breezy read that younger readers are sure to enjoy.

THE WORD

Find out what our regular student reviewer, Oliver Minter-King (Y13) has been reading this month...

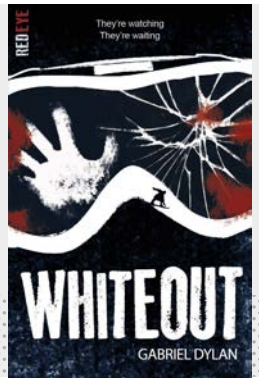
Gut Feelings

(C.G. Moore, UCLan Publishing, £7.99)

A personal story told in verse, C.G. Moore explores the effects of invisible illnesses and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals in a powerful read.

Whilst I'd never read, or even heard of a verse novel before, I found myself quickly absorbed by the author's emotional story of how his life was impacted by Familial Adenomatous Polyposis, as well as the prejudice he faced for his sexual orientation, before slowly recovering from the illness and ultimately becoming more confident in his own being.

Throughout the novel, Moore effectively utilises various poetic techniques, especially repetition, pathos and simile, to build up strong imagery and emphasise his struggles. The verse novel format also allows Moore to be creative with the layout of the novel itself, lending its poetry additional impact. For example, adjectives can often be scattered around the page, or arranged in a spiral shape to symbolise Moore's mental state, creating a standout, personal journey that doesn't pull its punches.

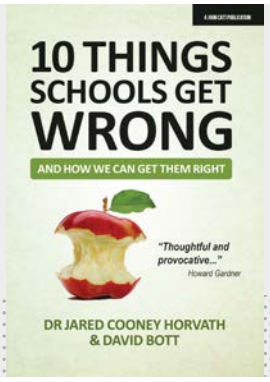


Whiteout

(Gabriel Dylan, Stripes/Little Tiger / Stripes Publishing, £7.99)

Warning – this is not a book to read if you're planning to embark on a school ski trip! It is, however, ideal for enticing teens – especially those who love scary films – to pick up a book. A diverse group of students on a school ski trip to Austria are left stranded in their hotel following a freak storm. Unable to escape, the students and their teachers soon become prey for some truly spine-tingling monsters... After the scene is calmly set, the plot takes a quick turn when the students realise their teachers have disappeared overnight, replaced by some monstrous beings who are intent on hunting them. This debut novel by English and Media Studies teacher, Gabriel Dylan, is horror fiction at its best. Not a tale for the faint-hearted, but as an introduction to the genre, it comes highly recommended.

Recommended by ReadForGood.org



10 things schools get wrong and how we can get them right

(Dr Jared Cooney Horvath & David Bott, John Catt, £15)

Authors Horvath and Bott set out to explain why it's not necessary to impose a wholesale overhaul of the school system, but rather how 10 key areas of modern schooling can instead be thoughtfully evolved to produce revolutionary outcomes. Some of the points raised will come as little surprise – how schools fare better when not obsessing over numerical grades, for example – while others are less expected. At one point, using growth mindset in schools focused on performance is likened to taking up a fad diet without exercising. The authors' grasp of educational history and astute international perspective (rooted in their globe-spanning consulting careers) add up to a thoughtful and engaging read. Those keen to have their educational assumptions challenged and/or suspicions vindicated would do well to pick up a copy.

Meet the authors

DR JARED COONEY HORVATH AND DAVID BOTT

Did you set any limits on the areas you wanted the book to cover?

Our only rule was '*If it can be evolved, it's fair game.*' This means some of the issues sit at the classroom-level – '*How do individual teachers define evidence?*' – while others sit at the larger policy level, such as '*Why do we have a long-form summer vacation?*'

That said, we try to draw everything back to the individual teacher and/or school. The ultimate goal is to inspire teachers to experiment with, and test emerging ideas in their own classrooms without needing support or approval from larger bodies.

The book adopts an international perspective – how easy was that, to maintain given the distinctions between school systems of different countries?

Issues like computers, mindset, and translation transcend boundaries, but there were certainly a few issues – school start time, class period length – that are highly varied. For those, we tried our best to stay with larger 'principles' of learning that would explain each. If readers can understand the underlying foundations behind why each practice might be negative or beneficial, they can adapt these principles to suit their own unique context, be it US-, UK-, or Australia-specific. Teach the why, not the what!

Is international co-operation a precondition for evolving practice?

Countries can share general concepts, but the specific actions required to drive learning may prove different across contexts.

Did writing the book prompt you to reassess your own educational views?

Absolutely. The chapters on computers and rewards, for instance, were originally meant to be far more tempered. However, once you dig into the actual research, it became more and more difficult to construct a 'middle-of-the-road' argument.

Diving deeply into the research ultimately opens up many other avenues of thought. Writing this book has led us to consider other emerging areas perhaps ripe for re-evaluation – flipped classrooms, creativity, general wellbeing. The research on these rarely tells the story many would assume, so there's going to be more to write soon!

Talking about GANG VIOLENCE

Vanessa Rogers offers some advice on how schools should frame classroom discussions around violence, gang culture and crime

Gangs and gang culture can be an emotive topic to discuss. For example, people may have strong views on the right to carry a weapon for protection, 'stop and search' and the arguments for and against joint enterprise law.

Make it clear that whilst expressing differences of opinion is to be encouraged, any actions that harass, scare or harm others are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Be sensitive to the life experiences that some young people may have. For some, it will be the first time they have really considered gangs and gang culture, whilst others may have first-hand experience of varying degrees.

Many parents have strong views on gangs and may have been open in their condemnation, making it hard for young people to openly question some of the things they have seen and heard. This, along with the opinions of family, friends and community leaders, will have informed young people's understanding and shaped their views, both positively and negatively.

Give students the option to pass in discussions and not participate in an activity if it becomes too much or is emotionally upsetting. Explain that they will not be asked to share personal experiences, and where appropriate, signpost young people to external help and support services. If a disclosure is made, follow safeguarding procedures and/or report to the police as appropriate.

A safe learning environment

Learning about gangs, gang-related behaviour and crime involves looking at a range of complex issues. Whilst the majority of young people will have no real life experience of gangs and gang-related crime, it is likely that they will have seen and heard things on social media, music videos, 'gangster' films, video games and traditional news sources, which may or may not be accurate.

To ensure that everyone feels safe participating, take time to explain boundaries and limits to confidentiality, explaining when information would need to be passed on and what can 'stay in the room'. To help with this, ensure that there is a robust set of ground rules in place before starting, and refer back to them as work progresses. These may include the right to feel safe, the freedom to express opinions and values and the right to respectfully challenge.

Other helpful rules could comprise promoting of inclusion and diversity, listening without interrupting, granting students the freedom ask questions to help learning and keeping information confidential (within agreed boundaries).

Whilst all young people are potentially at risk of being drawn into gangs, some are more vulnerable than others. Most research suggests that these more vulnerable young people include those:

- Not involved in gangs, but living in an area where gangs are active
- Not involved in gangs, but at risk of becoming victims of gangs
- Not involved in gangs, but at risk of becoming drawn in by, for example siblings, partners or children of known gang members
- Gang-involved and at risk of harm through their

"Be sensitive to the life experiences that some young people may have"

gang-related activities (e.g. drug supply, weapon use, child sexual exploitation , trafficking and risk of attack from own or rival gang members

Similarly, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including a lack of positive adult role models, witnessing domestic abuse, health inequalities, emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect, all contribute to making some children and young people more 'at risk' than others.

Young people with disabilities can have additional vulnerabilities that make it important to safeguard them from the influence and impact of gangs. The word 'disability' is a collective term for such a huge range of physical, sensory and mental disabilities – including 'invisible' disabilities such as diabetes and deafness – that it is impossible to prescribe for all.

Along this continuum, however, pupils will have different learning needs and abilities, as well as differing levels of experience and understanding of gangs and gang-related crime.

Observing the law

Knives

It is illegal for a shop to sell any kind of knife to someone under the age of 18. This includes kitchen knives and even cutlery. Some knives, such as flick knives, are illegal for even adults to buy. It is illegal to carry a knife, regardless of whether a person says it is for their own protection or if they are carrying it for someone else.

Possession of a knife can mean up to four years in prison, even if it is not used. Causing the death of someone with a knife can lead to a life sentence in prison.

Guns

It is illegal for a shop to sell guns (including imitation guns) to anyone under 18 years old, or sell realistic imitation guns to anyone. It is illegal to carry a gun, again, irrespective of whether a person says it is for their own protection or if they are carrying it for someone else.

Possession of a gun can mean a minimum five-year sentence, while causing the death of someone with a gun can lead to a life sentence in prison.

Other weapons

An offensive weapon is any object that has been made or adapted to cause injury, or is carried with the intention of causing injury. This can cover anything from purpose-built weapons, such as guns and knives, to snooker cues, baseball bats and crutches.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Children and Young People Trafficked for the Purpose of Criminal Exploitation in Relation to County Lines: A Toolkit for Professionals

Guidance produced by The Children's Society in partnership with Victim Support and the National Police Chiefs' Council that aims to address gaps in knowledge and offer suggestions for supporting young people who are being, or at risk of being, trafficked for the purpose of criminal exploitation.

bit.ly/ts103-gangs1

Gangsline

A charitable organisation that provides help and support to young men and women involved in gang culture, as well as training and consultancy services to schools, local authorities and other agencies

gangsline.com

Growing Against Violence (GAV)

A charity that seeks to prevent youth violence and protect young people from exploitation by gangs and grooming, both on the streets and online. GAV delivers age-appropriate workshops in schools and colleges, and is currently offering free online tutorials while social distancing measures remain in place.

growingagainstviolence.org.uk

Redthread

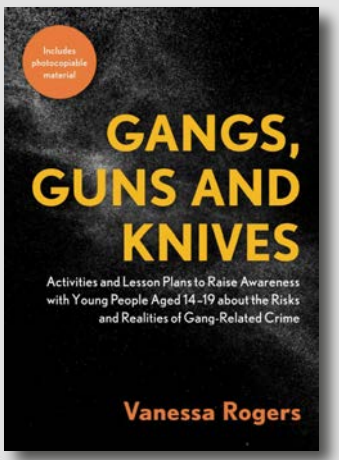
A charity that seeks to help young people navigate their transition to adulthood by integrating trauma-informed youth work into the health sector.

redthread.org.uk

Family members and professionals have an important role to play in helping protect young people from gangs and keeping them away from violence.

Like other public bodies, schools and youth services have a legal duty to prevent crime. If you have knowledge that a crime is about to be committed, or believe a young person is at immediate risk of harm or poses an immediate risk to others, call 999.

If you consider that a young person is vulnerable or 'at risk' of gang-related activity, then assess any additional support needs and follow safeguarding protocols. Check with your line manager and record everything. Report inappropriate content to social media providers and encourage young people to do the same.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vanessa Rogers is a qualified teacher and youth worker with over 10 years' experience at practitioner and management levels. Prior to becoming a youth work consultant, she managed a wide range of services for young people, including a large youth centre and targeted detached projects in Hertfordshire.

For more information, visit vanessarogers.co.uk or follow @ VRyouthwork

This article is based on an edited extract taken from her book *Gangs, Guns and Knives* (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £19.99)

What's New?

Our pick of the latest solutions and innovations for secondary education

1 Reading for all

Written by award-winning authors, and developed in partnership with Barrington Stoke – experts in producing accessible fiction – the Super-Readable Rollercoasters series aims to encourage less confident KS3 readers and support them to become life-long readers.

Each title has been written to help build confidence, make reading enjoyable and enthuse readers by providing them with accessible reading material that encourages them to develop a love of reading. Their shorter length allows readers to build reading stamina, whilst engaging in a gripping, well-told story that will ensure an enjoyable reading experience.

To find out more, and to order an evaluation copy, visit **oxfordsecondary.com/superreadable**; your local Oxford Educational Consultant will be able to guide you through solutions to support your resourcing needs – find out more at **global.oup.com/education/consultant** or by contacting **01536 452 775**

2

Rapid sanitisation

LapSafe® offers an extensive range of mobile storage and charging trolleys – the safest available on today's market. Having specialised in safe power management solutions, enabling convenient charging and data transfer for laptops, Chromebooks, tablets and other mobile devices, LapSafe® has now introduced a new item for 2021 in the form of the UV-C sanitiser station.

This innovative product can be added to an existing LapSafe® self-service locker configuration or used as a standalone product. The semi-automated UV-C sanitising unit will sanitise in around 15 to 20 seconds, deactivating 99% of bacteria and some viruses exposed to its high-intensity UV-C light.

To find out more, contact **sales@lapsafe.com** or visit **LapSafe.com**

3

Data driven

The Design and Technology Association is a membership organisation providing support, resources and training to primary and secondary D&T teachers, enabling them to teach inspiring and engaging D&T lessons. With ties to industry and business, our aim is to promote the importance of D&T – both as a subject, and for its role in helping to create the next generation of UK designers, creatives and engineers.

We have different member options available for secondary teachers, and are currently offering live digital training, free webinars and E-Learning courses, as well as bespoke INSET training opportunities. Our membership has grown to 20,000 members, and we continue to build a supportive network for D&T teachers. For more details, visit **data.org.uk** or email **info@data.org.uk**

4

Be inspired

Arts teacher Andria Zafirakou was always a rule-breaker. At her inner-city London school, where more than 80 languages are spoken, she would tend to urgent needs – mending uniforms, calling social services, shielding vulnerable teens from gangs. And she would tailor each class to its pupils, fiercely believing in the power of art to unlock trauma, or give a mute child the confidence to speak.

So in 2018, when Andria won the million-dollar Global Teacher Prize, she knew exactly where the money would go – back into arts education for all. Andria's story can now be discovered in her book *Those Who Can, Teach – What It Takes To Make the Next Generation* (Bloomsbury, £16.99, published 15th April) – a rallying wake-up call that shows what life is really like for schoolchildren today, and a moving insight into the extraordinary people shaping the next generation. For more details, visit **bloomsbury.com**

5

Close the writing gap

A recent study has shown that Y7 students' writing skills are 22 months behind age-related expectations. Writing Mastery, a component within the full English Mastery programme, has been released as a standalone offer to help teachers develop strong young writers.

Created by teachers for teachers, Writing Mastery is a high impact and easy to integrate language curriculum, filled with essential lesson resources and professional development for teaching grammar, spelling, and language at KS3. A sample pack of Writing Mastery resources can be requested by emailing **partnerships@arkcurriculumplus.org.uk**


Image © ScreenSkills/Erroll Jones

6

Big screen opportunities

ScreenSkills is the industry-led skills organisation for the screen industries – film, television, visual effects, animation and games. We support screen professionals throughout the UK with training and offer information on the jobs in screen to inspire the next generation.

There are hundreds of behind-the-camera jobs. At ScreenSkills.com, your students can read about what each role entails and how to get in, starting with the right subjects to study. You can encourage them to match their technology, engineering, arts and maths skills with roles in screen, and also find a range of resources, including lesson plans and videos, that will help you meet multiple Gatsby Benchmarks. Visit **ScreenSkills.com/starting-your-career** to find out more.

A Level success

Oxford Revise's simple three-step study approach to revision and practice, already popular at GCSE, is now available at A Level. Based on principles of cognitive science, Oxford Revise is designed to help students master the knowledge and skills essential for A Level success.

The approach makes use of knowledge organisers, with clear links and connections to aid understanding, and retrieval questions to improve long-term retention. Also included is lots of differentiated, exam-style-question practice with revistion hints and tips.

Oxford Review offers full coverage for both AQA and OCR A specifications, including support for required practicals, maths skills, and synoptic questions. It's everything students need to revise effectively and fully prepare for their exams, in one convenient book!

Find out more at **oxfordsecondary.com/oxfordrevise**

7

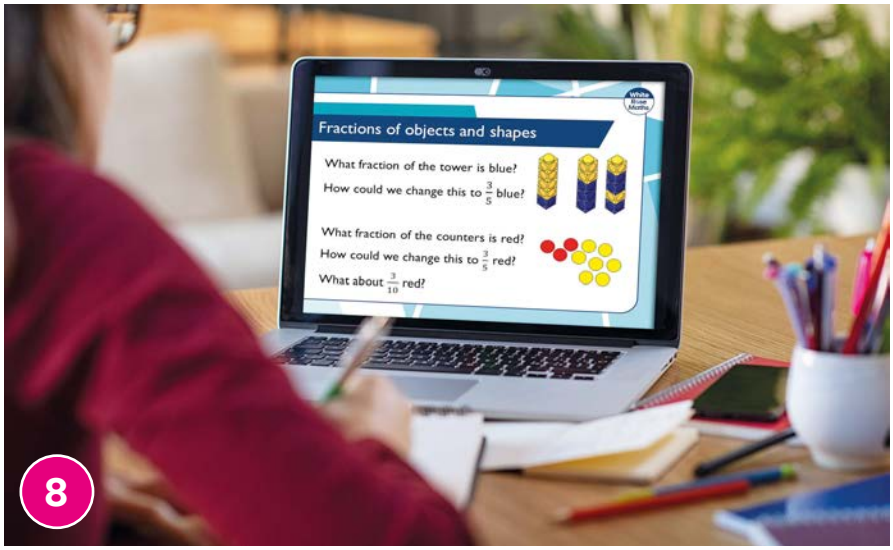
Professional know-how

White Rose Maths' mission is to make every teacher of maths a world-class teacher of maths!

The company runs a range of online CPD events, including individual and whole school webinars, which enable teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge.

There's online training too, plus a comprehensive range of FREE teaching resources for schools to download. The WRM team have also produced a FREE home learning video for every small step in their Schemes of Learning. Each video lesson comes with a short explainer, showing parents clearly and simply how to help their child complete the activity successfully.

To find out more, visit **whiterosemaths.com**



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Left to their own devices

Thought 2020 was a year like no other? Step forward 2021! With an increased reliance on technology, how can you ensure pupils are working safely and productively across their online devices?

Introduce them to the BCS Level 1 Smart Digital Award in e-Safety. Ofqual-regulated and aligned to the National Curriculum, this brand new qualification addresses ubiquitous device use in 2021, giving pupils the tools to build themselves a responsible digital footprint and a solid learning foundation. It's ideal for KS3 classrooms, complete with workbooks/teaching resources and automated testing, and is ESFA-funded for 14- to 16-year-olds. What's more, pupils can achieve a recognised certification. Want more info? Call us on **01793 417 445,** email **bcssales@bcs.uk** or visit **bcs.org/esafety-award**

10

Money talks

Your Money Matters is the only financial education textbook for secondary students in the UK. Covering topics such as borrowing, the world of work, fraud and security, *Your Money Matters* provides young people with the knowledge and skills they need to make wise financial choices, both now and in the future.

First published in England in 2018, editions for each of the devolved nations will be made available later this year, including a dual language Wales edition from September. The updated England edition and brand new Northern Ireland edition – each with their own Teacher's Guide – are now available for download from **young-enterprise.org.uk/YMM**

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When the walls fall down

Graeme Tiffany reflects on how the teaching challenges thrown up by the pandemic echo those that youth workers have faced for some time...

With schools now back, it's worth considering one under-reported challenge presented by the move to online learning – namely 'remote behaviour'. It's a topic that seems to rattle people's confidence and threaten our very identity as educators – not just school teachers, but those making up the army of informal educators in our communities. Think youth workers and community educators.

We've all had an unprecedented shared experience – one consisting of staring into screens while attempting to educate students in an unfamiliar 'remote' space, COVID-19 having made schools and youth centres largely inaccessible to the majority of those who typically use them.

My interest here, however, is to point out that what both school teachers and informal educators have recently lived through has long been a daily reality for a further group of educators – namely 'detached' youth workers who engage with street corner society, and who have been working out there, within communities in public spaces throughout the pandemic.

Engage your audience

To those who have worked in youth clubs, community centres, classrooms or lecture theatres – can you imagine what would happen if the walls framing those spaces suddenly fell down, allowing those present to simply walk away? That's what it's like to be a detached youth worker, and having been one myself for many years, I can confirm the similarities with remote learning.

Intriguingly, once the power constituted by the walls of a learning environment are stripped away, many disciplinary sanctions – detentions, isolation, exclusions – become farcical. What can you do when the young person is already at home? Put them under curfew and prevent them from going outside? During a government-imposed lockdown?

I hope he forgives me for dobbing him in, but during some of my lad's online lessons I've found him strumming his guitar (outside of music lessons), playing games on his phone or heading off for a shower, safe in the knowledge that if pressed, he can always blame 'tech issues'. Yet at other times he seems to be in thrall to some alien force – eyes wide open, furiously scribbling notes, utterly captivated, and even laughing while learning.

What's happening here? Well, to my eyes, it's the prioritisation of engagement – a daily necessity for detached workers, who can never assume the presence of a 'captive audience'. It's down to them – and only them – to keep engaged the audience they have. And what helps with that is researching the community your audience is drawn from, learning about them and building relationships. Without those, you can expect any prospect of learning to disappear on the wind.

Without walls

Those working in the street accept that theirs is a practice without any formal authority or walls. What might seem like powerlessness, however, actually confers a significant prize. Because when those we work with can literally walk away at any point, their choice to remain present unequivocally demonstrates their intrinsic motivation.

This is education *sans murs*; an education spent 'outside', both physically and philosophically. In place of a curriculum, there's an iterative process that shape shifts according to learner interests, stimulated by educators' provocations (usually good questions). There are no exams (sound familiar?), no age-related expectations and a temporality distinct from the 'clock time' presided over by the school bell.

This is a form of practical learning that's centred around a participatory process – the principle that those most affected by certain decisions have a right to be involved in making them.

This 'without walls' approach can be applied just as successfully within school-based remote learning and classroom settings, where notions of working 'outside' take on more of a philosophical character. In fact, it starts to resemble the type of 'democratic education' many of us will have discussed during our training, but forgotten by the time we arrived at our civil society or institutional settings. If we're fortunate, one legacy of COVID will be that those discussions can resume.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Graeme Tiffany is an independent education consultant, scholar, trainer, lecturer and researcher in informal and community education; follow him at @GraemeTiffany

COPING AFTER THE EVENT

Geoff Rickson explains how Samaritans' Step by Step service was able to provide one school community with welcome assistance in the immediate aftermath of a tragic loss

The following article is based on a real-life incident; the name of the pupil has been changed

It was the phone call that no teacher ever wants to receive. It happened on a Sunday evening, just a few days before the end of term.

"I'm calling you as a friend. My neighbour's son has taken his own life. The ambulance and police are there now and the parents are distraught. It's Tom. He's in the sixth form at the school where you teach. I thought you ought to know that this has happened."

Tom was a bright lad. Popular, strong academically, good at sport and had a leading role in next term's drama production. Nobody saw this coming.

The devastating news was passed on immediately by the teacher to the head. Despite being an experienced leader he had never confronted such a situation before, and as far as he knew, none of his SLT had either. He knew that suicide in young people was a real concern, and had read somewhere that an average of around two young people take their own life every week. His first question to himself was, 'What do we do?...'

Prompt, proactive, proportionate

Turning to the internet for guidance and support in the early hours of Monday morning, he came across Samaritans' Step by Step service, which seemed as though it might be able to help.

He arrived at school early that day. He broke the news to the school's staff during the Monday morning briefing, but asked that those present keep the news confidential for the moment, until further details were known and a plan could be formulated and agreed by SLT.

Following the briefing, he then rang the LA and chair of governors to inform both of the situation, and then contacted Step by Step for further advice. Within half an hour, the Step by Step administrator had contacted myself. In my capacity as an advisor for the service, I called the headteacher back and offered to visit the school straight away for a

meeting, while strongly recommending that the next steps taken by the school be be prompt, proactive and proportionate.

A heavy burden

As a Step by Step advisor, my role is to listen, make constructive suggestions on several fronts and answer numerous questions. In this instance – how do we break the news to students and when? Who should do it? Should the announcement be made in year group assemblies or smaller tutor groups? Should there be a single written text for teachers to read out, so that the message and information can be kept consistent? Should a statement be added to the school's website? What happens if the press start making enquiries? What else do we need to think about at this stage?

My initial recommendation was that if the headteacher was managing the situation in school, a different member of staff ought to liaise with the family – in this case, perhaps the head of sixth form. It is too heavy a burden for the same person to attempt both.

The next priority was to work with students to try to avoid suicide contagion.

"Tom was a bright lad. Popular, strong academically, good at sport. Nobody saw this coming."

Research shows that the period immediately following a suicide is critical, and that the risk in adolescence of 'copycat' behaviour is all too high – especially among those within social, psychological or geographical proximity to an attempted or completed suicide. Students were therefore 'triaged' to ensure that those most deeply affected received support first.

Throughout, I ensured that I was always available at the end of the phone to give further support and guidance. It can be invaluable for the person managing the aftermath to have someone outside of school to whom he or she can offload at any time, while maintaining an ongoing conversation in total confidence.

Getting the message heard

After the school holiday, myself and a Step by Step colleague – both of us active Samaritans helpline listeners and also former headteachers – came in to speak at a staff meeting held on the INSET day of the new term. We also offered to provide confidential, individual support for any teaching or non-teaching staff who had been deeply affected by the death.

A few weeks later, the we then accompanied members of staff in giving assembly talks to all year groups, adjusting the content, message and language used for each so that it was age-appropriate.

Some parents asked for a meeting to be held in the school, wanting advice themselves on how to manage discussions with their teenage children. On this occasion, the school opted to advise parents in writing, while distributing copies of Step by Step's parental guidance. Had a meeting taken place, both my colleague and I would have have offered to attend.

A change of plan

At the end of term, we both returned to meet with the school's SLT, assisted with carrying out an honest review of how the incident had been managed and helped make some adjustments to the school's Critical Incident Plan.

The Plan, like those in so many other schools, colleges and universities, had proved to be not quite specific enough to respond to a death by suspected suicide. A detailed and carefully considered procedure, planned in advance – and hopefully never needed – will be an invaluable investment, should this most tragic of events come to pass.

As a postscript to the above, the sixth form students met to discuss the situation regarding the play in which Tom had been cast. They voted overwhelmingly to carry on with rehearsals, however difficult it may be, and to dedicate the performance to his memory.

When it took place some weeks later, Tom's parents showed immense courage by attending. As it finished and the dedication was made, there was not a dry eye in the hall. For many, it proved to be an important step along the road towards some sort of healing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Geoff Rickson is a former headteacher who worked in primary schools in both Cambridgeshire and Devon for three decades before retiring in 2002; he subsequently joined Samaritans as a listening volunteer, and in 2015 joined the Step by Step programme as an advisor

STEP BY STEP

Support from Samaritans' Step by Step service is available free of charge to any school community for as long as it is helpful. The Service is available to all schools, colleges and academies from primary to sixth form, as well as universities and other HEIs. It also supports youth groups, Guide and Scout groups, sports clubs and other organisations affected by a death through suicide or attempted suicide.

The service can be contacted on 0808 168 2528; Step by Step has also produced a series of free online resources to assist schools in supporting grief and minimising the risk of further suicide, which can be viewed via bit.ly/ts103-step

10 KEY STRATEGIES FOR DLD

Sue Marr explains what DLD is and how mainstream teachers can support young people affected by it – while at the same time improving matters for everyone else...

Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) occurs when a child or adult has difficulties with talking and/or understanding language, but doesn't have any other biomedical conditions, such as autism or intellectual disability.

These difficulties can impact on an individual's level of literacy, ability to learn and form friendships, and emotional wellbeing. According to a 2016 study (see bit.ly/ts103-dld1), 7% of children have DLD. That means that in an average class of 30, two children may have DLD. It's much more common than autism, yet remains a 'hidden condition' that's often missed, misdiagnosed or misinterpreted as poor behaviour, poor listening or inattention.

Classroom strategies

Support from professionals can make a real difference to children with DLD. Speech and language therapists and specialist teachers can help them to develop various skills and strategies, and better understand their difficulties and strengths.

Mainstream teachers can support these children by developing an understanding of their individual difficulties, but also by making a series of simple adaptations to their teaching practice with the aid of these 10 key strategies:

1. Time

Allow the pupil with DLD more time to process information and instructions (receptive language) and formulate their answers (expressive language).

2. Use visual support

Visual prompting can help signpost activities for pupils with DLD and trigger memory. Make use of interactive whiteboards, iPads, apps and online videos. Provide visual timetables, language-rich displays and clear, simple signage around the school. Add pictures to your worksheets, and where possible, make use of real-life objects.

3. Sign it

Signing supports the development of expressive language and can help with understanding, since the young person will be given an extra 'visual clue.' The majority of teachers aren't trained signers, but we're all capable of effectively using gestures, facial expressions and body language in our everyday teaching. If you have a pupil with DLD in your class, ensure that you use these skills more overtly.

It might also be useful to familiarise yourself with, or even make up your own, signs for key curriculum vocabulary that the whole class can learn.

4. Do it

Pupils with DLD will respond well when taught using a multi-sensory teaching approach. Try to provide multiple opportunities for kinaesthetic learning – especially in topics that have a heavy language load. Start with the pupils' own first-hand experiences, focusing on life skills and creative tasks where possible. Model the language you want the pupil to use throughout practical activities – this will then support any subsequent spoken or written tasks.

5. Modify your language

Slow your rate of speech, issue one instruction at a time and build the task up. Keep your sentences short and concise, pausing between sentences so that pupils can process the information more easily. Be prepared to rephrase what you say more than once.

Try to use a word order that follows time – for example, 'Finish question 10 before you go outside' will be easier for a pupil with DLD to understand than, 'Before you go outside, finish question 10.' Also, simplify your vocabulary – such as using the word 'make' instead of 'produce'.

6. Chunk information

To support pupils' understanding of everyday instructions, chunk the information by employing pauses. For example, '*Tidy your desk … collect your planner … then line up.*' It's often useful to repeat such instructions. Be explicit, and use literal language. Pupils with DLD struggle to understand inference and language forms such as idioms and metaphors.

7. Words

Pupils with DLD will know fewer words than their typically developing peers. It's therefore vital that we teach them new words, ensuring that key curriculum vocabulary is explicitly taught. Try to plan vocabulary activities that target subject-specific words, as pupils with DLD will tend not to 'pick up' new vocabulary like their classmates.

Consider setting aside five minutes at the start of lessons for 'vocabulary time.' The whole class could benefit from this, particularly in subjects such as maths and science, where the vocabulary used can be highly abstract and involve a great deal of complex temporal or spatial language.

8. Small steps

Break down tasks into smaller, more manageable parts. Provide a tick list, so

> *"The majority of teachers aren't trained signers, but we're all capable of effectively using gestures"*

that pupils can see their progress and know what to do next.

9. Repeat it

Try to recap previous learning at the beginning of each lesson. Many pupils with DLD have difficulties with working memory and will thus benefit from such prompting. Throughout the lesson, repeat what you want the children to learn and model the use of targeted vocabulary. Do the same activity more than once, but make small changes each time to extend learning.

Ask the pupils to repeat back to you what they've been asked to do, so that you can assess their understanding.

EXPERT ADVICE

Moor House School & College in Oxted, Surrey, is one of the few schools in the country specialising in supporting pupils aged 7 to 19 with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), providing individually tailored education with integrated speech and language therapy, for those with the most severe and complex forms of the condition.

Moor House shares expertise and specialist knowledge with the wider community, including staff at mainstream schools and colleges. Bespoke training sessions can be provided to primary schools, secondary schools and further education colleges, with courses suited to the requirements of individual staff and students.

You can find out more about DLD by downloading a free training presentation for teachers created by Moor House Training & Research Institute, titled 'DLD – What every Teacher needs to know!', from the school's website via moorhouseschool.co.uk/dld-training

10. Model it

Whether spoken or written, always model the language you want the pupil with DLD to use. Provide them with a toolkit of phrases and sentence structures they can use to answer specific question forms.

These 10 strategies shouldn't be viewed as 'extra workload' for teachers. Supporting pupils with DLD is ultimately about maintaining good classroom practice – making lessons visual and/or practical, prioritising vocabulary, using innovative resources, maintaining consistency and allowing time for consolidation of learning.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sue Marr is an experienced teacher, having previously worked in both mainstream and SEN settings; she has taught pupils with DLD for many years, and possesses extensive experience of devising and delivering a mainstream curriculum that's been highly differentiated for the language needs of the pupils in her class

Want to be a surgeon? Study art

Hannah Day explains why a solid grounding in the creative arts is vital for developing adaptable, resourceful and independent learners

When I started teaching, the buzz phrases of the day were 'transferable skills' and 'cross-curricular learning', promoting the idea that every subject imparted skills that were useful in other subjects and across a student's wider life.

So why can schools make such narrow links between a students' GCSE and A Level choices and their post education outcomes? And why do we often present the idea that art education in particular is only relevant for those interested in the creative industries?

Skill building

Let's look at the structure art teachers will use to guide students through a project, and see what skills it builds. First, you research artists and art movements, learning about concepts, themes and experiences. You then have to make sense of, analyse and explain them,

Skills learnt: Research, comprehension and written communication

You then experiment and explore these ideas further in practice.

Skills learnt: Problem solving, craftsmanship, practical and fine motor skills, judgment, refinement, ongoing assessment and target setting

Finally, you refine your work, developing it into a more focused expression of your ideas and aims.

Skills learnt: Perseverance, reflection, selection based on critical review

Adding real value

Can you name a degree, or indeed any job, that doesn't require research, analysis, judgment of progress and the ability to manage one's own work? And to demonstrate these within a set of expectations and within a set timespan?

Recent findings from The Cultural Learning Alliance showed that structured art activities increased students' cognitive abilities by 17%. Those are abilities that students will be taking out of your art rooms, into the wider school and beyond.

This is backed up by further research from across the globe, such as Ludke *et al*'s work showing how singing can help with acquiring language skills. Schellenberg, meanwhile, identified links between dance and drama and increased social skills. Any would-be carers, youth and social workers – take note...

Creative absence

The defence lawyer John Henry Brown, perhaps most famous for representing Ted Bundy, once said that "Performing is part of the job... I did theatre in high school." It's thus not surprising to find that the UCAS website lists drama, music, and performing arts at the top of the 'related subjects' section on a page detailing the job of a Barrister.

We can also look to science. Roger Kneebone, professor of surgical education at Imperial College London, was quoted in *The Guardian* as stating that the lack of hands-on practical skills taught at schools was leaving students without an understanding of how the physical world works. In his work with the Edge Foundation, Kneebone has further argued that creativity should be at the very heart of education, and that its comparative absence from the current curriculum harms not just the creative industries, but also the field of scientific study.

This wider link between the arts and sciences is well established, of course – perhaps most famously in the work of Leonardo Da Vinci that seamlessly spans both, but also that of the Romantics, through their fascination with the natural world and belief that art could be used to question and understand in much the same way as science. The novelist and chemist CP Snow once lamented how the arts and science were starting to constitute 'two cultures', and urged that bridges be built between them.

Whether we teach a creative subject or form part of a school's wider subject provision, we must be clear as to the value of creative education, and carefully explain how the skills it cultivates can contribute to all career paths in one way or another.

Put simply, who should be studying art? Make that a resounding *everyone*…

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hannah Day is head of visual arts, media and film at Herefordshire and Ludlow Sixth Form College, where she has responsibility for overseeing the department's teaching and strategic development

BRIDGING THE TRANSITION

Rhiannon Packer and **Amanda Thomas** explain how input from practitioners, parents and pupils can ensure a smooth transition for your incoming Y7s

Transition is a complex process, regardless of age, and an experience common to us all. The move from primary into secondary school is seen as a significant rite of passage and a key element in the process of becoming an adult.

The transition process itself typically involves a number of stakeholders – Y6 pupils, practitioners from both primary and secondary settings and parents/caregivers – and entails both continuity and change. Continuity in terms of the educational context (and perhaps a social one too), and change with respect to the student's increased independence and responsibility, plus the expectations that will now be placed on them.

There's a wealth of research available on the social, emotional and academic impact of transition on learners, and yet the voices of those most involved in the transition process – the students themselves – often aren't heard. Both of us were greatly interested in hearing what those voices had to say about their experiences of leaving Y6 and entering Y7.

Pillars of support

It's worth first considering what precisely we mean by 'transition'. Traditionally, transition used to be seen as a one-off event, with a visit to the new setting constituting, at best, a small part of the overall experience.

The modern transition process now tends to encompass far than this, with numerous transition events incorporated into the typical academic timetable. This newer, more involved transition process can be seen as more of a bridge, with pillars of support either side for facilitating learners' journey from A (the primary school) to B (the secondary school).

To extend the bridge analogy further, it's important to recognise the potential potholes that might cause a learner's traversal to stutter, stall or even fail completely. Typical concerns identified by pupils include the size of their new setting, a fear of getting lost, their ability to make new friends and whether they'll be able to cope with the increased academic demands expected of them.

Parents and carers will have their own set of apprehensions concerning transition – particularly that the relationship they have with their child's secondary school may be more distant compared with what they've been accustomed to from their (usually smaller) primary school setting.

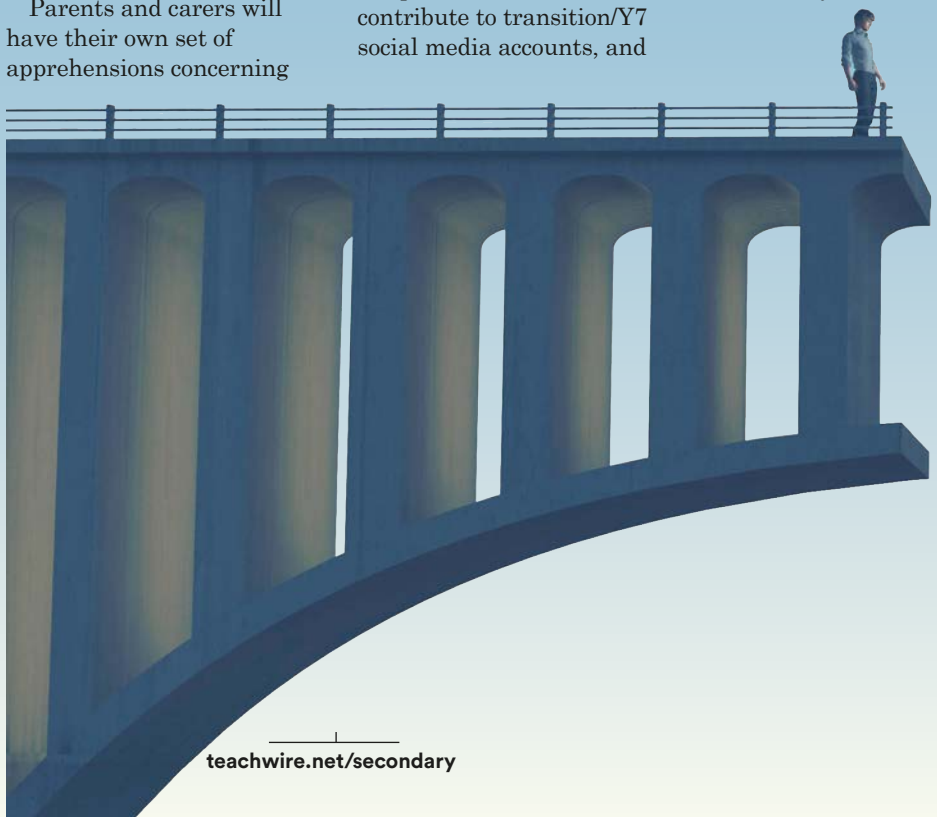
Consistency and certainty

Our research has uncovered many examples of good practice in preparing learners for transition. These include organised visits to secondary schools prior to Y6 which don't focus on transition, but rather aim to provide pupils with opportunities to familiarise themselves with the secondary setting.

We've also seen schools offer residential visits to their feeder primary schools, half-termly meetings between heads of Y7 and Y6, parents invited to contribute to transition/Y7 social media accounts, and organised visits by Y7 students to their respective feeder schools, where they present talks to Y6.

In one example, we saw generic transition events arranged across the academic year for pupils in Y6, alongside an offer of more tailored support for those pupils needing extra assurance. The latter would usually be arranged after meetings between practitioners, or at the request of parents or pupils. From our conversations with pupils, parents and practitioners, it became clear to us that such events could have a significant impact upon the success of the transition process.

Despite this evidence of good practice, however, it's also apparent that such approaches aren't consistent. This has been a year of heightened uncertainty, which has at



times compelled practitioners to adapt and amend their lesson plans, often with very little notice. Inevitably, this uncertainty has also impacted upon transition.

A challenging time

One parent recently described to us how, aside from one virtual open day at her child's new school, no other transition activities had been arranged. When she raised this with her child's Y6 teacher, the response was that the school 'Will look after him'. The uncertainty this parent will already be feeling around their child's forthcoming move is thus compounded by this lack of social interaction, and limited opportunity for them to discuss their feelings and thoughts with peers.

Social isolation, lack of peer support and disrupted school routines are all concerns that have been raised by practitioners. One noted to us that their school's Y7 had settled in well, despite the disruption. They had, however, ensured that the year group in question spent an extended amount of time with their form tutors, and further acknowledged the value of having a strong pastoral team. Form tutors and heads of year made regular wellbeing calls to check in on pupils, which strengthened relationships with parents and carers and led to positive outcomes amid a challenging time.

We heard another practitioner express concern that due to year group bubbles, it wasn't possible to bring her school together as a whole. As a consequence, she felt the school had been unable to consolidate its community ethos, resulting in several bullying incidents of a type not seen at the school previously.

Crucial collaboration

The school experience for current Y7 pupils has thus largely involved a mix of face-to-face and blended teaching, but schools have made a concerted effort throughout to ensure pupils feel settled and part of their new settings.

One pupil commented to us that while she valued the virtual transition week and opportunities she'd had to meet with staff and older pupils, the size of the school when she arrived in September was daunting, as she hadn't had the chance before then to visit the school in person. Wearing masks during break times had also made making new friends challenging, yet despite this, she still felt excitement at leaving primary school and developing greater independence.

Our original research focused on listening to the voices of all involved in the transition process, and it was evident that their opinions had a direct influence on the organisation and effectiveness of the transition process. Collaboration between practitioners, and with learners and parents/carers, remains crucial in establishing a smooth transition process.

Given the challenges presented by COVID-19, it's clearer now than ever that those voices from across your school community need to be heard and acted upon, if we're to ensure that the transition from Y6 to Y7 is successful for all concerned.

TRANSITION INNOVATION

The current Y7 cohort won't have experienced the full transition programmes they could normally expect. In place of such activities – full days at their new secondary school, extracurricular opportunities for parents to meet with staff – primary and secondary schools alike had to be creative in ensuring their pupils were prepared for transition:

- **Social media has played a key role in transition arrangements over the past year.** Last summer, a number of primary schools organised leavers' assemblies that included video clips of learners, practitioners' reminisces about certain year groups and the issuing of yearbooks compiled from material submitted by parents.
- **Some secondary schools organised virtual school tours and 'transition weeks,'** during which prospective pupils were set daily challenges via social media.
- **More traditional approaches have included video talks given by key members of staff,** on how eager they are to meet the newest members of their school, and older pupils discussing key aspects of the school day.

These examples demonstrate the critical role of practitioners in facilitating the transition process – by fostering a sense of belonging, identifying concerns new pupils might have and addressing them directly, and outlining the new expectations that will be made of them.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rhiannon Packer (left) is a former secondary teacher and head of year, now based at Cardiff Metropolitan University; Amanda Thomas is a former primary teacher and FE practitioner, and currently a senior lecturer in early years education at the University of South Wales

Their book, *All Change! – Best practice for educational transitions* (Critical Publishing, £16.99), is co-authored with Catherine Jones and Philippa Watkins, and is available now

SECONDARY RESOURCES FROM White Rose Maths

At White Rose Maths, our mission is to make every teacher of maths, a world-class teacher of maths!

With 80-90% of primary schools using our materials, we're now focused on building on this foundation for secondary schools and students. We've created an ambitious and coherent five-year plan from Year 7 to Year 11, with our Schemes of Learning designed to suit all students entering secondary schools, regardless of their levels of prior attainment.

WHAT WE OFFER

FREE

SCHEMES OF LEARNING

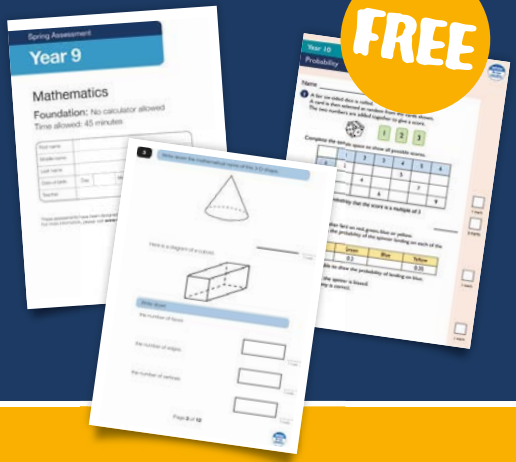
By June, we'll have complete schemes for Years 7-11, including:

- Yearly overviews
- Small steps progression
- Key representations guidance
- Key vocabulary and questions
- Low attainer guidance
- Downloadable and editable exemplar questions.

ASSESSMENTS

Our assessments are vital in achieving excellence in maths, ensuring progress is being made and content has been understood. These include:

- End of Block assessments
- End of Term assessments (Core, Foundation & Higher papers).



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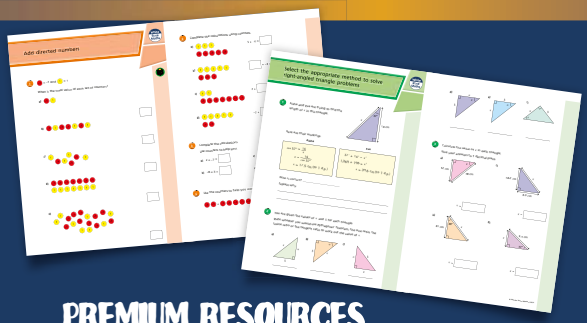
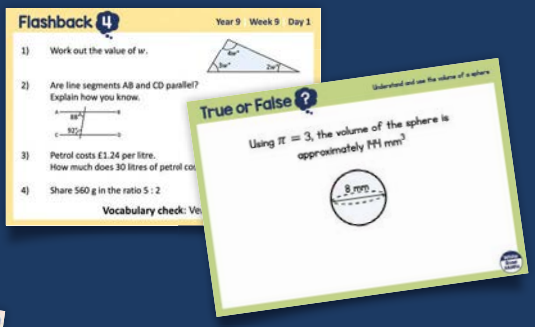


PREMIUM RESOURCES

By June, our Premium Resources will be fully completed and available for Years 7-11!
For each block of learning, this includes:

- A worksheet for each small step in our SOL, available in three formats
- Flashback 4 starters – a series of quick questions covering something from the previous lesson, last week or earlier in the year



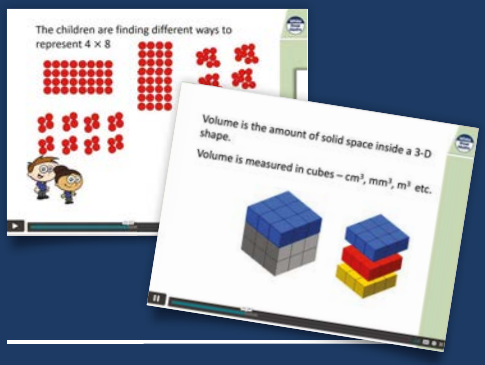
- True or False questions – perfect to get your class thinking and to encourage discussion
- Unseen End of Term assessments
- The PowerPoint Slides we used to create the Home Learning videos.

Our worksheets are also available as full colour Printed Workbooks and can be delivered either to school or directly to parents.

FREE

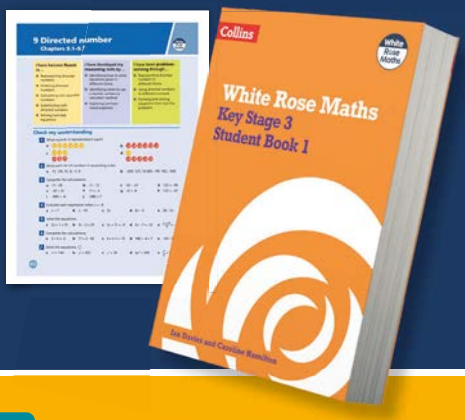
HOME LEARNING VIDEOS

Our free video lessons for Years 7, 8 and 9 are perfect to use at home or in school as part of a blended learning approach.



SECONDARY TEXTBOOKS

We're working in collaboration with Collins to produce new textbooks and teacher guides for KS3 which are perfectly aligned to our Secondary Schemes of Learning. Book 1 is available now, with Book 2 coming in May and Book 3 in September.



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FOCUS ON: STEM

Given the rapid changes taking place across today's information industries, we look at whether students are learning the skills they need – and at how schools can make their science labs COVID-safe...

How valuable and relevant are the lessons students are currently being taught in STEM subjects?

THE AGENDA:

Computer science
WITHOUT LIMITS

Curriculum leader and former IT professional **Adrian Briggs** reflects on his efforts at broadening the appeal of computer science, and why there's much more to the subject than coding alone

One of the problems we have at the moment is that a large number of students assume that computer science is 'just coding'. There's been so much emphasis on getting students trained up as coders, that that's pretty much all they think it is.

One of our key priorities at Middleton Technology School has therefore been to make sure they have a better understanding of what computer science actually is – not just coding, but also the actual workings of computers and an awareness of how to use the internet safely. Given how much more reliant students have become on technology in their homes, it's more important than ever that they can confidently and effectively use the devices they have.

We don't want them to be overly cautious, or afraid of the technology they have access to, but we do want them to use it for more than its basic purpose, while making computer science more accessible and available to everybody.

Shifting attitudes

The subject still carries some cultural baggage, but we've seen attitudes start to change. We've previously hosted many after-school computing clubs for primary children, who are already familiar with coding from lessons in their setting. It's obviously not been possible to host these in person of late, but we've been able to do so via Microsoft Teams.

More broadly, the switch to online learning at Middleton has been interesting to observe. In my experience, at least, it seems to have given girls more confidence in computer science lessons, since they're not in the classroom and the boys aren't looking at them. That appears to be a cultural issue – girls have often been reluctant to raise hands in lessons and answer questions, because it's still deemed to be a 'boys' subject'. I've seen the boys actually become less vocal in online lessons, at the same time that the girls are starting to thrive.

This year, we've had a number of girls choosing to do GCSE computer science because they have ambitions to become architects, and could therefore benefit from knowing how to lay out network cabling and infrastructure in buildings.

That ties into the various programmes we regularly sign up for – not just on the e-safety side of things, but also code clubs for those kids who are into coding and game design, as well as initiatives related to practical computer science for those wanting to explore hardware and build computers of their own.

We've also signed up to become a Cisco Networking Academy, and have joined the iDEA Award programme, which lets students earn badges for developing their digital, enterprise and employability skills. Of course, we also still have our coders, who regularly participate in various hacking challenges and the worldwide Hour of Code event, as well as Safer Internet Day.

Real-world examples

Our subject puts us in something of a unique position. With technology changing all the time, our specification has to change with it at least every two years, as new things are added by the exam boards. Luckily for us, however, our students tend to be highly engaged with computer science in different contexts outside of the classroom, which we try to incorporate into lessons where we can.

That might involve us looking at recent news stories. We recently did some teaching around hacking, ransomware and similar activities, building on the NHS hack that took place in 2017 – encouraging students to research the topic, and exploring its links to different areas. I'm always looking for ways of building similar real-world examples into the curriculum.

To highlight a more recent

> *"I've seen boys become less vocal in online lessons, and at the same time seen girls thrive"*

example, the PlayStation 5 came out last Christmas, but people have found it very difficult to purchase one. We'll ask our students to consider why supplies of this particular form of technology are so limited and what's stopping it from getting into people's hands.

A new addition to this year's curriculum has been artificial intelligence. I saw in the news recently that an AI in Japan that was originally programmed for shop checkouts, to distinguish between different types of pastry, has been re-programmed to identify cancer cells. If I raise that with my KS4 computer scientists, their first instinct will be query that, due to the popular misconception that AIs are essentially robots, because that's what films have taught them. Well, this one isn't – but look what it managed to do!

Hands-on hardware

Up until the first lockdown, there hadn't been much call for us to closely examine how the department was resourced in terms of devices, technology and software. This year, however, the IT manager of our MAT, Great Academies Education Trust, was able to buy devices in bulk, which has been a massive boon for our students.

When it comes to teaching lessons around networking equipment and similar technology, teachers are often limited to just describing what a server or network switch is, since the physical hardware is often expensive and difficult to source. We've been very lucky, however. Having previously worked as an IT support engineer, I have a good relationship with our IT support guys, who now pass on to us any networking equipment they have that's been decommissioned or which they can't use anymore.

This allows me to not just show our students what a server physically looks like, but actually create an ad-hoc network configuration right there in the classroom that the students can study. The same applies to old computers, which we'll open up so that the class can get a good look inside.

What we really want to impart, however, is that a 'computer' is now effectively any technology they can hold in their hands. The more we're able to drill that into them – that computer science doesn't just revolve around big black boxes sat on desks – the more likely it is that we'll be able to engage them in thinking much more deeply about computer science.

Next steps

It's obviously been harder than usual to determine last year's student destinations, but it seems to be an interesting mix. It used to be just our coders going on to do computer science at college, along with the odd one or two more interested in the internals of computers who wanted to do an apprenticeship.

The year before last, however, three students went on to do game design at Manchester University, two of whom were girls, which was fantastic to see. We're gradually increasing the number of girls picking computer science as an option, but it's still nowhere near enough.

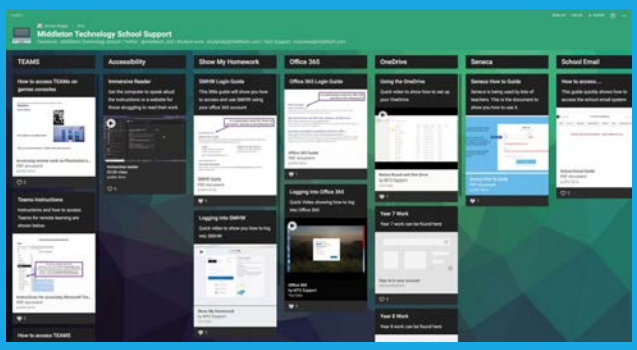
There are now more 'hands on' students interested in pursuing apprenticeships, though for the coders, the next step is still college. I'm now hoping that the incoming T Levels will help to mix things up further, and give our students even more options to explore.

TEAMS TALK

As the school's lead teacher of virtual digital technology, it was my responsibility to show the rest of the school how to use Microsoft Teams. That involved getting our staff in before September 2020 and showing them exactly what they needed to do, then doing the same for our students when they returned.

It was necessary to put a large volume of policies in place to ensure that pupils were sufficiently safeguarded, which involved a series of meetings where we discussed the IT freedoms we wanted them to have. My technical background allowed me to work closely with our IT support team and pass on what they were telling me to non-technical colleagues in a way they could easily understand.

Early on in the process we received many queries from students and parents, so I made a series of support videos for both groups and made these available via a dedicated support page on the school's website which can be viewed via bit.ly/ts103-stem1



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adrian Briggs is curriculum leader of computer science and lead teacher of virtual digital technology at Middleton Technology School; for more information, visit middtech.com or follow @Middtech_sch

TOMORROW'S SKILLS TODAY

What can schools do to ensure that young people today possess the skills they'll need to help address the tough technological challenges that are set to unfold in the coming years?

The rapid evolution of the modern labour market, and the new training and skills it demands, have caused young people's horizons to change at pace.

This has resulted in a number of traditional jobs being radically altered or replaced altogether. Simultaneously, many more opportunities are being created across a range of growing sectors.

It's therefore key that young people feel confident that they have the skills and qualifications they'll need to thrive in tomorrow's world.

Looking ahead, there's no doubt that many challenges lie in store. From the task of rebuilding the economy after the COVID-19 pandemic, to the demand for sustainable energy sources and the many other pressing needs of a growing population, the science, technology and engineering industries will have crucial roles to play in developing viable solutions.

And yet there continues to be a considerable shortage of scientists and engineers in the UK. According to the 'UK Skills mismatch report 2030' research paper produced by the Industrial Strategy Council (see bit.ly/ts103-isc), 1.5 million workers are set to be acutely under-developed in at least one STEM skill by 2030. The DfE's recent 'Skills for jobs' white paper (see bit.ly/ts103-dfe-skills) meanwhile highlighted a significant shortfall in workers with technician-level STEM skills – a key driver of economic innovation and growth.

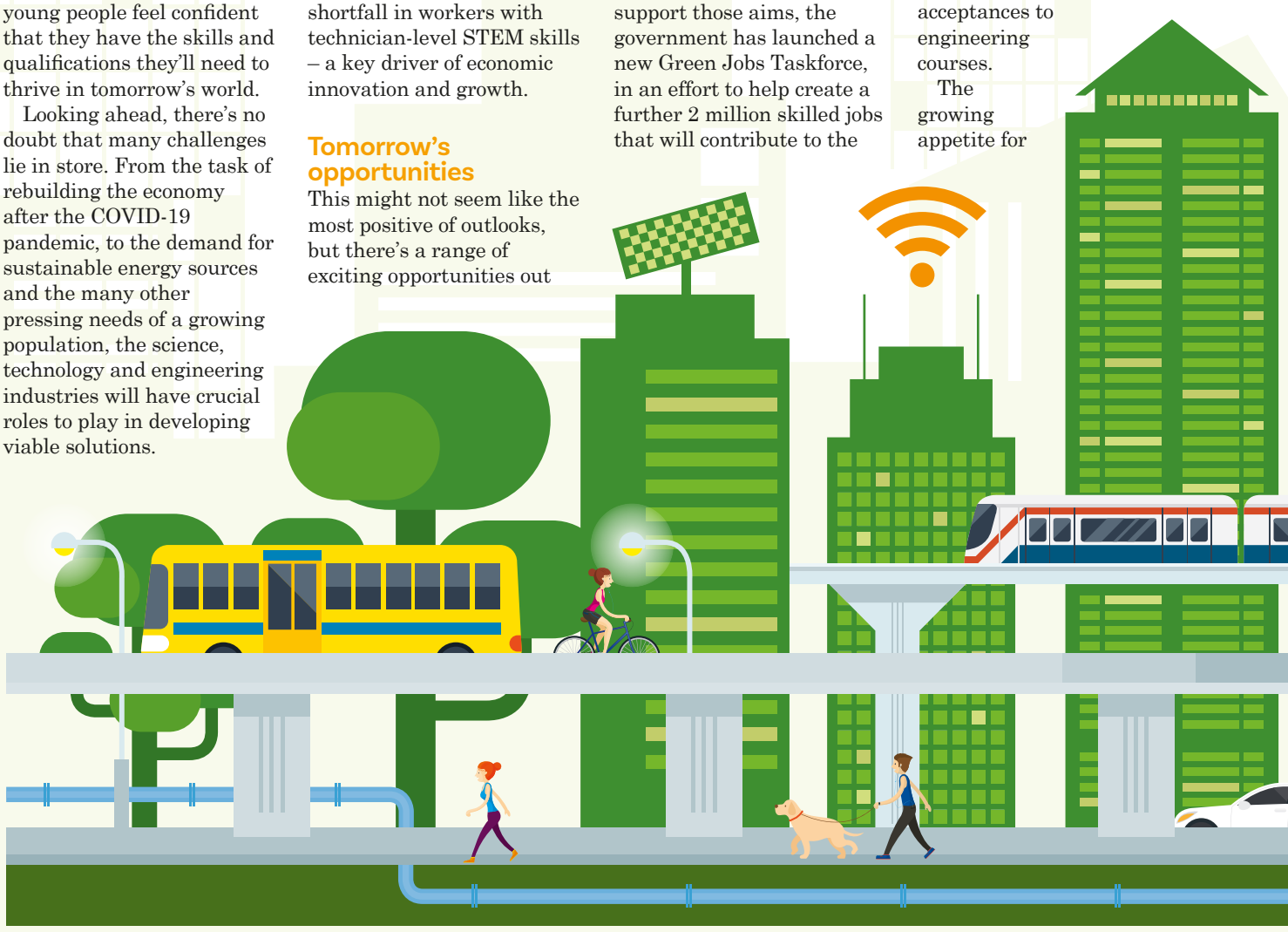
Tomorrow's opportunities

This might not seem like the most positive of outlooks, but there's a range of exciting opportunities out there for young people when it comes to gaining new skills and qualifications.

For starters, many sectors are in the process of growing, and will therefore need a sizeable skilled workforce in the coming years. Of particular note is the rapidly developing green economy, fuelled by businesses' increasing focus on promoting sustainable development and developing products geared towards environmental stability. To support those aims, the government has launched a new Green Jobs Taskforce, in an effort to help create a further 2 million skilled jobs that will contribute to the UK reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

Another cause for optimism is the increasing appetite for STEM degrees. The latest figures from UCAS indicate a big shift towards subjects based around engineering, computer science and other technologies. Equally promising is the 50% rise in sign-ups to computer science courses we've seen over the last 10 years, alongside a 21% increase in acceptances to engineering courses.

The growing appetite for



these subjects, however, begs the question – how can we make sure that students are fully prepared to tap into all these opportunities, and possess the skills they'll need to succeed in the jobs of the future?

Transferable and technical skills

The emergence of new industries brings with it the need for new technical and transferable skillsets. The World Economic Forum's latest Future of Jobs report (see bit.ly/ts103-wef-2020) highlights critical thinking, problem-solving, originality and initiative as among the top skills being increasingly sought out by employers.

In short, we need a talent pipeline of creative and entrepreneurial minds, who have acquired a range of experience, if we're to develop the most workable and innovative solutions for tomorrow's biggest challenges.

On the technical side, young people will need to couple these kinds of transferable skills with the right qualifications and training. With the rate of technological change only getting faster, the latter will be crucial to building an agile and adaptable workforce.

At present, only 4% of young people achieve a higher technical qualification by the age of 25, despite the need and demand for such qualifications growing ever higher each year. That's why technical education has been placed squarely at the heart of the DfE's aforementioned white paper, which includes plans to invest £65m in supporting technical training needs at a local level.

If we're to provide sufficient employment and development opportunities for young people in future, we're going to need more strategies and initiatives of a similar ilk.

> **"We need a talent pipeline of creative minds"**

Curriculum connections

Students can be encouraged to develop this blend of transferable and technical skills via a number of business-led programmes, many of which will include curriculum-linked resources, virtual workshops and other opportunities that support the teaching of such skills in school.

The Bright Ideas Challenge, Shell's cross-curricular competition for ages 11 to 14, is just one example. Drawing on a variety of cross-curricular areas – ranging from Science and careers to D&T – The Bright Ideas Challenge puts students' innovative and critical thinking to the test by asking them to come up with solutions to the big energy challenges that major cities will face in 2050. Their ideas will need to dazzle a panel of STEM experts, by showing how they would creatively and effectively power tomorrow's cities to be clean, healthy and sustainable places to live. Regional winners will be selected across Great Britain, with big prizes up for grabs.

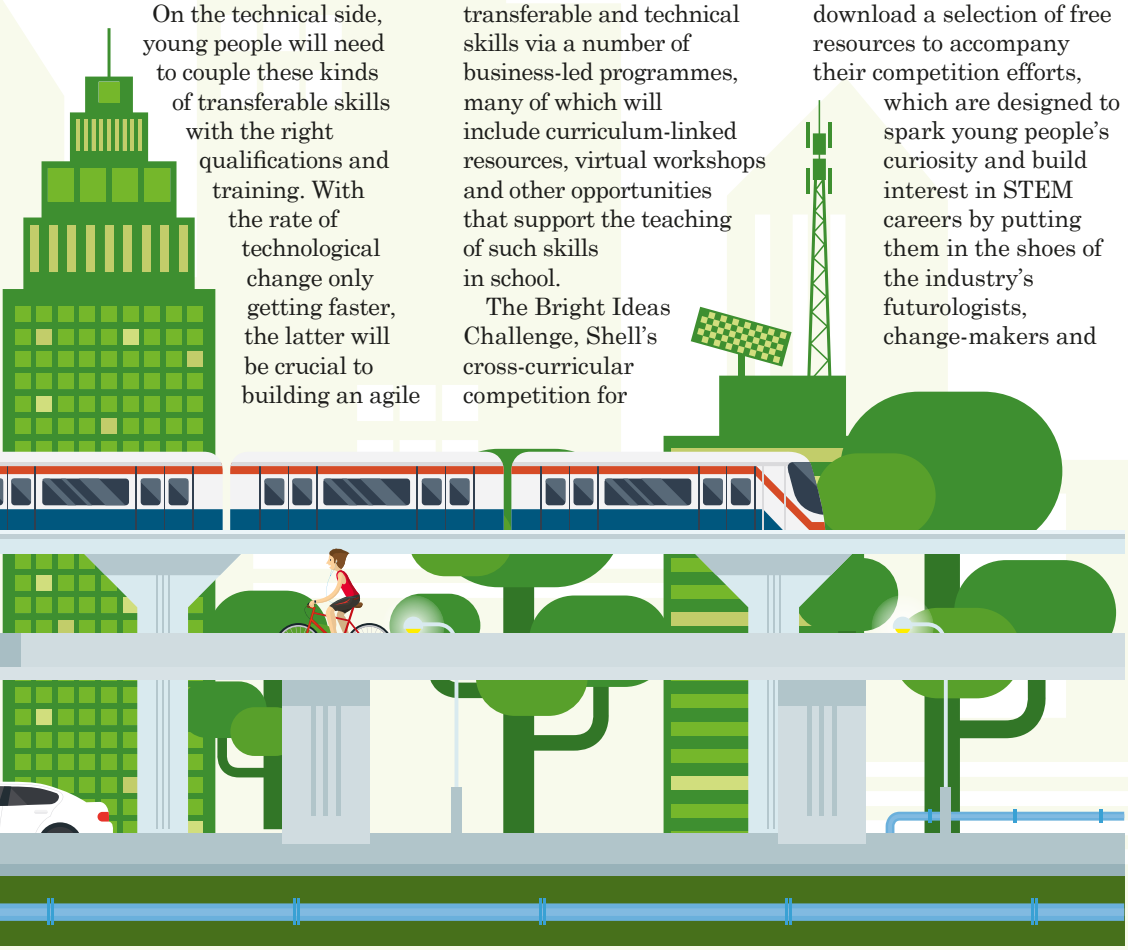
Creativity and problem solving are at the heart of the competition. Schools can download a selection of free resources to accompany their competition efforts, which are designed to spark young people's curiosity and build interest in STEM careers by putting them in the shoes of the industry's futurologists, change-makers and innovators. According to one teacher who delivered the competition last year, "Working on The Bright Ideas Challenge really broadened my students' horizons and encouraged them to think creatively about the issues we face regarding energy."

Students who succeed in producing winning entries will get to flex their technical muscles by participating in practical workshops alongside real engineers and science communicators, where they will be tasked with prototyping and presenting their ideas as part of a fun, enriching and hands-on experience.

Throughout, they'll get to experience first-hand the range of skills they'll need to pursue STEM-related careers, as they collaborate with experts in bringing their ideas to life and exhibiting them before an audience of industry leaders.

The winning teams will also earn cash prizes of up to £10,000, enabling their schools to boost their STEM offers, as well as student goodie bags – which in the past have included 3D printers, coding club subscriptions and more to help them further nurture and develop their passion for STEM and innovation.

The calibre and creativity of the Bright Ideas Challenge entries we've seen over the years has been truly astounding. That surely leaves space for some optimism when it comes to the prospect of schools being able to produce tomorrow's scientists and engineers!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Fiona Dyer is a Social Investment Adviser at Shell UK

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The Oxford Revise app is also available for AQA GCSE Sciences.
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"Looks to be a brilliant resource. I'll be recommending them to my A-level students"
Head of Science

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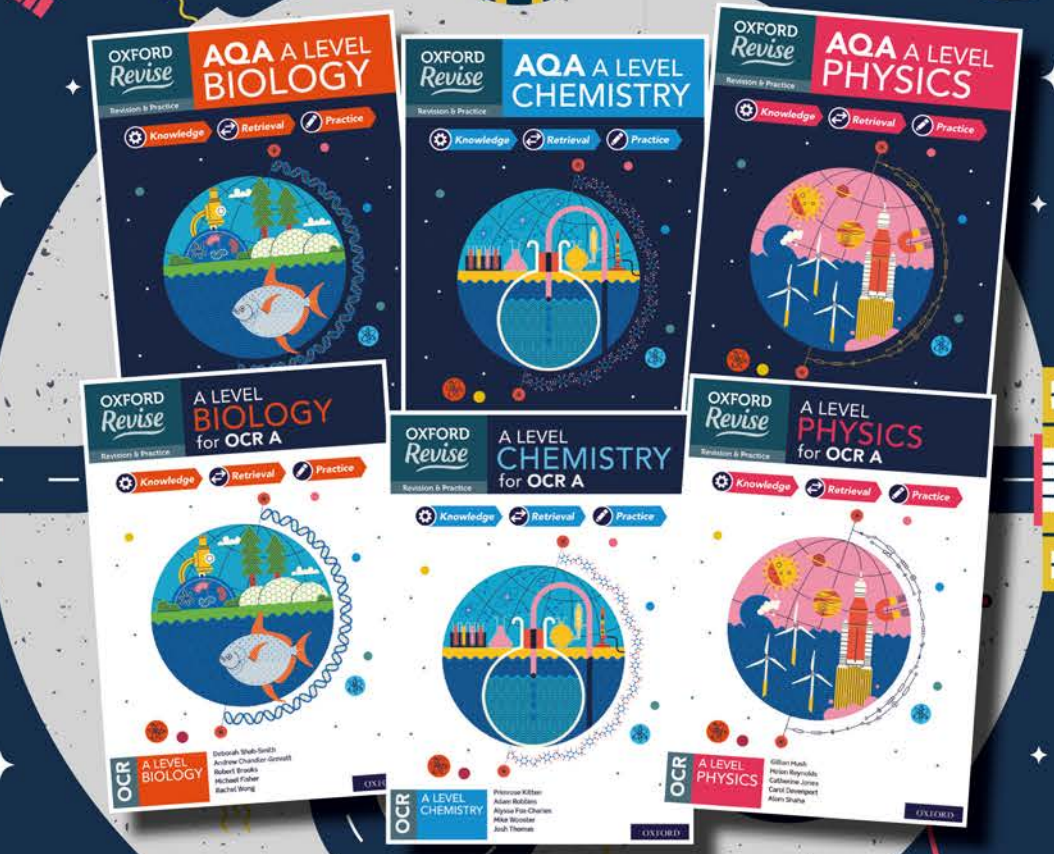

"My Year 13 were very excited when I showed them a copy"
Head of Science

www.oxfordsecondary.com/oxfordrevise

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Save our science practicals

Running science practicals in the post-lockdown world is a big challenge, but with imagination and collaboration they'll be able to continue, says Reece Broome

Science without practical lessons is a bit like trying to play football without pulling on your boots and kicking a ball. Practicals are crucial for helping students make sense of many key concepts across biology, chemistry and physics. They're also a great motivator, providing a crucial hook that can pull students further into a subject that they may well go on to study at a higher level.

Here at Torquay Academy, we've tried to overcome the obstacles placed in the way of our practical science provision by COVID safety regulation through thinking creatively and collaboratively. We're proud of the fact that every student in each year group has conducted at least one practical this academic year, but it hasn't been without difficulty.

Safety first

The main challenge we face is that the science equipment employed in practicals is used across bubbles. That means having to quarantine equipment for 72 hours before it can be used again.

There's added pressure for practicals to go smoothly, since repeating them isn't an option. Before the pandemic, you could simply reorder the same equipment if you were unable to cover all you wanted to. Do that now, and it can put unreasonable pressure on your colleagues.

Practical science lessons can present a health and safety risk to students, but they're also a time when students feel most at ease with breaking rules. Without strong, established routines, practicals can imperil student safety and waste valuable time.

Crowd control

One technique we've adopted to make science practicals go smoothly is to prepare equipment in trays, which one person in each group collects at the start of the lesson – this stops students from charging round in all directions, searching for the correct items.

We've also shifed the curriculum around, ensuring that year groups aren't the same content simultaneously by dividing their time across the three subjects to reduce demand on equipment. This also gives practical-heavy subjects more time with the equipment.

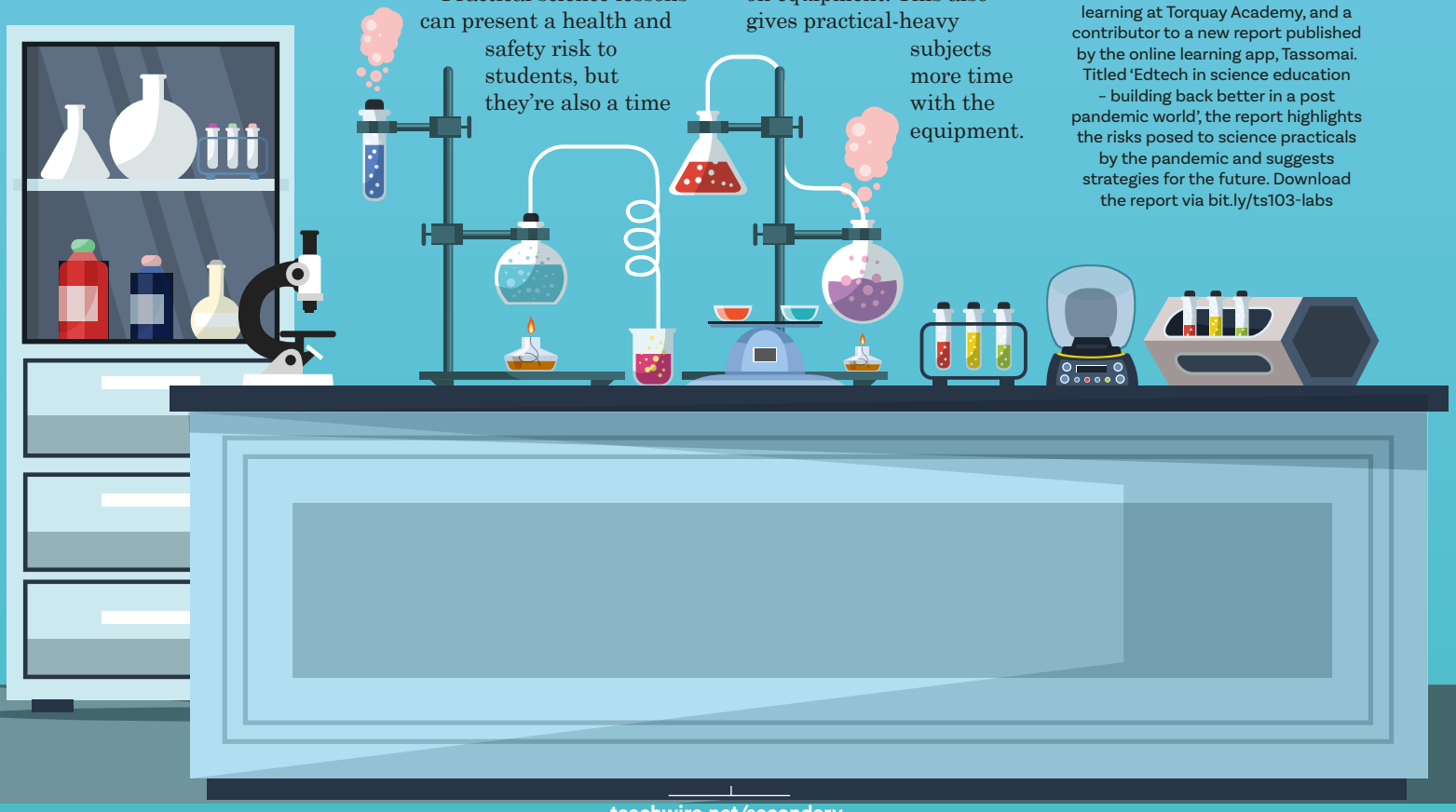
Outside help

Researching school science practical videos on YouTube has provided me with valuable CPD, and helped improve my science practicals for the better. I highly recommend The Malmesbury Science YouTube channel.

Technicians are our key partners in keeping science practicals viable. If you find a video practical that you'd like to replicate for your students, show it to your lab tech well before the lesson – you'll be amazed at what they can achieve.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reece Broome is head of online learning at Torquay Academy, and a contributor to a new report published by the online learning app, Tassomai. Titled 'Edtech in science education – building back better in a post pandemic world', the report highlights the risks posed to science practicals by the pandemic and suggests strategies for the future. Download the report via bit.ly/ts103-labs



4 REASONS TO TRY... STEM Summer Camp

The London International Youth Science Forum is a 15-day summer STEM programme for students aged 16+ held online and on-campus

1 THE INTERACTION
The LIYSF sees students from 70 countries assemble together in order to engage in cultural sharing and learning, over the duration of a two-week immersive residential summer course.

2 THE EXPERIENCE
Students will get to meet and connect with like-minded and equally passionate peers, for learning, debating and networking, both online and in-person. There's also the opportunity to present a scientific research project.

3 THE LECTURES
The programme includes 12 plenary lectures from world-leading scientists, including a Nobel Prize winner, plus 10 specialist lectures on a wide range of STEM subjects, including, robotics, pandemics, artificial intelligence, health, sustainable food and energy, nanotechnology, climate change, engineering and cyber security.

4 THE VISITS
Students taking part will get to experience behind the scenes access to pioneering UK university laboratories and departments, including facilities at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, as well as other national research centres and industrial sites.

Contact:
For more details and to apply, visit **liysf.org.uk** or email us at **info@liysf.org.uk**

At a glance

+ The event will be held at Imperial College London from 28th July to 11th August 2021

+ 14 nights' accommodation in central London will be provided, including all meals

+ Places are available now, priced at £2,195 per student on campus and £495 for online attendees

Retake the stage

The pandemic has compelled drama teachers to innovate in a host of exciting ways – let's now take that creative spark back with us into the studio, says Matthew Nichols

Christmas seems like a long time ago now, but I felt properly festive during one recent evening as I picked my way through a selection of Quality Street – carefully preserving the colourful cellophane wrappers as I did so.

Why? Because when a colleague suggested that chocolate wrappers could be used in place of drama studio lighting gels, in combination with the light of a smartphone, a whole world of possibility opened up before me. I quickly set about creating a new scheme of work for my students, whereby they would create their own miniature puppet shows using home-made props, coloured lighting and their practical performance skills.

From grimness, ingenuity

My recent book, *The Drama Teacher's Survival Guide*, draws on my experiences of teaching drama in secondary schools over nearly two decades – but all the experience in the world couldn't have prepared any of us for the challenges our profession has faced over the last 18 months.

The headaches of trying to deliver socially distanced drama in a face-to-face setting, or through a computer screen, has seen us having to rethink what we do, how we do it and what sort of outcomes we might realistically get.

And yet, throughout this grim situation, seeds of ingenuity have been sown. Whether it's repurposing chocolate wrappers, recreating much-loved theatre and movie posters using software packages or using laptop cameras to record 'CCTV footage' for performance pieces, the drama teaching community has become more creative and resourceful than ever.

We should celebrate this, but also learn from it.

Let's make the months count

Once some degree of 'normal' eventually returns and we're back in our drama studios, we'll need to breathe life back into our subject and allow it to once again take centre stage in our students' educational lives. To do this, we should start thinking now about what's actually worked well during lockdown. Which ideas and practices can we take forward and incorporate into our existing delivery of the subject?

As well as using makeshift tools to achieve theatrical lighting, my own classes will be exploring verbatim theatre, using the experience of lockdown itself. During remote learning, my students worked on developing their own characters and monologues in isolation using verbatim techniques. What I hadn't anticipated was the wonderful alchemy involved in combining these monologues into one coherent piece and cross-cutting between them, in effect creating a portmanteau performance.

This is an approach I'll definitely be adopting and implementing again when it comes to devising future projects. What tasks can be completed by students in isolation, before being merged together in order to produce something bigger and more ambitious? It'll certainly help get round the problem of persistent absentees. I'm not pretending that remote learning has been much fun – but if nothing else it's been a salutary reminder of the vitality and spark our subject provides.

I'm looking forward to finally being back in a drama studio – even a messy one smelling slightly of feet. What I'll also be trying to do, however, is make the last 18 months count. I want whatever we've done and picked up along the way to be added to our existing arsenal and used to strengthen our reserves and develop our creativity – as we all work to restore the sheen to a subject we love and care about deeply.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Nichols is head of drama at Manchester Grammar School, a drama education consultant and Series Editor of student editions of plays for Methuen Drama; his book, *The Drama Teacher's Survival Guide*, is available now (Bloomsbury, £17.99); follow him at @matthew_drama

Let's close the digital divide

Closing the attainment gaps that have opened up during lockdown will require schools to forge supportive external partnerships, says **Nayeer Afzal**

The reopening of schools has restored a welcome sense of structure to pupils' learning and daily lives.

At the same time, however, the digital divide between disadvantaged children and their peers has become wider and more severe, to the point where the former's future prospects are going to be significantly impacted if steps aren't taken to address it.

The past year's school closures and moves to remote learning have thrown the issue into sharp relief, with many young people now further behind in their studies than ever before.

Understanding the divide

To close this digital divide, we must embrace a holistic approach that ensures disadvantaged pupils can obtain better access to devices, both in school and at home, while providing them with the personalised support they'll need to catch up.

The government's catch-up funding and National Tutoring Programme have both offered welcome support, but schools, trusts and tuition providers will need to forge partnerships and go the extra mile if the divide is to be tackled in the long term.

More affluent families are generally able to provide their children with sufficiently capable

internet-connected devices, which has been instrumental in helping them access online learning and resources during school closures, and continues to be pivotal in assisting them with homework tasks.

In contrast, disadvantaged children will often live below the poverty line. Their parents may be on low wages, with multiple school-aged children at home, and unable to afford enough devices for everyone.

One recent study found that 40% of children in middle class families were completing five plus hours of online learning, compared to just 26% in working-class households. Another found that in the most deprived schools, 15% of teachers reported more than a third of their students not having adequate access to device for home learning.

Long-term impact

Without regular access to digital tools, these children will miss out on developing the skills that can otherwise help them become more tech-savvy, acquire a job, move into higher education and attain social mobility. There are, however, some steps we can take to help narrow the divide and build a better future for children of all backgrounds.

Addressing digital poverty will require us to combine easier access to technology with tailored support for those pupils who need it most. The government's efforts at delivering laptops to disadvantaged students have been welcome, and gone some way towards alleviating the challenges many face. That's something that we at Learning Hive, alongside many other organisations, have also been engaged in, in order to tackle the problem in the short term.

Now, however, further efforts are needed to ensure the impact of these measures can be maximised. A new laptop or iPad can go a long way towards engaging pupils and firing their imaginations, but true success will only come from being able to deliver a comprehensive programme of support. That includes in-person teaching, as well as fully-funded, after-school tuition carried out in partnership with teachers and schools – Barnardo's 'See, Hear, Respond Parnership' service has been an excellent example of this. Such schemes should undoubtedly be focused on core subjects, but it's also important that enriching disciplines such as drama, STEM and health and wellbeing are covered too.

All young people deserve a high standard of education, and digital poverty should never be a barrier to that. There are many challenges ahead that schools will need to tackle – but simply being back in the school environment itself is a major plus. A coordinated and proactive approach will now be required to help pupils catch up fully.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Nayeer Afzal is programme director at the after-school learning providier, Learning Hive; for more information, visit learninghive.co.uk or follow @learninghiveuk

LEARNING LAB

IN THIS ISSUE

CONTRIBUTORS

PETER RADFORD
Teacher, trainer, coach and inspirational speaker

ROBIN LAUNDER
Behaviour management consultant and speaker

ADAM RICHES
Senior leader for teaching and learning

ZEPH BENNETT
PE teacher and school achievement leader

ROBERT HARRISON
Education strategy director at ACS International Schools

Ways to...

IDENTIFY SYSTEMIC RACISM

In most schools, racism tends to be treated as a subsection of anti-bullying or behaviour policy. We recognise that it's a negative behaviour requiring sanction, and that all racist incidents should be logged. If asked whether they have problems with racism, schools will typically answer no, believing their number of 'racist incidents' to be at an acceptably low level – but that is to miss the key point concerning systemic racism. What we MUST recognise is that:

1 Incidents go unreported

At a school I previously worked at, officially, our racist incident count was low – yet when I surveyed minority ethnic groups in the school, their anonymous responses revealed a shocking picture of daily comments and social exclusion that they readily admitted were 'normal'.

2 Racism takes different forms

So-called 'racist incidents' don't account for the myriad ways in which people of colour can be overlooked, ignored or excluded in schools and classrooms daily, due to conscious and unconscious bias. These aren't 'incidents', since nothing specific actually happened – but that's the point. Many people of colour and minority ethnic students will miss out on opportunities, feel they have to work twice as hard or live with the fact that they aren't represented in the curriculum, in leadership, on the school council or similar.

3 Reacting isn't enough

When a system is inherently biased in favour of a white privileged majority, any process of change has to be deliberately set in motion. Tackling racism must extend beyond responding, however decisively, to 'racist incidents'.

Instead, we must educate for change, beginning with an understanding of equity. Equity acknowledges that we are not all equal, and that to treat everyone 'equally' makes no sense. To achieve true equality, we must deliberately treat people un-equally – this is equity. We do this for disadvantaged children in the context of the Pupil Premium, but we have not, in the main, applied this principle to racial inequality. Too often, we haven't proactively sought to address inequalities by changing our systems, curriculums or school structures to promote fairness and celebrate difference.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Peter Radford a teacher, trainer, coach and inspirational speaker, regularly visiting schools and colleges nationwide; visit beyondthis.co.uk or follow @PRadfordSpeaker

BRING THE MUSEUM INTO THE CLASSROOM

The Science Museum Group fills us in on how some of the exhibits in its collection can lend an extra narrative dimension to your students' study of STEM subjects and history...

Imagery and stories can help your students make connections between what they're learning at school and the real world. Here, we'd like to share three of our curriculum-linked resources that feature images of objects from our collection on display at the Science Museum. Accompanying each image is a story and questions for students to encourage observation and discussion.

1. TIM PEAKE

Tim Peake was the first European Space Agency astronaut from Britain to travel to the International Space Station (ISS). Our Tim Peake Spacecraft Image Bank follows his journey to and from the ISS, including a photo of the Soyuz descent module on display in the museum's 'Exploring Space' gallery. Ask your class if they think it's important to spend money sending humans into space and start a debate. *Topic links: astronomy, forces*

2. COMPUTERS

Computing has been one of the biggest technological innovations of the past century. The Maths and Computing Image Bank features objects from 'Mathematics: The Winton Gallery', including an Enigma cipher machine used to encrypt millions of military messages during WWII. Why were computers invented? What did people use before computers? These questions could help your class apply maths to the real world. *Subject links: maths, IT*

3. MEDICINE

Medicine and healthcare have shaped human lives throughout history. Our Medicine Image Bank features objects on display in 'Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries', including an anatomical model made of beeswax that was used to teach anatomy from 1770 to 1800. Ask your class why this object is important to the history of medicine – they could work in groups and share their findings with the class. *Subject links: biology, history*

Our image bank resources can be downloaded for free at learning.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk, along with many other curriculum-linked learning resources.

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP OPERATES FIVE MUSEUMS ACROSS THE UK, INCLUDING SCIENCE MUSEUM IN LONDON, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY MUSEUM IN MANCHESTER, NATIONAL MEDIA MUSEUM IN BRADFORD, RAILWAY MUSEUM IN YORK AND LOCOMOTION IN SHILDON

TRY THIS

'DO NOW'

GET YOUR LESSONS OFF TO A PRODUCTIVE START WITH THIS SUGGESTION FROM ROBIN LAUNDER...

• A 'Do Now' is a 3- to 5-minute silent writing activity that students complete at the start of the lesson. It's not a starter activity, but rather an exercise that settles the students, sets the tone of the lesson, and reinforces your high academic and behaviour expectations.

• A 'Do Now' communicates to students that your classroom is a space where learning takes place, and where every second of the lesson is valued. Display the 'Do Now' clearly on the whiteboard, with easy to understand instructions. If you have to explain the task verbally, then you've not done a good enough job of making your instructions clear. The only materials the students should need are a pen and something to write on.

• Given the importance of spaced retrieval, it makes sense for the task to be a review of previous learning (from last lesson, last week, last month or even two months ago) – or it could be a foretaste of work to come.

• Bring the 'Do Now' to a close by quickly going through the correct answers – don't drag this bit out. Prepared model answers on the board will be the fastest way of doing this. Once done, crisply move on to the next part of the lesson.

Start every lesson with a 'Do Now' – once established, the lessons will start themselves.

Robin Launder is a behaviour management consultant and speaker; find more tips in his weekly Better Behaviour online course – see behaviourbuddy.co.uk for more details

93%

of secondary students wish to see lessons on mental health being taught in schools, and for conversations around mental health to be normalised

Source: survey of 3,000 school students aged 11 to 19 carried out by the Anna Freud Centre

Do your students have what it takes to construct an argument and present a convincing case before the court of public opinion? Here's your chance to find out – the Edinburgh-based School Mock Court Case Project is inviting schools to take part in a virtual international debating competition involving schools in the UK, Bulgaria, Denmark, Chile, Dubai and elsewhere.

Open to students aged 14 to 18, participants will be challenged by a controversial debate topic and receive lectures from passionate advocates for both sides. Debating teams of four or five members will be assigned at random from all those taking part, thus providing a unique opportunity for cultural exchange.

The programme then takes place over the course of six weeks, comprising a weekly lecture for four weeks, followed by two weeks' preparation time – which is when students will discover which side they need to argue in favour of. The winning team will then be chosen by a live audience deciding 30% of the final score, alongside a panel of judges.

The next scheduled debate will be 'Should the judiciary be independent of government?' Registrations close on 27th April 2021, and being a pilot programme, there is no participation fee. For more details, visit mockcourt.org.uk

YOUR GUIDE TO ...

INSTRUCTIONAL TEACHING VS DISCOVERY LEARNING

The stark contrast between discovery learning and direct instruction approaches is hotly debated – understanding the difference is vital for any effective classroom practitioner.

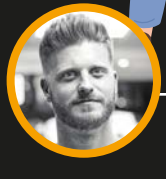
Discovery learning is a technique of inquiry-based learning that's often classed as a 'constructivist' approach to education. It's an approach that utilises exploration; student aren't provided with exact answers, but are instead given the materials they'll need to find the answers.

Conversely, direct instruction focuses on the expert transferring knowledge to the novice. The first type of Direct Instruction (with capitals) was developed by Siegfried Engelmann, and concentrates on the idea that teaching should be built upon well-developed, careful planning, with learning broken down into small chunks consisting of clearly defined and prescribed learning tasks. The second type (lowercase) was introduced by Barak Rosenshine in the late 70s. He used the term 'direct instruction' for an approach to teaching that led to optimal learning known as the Principles of Instruction, which continue to serve as the basis for the pedagogical approach in many schools.

A huge misconception about direct instruction is that it makes learning boring. In actual fact, direct instruction has positive effects on learners in terms of progress and wellbeing; parents are more positive about it, teachers feel more confident using it and it's been shown to have a positive effect on learner attitudes, confidence and behaviour (see Stockard *et al.*, 2018).

That said, the benefits of direct instruction shouldn't be taken to mean that discovery learning is fundamentally flawed. We're often coaxed into adopting an 'either/or' attitude towards approaches to learning, when often a blend of approaches can make for an optimal learning method. In some contexts, the power of discovery can be a hugely motivational addition to a lesson. When used in conjunction with elements of direct instruction, learners can build incredibly strong schema.

What's important is that you know when to use each, and the strengths and drawbacks of both approaches.



ADAM RICHES IS A SENIOR LEADER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING; FOLLOW HIM AT @TEACHMRRICHES

68%

68% of teachers in England report being affected by accountability-related stress, compared to a cross-country average of around 45%

'School accountability and teacher stress – International evidence from the OECD TALIS' research paper by the UCL Institute of Education – see johnjerrim.com/papers

Need to know

The Education Policy Institute and Renaissance Learning have published the interim findings of their assessment into the extent of learning loss experienced by pupils in England due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on around 400,000 reading and maths assessments taken by pupils during the first half of the 2020/21 autumn term, the researchers found evidence of learning loss in reading across all year groups – typically between 1.7 and 2 months in primary schools, and 1.6 and 2 months for Y8 and Y9 at secondary.

The least amount of learning loss was found among those starting Y7 – possibly due to the requirement for schools to admit Y1, Y2 and Y6 pupils from June 2020, while other year groups were taught remotely – though the researchers note that this group's sample size is smaller compared to others.

The study estimates that primary schools experienced a more dramatic loss of around three months' learning in maths; equivalent estimates for secondary learners aren't yet available. The EPI and Renaissance Learning are planning to issue a full report containing breakdowns of results by pupil characteristics and further analysis later in the year.

Download the interim findings at bit.ly/ts103-LL2

WHAT WE DO
THE MIDDLE YEARS PROGRAMME

Teachers can use the International Baccalaureate's Middle Years Programme (MYP) to develop a customised, globally-oriented education for students aged 11 to 16. At the end of the programme's final year, MYP exams look back at the past five years of learning and provide data that's useful going forward. They're as much an assessment *for* learning as they are an assessment *of* learning.

I see them as moderate-stakes exams, and believe them to be a much more comprehensive and humane way of assessing student learning compared with GCSEs. Here are eight reasons as to why that is:

1. Less cramming, more meaning
Factual knowledge is only about 25% of the value of MYP eAssessment; the rest is communication, application and interconnection of understanding. Students learn how to revise meaningfully, rather than cram mercilessly.

2. Real-world knowledge
Each MYP exam cycle focuses on a global context that invites students to reflect across the curriculum on what they're learning with respect to its interconnection, real-world consequences and opportunities to inform globally responsible civic action.

3. Progressively minded
MYP exams are digital. Digitally focused exams drive pedagogy and learning infrastructure forward, serving important educational goals.

4. A modern medium
The exams use secure electronic distribution, rich media, interactive inputs and integrative technologies – so no more pen and paper scribbling. The medium by which exams are administered shouldn't be a barrier students have to overcome.

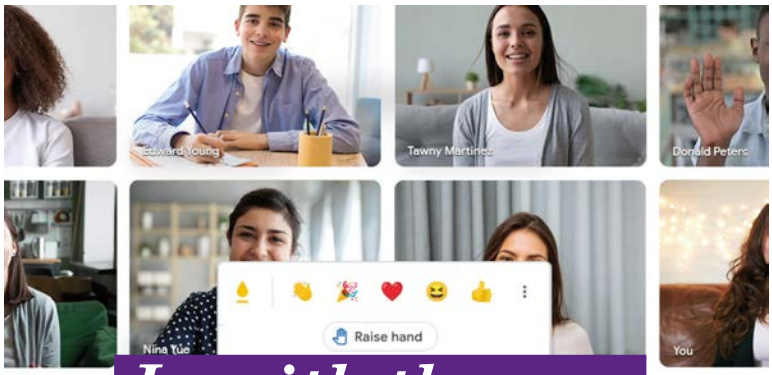
5. Increased fairness
Some courses require practical, non screen-based assessment in the form of portfolios. These are developed in ways that put schools and their students on a level playing field.

6. Creative links
The MYP provides interdisciplinary learning, which brings together two subject groups to let students address unfamiliar challenges, and combine new information with what they have already learned.

7. Engaging efficiency
The MYP eAssessment facilitates fair, equitable and efficient marking for secondary students – who describe it as interesting and engaging, rather than the usual drudgery of exams.

8. Extracurricular inspiration
The MYP provides opportunities for students to investigate global issues, study a second language and develop an interest in their local community by completing community and personal projects.

ROBERT HARRISON IS EDUCATION STRATEGY DIRECTOR AT ACS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS



In with the new

Google's widely used G Suite for Education package is set to undergo some major changes. The newly renamed Google Workspace for Education now comes in four distinct editions – ranging from a free 'Fundamentals' version, up to the most advanced 'Plus' edition with extra security, teaching tools and video functions – and boasts a number of new features across its Classroom, Meet and Chrome components.

These include an offline mode in Google Classroom for settings with intermittent internet connections, student engagement tracking aimed at helping educators better understand their classes, and a more streamlined process of photo creation and sharing via mobile devices.

Those who have become better acquainted with Google Meet over the past year than they could have ever imagined may well appreciate its new 'end meeting for all' command, transcript generation facility and ability to mute all participants on a call simultaneously, with the option to set whether participants can unmute themselves or not.

Perhaps less welcome for some is the news that students will be granted the ability to express reactions using emoji – though others may be pleased to hear that a screen recording tool will soon be arriving in Chrome OS, enabling lessons, workshops, lectures and other real-time interactions to be captured and subsequently used for review and revision purposes.

FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT EDU.GOOGLE.COM

TRENDING

Our pick of the recent resources and launches teachers might find useful...

ENVIRONMENTAL HIGH SCORE
Green energy consultancy Zenergi has launched a free, browser-based game aimed at school and college students, in which players help a virtual community reduce its climate impact while raising the happiness levels of its residents.
zenergi.co.uk/climate-crisis

ETHICAL AI
The Institute for Ethical AI in Education has produced a framework for educators outlining the benefits and safe uses of artificial intelligence, based on a series of roundtables convened by the organisation over the past year.
bit.ly/ts103-LL1

EXAM-READY
Beautiful Minds Education is currently offering free online access to its book *The Guide to Greatness*, which aims to help students boost their literacy levels and cross-curricular study skills.
beautifulmindseducation.co.uk

STUDENT WALKTHROUGH

HOW WE REMEMBER

HELP YOUR STUDENTS BECOME BETTER LEARNERS WITH ZEPH BENNETT'S VISUAL EXPLAINERS...

ENCODING
How we absorb and process information so we can understand it; understand it, and it will be encoded into our memory

CONSOLIDATING
To move information into long-term storage, we need to question and analyse the data that is presented

STORAGE
Once we have consolidated information effectively, it moves into our long-term memory

RETRIEVAL
To maintain storage in our long term memory, we need to regularly retrieve data and information through recall or testing

4 FACTS ABOUT MEMORY

LONG-TERM MEMORY ISN'T LIKE A COMPUTER – YOU CAN'T JUST TYPE IN A KEYWORD AND INSTANTLY ACCESS WHAT YOU WANT

WE HAVE FALSE MEMORIES OF THINGS THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN, OR WHICH OCCURRED DIFFERENTLY TO OUR INTERPRETATIONS OF EVENTS

OUR MEMORIES TEND TO BE APPROXIMATE, AND NOT AS ACCURATE AS WE WOULD LIKE TO THINK

EVERY TIME YOU ACCESS A MEMORY YOU CHANGE OR MODIFY IT

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

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Data-rich RE lessons

Incorporating research and practices from the social sciences can add valuable depth and rigour to your RE curriculum, says Dawn Cox

In our book, *Making Every RE Lesson Count*, Louise Hutton and I discuss how RE might be considered as a multi-disciplinary subject, and that theology, philosophy and social sciences might be three appropriate lenses through which to frame it.

In the book, we we define a social science lens as, 'Questions about the way that religion and beliefs are lived, and the impact they can have at an individual, communal and societal level.'

This disciplinary knowledge within social science links to the ways that social scientists operate, and the tools and methods they use.

So what can we gain from giving students a basic understanding of how this works within RE?

Social science data

Results from social science research – the relevant data being often freely accessible from numerous websites – can be used in several ways when teaching a topic.

One potential use is at the start of a topic, to present students with data that can be analysed and questioned. The scheme of learning can then go on to answer some of the questions raised.

Abortion is one example – specifically, using the number of abortions per year in the UK, and UK abortion law to introduce the topic. Students are shown realities of abortion, before going on to examine the moral and religious arguments surrounding it.

Social science data can also be used when a specific concept within a topic is being taught, to see how followers might actually interpret it. For instance, I've been teaching my students about 'The Fall' in Genesis. We begin by reading the story, then unpick what it might tell the reader about creation, humans, God and their relationship. I then showed them a fascinating 2014 survey of 3,034 American adults, querying their levels of belief in an historical Adam and Eve (see bit.ly/ts103-re1).

Survey experience

We can ask many questions about that data, but it's important when looking at any of the disciplines within RE that we acknowledge the importance of substantive knowledge for being able to carry out informed analysis and asking pertinent questions.

In class, you could model how a researcher might design and carry out a survey, and then have the students explore beliefs about life after death. This will give students first-hand experience of designing questions, choosing respondents, collating responses and organising their findings, prompting them to ask important questions about reliability and validity in the process.

Studying historical and contemporary social science experts will further allow students to analyse the kinds of issues they chose to research, and critique the relative strengths and limitations of their work.

Lived religion

Multidisciplinary RE gives us an accessible way of engaging students with the realities of lived religion and belief in the world today. It provides students with opportunities to study religion and belief at a personal, local, national, and international level, whilst also highlighting the diversity of beliefs, interpretations and practices that accompany the doctrines and teachings of organised religion.

Using social sciences in RE is both challenging and engaging. It can also be surprising, prompting us to question our assumptions about lived belief, and can be used to address students' misconceptions, by providing them with evidence to counter misunderstandings within a structured framework.

This can in turn contribute to the development of critical thinking skills, such as the ability to identify bias, vested interests and reliability.

Overall, I believe that using social sciences will provide structure and continuity across the RE curriculum, equipping students with appropriate skills for further study.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dawn Cox has taught RE for 20 years; she is currently a head of department in Essex and also runs a local RE network; Making Every RE Lesson Count is available now (Crown House Publishing, £12.99)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Rhiannon Smith is a first year A Level student at Ludlow College

THE LAST WORD

Too little give, too much take

Does the government actually care about teenagers' mental health? Because this sixth form student is getting very mixed messages...

This year, the government has invested £79 million into youth mental health across the UK – which is an amazing gift, but it won't be enough if other government plans end up going ahead.

A number of MPs have suggested that because of the lockdowns, students need help in catching up on lost time. Schools Minister Nick Gibb has talked of being open to all ideas on how to help students. Some, however, have suggested making school days longer, and even holding summer schools as an effective way of providing extra teaching.

That's caused rage among students, parents – and even teachers.

Terrifying times

Online learning has been stressful for teenagers and adults alike. That money to help with mental health support wouldn't be needed if the education students receive could be better planned. The absurd suggestion to expand school days is going to cause additional unnecessary stress, the effects of which will be all the worse following the mental impact of the three lockdowns.

How would you feel if you were told that all the hard work and dedication you'd put in during the lockdowns was for nothing, and that you'd have to go to school for longer days and have your summer practically ruined?

Students are already being given enough summer homework to keep their brains active; stretching out the school term into the holidays would most likely weaken their motivation to learn, especially when the government has made it so confusing to know whether their years will be taking part in GCSEs or not. For our generation, 2020 and 2021 have been truly terrifying.

Even before COVID started, the education system was putting far too much pressure on pupils. I can remember revising for GCSEs and crying almost every night, out of fear of failing and being made to do them again. Many of my friends struggled too, and had to go home from the immense pressure put on their shoulders.

I don't necessarily believe this is the fault of teachers; it's the work they're being paid to give us. As we got closer to our mock exams, the homework they were already bombarding us with increased rapidly. Having been told to revise 'in our own time', we were given barely any time to relax.

Sometimes, I'd be given so much homework by one class that I wouldn't be able to complete the homework from another. This led to detentions and punishments, during times when I could have been catching up on some much-needed socialising with friends, One night, I'd revised for hours for one of my mocks, and also had homework that night for the same subject. I decided to prioritize my revision over the homework – which I don't regret now, because of how they marked our exams last year. But when the teacher found out I hadn't done the homework, I was given a detention.

Blind to the cause

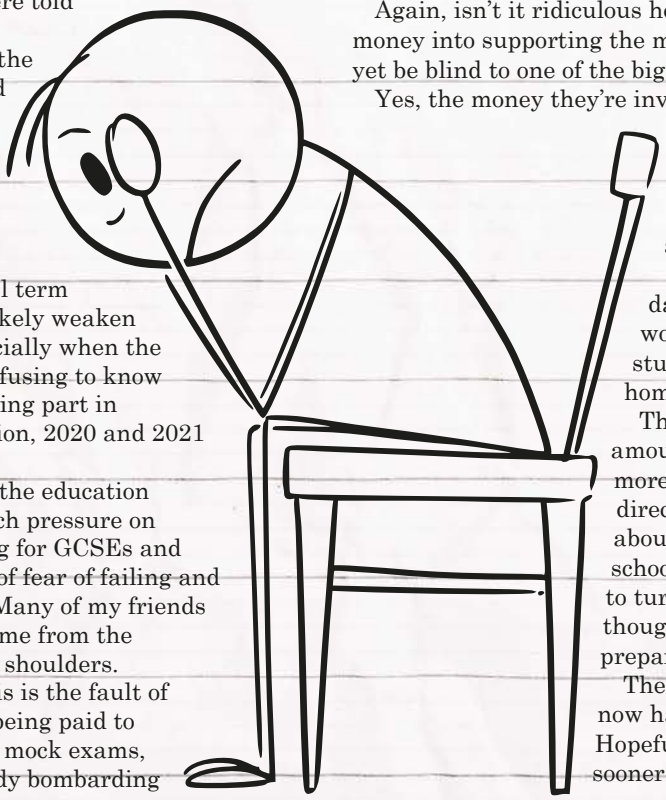
There should be better planning, in a way that actually helps students with their GCSEs. Being put under immense pressure, while at the same time preparing for an exam that's supposed to be important for your future is horrible – there's so much going on at once. I just hope they learn how students are really feeling, so that the way homework and revision are planned can change.

Again, isn't it ridiculous how they can invest so much money into supporting the mental health of teenagers, yet be blind to one of the biggest causes of our stress?

Yes, the money they're investing shows that they do care about us, somewhat. But they needn't have put as much in, if they could just change the way schools are run.

No, not by extending school days, throwing even more work at us or punishing students for missing some homework due to revision. They should decrease the amount given, and instead give more assistance to students directly. Take revision – talks about how to revise from the school didn't help me at all. I had to turn to YouTube instead, even though it's the school's job to prepare us for the future.

The way education system is now has always baffled me. Hopefully they act on the matter sooner rather than later.



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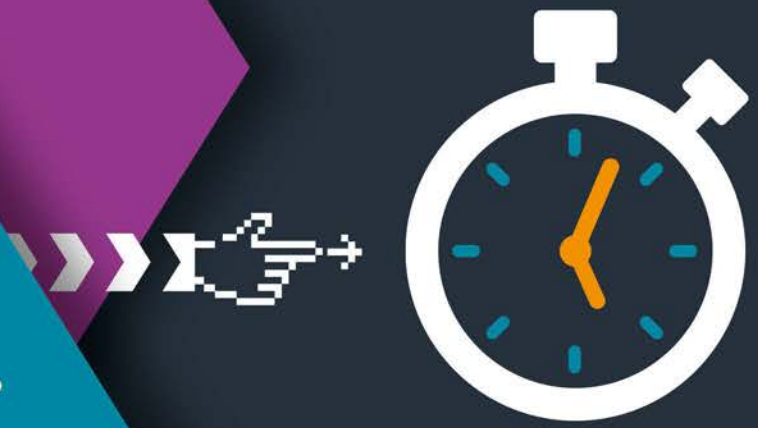

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