The Olympic Games
A cross curriculum project celebrating the Games’ past, present and future

Making maths phenomenal
Exploring creative approaches to engage students in mathematical thinking

Edge-of-the-seat learning
Telling stories to create a healthy learning tension in the classroom

www.teachingtimes.com/zone/creative-curriculum.htm
Understand the numeracy strengths and weaknesses of your children

The Sandwell Early Numeracy Test – Revised (SENT-R)

Price: £99.00 + vat

Recommended by the DES and the Every Child Counts programme, the revised version of the Sandwell Early Numeracy Test is proving hugely popular as schools try to lift their maths teaching in the light of tougher new Ofsted assessment-for-learning and teaching quality requirements.

Every Child Counts describes the Sandwell Early Numeracy Test as an ‘Essential Teacher Resource’ to be used as a standardised baseline test to establish children’s levels of numeracy at the start and end of their programme, and to monitor children’s progress throughout. The assessment is now used in schools in most local authorities.

SENT-R enables practitioners to assess children’s ability with numbers. Designed for use with children from ages 4 years – 7 years 11 months, it explores five strands of basic numeracy skills: identification, oral counting, value, object counting and language, and provides a baseline of a pupil’s number skills. It is particularly useful in helping to identify targets for pupils who are having difficulties with numeracy up to Key Stage Two.

The two parallel tests allow for the monitoring of progress every three months and there is an online marking tool for easy analysis. SENT-R is easy to administer and enjoyable for the children. Images in the test book are engaging and relate to tasks in every day activities. Any member of the school staff who has some basic training can use the tests.

Are your children ready to read? Assessing phonological skills

The Sandwell Phonological Awareness Readiness for Reading Kit (SPARRK)

Price: £150.00 + vat

Phonics is the main way of teaching reading to Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children. But the starting point is how phonologically aware are your children? If they are not, they will struggle with putting sounds and letters together and their reading readiness will be adversely affected.

The SPARRK assesses:
- Concepts (Linguist concepts associated with phonological awareness)
- Syllable
- Rhyme
- Beginnings
- Middles
- Blending and segmenting

It can be used as a diagnostic tool with individual/groups of children who are experiencing difficulties with phonics acquisition/reading and spelling. It can also be used as a screening tool within the Early Years in order to identify children who might require early intervention before they embark on formal phonics teaching.

SPARRK provides an Excel data recording spreadsheet for data collection, that has been specifically designed to provide an overview of the phonological awareness skills of individuals, groups and whole classes of children. This can be used to identify which skills are established, identify potential groupings for intervention work and measure progress over time.

SPARRK also provides ready to make games and activities and signposts to other commercially produced materials in the “Where Next” pack. This provides practitioners with ideas and teaching suggestions to implement if difficulties have been identified by the assessment. SPARRK also links directly to the SALLEY programme (Structured Activities for Language and Learning in the Early Years) a well researched programme that can be delivered as a Wave 1 programme during the Foundation Stage, but also as a Wave 2 and/or 3 intervention by selecting specific activities.

Available May 2012
Where can I find the off switch please?

After 30 years of full time teaching this is my final half term. I will be going freelance in September (joining Creative Teaching and Learning as the new Editor!) and decided that the last half term break would be a restful one and I would recharge the batteries... all the usual clichés. Penthouse apartment booked on the East coast (if you are going to do it – you might as well do it in style is my motto), books, camera... oh and laptop, iPhone, novel for Year 7 for next half term, books I’ve been meaning to read….Where is the off button I seem to have mislaid it?

Half way through the half term week I was doing really well but come Wednesday and I was starting to twitch! I had several conversations on Twitter in regard to our staff training next week, favourited several tweets to look at websites properly at the weekend, I’d read a novel for my Year 7 special needs English group, emailed about articles, started reading Dancing about Architecture (P Beadle) and Bounce (M Syed), bought resources that will be useful for Mantle work, saved the newspapers from the Jubilee coverage because I will be able to use them in the coming term...

I was regretting not sorting out Internet access as I wanted to update my blog so was typing an article to upload later, and... breathe! Whilst my husband was out walking (in the rain – this was a holiday on the East coast in June after all!) I found myself thinking about how to switch off! If you are a teacher I think you adopt a different mentality:

Squirrel – you hoard and save. One pink fishing net, shells, several Union Jack flags, a hat which is a tiger’s head, ‘The Times’ newspapers from the last few days – because you can and will use them in the classroom.

Hamster – there is this treadmill, you get off but the temptation to get back on is too great – just one more go, just one more article, just one more tweet, just one more email...

Bear – you spend the first couple of days of any holiday hibernating, slobbing out in tracksuit bottoms, sloppy socks and wondering how you manage to get up at 6am normally.

The work ethic is too engrained and even when not working I’m thinking about what I should be doing and when I can fit it in. I promised myself a week off so why can’t I do it? Maybe I don’t really want to and the “Yes!” factor of finding that one off article; or the ‘lure’ of your next lesson is too great.

During term time I sometimes feel overwhelmed and there is never a time when I can say I have got to the bottom of my ‘to do’ list. The app ‘do it tomorrow’ is great – it even makes a ‘whooshing’ sound when I cross something off and if I don’t cross it off...it automatically transfers it to ‘tomorrow’. The good thing is that when an item has been on my list for a couple of weeks, I’ve not done it and nothing drastic has happened as a result...I just cross it off anyway! Reminds me of a deputy I worked with who had two cardboard boxes under his desk, all correspondence went into the first and only got transferred into the one that was his ‘To do’ box if someone asked him for it.

If you are a committed teacher can you ever stop? I would be happy with a pause button but don’t hold out much hope.

Jane Hewitt is currently an AST and teacher of Photography at the Dearne ALC in Barnsley. Jane will be joining Creative Teaching and Learning as the new Editor from July 2012.
06 Making mathematics phenomenal
In the first in a series of forthcoming articles on maths, David Pratt stresses the value of the lost skill of programming.

13 A shift from teaching to learning
With such great emphasis on teaching, it’s important that children don’t become passive learners. Bob Drew shares his vision for a learning-focused school.

22 The evaluation challenge
Empowering students to become information literate. Andrew Shenton and Alison Pickard present the case for meta-evaluation.

30 Edge-of-the-seat learning
Hywel Roberts breaks creative convention by building a tension in the classroom to captivate learners.

34 Small steps to creative thinking
Sharing the contents of her creative toolkit, Louise Tondeur proves that classroom creativity is not so elusive after all.

40 A Holocaust experience
To gain insight into the unimaginable, David Lawson shares the value of using memoirs to break down barriers to effective teaching.

48 Demolishing exam factories… raising emotional intelligence
To embrace the challenges of the 21st century, Paul Trainor argues for greater emphasis on emotional intelligence within the school culture.
54 Where am I?
Making understanding deep and explicit. Tait Coles helps his students track their learning journeys through SOLO Taxonomy.

59 Connecting with maths
A series of websites to support the teaching and learning of maths, bringing the subject up-to-speed with the 21st century.

The Olympics
A themed project plan embracing the Olympics from its every angle for use at Key Stages 2, 3 and beyond. Ideal for use before and after the Games, the project presents an ongoing opportunity to celebrate the event with a series of thinking skills activities and resources.
More than two-fifths of UK teachers say children are turned off reading for pleasure by the time they finish primary school, according to new research by Pearson. The research found that 42 per cent of children lose interest in reading by age 11. More than a third of children are likely to have turned off reading for pleasure before they reach secondary school age (11 years old).

Of the 400 school teachers questioned:

- 29 per cent reported that in a typical English class, more than half of their pupils show little or no interest in reading at all.
- 94 per cent of teachers reported that their pupils prefer spending time online to reading a book.
- 97 per cent felt that parents must do more to encourage their children to read.

For boys in particular, teachers suggested they reacted better to horror 93 per cent and science fiction 92 per cent. However, both boys and girls appeared to have an appetite for fantasy novels. 83 per cent of teachers state that boys are likely to find fantasy novels engaging and 65 per cent state the same for girls. This trend is evidenced by the strong teen fantasy book market for series like Twilight, The Fallen or The Hunger Games.

The research has also revealed that over three-quarters (78 per cent) of teachers thought that a greater use of online or digital technology to practice reading could help with literacy at Key Stage 3.

Children's author Frank Cottrell Boyce said: "It's worrying to think that so many young children are not being inspired to pick up a good book and get lost in a story. "According to UNESCO (the United Nations agency which promotes knowledge), the biggest single indicator of whether a child is going to thrive at school and in work is whether or not they read for pleasure.

"Clearly we need to make sure we are providing our children with the right types of books which stimulate their interest, capture their imagination and make them turn the next page."

Schools Minister Nick Gibb said: "In a world of so many distractions for young minds, the place of literature is more important than ever.

"Children need to master the basics of reading as early as possible in primary school so they can then go on to explore magical and powerful books such as Private Peaceful, Harry Potter, and, in good time, books such as Lord of the Flies, Animal Farm and those by Charles Dickens."

The research was carried out to mark the release of a new set of HEROES classroom reading books, edited by top children's author Frank Cottrell Boyce and designed to stimulate children's interest in reading.

---

Call on schools to champion curiosity

A new RSA report has revealed that Britain may be in danger of losing the kind of curiosity needed to stimulate innovation and solve future challenges.

The research, commissioned by British Gas Generation Green, found that Britons are experience-hungry, possibly at the expense of gaining depth of knowledge. It identifies a vital link between curiosity and innovation, and calls on schools and businesses to champion curiosity to ensure that the next generation can maintain Britain's reputation for innovation, having won more Nobel prizes for science and technology than anywhere else in Europe.

Kate Lemon, Programme Manager of British Gas Generation Green, said: "We will face big energy challenges over the next few decades, and we know that we need to innovate and use energy in new ways. This report shows that inspiring curiosity in young people could play a key role in addressing these challenges.

In response to the findings, the RSA is calling on schools, parents and learners of all ages to cultivate curiosity by:

- Teaching for competencies and skills, like curiosity, that encourage problem solving rather than rote learning
- Encouraging forms of mental attention, including mindfulness, that make people reflect on things that might not have been noticed
- Giving pupils the opportunity to develop a full understanding of a topic, rather than just the answers to exam questions
Allowing the minds of learners to explore and experiment with ideas

Further findings include some interesting variations in curiosity across Britain, and a number of curiosity profiles:

- Being curious for knowledge (epistemic curiosity) is less common in the UK than other types of curiosity (e.g. curiosity for experiences of sensations)
- The Welsh appear to be the most curious in the UK and Scots the least curious
- Women are more curious about things they experience through their senses (perceptually curious) than men
- People who live in households with three or more children are more curious than those with one child.

Dr Jonathan Rowson, report author, RSA Social Brain Centre, said: “Our research indicates that curiosity may play an important part in stimulating innovation in ways that we urgently need to meet energy challenges in Britain. Understanding curiosity can help to create more effective feedback on home energy consumption, improve how we communicate environmental messages, and develop more sophisticated strategies to change behaviours that are habitual in nature. We also explore several ways that we could try to build on the natural curiosity of young people in educational settings.”

Curiosity profiles identified by the research include:

- Problem solvers (Epistemic specific): who focus on acquiring knowledge to answer specific questions
- Day dreamers (Epistemic diversive): who use information in an exploratory fashion, to understand a variety of ideas
- Scientists (Perceptual specific): who desire new sensations – sights, sounds, textures - directed towards answering a particular question (“I’m just going to put my hand in that aquarium to find out what that star fish feels like”)
- Explorers (Perceptual diversive): who desire new sensations – sights, sounds, textures – to discover as many different things as possible rather than being directed towards answering any particular question.

Not enough recognition given to dyslexia

New research has found that dyslexia knowledge, understanding and expertise is ‘patchy’ across UK schools.

The survey of 450 parents suggests that dyslexia was not given enough recognition within the education system.

It also revealed that nearly 60 per cent of dyslexic children have suffered a negative experience at school, and over half have at some point wished not to attend as a result.

Peter Johansson, a leading dyslexia expert, said: “With approximately ten per cent of the population living with dyslexia, it is the most prevalent learning difficulty within our schools.

“Many dyslexic children highlighted in this report will have grown up using technology in every part of their lives and the incorporation of even simple devices such as laptops or tablets can make a huge difference in bridging the dyslexia gap.

“Hopefully these findings will encourage steps to be taken to prevent these students falling behind or being left with the ‘sense of failure’ this report alludes to.”
Making mathematics phenomenal
The case for programming

Professor David Pratt introduces the notion of making mathematics phenomenal through the carefully designed use of digital technology. This idea will be detailed over a forthcoming series of articles for Creative Teaching and Learning, starting with the importance of programming.
Mathematics education faces, in my view, something of a crisis. Participation rates at A Level are low (though not as low as they were just a few years ago) and mathematics courses in higher education struggle to maintain viability. One consequence is that a worryingly high proportion of teachers of secondary mathematics classrooms have not been fully enculturated into mathematics as a discipline of knowledge, and this is especially problematic in specific parts of the country. Good mathematics teachers possess a very wide range of skills and one of those is knowledge about the discipline. It is this kind of knowledge that allows a creative approach to how students might be engaged in thinking mathematically. At a time when society is becoming increasingly technological, there is a real danger that citizens will not appreciate the power, and indeed limitations, of mathematics to contribute to that society.

Too many students are disengaged from mathematics. Why should this be? We can listen to our own students who refer to the pointless nature of the subject, which seems disconnected from their everyday lives. Mathematics is often perceived as entirely cerebral, locked away in the heads of their teachers, out of reach for them. This perspective is reinforced by curricula and textbooks, which portray mathematics as de-contextualised. But the task itself is daunting: mathematics is like playing a game of virtual reality without a computer – mental representations are the key to understanding, but mental representations are terribly difficult to share.

Over this series of articles, I will argue that one of the ways in which we can engage students in mathematics is to enable them to handle its power, to ‘get stuff done’ by presenting mathematics as a lively exploratory domain of activity that can be experienced much like other phenomena in their lives. Through principled design of digital tools and associated tasks, students can experience mathematics as a living and dynamic human endeavour. Each subsequent article will exemplify one component of making mathematics phenomenal by drawing on tools and tasks, many of which were designed by the author or as part of a collaboration for research or teaching purposes.

The case for programming

In this first article I will introduce the idea of making mathematics phenomenal through programming. Programming was once a common feature in quite a number of mathematics classrooms but, since the introduction of the National Curriculum and the Numeracy Framework, programming has dropped out of favour as teachers find it more difficult to justify its use in a crowded curriculum. Nevertheless, it seems especially relevant at the moment to discuss the role of programming in schools when the Department for Education is encouraging the use of the Raspberry Pi in schools as a step towards reversing the lack of programming skills in the UK. For my purposes in this series of articles, programming offers the paradigmatic case of making mathematics phenomenal though the subsequent articles will focus on other cases.

The idea that programming might be the basis for mathematizing through problem solving was first proposed by Seymour Papert in Mindstorms as long ago as 1982. That seminal work challenged the orthodoxy of how teachers might teach mathematics. The approach was to facilitate learning by allowing children control and ownership over the development of their own projects by programming in Logo, which his team developed for that express purpose. The ideas that I express in this series of articles owe much to that pioneering work, which is now three decades old and yet still highly relevant.

How can programming be so relevant to mathematics? As an initial response, I refer to the fact that mathematics is interested in developing algorithms,
unambiguous procedures that create specific well-defined outputs. Programming of course shares this aim. Traditionally though, students receive ready-made algorithms and often struggle to make sense of them. Papert envisaged students creating their own algorithms, thus engaging in a creative problem-solving process. Logo was developed in order that students could try out ideas, benefit from neutral machine-oriented feedback and so modify and gradually enhance a programming project, often based around drawing and animation.

The choice of drawing and animation as a context was not arbitrary. On the contrary, Papert chose turtle graphics as a medium for mathematical expression because he knew drawing and animation were creative outlets enjoyed by most young children. I will further explain the connection between programming and mathematizing through a simple example. The following scenario is imagined but those who have taught mathematics using Logo may recognise its features.

A simple scenario

Imagine two 11-year-old students drawing a house using the Logo programming language. In Figure 1 they have managed to draw four sides of the house. In trying to guess the required length for the ground floor, they have overshot, but they have treated the mistake as the creative development of a garden path. (An imaginative teacher of older students might take up the opportunity to introduce some trigonometry to draw the ground to the exact length.)

Even at this stage the children have already engaged in algorithmic thinking and problem solving and for younger students the managing of lengths and angles might have been educationally challenging. The students might now want to write a procedure so that they are able to create a whole street of houses. For children who might be about to learn about algebra, the scenario offers a very rich opportunity. Houses are of course different sizes and so the procedure might be developed to incorporate a variable, such as in:

```
fld 100:*x  \rt 45  \<move up the left hand wall of the house and turn>
fld 50:*x   \rt 90  \<move up the left hand side of the roof and turn>
fld 50:*x   \rt 45  \<move down the right hand side of the roof and turn>
fld 100:*x  \rt 90  \<move down the right hand wall of the house and turn>
fld 225     \rt 90  \<move too far! - along the ground and turn to the original direction>
```

The variable :x acts as a scale factor on all forward movements (apart from the garden path).
By re-applying the house procedure several times, the students can easily create a street. In Figure 2, the first three houses form the right have been created using:

house 1 house 2 house 0.5.

The left hand most house was generated when the students decide to experiment with:

house -1

**Programming to make mathematics phenomenal**

I will now aim to pick out some of the significant aspects of this scenario. First, there is a sense of creative enjoyment. Most students who program their own projects are excited by the feeling of control and ownership that many rarely otherwise experience in the mathematics classroom. Rather than trying to understand what is in the teacher's head, these students solve problems that emerge naturally as part of their chosen project. The mathematics seems to reside in their own activity.

Of course, mathematics has content and it is not sufficient to focus only on the mathematizing processes. When the design of the tools and the tasks is right, the students will find that they need the mathematical content in order to progress their projects. In the above scenario, the students problem solve using angle and length. For some, this will be a learning experience. For others, the challenge might instead lie in using trigonometry to draw exact lengths.

Traditionally, most students are not able to connect with algebra. How many mathematics teachers have experienced students asking, ""What is this x thing?"" after several weeks, months or years of algebra teaching? Logo in the hands of a skilful and knowledgeable teacher can be a powerful tool for helping students to appreciate the power of algebra as a method of communicating with machines. The input, :x, in the above procedure offers the power to draw different size houses almost instantly. Unlike many students in a traditional classroom, students who meet algebra through programming are likely to understand a purpose for algebra. They will not of course have a full picture of what algebra can do for them but they may be ready to explore further.

Although Logo and other forms of programming have dropped out of mathematics classrooms in recent decades, Logo itself has continued to evolve. There are now many versions. One of today's derivatives of Logo, Scratch (http://scratch.mit.edu/), is an interesting case. Like the original Logo, Scratch continues to challenge thinking by supporting a huge on-line student community that uses mathematics in the form of programming for no other reason that it is fun to be creative and to share. Most of this activity takes place outside of traditional classrooms. Hundreds of student projects are uploaded weekly to the Scratch website by young people who are finding programming a creative outlet.
As an example, let me describe a project by an anonymous student.

A small fraction of the code developed is shown in the central panel. The left hand panel shows some of the programming bricks that could be used to build a Scratch program. Beginning to use Scratch, those used to conventional Logo soon recognise familiar structures and commands, such as turtle graphics movement (fd, rt, pen etc), controls (for example, repeat and forever) and the use of variables. A snapshot from the animation created is shown in the top right hand panel. In this project, the student author portrayed what seemed to me to be unrequited love. The girl is seen to long for her missing boyfriend. She waits in the rain for him to return. The project involves a series of interconnected scenes set to romantic music until in the finale, she rejoices in her freedom and the music takes on a rock anthem.

The story is told by linking a series of scenes, each with its own characters. For example, the boy and the girl in Figure 3 are both sprites (modern day turtles), which have been given costumes to reflect their roles in the scene. In this particular scene, the boy moves across the front of the scene with the girl stationary in the background. An incident such as this would be represented as a chunk of code, comprising a number of individual programming bricks connected jigsaw fashion, rather like putting together Lego bricks. This particular scene might be triggered by a previous piece of code sending a message so that the boy begins to move when the message is received.

In contrast to conventional Logo, a powerful aspect of Scratch is that it is object-oriented so that sprites, like the boy and the girl, are treated as independent objects but can communicate with each other through the sending and receiving of messages. Parallel processing means that sprites and others objects might run actions simultaneously whenever triggered. These features add enormous narrative expression.

For me, this example demonstrates memorably the sense in which mathematics in the form of programming can be used to create fantasy or express ideas more normally than the domain of art, poetry and music. What impressed me was that this student found programming to be a means of expression, a hallmark of making mathematics phenomenal.
Coming later...

In the forthcoming articles I will set out in more detail key aspects of making mathematics phenomenal. In the second article, I shall focus on how using mathematics can lead to understanding mathematics, challenging the apparent orthodoxy that learners need first to learn the skills and procedures before they are able to apply them. Even in the programming example, we can see how some students may have been using the fd and rt commands before having a complete understanding of distance and angle. Or using the input :x in the procedure before understanding algebra.

In the third article, I shall discuss the importance of designing tasks that are seen as purposeful by the students and lead to an experientially-based sense of how mathematics can ‘get stuff done’. I have commented above on how the students may, for the first time, have sensed how algebra might be used to create a street of houses with varied sizes.

In the fourth article, I shall focus on one specific design principle, whereby offering control of their own activity might provide the student with insights into powerful mathematical representations. The Logo example offers turtle graphics as a representation of geometry but at the same time provides commands that control activity to create the geometric pictures and animations.

In the final article, the focus will be on the interface between mathematics and other aspects of human activity. The Scratch example shows how mathematics can create artistic, poetic and musical experiences. In this article, I shall explore how, by engaging with social decision-making, students may begin to map out the territory of mathematics to appreciate the scope and limitations of the discipline.

Overall, my intention is that the reader will understand that the project of making mathematics phenomenal is essentially a design challenge. My examples will draw on digital technology but I will not be making the argument that technology alone offers the solution. On the contrary, technology without principled pedagogic design is likely to disengage students by hiding the mathematizing process that can be so creative and enjoyable.

The components of making mathematics phenomenal that I will introduce in the next four articles are not exhaustive but they are illustrative of how the carefully designed use of technology could be one important ingredient in the challenge ahead.

David Pratt is a Professor of Mathematics at Institute of Education, University of London. d.pratt@ioe.ac.uk

References


Knowledge trails

1) Can you be creative in maths? – Laying down the conditions that help to make maths considered as a creative subject. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/can-you-be-creative-in-maths.htm


3) Maths adventures – An alternative to computer-based mathematical games has caused children to ‘hug each other in excitement’. We find out why. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/ctl-1-4_maths-adventure.htm
To create a truly professional learning community in your school every leader and teacher should have access to the information they need to develop the knowledge and skills for their role.

Professional Learning Community provides:

- Inspiring and thought provoking articles
- Professional practice content
- Themed Knowledge Banks on specialist areas of education
- An extensive archive of research material, ideal for those on Teach First and PGCE courses
- Email alerts of new content
- All staff access
- A cost-effective resource for School Leaders who want to monitor the progress of their staff

For further information on our Professional Learning Community packages and how they can benefit your school, visit [www.teachingtimes.com/professionallearningcommunity.htm](http://www.teachingtimes.com/professionallearningcommunity.htm)
Head teacher, Bob Drew describes how he made a move from a teaching to a learning-focused school culture.

A shift from teaching to learning

‘Learning is more important than teaching!’ As a statement of belief, this may sound quite radical. Our government’s current educational focus, as stated by the current Secretary of State for Education, is firmly on the importance of teaching. Most teachers’ professional development has revolved around the development of teaching skills and...
It took me a long time in my teaching career to reach the conclusion that learning was a more important focus than teaching and to say this with confidence. I have travelled a path of self-reflection, influenced by theorists and practitioners, and finally condensed this thought as a member of a professional learning community – namely the school I serve in. I believe that the most important aspect of education is the process of learning. After all don’t children come to school to learn? They need to learn not only discrete subjects but also the skills that support learning. Children need to know how to learn, if they can do this well they will be successful in learning new content and grow up to be flexible and adaptable, resilient and creative. It is therefore entirely logical that schools should focus on the act of learning.

This article is a record of the process involved at the school I serve in, where theory was put into practice; the creation of a system that recognises the importance of core learning skills and ensures they are a key feature of children’s experiences in school. Children’s progress is assessed and achievement communicated, in order to tackle the most important aspects of children’s education, the things that we believe have the greatest impact on success.

**Learning is the heart... teaching is the tool**

It is important to be clear about the school’s pedagogical perspective. Learning is at the heart of the school. Teaching is the most powerful method we use to support learning. The leadership of teaching has the next most powerful impact on children’s progress and achievement, but only indirectly through its influence on teaching. We recognise learning as the main driver for children’s experiences in school. In fact the whole process of learning is the human act of discourse, the relationship developed between child and teacher. The school is the people in it and their actions and experiences, rather than the building and its physical resources.

I have been the Head teacher at Gearies Infant school, a large urban community school in the north east London borough of Redbridge, for over fifteen years. Our community is made up of predominantly ethnic minorities, mostly Asian. The neighbourhood is relatively affluent and our families are supportive of our focus on high standards. As with most schools in London, our demographic changes are constant. Our community continues to change in response to local economic pressures and housing growth. Over the past fifteen years, the relative proportion of ethnic groups has changed. We have continued to become more diverse, welcoming new groups to the school, in particular families from Eastern Europe, whilst at the same time the representation of white UK families has reduced to one of our smallest. Children from ethnic minorities now make up 95 per cent of the school population. The culture in the school is firmly focused on high expectations. The school community expects each child
to be a successful learner. However we do not limit our definition of success to the National Curriculum. This includes all aspects of learning including skills, knowledge and understanding.

Creating a compelling school vision
As a Head teacher I believe it is important to be clear on your moral purpose. I have long been interested in theories of meta-cognition and the school has looked into supporting a climate where we develop effective learners. The works of Guy Claxton and Mike Hughes have been influential in supporting our thinking and actions. They propose a belief that standards should be developed with a focus on key learning skills and that this is a profound declaration of intent that defines the purpose of education. Education is seen as a process of discovery and application, rather than a mechanism for passing exams. Over the past ten years, many of the school’s teaching staff slowly digested related readings, attended lectures and conferences. We came to a general consensus that learning was at the heart of the process of schooling and deserved a significant focus in our practices. A slow realisation took hold that if we really believed in this, we should be bold and refine our practices accordingly. One of the most important aspects of this process was the time taken. It was significant that this vision became compelling over many years, backed by a communal familiarity with theory and research. It became a good example of Claxton’s “tortoise mind” at work, the slow contemplation of ideas and a gradual consensus amongst colleagues.

We aimed to take steps that would embed core skills and dispositions at the heart of the learning process and recognise this as a pedagogical approach underpinning both planning and assessment. Where a large number of colleagues were familiar with the theories, the process of communicating them to the whole school community would be crucial, as would be deciding the actual skills themselves.
Our first step was to negotiate with the staff a draft Learning Statement. This process began in the autumn of 2009, took place in a sequence of staff meetings over two terms, and contained the following sections:

- Our definitions of learning
- A visual metaphor for learning
- Key learning skills
- Key learning objectives
- Pedagogy
- Teaching strategies

We started believing that it was important that we had a clear definition of learning (fig.1) in order to base our statement on. After much discussion it was agreed to publish a list of definitions that we agreed with, rather than choose one exemplar. This would reflect a realisation of the complexity of the process. These were then adapted into a visual metaphor (fig.2), and a shorthand version so members of staff were able to remind themselves of the process involved. We likened the process to the act of cooking. You choose a number of educational ingredients that you trust will build a coherent outcome. You then follow the recipe of teaching, and support the child’s growth with a variety of tools, including targets and assessment. The process takes time, sometimes it works well, but on occasions it does not and you need to find other recipes. The metaphor can be embellished in many ways and has proven a useful tool to express our thinking.

These were then used to set the scene for negotiating the key learning skills. We undertook a long process of consultation with staff, parents and governors. At that time we did not talk about this with the children. In retrospect this may have been a weakness of our process, and we may well have underestimated their capacity to discuss this with us. A variety of lists were recorded that documented the discussions held. Much useful debate was engaged in and open negotiation was a clear feature of this process. Colleagues expressed fears of developing differing lists with contradictory priorities. We were concerned that different groups would have opposing priorities. A major delight though was the content of parents’ priorities. These turned out to have a very similar content to the teachers’, and they were very enthusiastic about recognising core skills. One particular aspect that was initially controversial was the inclusion of enjoyment as a disposition. Teachers were concerned about including this, as they weren’t sure if you could or should always make children enjoy their learning. However parents were very clear that they thought enjoyment needed to be a regular feature of learning. As a result it was included in the final list.

**Definitions of learning**

Following debate by the teaching staff, the following definitions of learning have been offered:

- Acquiring skills and knowledge for real life that are useful
- Accumulating knowledge and applying it
- Practicing and retaining knowledge, understanding and skills
- A unique process through which you discover, remember, rehearse and apply knowledge, values and skills.

This inclusive process enriches your emotional, social and cognitive development. It is an individual and collective right.
Once the process was complete, we were pleasantly surprised with the large amount of significant consensus. This was a great relief, but also a reassurance that we were close to a practical conclusion. The lists were reviewed and a final version was arrived at (fig.3).

In order to develop a practical application, the teaching team refined these further into a list of Key Learning Objectives (fig.4). The Objectives became the focus in the classroom for both the children and the teachers and the structure for future review. It was significant to have arrived at this point, and to have established the Objectives as a focus in the school, however we now recognise that the language is teacher-led and more needs to be done to develop children’s ownership of the process.

### Key Learning Skills

1. Making connections
2. Motivation, enjoyment and curiosity
3. Imagination and creativity
4. Resilience and perseverance
5. Reflection and self-evaluation
6. Independence
7. Team work
8. Communication
9. Literacy
10. Numeracy

### Our agreed learning objectives

**To communicate**
- To speak clearly and be able to make yourself understood
- To listen to others and understand them

**To be literate**
- To be able to read different forms of text
- To communicate meaning in different written formats

**To be numerate**
- To be able to reason with numbers and mathematical concepts
- To be comfortable with logic and reasoning
- To be confident and competent with numbers and measures
- To understand ways in which data is gathered

**To learn in teams**
- To have a sense of shared community
- To take turns
- To value each others’ contributions
- To accept and take part in routines
- To follow the lead of another child or adult
- To show a sense of others’ needs

**To be reflective and to self evaluate**
- To identify options or choices
- To reflect on what they have learnt
- To consider a range of options

**To be resilient and to persevere**
- To understand that learning takes time and can be frustrating
- To respond to new challenges
- To stick at activities
- To show determination towards a set goal
- To take personal responsibility for learning

**To take risks**
**To put in enhanced effort and performance following failure**

**To be motivated, to show enjoyment and curiosity**
- To have a willingness to try out new experiences
- To ask questions
- To try new experiences
- To investigate or explore new ideas

**To be imaginative and creative**
- To solve problems
- To reformulate ideas
- To make connections in learning
- To be a divergent and critical thinker – there are a range of possible solutions
- To construct their own learning

**To make connections**
- To relate information in different ways
- To use one skill taught on one area in another area
- To apply information
- To look for patterns and relationships, problem solving and reasoning

**To be independent**
- To accept and take responsibility
- To organise oneself and one’s own working environment
- To make choices and decisions about friends, activities, interests and actions
- To know when to seek help
- To show self-discipline, accepting consequences of choices
- To offer assistance to others

---

Fig.3: Key Learning Skills

Fig.4: Agreed Learning Objectives
Sharing and celebrating learning

We then began to communicate the content of this agreement to the school community. We needed to have manifestations of this consensus, and we began to implement a range of practical applications, some subtle and others more direct. One of the hardest to achieve was the use of the word “learning” as opposed to “work”. Colleagues began to deliberately change the reference to support the importance of what we were doing. Work has many negative associations, whereas learning is a more accurate description of what the children were doing in school. Although this sounds a simple transposition, it was initially quite a difficult habit to break. The focus though gives a clear message of our priorities that continues to communicate intent. We also celebrated achievement each month in an assembly for parents with the identification of a “Learning Hero” from each class, a child singled out by their teacher for their success in an aspect of learning. Examples have included children who have persevered to achieve personal milestones, collaborated successfully with others, or helped others to learn successfully with a difficult project.

The collected agreements were collected together into a published Learning Statement. This was included in our Prospectus, added to our school website and issued to parents and staff. The statement is reviewed annually each year with the staff. This helps to refine the detail and keep colleagues knowledge up-to-date. Parents are introduced to this during their induction meetings and the statement is referred to in numerous review meetings during the school year. It has proved particularly useful as a declaration of intent with external moderators who are unfamiliar with the school. They are quickly able to digest the information and have a considered point of reference when judging the effectiveness of the school.

A very important part of communicating this with the children involved the act of assessment. I believed strongly that if we truly valued children’s progress in learning dispositions we should measure this and report on it to the children and their parents. It is important to have a measure of how successful you are and feedback is important not only for individual children but also on the cohort level as well. This process became the significant way in which KLDs became embedded into our practices. We attempted to measure what we valued, rather than valuing what we measured – the more familiar assessment of learning manifested in the teacher assessment of the National Curriculum. Each child’s attainment is now recorded as part of the learning process each term; teachers update our records all the time. The class summary sheet is used to identify areas that have not been covered during the year and then further activities are planned to allow each child to experience the full range of dispositions. Progress is reported to parents in consultation meetings, which are subsequently made available to them on our Managed Learning Environment (we use the “Fronter” product), and targets for progress based on the dispositions are then communicated to the children in appropriate language they are able to relate to. At the end of the academic year the final assessments are made and summary reports make reference to successes and areas for further focus. The data is then collated together into summary reports for each year group. We are then able to clearly identify the dispositions that have been most successfully learnt, as well as those that were acquired least successfully. Our most important use of this data has been to give focus in subsequent years to the teaching programmes, in order to focus more on the dispositions covered less successfully. We are currently in the third year of collecting assessment data and will be able to record mean averages by the end of the year, in order to better define what an average year would look like. This is helpful in order to identify whether a particular year is

“I believed strongly that if we truly valued children’s progress in learning dispositions we should measure this and report on it to the children and their parents”
above or below average in performance.

Our conclusion for the children currently in Year One so far has been that certain dispositions are regularly learnt successfully, namely learning in teams and learning independently. Children have found being reflective, imaginative and creative the most difficult skills to master. In Year Two, success rates, not surprisingly, are significantly higher in all dispositions. Learning in teams and learning independently continue to be great strengths however being imaginative and creative and making connections in their learning are the least successful areas. We have noted variation between the different years and we wait with interest this year’s results to note long-term trends and variations.

The benefits of a learning focus
The act of focusing the school on key learning skills has had many uses. It has benefited the school and its pupils in many ways. We have a clearly defined pedagogy recorded in our prospectus and this is given to inspectors to contextualise our practices. It has become the focus of learning programmes for staff and children. It has been possible to clearly define our aims and methods with parents, and thereby they are able to more easily understand the school’s intentions and contribute meaningfully to their children’s progress at home. We use the focus as a point of reference when considering influences from outside – non-statutory guidance and teaching innovations from other schools. The review of coverage is a very useful way of refining our medium term coverage and subsequent learning programmes. Finally, feedback to children and their parents focuses on successes but clearly addresses aspects of learning they need to develop. The message is always based on observation and assessment and consistent with our agreed outcomes.

We have noted a number of significant impacts as a result of our focus. Children’s attainment remains very high. Evaluation of attainment in RAISE online has been consistently recorded as ‘SIG+’ in each area of learning over the past five years. With a changing community it has been a consistent challenge to maintain standards, especially as the percentage of children who speak English as an additional language continues to grow. Although it would not be fair to credit our capacity to maintain standards entirely to the focus on learning skills, it is possible to say that they have contributed to this. We believe they have helped maintain a focus on the aspects of learning that support attainment in English, Maths and Science. We would also claim that the focus on Key Learning Skills has produced very well rounded learners. This is certainly confirmed by our end of Key Stage assessment results for the KLDs, which show high success in each...
area. A very pleasing impact is also the recognition that the children continue to be very successful in their learning in the next stage of their education, namely the junior school. Children continue to make excellent progress throughout Key Stage Two, and their end of Key Stage results reflect an equally high standard. We believe this focus enables children to internalise their learning processes and supports them in different learning contexts. They are good learners, they continue to be successful in their learning and they are aware of the factors that help them to achieve and continue to make good progress in all areas of their learning.

The processes involved in our learning journey have taken place over the past five years. It is a continuing process that will undoubtedly evolve over the coming years within our learning community. I anticipate further refinements will be made in response to our annual analysis. I look back with pride on the journey travelled to date and the achievements we have noted but also look forward to the journey yet to come, the challenges and decisions yet to be made in order to better support children’s learning in the coming generations.

Bob Drew, Head teacher at Gearies Infant School, Essex

Knowledge trail

Learning to learn – Summarising some of the key outcomes from the Learning to Learn in Schools and Further Education Projects. How important is it to promote talk about learning in the classrooms? And, is it enough to be a reflective learner? http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/learning-to-learn.htm

This series is based on Edward de Bono’s Thinking Hats concept

Thinking Hats
By Anna Forsyth
All books priced at £17.99 each

Thinking Hats - Book 1 Ages 5-7
Thinking Hats - Book 2 Ages 7-9
Thinking Hats - Book 3 Ages 9-11

Creativity is the wealth of tomorrow. Developing laterality in approach to issues is exciting, challenging and critical learning. World-renowned Edward de Bono’s concept of ‘Thinking Hats’ has proven itself to be an excellent way to ensure that students consider problems and issues from different perspectives; ‘actively thinking’.

This series of three books teaches the use of Edward de Bono’s six thinking hats; white for facts and information, yellow for optimism, green for creativity, blue for the overall picture, black for negative, red for emotions.

A series of 40 lessons in each book spans almost all the curriculum areas so that students practice using thinking hats in many contexts.

Order Now: Tel: 0121 224 7599 Fax: 0121 224 7598 or Email: enquiries@imaginativeminds.co.uk
This book includes a broad selection of exciting and enjoyable poems that can be used to develop enthusiasm for poetry, reading and writing. For ease of use each poem is specifically linked to both a ‘Key Objective’ and accompanying ‘Teachers’ Notes’.

All of the poems in this book have been used successfully in school workshops with 4-8 year olds. Most are written by Alan Peat, but the collection also includes poems by Wes McGee and Andrew Taylor.

A broad range of poetry styles is included, and related ‘language play’ activities are discussed. This book is a companion volume to the popular Teaching Poetry with 7-12 Year Olds.

TEACHING POETRY WITH 4-8 YEAR OLDS

Price: £17.99 each
For postage and packing add:
£5.00 UK - £12.00 Overseas

Essential Poetry Teaching Resources
Order both books for £30.00 plus p+p and save over 15%

Teaching Poetry with 7-12 year olds

Many teachers are devoting substantial amounts of time searching for resources to effectively teach poetry.

This pack has been specifically developed to link poems with key objectives and a wealth of practical teaching ideas.

- Each poem is accompanied by ‘teachers’ notes’.
- As a teaching aid it will save valuable time by explicitly linking each poem to one or more of the objectives.
- It includes both suggestions for using the poem with either a whole class or a group, and extension activities.
- All the poems in the book have been used in school workshops with 7-12 year old children.
- The poems cover a variety of forms including rhyming and non-rhyming verse, Haiku, expanding/contracting poems, shape poems, rap and free verse.

Price: £17.99 each
For postage and packing add:
£5.00 UK - £12.00 Overseas

Order Hotline: 0121 224 7599
Fax: 0121 224 7578

Imaginative Minds, 309 Scott House,
Gibb Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B9 4AA
www.teachingtimes.co.uk
The world is a wealth of accessible information, but there are many pitfalls to be avoided. Here Andrew Shenton and Alison Pickard present the case for meta-evaluation as a means of empowering students to select or reject information.

For years writers concerned with information literacy (IL) – essentially the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to find and use information effectively – have stressed the importance of learners evaluating the material with which they come into contact whilst searching. In an influential publication that first appeared over thirty years ago, Marland presented an ‘information skills curriculum’ whose fourth stage – that of determining the resources to be employed – listed various matters that should be considered by a youngster when making a decision on whether to select or reject particular material. Numerous subsequent models have also proposed individual criteria for the assessment of information sources. As many commentators explain, the need to make sound judgements has become especially important today, since so much information searching now involves the
World Wide Web. This point is well made in a previous article in the journal. The piece, ‘Using the Internet for Student Research in Schools’ (Creative Teaching and Learning 2.3), highlights several reasons why evaluation is critical when working in the electronic environment. Specifically:

- the content of collaboratively authored resources such as blogs and wikis may not be entirely reliable
- much of the material available via the Internet is not appropriate for the ages of the pupils we teach
- for the most part, traditional gatekeepers who exercise quality control are missing from the Web

**Questionable origins**

One of the key problems for the educator is that, in the majority of IL models, there is little evidence that the framework recommended for adoption has been formulated after rigorous investigation. Thus, ironically, in such cases the credibility of the model itself is open to question, even if we are prepared to accept, on an intuitive level, that the principles being proposed for consideration seem sensible. This concern has existed for a long time. As far back as the early 1990s, Eisenberg and Brown commented that, typically, IL models ‘were developed without any formal research. While most were developed after the authors had years of practical experience working with students and meeting their needs, the models are not empirically derived or tested in any formal field or laboratory study’.

This pattern is indicative of a wider issue recognised by Limberg and Sundin, namely that the teaching of IL and research into information behaviour ‘have not influenced each other in the way that they have potential so to do’. There are certainly sound reasons why strong connections between the two areas are highly desirable. Ideally, IL teaching should be informed by an awareness of the problems learners have been seen, through research, to experience, and good practice demonstrated by effective pupils.

**A new model**

The evaluative framework proposed in this article was designed with the aim of helping to narrow the gap between discoveries emerging from research and the teaching of IL. To this end, the content is based very closely on a recently constructed model prepared by Pickard, Gannon-Leary and Coventry and devoted to “how users place their trust in digital information resources in the web environment”. The team’s research explored the credibility judgements made by people and grouped these according to three categories, pertaining respectively to the individual’s cognitive state, internal cues relating to the material itself and external factors associated with the source but not intrinsically part of it. The structure put forward here concentrates mainly on the second dimension, although one of the external factors identified by Pickard, Gannon-Leary and Coventry is also incorporated. Figure One shows the ten issues that have been selected for coverage and converts each of the authors’ explanatory comments into one or more questions for consideration by the learner. Whilst the chart focuses on Web material, it could also be employed, with only minor amendments, either for evaluating other kinds of information sources or as a generic tool for assessing a range.

“ Ideally, IL teaching should be informed by an awareness of the problems learners have been seen, through research, to experience, and good practice demonstrated by effective pupils.”
**The significance of context**

Despite the strong arguments for forging a close relationship between IL on the one hand and research into how young people find and use information on the other, traditionally fundamental differences in emphasis between the two areas have been clearly evident. In a seminal textbook, Case\(^2\) observes that it is now well accepted in research that people’s information behaviour takes place in a specific context; the needs for information that are experienced by an individual do not emerge in a vacuum but owe their existence to wider factors. Many IL models, however, give scant attention to context when presenting criteria for the evaluation of information sources. This reflects a broader shortcoming of IL frameworks — in demonstrating transferability and wide ranging relevance, they do little to acknowledge factors that are particular to individual situations and which may impose their own idiosyncratic demands. Moreover, the fact that

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the page give a recent date when it was prepared or updated?</td>
<td>Does the page refer to the latest developments/events?</td>
<td>Has the writer referred to other sources, how old are they?</td>
<td>Are there any obvious factual errors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens if you check the material against other sources?</td>
<td>Is it, for example, a blog, journal article or an encyclopedia entry?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Figure 1: The model**
evaluative criteria are usually presented in a simple list (frequently in a bulleted form) tends to imply that they are all of equal weight. Nevertheless, very often, in reality, their relative pertinence differs according to the situation. Let us take a moment to consider how the importance of some of the criteria highlighted in Figure One varies from one set of circumstances to another:

■ Currency of information is obviously a factor that is paramount in the study of many scientific or technological topics but it is much less significant if a historical matter is under examination. In the latter situation, up-to-dateness cannot be dismissed completely, as we must always be mindful of fresh interpretations and new evidence, yet there are also occasions when old material is valuable in revealing thinking or the level of development in relation to a certain matter at a particular time. This characteristic is, of course, central to the role of the historical source.

■ Although, in terms of coverage, we may be inclined to assume that in-depth information is preferable to brief material, Ahituv and Newman1 remind us that very detailed content can confuse, mislead and actually form a barrier to the acquisition of knowledge. In addition, as a pupil is preparing an academic assignment, the depth of the information required may vary according to the phase of the work that the individual has reached. Outlining the stages within the Information Search Process, Kuhlthau6 explains how, in the third – that of ‘prefocus exploration’ – the learner is intent on finding out about the general topic. Here, it is likely that a short paragraph or two offering an overview or introduction is desirable whereas, in the later stage of ‘information collection’, more precise, and probably detailed, material is necessary.

■ Whilst for the most part we demand information that is objective, if we are exploring the stance of a particular pressure group material which is wholly unbalanced and does no more than merely put forward their arguments may still be suitable for our needs.

The overall message underpinning all these examples is that the application of the different evaluative criteria should be situation-specific. A similar attitude may be taken with regard to people recommending information sources. We may trust advice on the quality of football websites if it is given by a friend who is knowledgeable on the game but baulk at accepting the ideas of the same individual if they offer guidance on websites devoted to a subject that we know is outside their field of expertise.

The proforma tool

The proforma shown in Figure Two, which has been derived from the previous chart, is intended as a vehicle for the promotion of meta-evaluation. In recent times, the prefix, ‘meta-’, has become somewhat overused, and the range of senses in which it has been applied is now so diverse that its meaning is ambiguous. If we note, however, that ‘metacognition’ is frequently assumed to represent ‘thinking about our thinking’ and that ‘metadata’ is often defined as ‘data about data’, by extension we may say that ‘meta-evaluation’ is concerned with ‘evaluating evaluation’ or more specifically in the case of this article the evaluation of evaluative criteria.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil Criterion 1</th>
<th>Coverage</th>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOURCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVALUATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author's authority</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Criterion 3</td>
<td>Citations</td>
<td>Objectivity and motivation</td>
<td>Presentation and format</td>
<td>Affiliations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Criterion 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As we have seen, it is beneficial if, rather than youngsters automatically applying each evaluative criterion in a prescribed set to all the various sources they encounter when undertaking an information search, they pursue a more selective and flexible approach. The attitude to source evaluation proposed in this article should be viewed as part of current trends towards aligning IL more closely with the concerns of research into how people actually find and use information. The methods advocated here are consistent with the modern argument of Limberg et al that IL constitutes ‘a set of abilities to seek and use information in purposeful ways related to the task, situation and context in which information seeking practices are embedded’ — a stance that will itself strike a chord with academics whose interest lies in investigating the phenomenon of information behaviour.

Educators who are keen to promote meta-evaluation may provide pupils with copies of Figures One and Two at the outset of a task that necessitates finding and using information. The ten stated criteria form foci for the learners’ attention and serve as a basis for potential criticism. Each youngster may be asked to decide whether, in their particular case, the criteria and the accompanying questions shown in Figure One are suitable for evaluating the first source they will encounter. In Figure Two, the blank, white boxes adjacent to each of the criteria provide spaces for the pupil’s writing. Here, the learner may either comment on the quality of the source under scrutiny in relation to the criterion involved or indicate why this factor is inappropriate for their purposes. The questions shown in Figure One are intended to serve as guides to stimulate thinking, although it is possible that the youngster may choose to interpret a certain criterion in a way that is not represented in any of the questions posed but which is still pertinent to the task, their own state of knowledge or the subject. Herring suggests that pupils may be encouraged to develop their own IL models, instead of having such frameworks imposed upon them8. The proforma goes some way to accommodating this kind of latitude by including four lightly shaded boxes. Here youngsters are at liberty to offer their own evaluative criteria and assess the source in question in terms of these considerations. Nonetheless, if, as Harris asserts, there is a tendency among young people ‘to simplify website evaluation tasks and make credibility judgments that rely heavily on design and presentation features rather than content’4, it would be unwise to leave the learners entirely to their own devices when asked to assess material and they should be guided at least to some degree by a set framework.

**Freedom of method**

Assuming that we adhere to the principle that the location and use of information take place within a certain context, it is important that pupils are not only allowed the scope to apply evaluative criteria as they see fit but they are also given some autonomy with respect to the methods they use when making their actual evaluative assessments. It is all too easy for IL teaching to take a heavily didactic orientation, with learners encouraged to apply stipulated techniques in a prescribed order, thereby reducing information processes to little more than a formula and limiting opportunities for personal decision making. It is more appropriate to concentrate on furnishing pupils with a repertoire of strategies that they apply as they deem necessary according to the circumstances in which they find themselves. Let us consider how a particular pupil pursues different methods for evaluating information when faced with two contrasting scenarios. In the first, he is exploring a website devoted to his favourite sport, cricket. The youngster is a teenager who has followed the game avidly for some years and already he has amassed a considerable personal knowledge base. He assesses the...
Knowledge Trails

1) Using the Internet for Student research in schools – Dr Andrew Shenton explore the dos and don’ts of using the Internet for research in secondary schools. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/ctlp6971
earningusingtheinternetto
researchinsecondary.htm

2) Promoting inferential information behaviour – Rather than acquiring a set of skills, inferential information behaviour involves forming a mindset involving problem solving and lateral thinking. Dr. Andrew K. Shenton looks at ways to develop inferential strategies. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/ctlp1417

site for both accuracy and currency on the basis of this knowledge. Since he is an expert on the game, major errors in the information will immediately become apparent to him, and he is able to test the currency of the material he sees against what he knows about recent developments and the latest events in the sport. When asked, however, in a History lesson to evaluate a website devoted to the French Revolution – a subject with which he is totally unfamiliar – the youngster has no alternative but to resort to other methods. Consequently, he pays close attention to the dates given on the web page in order to determine when it was created and last updated, and assesses the accuracy of its content by looking to verify some of its stated facts against other information sources. There is much to be said for educators who are keen to develop their pupils’ IL setting a wide range of assignments that, in sum, allow different levels of choice, present diverse contextual situations and encourage the use of more than one evaluative strategy in relation to a particular criterion.

The importance of meta-evaluation today

Since today much of the information encountered by young people when searching the web is of dubious quality and value, the ability to evaluate the material accessed in this way is vital. There is no shortage of criteria that have been recommended for use in assessment but many are of questionable provenance themselves. This article has presented a framework that is firmly rooted in what has been learnt in recent research about the strategies executed in real situations by information users. The danger arises, however, that, when any prescribed set of criteria is employed as a basis for action, the process of source evaluation becomes rather mechanical, and youngsters direct their attention, with little thought, to each of the considerations in turn. To combat this possibility, the authors have proposed that a higher order meta-evaluation is necessary. Learners must make decisions as to whether a certain criterion that has been advocated in IL training should be adopted in the light of the peculiarities of the specific situation with which they are involved. Some of the factors that have been put forward by educators may be seen to be inappropriate. Conversely, youngsters should be encouraged to add their own criteria if they come to the conclusion that they will be of value in dealing with the matter at hand. Finally, once the individual factors for application have been determined, learners may be given the freedom to decide for themselves the tests they will use in their particular situation. In short, the process of source evaluation demands an adaptable mindset which is sensitive to a range of variables.

Andrew K. Shenton and Alison J. Pickard

References

Start them thinking!

Marcelo Staricoff and Allan Rees
Suitable for KS1-2 £22.99

Make an immediate difference to teaching and learning in your school. Start Thinking will bring enjoyment, creativity and challenge to your classroom and improve the thinking skills of your pupils.

Inspiring education often grows from simple routines. When teachers at Westbury Park School in Bristol wanted to challenge their pupils to think, enquire and reach beyond standard expectations, they introduced daily thinking-skills starters. These mini-challenges had built-in requirements for pupils to exercise their minds through essential thinking processes such as questioning, comparing, prioritizing, recognizing patterns and thinking methodically. The teachers were amazed at how much children enjoyed the starters and benefited from them. Some children turned starters into projects lasting months – all completed in their own time. Children seemed to grow in confidence, persistence and enthusiasm for learning.

Start Thinking collects more than 90 thinking-skills starters, tried and tested by teachers at Westbury Park School. The starters are arranged into chapters on Words, Numbers, Science, Creativity and Philosophy so you can easily choose the most appropriate challenges for your pupils. Detailed guidance notes are provided.

Order Hotline: 0121 224 7599
Seeking stories to hook learners. **Hywel Roberts** explains how building a healthier learning tension can trigger creative thinking.

We stand in the sea cave listening to the lapping of the seawater that strokes the rock, shale and bones that lie under our feet. As we walk, this coastal floor crunches and creaks with each and every step. We look down at the ground. What do we see? Sand, stone, smashed shells, fish bones, seaweed, dead crabs.

And then we see it there ahead of us on the ground. The smooth, wet and leathery skin, discarded by the strangest of mythical creatures of the sea: the Selkie. Whilst we stare at the cool grey coat lying amongst the natural debris, we realise we are faced with a dilemma; the same dilemma that has faced everyone who has encountered a Selkie in the past: once a Selkie sheds its skin and becomes human in order to spend a short amount of time amongst people, the skin is left in a safe place for the creature to return to the sea. The thing is, the skin is a bringer of great luck to the finder. Within it lie the secrets of the sea. And to poor people like us, this is a godsend. And if we can catch the Selkie in human form then...well, who can tell what good fortune may be showered on us?
And then it’s playtime and Year 5 reluctantly get their coats and go outside to play and think about what’s just happened. I’ve been invited into a Bradford primary school to model some strategies to ‘hook’ children into learning and maintain their engagement with a context from which we can generate a flood of opportunities around enquiry, literacy and numeracy.

**Hooking learners**

It may appear easier for a visitor to have an impact on a class, and perhaps there’s some truth in this. I will say however that being the visitor (or visiting practitioner if you prefer) implies that there will be a one-off ‘nice’ experience for the children and that will be that. In this case, I’m working closely with the Year 5 team in order to ‘hook them into a more creative and experience-led mindset that will enhance their current practise and enable them to look at what they’re teaching and ask themselves if there are opportunities for great learning (and teaching) that they are missing. The morning is spent with the children; the afternoon is spent planning potential next steps with the colleagues. This is just Day One. Day Two involves us looking at the whole Year 5 offer, and identifying the elements of the curriculum that need rejuvenating, sparking up or simply ditching.

All this is in the spirit of giving the children a curriculum that is authentically engaging whilst meeting the needs of all the pressures that exist for teachers outside the classroom. The school has seen massive improvement over the last few years but attendance has been an issue, as well as learner motivation. The recent Ofsted inspection has also highlighted an over-reliance on a ‘sage on the stage’ rather than ‘guide on the side’ approach to teaching. As a result, the children, though biddable, are passive in their learning. A re-look at the curriculum on offer is a step the Headteacher wishes to take in order to rejuvenate the school and its children whilst continuing on the path to sustained improvement.

**Seeking out stories**

The Year 5 class are about to embark on a project around Myths and Legends. In the past I’ve worked with classes on this theme and I really want to try and do something different this time. I really want the children to get lost in a story and for the learning to bubble up as we move through the narrative. Looking at my six-year-old son’s bookshelf I find a book that will help me with this. The book is *Selkie* by Gillian McClure and the story is very much based on the Scottish myth of the Selkie which sees seals taking human form by shedding their precious skin. As an aside, the Selkie myth was cinematically interpreted a number of years ago by acclaimed film maker John Sayles as *The Secret of Roan Inish* (1994) and is well worth seeking out.

As a visitor (or ‘special visitor’ as one child said, as I had a suit on), I needed to get into the context of learning as soon as I could. My starter (if you like starters) was a projected photograph of the interior of the cave. It’s not a photo that’s dark and dull; rather, it has a beam of sunlight coming down from a split in the ground above. This gives it a real air of magic. I ask the children to come up with some questions they would like to ask the photograph. Yes, the photograph. Rather than give them no time to prepare this, I give them a few minutes to write the questions down. I tell them that I’ll answer for the photograph. I don’t tell them I’m pretending to be a photograph, I’m just representing it. Here are some of their questions:

- Where are you?
- What are you made of?
- Are you cold?
- What do you hear?
- Who talks to you?
- How long have you been here?
- Have you any family?
By giving the cave a voice, by personifying it, it becomes real to the children and their willingness to suspend disbelief is captured; they are hooked.

I answer the questions in much the same way as a very matter-of-fact teacher-in-role. We then grab the sticky notes and sign up the classroom as the cave. All this means is that we create the environment of the coastal cave by putting up labels that direct our imaginations and stick them around the room. Here are some of the labels the children created:

Cold stone, Snakehole, Litter, Dead stuff, Driftwood, A smashed photo frame, Old fishing nets, A lobster pot

Signing the space gives children the visual clues to building their imaginative view of the context. It also enables us to step in and out of the context as appropriate; it’s a lurking resource that can be referred to and used during other learning. As you can see from the list above, there are many opportunities for exploring the children’s ideas. A couple of the ideas themselves offer us potential stories and narratives that would be well worth pursuing, the smashed photo frame for example, but time was pressurising so I needed to move on.

Following the starter and the signing, I ‘protected’ the children into a story by essentially saying the following to them:

“"I’m going to tell you a story. It’s not a real story. But it is real in my head and it’s going to be real until lunchtime. But it’s just a story. Is that okay? A real made-up story. It’s the story of Selkie Cave.”

Most children understand the conventions of a story and these children were no different. The story I told was about the cave by the sea I had discovered whilst on a ramble around a small island off the Scottish coast. I asked them to imagine we were all in the cave. We walked through it (them in their heads, me moving around the room) and I asked them to provide a soundscape for me to walk through. Now I thought I’d need to explain this but they did it straight away: the crunches and creaks of my footsteps were offered without trepidation, so as I walked I decided to conduct the volume of the soundscape being provided to avoid the danger of it turning into cacophonous chaos. I did this by holding out my hand palm down as I walked. When I raised my hand higher, the children increased the volume of the soundscape; when I lowered it, they quietened. It was during a quiet moment later in the morning that we found the source of the dead crabs and fish bones: a Selkie. It had shed its skin and left it on the ground to be returned to later. We watched the Selkie leave.

Hot seating

Prior to this turning point we had spoken to the man who lived near the cave, who had seen the Selkie before. We’d ‘hotseated’ him after I’d given the children plenty of time to write down appropriate questions to ask, and after we’d signed up what we thought the man would look like. They said he:

- had a big white bushy beard
- had a wooden leg
- spoke softly
- wore an eye patch
laughed a lot
didn’t like the mainland
loved the sea
was wrinkly

Again, the children offer offshoots to the central Selkie narrative that may well be worth pursuing, how did he lose his leg? for example.

So the Selkie leaves. Its skin lies on the ground in front of us. We learned much from the man who lived by the cave (and whom I represented, surrounded by an archway of sticky note signs), the main thing being that he who holds the Selkie skin will have good fortune and it will also be worth a lot of money. He told us that the Selkie is a precious thing and must be protected at all costs. He also said that there were people who would destroy the Selkie to get their hands on its skin. He added that the Selkie knew all the secrets of the sea.

(I wonder what the secrets of the sea actually are? Another session maybe...)

The Selkie skin is represented by my jacket which I’ve thrown on the floor in the space between the back table and the fire exit. We understand the beauty of the Selkie but we also know the potential value of the skin.

The benefits of positive tension

This is the dilemma which takes children to the edge of their seat and creates an authentic tension within the learning. This sort of learning cannot be summed up in a text book (or perhaps an article for a magazine), but exists in the moment. The children become characters in the shared narrative and as a result they find it easier to articulate their thoughts and opinions. The story, with its healthy learning tension, turning points and air of the fantastical, becomes a distancing tool that works to support engagement. The curriculum needs to rehearse children for real life and this is why stories that resonate with children can really help. Stories also offer many opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, cause and consequence, right and wrong, responsibility and rights, difference and understanding. For this class, and this school, looking at how we can marry the established curriculum to creative classroom practice is the start of the journey.

So, have a look at what you need to deliver next half term and ask yourself ‘Where are the stories?’ You could keep your class on the edge of their seats.

Hywel Roberts is an associate of Independent Thinking. Visit his website at: www.createlearninspire.co.uk.

Hywel’s book Oops! Helping Children Learn Accidentally (ed. Ian Gilbert) was published in April 2012 and can be ordered online.

Knowledge trails

1) I want to tell you a story – the benefits of storytelling go beyond improving reading and writing skills. Here we look at the impact on the broader curriculum spectrum. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/ctl_2_1_i_want_to_tell_you_a_story.htm
3) Classroom detectives – How using the stories of Sherlock Holmes as a creative writing project in one school helped pupils develop logical thinking skills. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/classroom-detectives.htm
Small steps to creative thinking

Can creativity be captured in the classroom? Armed with the contents of her ‘creative toolkit’, Louise Tondeur shares her step-by-step experience of seizing the creative writing process.
and they promote a kind of word association that becomes easier with space
around the words. It turned out that the approaches I was using weren’t wacky
or mysterious or particularly unusual or even particularly original. Not only were
they tried and tested, they could be explained to other people!

Recalling creative experiences
When did you last do something creative? If you are a writer, an artist, musician,
dancer or performer, think back to the last time you practiced. Or think more
broadly about how you are creative in your every day life. Alternatively, use this
exercise – called ‘Frog-Green’ – as an opportunity to be creative:

- Go for a walk. Notice the different versions of the colour green you see along
  the way.
- When you get home, close your eyes and think about your walk. Imagine all
  the detail you can. Picture the colours.
- Go through all of your senses one by one and recall the experience.
- Now think specifically about the different versions of the colour green you
  saw.
- In a notebook make a list of the kinds of green you saw by pairing ‘green’
  with a noun. For example ‘frog-green’.

Once you have thought about a time you were creative, write down what you
did. Don’t analyse too much. Make a list of what you actually did. Anything is
allowed. For example:

- Moved
- Used all of my senses
- Thought in pictures
- Observed the world around me

The creative toolkit
After I had looked at my creative process and broken it down, I created tools
that I could pass on to my students. I had to depersonalise these tools. Those
that work for me won’t necessarily work for others. In my teaching I present
them this way: experiment with the tool; if it works hone it and use it regularly. I
use the term ‘creative tools’ because I want my students to be able to visualise
a toolkit that they can ‘carry’ with them into different situations. Some of the
tools in my toolkit are:
Freewriting – By this I mean writing without stopping, without editing, without taking the pen off the page, for a set amount of time – usually one minute to start with. It’s a term described by Peter Elbow at the beginning of his book Writing with Power.

Close observation - This simply means looking at something, in minute detail, and describing it. Try to remove the visual bias, too. Use all of your senses. Close observation can be done deliberately just before writing about something: going on a walk to observe the environment or looking at an object in your hand, for instance. It can also become a daily habit. Try to develop ‘writer’s eyes’ and observe the world around you closely.

Creative visualisation - If you did the ‘frog-green’ exercise you’ve already tried this. As a writing exercise, creative visualisation means picturing something in your head – in as much detail as you can - and describing it using words on the page, or telling someone about it. It can be based on direct experience, or can be made up.

Reading - As Julia Skinner points out in her article ‘The 100 Word Challenge’ (Creative Teaching and Learning, Vol. 2: 4) children may feel they don’t ‘have reason to write […] unless [they] have taken to blogging or are a closet author’. But one reason to learn and teach Creative Writing is that it develops interest in reading and, at the same time, our scope for creative and broad thinking. We could argue that both reading and writing are ways of thinking, or ways of working out what we think about the world. At the same time, reading develops our capacity for creativity.

Making it easy
Psychologists have proved that the easier a task becomes, the more likely we are to do it. This may seem obvious when reduced to a single sentence but consider the implications: make stopping smoking or road safety seem ‘easy’ and our brains have been hoodwinked into making life a little bit better. This is also a principle we can apply to learning and teaching creativity. ‘Be creative’ does not sound easy. It sounds abstract, and possibly elitist, too; something other people have time for. Some of my students tell me they think it sounds ‘childish’, suggesting that to be creative we need to get back to being more child-like and more playful. You can ‘make it easy’ by breaking it down into small steps like this:

- Find a stone.
- Hold it in your hand.
- Feel its weight.
- What colour is it?
- Is the surface rough or smooth?
- What does it smell like?
- With a partner, write down some words about the stone.
- Describe the place you found the stone.
- Who might use the stone? What for?
- Someone remembers using the stone. Write down the memory.
- Now you can add any writing activity you like (for any age group or ability) and extend it in any direction: a word association game, a poem about textures and smells, a murder mystery that starts on a beach, a feature article about unemployment in tourist resorts, an interview with an older person about memories of childhood.

Why it isn’t easy...
I’ll stop to contradict myself now: one of the important things about creativity is that it isn’t easy. Sometimes I wonder if this applies to adults wanting to be creative more than to children. What do I mean? There are three different aspects to this way of thinking:
1. You have to look in a new way. It’s sometimes easy to go for the most obvious: the stereotyped phrase, story, character, image, or situation, the one we’ve seen repeated on TV or on the Internet. Creativity means (perhaps using close observation) avoiding the most obvious path or reworking it. We’re not finding something new, but often we’re looking at ordinary things in a new way.

2. You have to be brave. When everyone else seems to be going for an uninteresting or same-old approach, it takes some nerve to stand out from the crowd, to say ‘yes, I am creative’, to get your idea out – especially as it might be criticised.

3. You have to be disciplined. Creative practice takes practice. There is no such thing as getting it right first time, or even getting it right. With a media (seemingly) full of instant gratification, and a vision of creativity influenced by the Romantics, it can be hard to understand that creativity is not about instant results or bolts of lightning. The more you practise the better at it you get.

**Constraints in creativity**

One of the things I discovered as I looked at my own creative processes was that anything at all can be an idea (or perhaps it’s better to say anything can be a starting point or a trigger or can tell a story). In a way, creativity is a way of describing your ability to shape, like a potter shapes clay. That is, we take the material (the idea, starting point or trigger) and we apply a constraint to it.

This can be as simple as playing a Creative Writing game or as complicated as plotting a 100,000 word novel. There is something about the constraint that allows one to be creative. When we teach creativity we’re suggesting constraints (or exercises or structures) for students to adopt and explore, and we’re allowing students space to apply their own constraints. In so doing we make the process easy at first, repeatedly using short exercises or wordplay activities. Gradually we build on this approach, extending the exercises and making them more and more open ended, until we start to ask students to come up with their own structures and patterns.

**Making the steps small enough**

You’ve looked at your own creative processes and have begun to write down what you do when you’re ‘being creative’. You can extend and develop your list over the coming weeks, remembering the different approaches you took and recording them in a notebook. Once your list is fairly substantial, turn what you have into a list of short writing exercises. Take steps backwards until you have a set of instructions. Make sure the first instruction is as simple as possible. How do you make sure your steps are small enough? Keep taking steps back until you can’t simplify the process any more. Look at my close observation exercise called ‘Find a Stone’ above for an example.
Setting up your own small steps approach

Here’s a recap:
1. Look at your own creative processes. Think back to a time when you were ‘being creative’. Don’t analyse too much. What did you do? Make a list.
2. Keep adding to your list over a few weeks.
3. Turn your list into a set of writing exercises. Write a series of instructions for each item on your list.
4. Keep taking steps back until you’ve made the first instruction as simple as possible. (For example, ‘Find a Stone’.)
5. Try adapting the activities for particular groups of students, based on particular themes. (For example, the beach.)

Pay attention to the layout of the room. Experiment with seating students in small groups in circles, for instance, or around a small display of natural objects, or everyday objects they have brought in themselves to create learning stations. (A bag with objects spilling out of it is a good stimulus.) You can also use props: a wooden spoon, a box, a set of dominos, or a plant pot, for example, are all interesting props that can be displayed in an empty space. I recently had the opportunity to start a writing activity in a drama studio, with some beginner playwrights. I used a photo album, a set of postcards, an umbrella and a hat. The resulting pieces of writing were all very different.

One way to structure creative learning is to ask students to move between different stations, responding to particular activities. Alternatively, use jigsaw-learning. Have students work on the same activity together in small groups, and after ten minutes, ask one representative of each group to move on to a new group. That person reports on what happened in his or her original group.

You’ll notice from the ‘close observation’ (Find a Stone) exercise and the ‘creative visualisation’ exercise (Frog-Green) that the senses are very important. It is vital to consider how you stimulate the senses and avoid always using visual stimuli to ensure all learners can enjoy the creative process and realise that creativity is not too abstract to capture.

Louise Tondeur is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Roehampton. Louise has published two novels: The Water’s Edge and The Haven Home for Delinquent Girls. Her new book A Small Steps Guide to Goal-Setting and Time Management is available from 25th July 2012. www.smallstepsguide.co.uk

Further information
For more on the creative process:
For examples of short Creative Writing exercises:

Reference

Knowledge trails
1. Classroom detectives – A look at a creative project that uses Sherlock Holmes’ stories to inspire questioning and logical thinking in the classroom to teach children vital thinking skills. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/classroom-detectives.htm
2. Thinking to write! – To improve writing results, sometimes you have to throw away the paper and pens. Here we explore how two thinking strategies – ‘P4C’ and ‘Thinking Maps’ – boosted literacy at one junior school. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/clt-thinking-to-write.htm
3. Why is creative writing so difficult to assess? – One of the main attractions of A level English Language is creative writing, as it allows students to return to the earliest form of education: listening to and making up stories. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/why-is-creative-writing-so-difficult-to-assess.htm
A major new book giving a child’s eye view of the Holocaust

Introduction to Eva Erben’s Journey

As a young girl Eva Erben was suddenly forced by the Nazis to leave her home in Prague to join, with her parents, one of the transports to the Theresienstadt Ghetto. The nightmare that followed is told by Eva as a young girl struggling to cope with the fear and danger that becomes part of her world.

This child’s view of the Holocaust is a unique and moving story as well as an important historical record.

ISBN: 978-0-9570477-0-9

“A death march, survival in hiding, liberation and a new life in Israel underline the force of the will to live that illuminates this courageous story.”

Rt. Hon. Sir Martin Gilbert – Historian

Special prices when purchasing classroom packs!

Purchase a single copy of this A5 book for £8.99 or take advantage of our special bulk packs. Save £15.00 on a pack of 5 or purchase a pack of 20 for £84.00 and save over £95.00!

Please call or send orders to: Imaginative Minds Ltd
309 Scott House, Gibb Street, Digbeth, Birmingham B9 4AA
Tel: 0121 224 7599 or Fax: 0121 224 7598 Email: enquiries@imaginativeminds.co.uk
A Holocaust experience

By journeying deep into the memoirs of Holocaust survivors, David Lawson reveals the emotional value of using first-hand experience to help teachers overcome difficult barriers.
Teaching the Holocaust presents a number of problems and difficulties. What exactly are we trying to teach? Are we teaching the facts and sequence of events as an academic historical subject or are we trying to instil some moral lesson? Are we trying to use Holocaust education to try to prevent another genocide? Or to draw wider lessons about race hate?

Do we point out that the Holocaust did not occur long ago in some far distant savage land but that it happened in living memory in an apparently civilised society? There are people still alive today who were involved in the Holocaust both as perpetrators and as victims. Germany is now a leading member of the European Union. Before the war it was a cultured, educated, industrious, technically advanced society. It was democratic. Are we trying to tell our students that this did not prevent it becoming fascist and racist?

And, in any event, how do we ensure that our students understand and empathise with the terror and horror without themselves being traumatised or without the whole subject becoming prurient and being reduced to yet another Hollywood horror story?

Describing this as “teaching” adds to the problem, as this creates in the children’s mind the idea that this is something to be “learnt” like mathematics or geography, whereas we probably want the children to experience and understand.

Teaching the basic facts is, of course, necessary. So we must provide an outline of the events – “A” happened and then “B” which caused “C” and so on. This provides the essential factual framework. It is necessary but not sufficient. The study of the Holocaust is not the same as teaching about the Romans or Henry VIII although there is a requirement in each case for some learning of the facts and sequence of events. Holocaust education must cause also some personal involvement and empathy with what happened. It is not just a part of the history of the Second World War. Its specific inclusion in the curriculum must be designed to cause some change in children’s attitudes and behaviour, to help prevent race hate becoming acceptable and accepted in this country.

But this is precisely where the pedagogic difficulty lies. The facts are well known and teaching them is in principle no more difficult than teaching any other series of facts. But how do you get across what the Holocaust actually meant to those who suffered from it? Our brains, let alone those of our pupils, find it difficult to comprehend the suffering and death of six million Jews or millions of gypsies, homosexuals, or disabled people. The numbers are too great and the events too extreme for us to absorb. The size makes it all rather abstract. The topic is, or can be, vast but there is very limited time in the school year to cover it. That is where living eye-witnesses are important and invaluable.

Learning through the eyes of survivors

Eye witnesses can provide direct personal confirmation that the events actually happened (“I was there and I saw it”). They also bring things down to a personal level and describe what happened to them, as individuals or as
families. In this way the hugeness and abstract concept of genocide or race hate becomes crystallised and focused onto single people and that single person is there, in front of the class, describing what happened. He or she will be able to relate their history to the lives of the pupils and will be able to describe thoughts, emotions, and feelings. The children listening will be more or less of the same age as the Holocaust survivor was at the time of the horrors he or she was describing. The experience of the Holocaust will become real and not just something studied in school. The Holocaust Educational Trust or the London Jewish Cultural Centre can possibly help in finding Holocaust survivors in your area who may be willing to talk to schools. Some synagogues (e.g. Kingston Surbiton and District Synagogue) run workshops on the Holocaust for secondary school children with survivors speaking.

If living survivors are not available, there are many published Holocaust memoirs which can be studied. Many of them are, however, too long, too complex, or too academic to be of much value in a school context. This is where Escape Story; How a young girl survived the Holocaust (by Eva Erben, adapted by David Lawson) is almost uniquely useful.

Eva is now a delightful, charming 81-year-old lady, full of life, living in Ashkelon, on the coast of Israel. She was born in Czechoslovakia in 1930 and lived a happy comfortable life until the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939. She and her parents were driven out of their home in Prague, sent to Theresienstadt, Auschwitz and Christianstadt. Eva’s father was killed and her mother died of exhaustion on a death march with Eva. Eva survived the death march and escaped. She was found, unconscious, by a Czech farmer and hidden by him and his wife, risking their lives for her.

She returned to Prague after the war where she met Peter, whom she had met in Theresienstadt. They married and emigrated to Israel where they still live. They have three children, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

In Escape Story Eva describes her life, in her own words. It is relatively short paper-back A5 sized book, with 140 pages. It is written from the perspective of a young girl and the language is clear and simple and appropriate for her age. This makes it immediately accessible to school children who are able to identify with her and empathise with the horror of her life during and immediately after the war. It is, however, by no means a horror story. The terrors and the hell of the camps is described lightly and briefly and is the more poignant and effective for that. But the story has true heroes, besides Eva herself. The heroism of the Czech farmer and his family who find and hide her, risking their own lives for an escaped Jewish prisoner who was quite unknown to them, is a lesson for us all.

And the story has a happy ending, with Eva living in Israel with her children, grandchildren and even great-grand-children. Early in the book we see Eva with her grand-mother and the book closes with a photograph of Eva and her own grand-daughter.

Sir Martin Gilbert, the historian and official biographer of Sir Winston Churchill writes of the book: “This is a powerful, personal story that evokes the terrors and
challenges of the war years. Theresienstadt and Auschwitz are places etched in the human consciousness: this eye-witness account helps to ensure that the truth will not be forgotten or denied. A death march, survival in hiding, liberation and a new life in Israel underline the force of the will to live that illuminates this courageous story.”

One elderly lady who read the book wrote; ‘…could not put it down until I finished reading to the last page. It was harrowing but felt that Eva Erben’s story came through so well and at the end I was so pleased that she survived the terrible ordeal of the camps and is now living in Israel. I felt in a strange way a sort of kinship to her as I was of similar age at the time of her going to the camps. My suggestion would be a compulsory read of this book in all schools – so easy to read and explains the situation so vividly’.

Dr Joe Beck wrote: ‘Having been…to visit…Theresienstadt, and then Auschwitz, I felt that on reading the book I was more able to appreciate what dreadful things these poor people had to suffer. I took it as an impassioned account of the most dreadful things that could possibly happen to a child and yet told in almost subdued language and devoid of self-pity. The horrors of Theresienstadt did not come across to me when we visited, in anyway approaching the description she gives of the misery suffered by the prisoners. I believe also that Auschwitz, horrific though it was to see, had been sanitised sufficiently for us never to truly appreciate the suffering of those unfortunate souls. The sadness and suffering of that lady as a child came through so movingly and I congratulate you for your part in the translation into such easily readable English.’

The value of empathy

Eva has spoken to school groups in Israel, Germany and the Czech Republic. The children are normally age 14 or over (which is when English children usually meet this topic as part of the National Curriculum) and have read her book already (earlier and less detailed versions of her book have appeared in Hebrew, German, French and Czech. The English version has corrected errors of fact and included quite a lot of previously unpublished material).

As an introduction to her talk, Eva sometimes asks the children to close their eyes and imagine that when they get home, they find that their bedroom is bare, with all their clothes and things vanished. They immediately go to ask their parents what has happened, but their parents have gone, as well. Suddenly,
they are alone and everything from their past life has disappeared. Eva then explains that this is effectively what happened to her and her parents. From one day to the next, all their belongings and their past life was suddenly taken away from them. Eva then builds on that shock introduction to describe her life, from happy childhood to the horrors of the Holocaust and then rebuilding her life in post-war Czechoslovakia and Israel.

However, it might be more suitable for a teacher to ask the children to imagine that when they are at home with their parents, a policeman comes to the door to tell them that the next morning they must leave their house, with everything in it, because they are being deported to an army camp 100 miles away and all they can take is a small case each. They should leave the key in the front door as they leave. Then ask them to imagine their thoughts and feelings at that time. That leads easily into a more detailed presentation of Eva’s story and the Holocaust in general. It is, of course, possible that there will be a child in the class who has experienced, or whose parents have experienced, just such an event in their own lives.

Eva comments that usually the children are very apprehensive before she starts talking, wondering who this old woman is and what horrors she is going to inflict on them, but once she starts to talk about her early, happy childhood, they melt. This is something I have seen with other Holocaust survivors when they speak to schools, the warmth of their personality immediately comes through and the children are captivated. The horrors, and there are horrors mentioned, become a source of shared emotion. At the end, several children are in tears and many of them want to come to touch or hug Eva and the same thing happens to other Holocaust speakers.

All the Holocaust speakers say that it is important that their talk has a positive or up-beat ending and that there is a message or moral to what they say. The up-beat ending is usually clear. Each of them survived, led successful and valuable lives, married and raised children and grand-children. School children are surprised and excited to find that a local dentist, whom they knew, is a Holocaust survivor. It brings the whole event out of the past or a distant country into their immediate experience.

The overt message varies from person to person. One Holocaust survivor
emphasises how important it is to follow your conscience and to do what is right. This does not have to be in life-threatening circumstances but can relate to standing up to bullying or racist comments in school. In Eva’s case, she emphasises the courage and the love of the Jahn family, Czech farmers who found her unconscious, hid her from the Germans and looked after her during and after the war. They have been commemorated in Yad VaShem in Israel, the official state Holocaust memorial site, among the Righteous among the Gentiles.

Another speaker speaks of the importance of resisting propaganda of all sorts but especially hate or discriminatory propaganda of which there is still significant amounts even today. But all of the survivors have another message, which is partly implicit in the whole story or, depending on the speaker, completely explicit. Eva always makes it quite clear. Her message is that every life is important and precious and every child in her audience should value it and make the most that they can of their life and their talents. This sounds like the usual parent/grandparent encouragement to children to work hard and do well at school but in the context of Eva’s talk, or that of other Holocaust survivors, it has a real impact and it becomes a serious message and not a platitude.

Letters from children at Friedrich-Engels-Gymnasium, Senftenberg

Charlott Förster, age 12

…Do you know what, Eva, I want to try and understand people who did such cruel things as you experienced. But I cannot. I try to, but I simply do not succeed. Often, I think that it was all not true, just a fairy story, a cruel fairy story. But it is true, it really happened. Then I wonder, could it have been prevented. What do you think? Could that have happened? I should like Hitler and the Nazis to have gone into a ghetto, only for a short time.

…I am sorry that your mother and father died. I found it terrible that you got so little to eat in Theresienstadt. Here it is usual to have a lot to eat……..I also really liked the part about Brundibár. It made a big impression on me that you did not give up. You fought back. I admire you for that. How awful was it for you, waking up each day? I was shocked when Count Bernadotte came and reported that everything was OK. Now there was no one to save you. Everyone thought it was alright in the ghetto.

When your father went on the transport, I hoped there would soon be a “Happy Ending”. I found it great that Julia, your mother’s friend, was there to save your life. I cannot imagine how starved and thin you must have been. How did you get anything to eat on the death march?

Eva, I found it terrible to read that your mother died, just next to you. Can anything worse than that happen? I admire the Jahn family for their courage in hiding you.

…I wish you, Eva, much luck and joy for the rest of your life. I am amazed that you have written everything down. Without that, I could not possibly have imagined what you experienced.

Your Charlott

Marvin Bugai, age 13

…Sadly I, too, have lost my father. In 2005 he died from lung cancer. It was a hard time for me but you have to struggle on, haven’t you? …We studied your book in our German lesson and I like it very much. What I found shocking was that Germans could do such things to other people.

Although your life consisted effectively of only two things, your love of life and your love of your parents, you did not let it get you down. I found your love of life most impressive. I found it terrible that your father was sent to Auschwitz and gassed. Then it was just you and your mother. When your mother also died, I had tears in my eyes. I was glad that you managed to escape from the Germans. I was happy that you were looked after by such a nice family and that the war was finally over.

I think it is bad that so awful crimes were committed against mankind. But we Germans have changed, we are no longer hostile to foreigners or Jews. We have had our proper punishment and we will organise things so that it can never happen again. I am proud of my Fatherland, of German, my Fatherland.

I hope all, all, all the best for you that you have a long and good life.

Marvin
Building a questioning culture

After the talk, there are usually questions from the students and our experience is that there are almost always many more questions than there is time for. Some of the questions are predictable:

- Do you now hate Germans? The answer of all the survivors is the same, that today’s Germans are not the same as those who perpetrated the Holocaust, that the young people are as horrified by what happened as everyone else, and that the speakers have all been warmly welcomed by the German authorities when they have returned to speak to German groups. Holocaust education in Germany is extensive and probably more intensive than it is in the UK. There is no hatred of today’s young Germans.
- What happened to other family members?
- What was it like in Auschwitz? Eva wrote to me how she answers that: “I try to explain with a touch of distance, without blood and fire, but so that the children can understand the cold hopelessness, hunger and the deep fear; the helplessness, with no help from nowhere. Being inspected by Dr Mengele with all my hair cut off completely bald, being naked in the presence of all the soldiers and so on - it goes very deep.”

Eva describes the effect her talk has on children:

“I am telling a true story and it works! The teachers are always surprised and say they could never get such silent attention. The response of the children is amazing. Suddenly they recognise the true values in life and their attitudes to situations with friends and parents change. Children have all kinds of troubles and sorrows; some even drink or take drugs but they find hearing my story and the “philosophy” I speak about, helps them in their lives. They recognise more what is happiness and how to approach it. When I walk out from the class I have a feeling that I gave them something, something that money cannot buy. I have letters from the children showing this.”

A flexible approach for maximum effect

It is necessary to be aware of the level of general knowledge of the children when teaching the Holocaust. In one Holocaust workshop for a group of schools, the presenter used the poem by Pastor Martin Niemöller, a German Protestant minister, to emphasise the importance of standing up for what is right and speaking out against injustice:

Lisa Gronau, age 12

…I do not really like reading, but when I started to read your book I could not put it down. I am amazed that, after everything you had lived through in your life, you could write a book about it. When I read what happened during the war how people had killed people only because they followed a different religion, I was very upset. Only when I read your book did I realise how horrible people were. What did you feel when you were deported to Theresienstadt? It must have been terrible to leave the house, the town, the friends and everything that you had been so familiar with. I am happy that I did not live at that time!

My Grandpa lived through the war and told me a lot about it, but not as bad as you described in your book. I was, myself, in a concentration camp and it was terrible. I hope that such a thing never happens again.

I wish you and your family a long and happy life

With friendly regards, Lisa Gronau
First they came for the communists, and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a communist.

First they came for the socialist, and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a Jew.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

We found it did not work very well, as the students did not understand the relevant background to the terms communist, socialist, or trade unionist. Nowadays these terms do not have the resonance for young people they do for those of us of more mature years.

Eva regularly speaks to groups of children from Yad Mordechai, a kibbutz (collective farm) near Gaza about her life. The biblical story of Samson is set near Gaza, and describes a riddle based on how some bees made a nest in the body of a dead lion; “Out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness”. The kibbutz keeps bees and produced honey, so every year, Eva receives a jar of honey after her talk and generates an echo of the old story.

Eva spoke to a group of 18-year-olds in Germany. They had all read her book before she spoke and they all came prepared for her talk. At the end, each of them gave her a rose as a token of their appreciation so Eva was standing at the front of the auditorium with a bunch of three dozen roses. She felt uncomfortable with them as her mind was still on the memory of all those who had been killed by the Nazis until she thought that she should put the roses on their grave. And then she realised that they had no grave.

David N Lawson

Escape Story is available to purchase from Imaginative Minds. To order by phone call 0121 224 7599, or fax on 0121 224 7598. Alternatively, visit http://www.thinkingonlinecatalogue.co.uk/ to place an online order.

Knowledge trails

1) Understanding the Holocaust – It is vital that children have the skills to empathise with the victims of social exclusion. Here we explore the teaching of this difficult subject and provide primary and secondary lesson plans. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/understanding-the-holocaust.htm

2) Never Again! Does Holocaust Education Have an Effect on Pupils’ Citizenship Values and Attitudes – An overview of research aiming to examine whether teaching the Holocaust at upper primary level has an impact, both immediate and longer term, on pupils’ values and attitudes, and particularly those relating to various minority or disadvantaged groups. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/holocaust-education.htm
Article available from Leadership Briefings on the Professional Learning Community (access by subscription).

3) Transforming teaching and learning about the Holocaust – Research into teaching and learning about the Holocaust has helped to create a five part professional development programme. The result is a compelling example of research-led professional development which transforms practice. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/holocaust-professional-development.htm
Article available in Professional Development Today on the Professional Learning Community (access by subscription).

Reference


Further information

i) Holocaust Educational Trust www.het.org.uk/
ii) London Jewish Cultural Centre www.jcc.org.uk/
iii) Kingston and Surbiton District Synagogue www.kingston-synagogue.org.uk/
Demolishing exam factories...
raising emotional intelligence

Should schools be fact-obsessed factories or educational establishments producing young people ready for the challenges of the 21st century?  
**Paul Trainor** explores the value of developing emotionally intelligent learners.

What is your purpose as a teacher? Your answer will depend on the ethos of the school you are working at and your own personal philosophy. As educators, we should be concerned with the development of the whole person. There is no doubt that schools need to provide young people with the opportunity to achieve academic success, this is vital, but we should not neglect the need to help our young people grow to become outstanding, independent, resilient and effective young adults, ready to embrace the challenges of an uncertain 21st century world.
How do we get the best out of the young people in our care? More importantly, how do we get them to get the best out of themselves? Why do some intelligent pupils not make the academic progress you might expect? Why doesn’t additional academic intervention solve the problem with all pupils? Developing an emotionally intelligent approach in your lessons and across your school could provide some answers.

A preoccupation with grades, test results and levels is surely missing the whole point of our role as teachers. Should our schools be exam factories solely focused on pupils knowing information in the here and now or an educational establishment producing young people who have the skills and experiences to flourish in an ever changing world? The aforementioned ‘exam factories’ are often based upon one quick fix ‘achievement strategy’ after another, where pupils are dragged through exams in order to ensure that they are ‘motivated’ to achieve. However, based upon a number of academic studies, Emotional Intelligence does not only impact positively on the ‘soft’ or people skills, but evidence also proves there is a positive impact on factors which are inextricably linked with achievement such as motivation, self esteem, resilience and stress management.

What is Emotional Intelligence?
Mayer & Salovey (1997) defined Emotional Intelligence as:

‘the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.’

Daniel Goleman, whose work raised the profile of Emotional Intelligence, talks of encouraging people’s awareness of their feelings and ability to manage them as a crucial life skill. Professor Goleman identified five key domains which make up one’s emotional intelligence:

1. Knowing your emotions - the capacity to recognise your feelings as they happen.
2. Managing your emotions - the ability to manage your emotional reactions, control your impulses and recover from life’s upsets.
3. Motivating yourself - the ability to use emotions to pursue a goal, staying hopeful even in the face of setbacks.
4. Empathy - having emotional sensitivity to other people’s feelings.
5. Handling relationships – encompassing social skills such as leadership, teamwork and confidence in dealing with other people.

There is a strong case for these five domains being important factors in the development of well-rounded young people who can be successful, whatever the success measure, in education and in later life. As educators, our aim is to contribute to developing young people who leave school with a skill set of personal attributes and skills that equip them for the different sets of challenges they will face in their lives. The HTI (Heads, Teachers and Industry – a charity that promotes collaboration between education and industry) produced a report in 2011 called ‘Lessons for Life’. From interviews with more than 50 top business leaders and educationalists, the report outlined nine top skills that they considered vital in young people being prepared for the world of work:

1. Very high standards in English and maths, and core knowledge of key elements of science, great literature and the country’s history.
2. The skills to think in different ways - collaboratively in teams, as well as
individually; deductively as well as inductively; creatively as well as logically.
3. The capacity and research skills to distinguish good evidence from bad - particularly important in the ‘Google age’.
4. Confidence and enthusiasm, which can be learnt through the curriculum, but equally through sport, drama, music, art, public speaking and debating.
5. Interpersonal skills and empathy - the need to understand a diverse range of viewpoints in the 21st century.
6. A set of values that build character and sense of purpose - they need that bit extra in terms of self-discipline, good manners, smartness, punctuality, respect and that old-fashioned concept of sacrifice in achieving what you want to achieve.
7. Resilience - the capacity to handle failures or knock-backs and keep on going.
8. An inquisitive nature, critical thinking and a self-directed approach to learning - these are what universities look for. Extended projects can help build these skills.
9. Practical as well as academic intelligence - this requires real-world opportunities and higher quality, more practical work experience so young people can develop skills in a way that makes sense to them.

Out of the top nine suggested in this study, numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 can be linked to emotionally intelligent attributes backing up the argument that schools need to see this as a key feature of the school culture to prepare our learners for life and learning in the 21st century.

Emotional Intelligence in action
Imagine taking the lid off a bottle of fizzy drink after it has been shaken up - this is a practical analogy of Emotional Intelligence in action. Anyone who does not want to be covered in the contents of the bottle would release the screw top slowly and allow the pressure to release.
Consider the pupil who has had a difficult night at home - a fall out with parents, woken up late, uniform wasn’t dry so has arrived late at school - all factors to shake the bottle. This is made worse when the lady in the school office has reprimanded the pupil for being late; they then walk into the lesson late which has caused further aggravation. The final straw then occurs when they are shouted at in front of the class by their teacher for not having their book and no pen. The top is off and the pupil responds in an inappropriate, explosive way, resulting in an emotional confrontation with the teacher. What could be done differently here to release the pressure in the bottle slowly allowing the pupil time to manage their emotions and control their impulsive reactions? One aspect is teaching the pupil the skill of understanding their emotions and what to do in challenging circumstances. Another solution is for the adults to pick up the emotional cues and know how to manage situations to get the solution they want - a healthy classroom climate with pupils in a positive emotional state, ready to learn.

Dr Goleman, when speaking at an NCSL event, said: “It is not about becoming more emotional. It is being intelligent about your emotions and managing them well, knowing your own emotional state and how it is affecting your decisions. It is being skilled in relationships. I find teachers quite receptive - they intuitively grasp why it matters in the classroom. If children are upset or bored they are not going to learn.”
Therefore, as well as focusing on the pupils in our care, it is important that we reflect on our own emotions and how we manage them. In 2010 Michael Gove said: “There are academically bright people who cannot teach for toffee and other people who may not have been the most gifted at university [but] who have the emotional intelligence and spark to really engage a classroom.” As a general rule, the smarter an individual is in terms of IQ and EQ, the more opportunity for that person to be a great teacher. When observing great teachers in action, you see high levels of Emotional Intelligence in the teacher, whether consciously or subconsciously, which is often modelled by the pupils and contributes to classroom climate, pupil motivation, behaviour for learning and ultimately better learning and progress.

Teaching Year 9 Set 33 on a Friday Period 5 will undoubtedly bring about different emotions to Year 7 Set 1, but the skill, demonstrated by emotionally intelligent practitioners, is managing these emotions and not allowing them to interfere with our work. Growling and grimacing at the door ready for battle as the Year 9s arrive is only going to be reflected in the pupils’ responses as they model our behaviours.

The solution, albeit a more challenging and longer term one, is to focus on developing the skills and behaviours in these pupils and model these behaviours in our lessons. The vital factor is catching the pupils demonstrating a particular skill: “Great resilience, David, I really like the way you have stuck at that when you found it tough”, or “Look at Scarlett’s group, they didn’t agree at the start of the task but they have discussed the different solutions and compromised on what they did without arguing.”

Reaping the rewards
The new Ofsted framework alludes to the teaching of these skills in the outstanding lesson criteria. ‘Teachers and other adults generate high levels of enthusiasm for, participation in, and commitment to learning. Teaching promotes pupils’ high levels of resilience, confidence and independence when they tackle challenging activities.’

Research into the impact of Emotional Intelligence in UK and US schools has revealed its positive impact across various aspects of school life. As well as benefits to the behaviour and climate in school, developing an emotionally intelligent school also helps to improve the health and wellbeing of pupils’ attendance, self esteem, motivation, ability to avoid risk behaviour, happiness, life ambition, preparation for the challenges faced in life after school and ultimately, higher levels of achievement. If an educational publisher launched a product with evidence of impact in all of these areas, schools would be queuing to take the resource on trial. However, the creation of a truly emotionally intelligent school is based on a culture which all adults buy into: teaching, modelling and recognising the required behaviours for all of the young people in their care.

Sharp (2003) asserts that emotional literacy ‘is a relatively untapped lever in raising and promoting the national standards agenda in the secondary phase. Building on and reinforcing current teaching and learning strategies and providing a focus on the affective domain, emotional literacy is a powerful added dimension to raising standards, improving behaviour and increasing attendance in a sustainable and humane way.’

Looking to the future
It is crucial for schools to understand that changes in society have placed a greater emphasis on their input into the social and emotional development of the young people in their care. Sometimes, in certain circumstances, the

“Teachers and other adults generate high levels of enthusiasm for, participation in, and commitment to learning. Teaching promotes pupils’ high levels of resilience, confidence and independence when they tackle challenging activities.”
Teaching approaches

adults in school will be the only people having significant involvement in the development of these skills. It is crucial that all adults in the school understand that they are role models to all students in the development of these skills - pupils will model the behaviours they see. Do they see their teacher as resilient in the face of a challenge when dealing with a difficult pupil? Do they see the lunchtime supervisor showing self awareness in the way they speak to the pupils? Are the office staff calm and compassionate in dealing with a pupil who is upset? Does the emotionally intelligent approach permeate through all levels of the school?

It is not possible to pass on emotional intelligence as a package of knowledge and skills to be delivered to pupils through a lesson or an assembly. However, if we look from a broader view and see all adults in school as those who, through their values, beliefs and actions, model what it is to be learned, teachers can teach the skill of emotional intelligence. However, a key factor is ensuring that this practice is not just isolated within the classroom but that it is part of a whole school approach. This will ensure that the pupils see these skills as transferable and credible to their personal development.

‘Children who are emotionally competent are at an advantage. They have increased desire to learn and achieve and are likely to lead happy and productive lives. Almost all students who do poorly in school lack one or more elements of emotional literacy.’

Elizabeth Morris

Emotional Intelligence has often been regarded with some cynicism, seen as being a soft approach to discipline and merely teaching pupils to be happy. However, whether we are focused on the behaviour, learning, climate and success of our schools in the here and now or in the long term development of young people prepared for whatever the 21st century can throw at them; there are compelling arguments for a commitment to developing an emotionally intelligent culture. This is not a quick fix but can have real impact with training, support and commitment from adults within school and an ethos understood, relevant and well modelled for pupils. The challenge facing schools is the balance between the public accountability of academic achievement and the holistic view of a child’s development. The good news for schools is that both school evidence and research suggest that these are not mutually exclusive goals.

Paul Trainor is Assistant Headteacher at Parklands High School, Lancashire.

References


Knowledge trails

2) Thinking with our emotions – How classroom dialogue helps to achieve the aims of PSHE and prepare students for post-school life. http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/thinkingwithoureotions.htm
3) Smile your way to better grades – Performance in exams can be decided by pupils’ emotional state, so help them to higher achievement with some positive thinking! http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/smileyour-way-to-better-grades.htm
Article available in School Leadership Today on the Professional Learning Community (access by subscription).
The House on the Hill

Imagine that you're staying in a cottage in the countryside. At the top of a hill you see a huge old house, it's not quite a ruin but it's been empty for many years. As the wind gets up at night you look out of the window and seem to see lights flickering in the windows - when the wind stops howling you think you hear sounds of sobbing and weeping. You decide that once everyone else is in bed you'll sneak out to explore.

The Great Jewel Robbery

This story is about a robbery that Sherlock Holmes might have investigated - a robbery from a famous museum. Perhaps the most famous display is the priceless set of 'The 15 Crystal Jewels'. One morning the museum guards discover that one of the 15 pieces is missing!

The Haunted School

A class of 30 or more children is bad enough to cope with, but when this is added to by a couple of ghosts, it becomes too much for the teacher to bear! The ghosts are friendly enough and every night at midnight they come out to play, but every day without fail something else has been hidden, put back in the wrong place, or jumbled up. The Spookies have to go!

Pupils explore a haunted house encountering a series of eight number problems on the way. They will have to be resourceful and clever, but every time they solve a problem they will be able to find the true name of one of the eight children who used to live in The House on the Hill.

The tasks are set within a Victorian detective story; each problem bringing a piece of information which contributes to the overall solution.

The problem-solving theme is highly motivating, and children will be genuinely excited as they progress through the adventure, eventually completing the final problem and then being awarded a certificate.

Order Hotline: 0121 224 7599
Where am I?

Tait Coles explains how he empowers students with the skills to track the learning journey ahead.
Now, what I want is facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the mind of reasoning animals upon facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them.

You could be mistaken in thinking that this was a direct quote from one of Michael Gove’s inspirational speeches, it is in fact the opening lines of *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens - you probably guessed that. Although the book was first published over 150 years ago, do the words of Mr. Gradgrind still have pertinence today?

As educators surely we strive to encourage our students to be submerged enthusiastically in their learning? Is it not our moral duty to create opportunities for them to deepen their understanding and become immersed in their learning? A shallow tentative dipping of toes into a subject may leave students wanting more, but how often do we review the learning to make it explicit and deep? 

*John West-Burnham* describes it as ‘Shallow, Deep and Profound Learning’ while Professor John Hattie calls it ‘Shallow, Deep and Conceptual Learning’. Whichever way you care to describe it, there is a need and an obligation on our parts to provide students with the opportunities for deep learning.

At this point many readers may agree (or possibly disagree) and expect an article riddled with dated evidence and a relentless argument as to why we should be doing this - I’m hoping this article may prove to be slightly different in the fact that it will hopefully tell you how you can facilitate and activate deep learning in your classroom.

The Structured Overview of Learning Outcomes (SOLO) Taxonomy is an extremely simple five stage hierarchy that allows students to understand their learning journey - where they’re at, where they need to be and what they need to do to get there. SOLO was created in 1982 by John Biggs and Kevin Collis who described their taxonomy as ‘providing a simple and robust way of describing how learning outcomes grow in complexity from surface to deep to conceptual understanding’. SOLO Taxonomy is a model of learning outcomes that helps schools develop a common understanding and language of learning that helps teachers and students understand learning progress.

**The five stages of SOLO Taxonomy**

1. **Prestructural** - The learning outcomes show unconnected information with no organisation. The student may complete the task with no real connection or understanding, they may have missed the point or need support to make a start. This is the “I have no idea!” stage - I believe this an important pre-learning stage, that is often overlooked. It is essential that students feel comfortable in placing themselves on this stage. The prestructural stage could be at the start of a new topic or possibly at the start of a learning journey.

2. **Unistructural** - This stage is associated with the students understanding a single fact or a single piece of information. The learning is often disconnected and limited. This stage is an example of shallow learning. This is the “I know one thing about what we’re learning!” stage.

3. **Multistructural** - Again this stage is an example of quantitative learning, where the students can simply recall a series of separate pieces of information and facts. The multistructural stage differs from the unistructural stage simply by the number of facts. The student knows several aspects of the task but fails to recognise the relationships between them. This is the “I know loads of things about what we’re learning about!” stage.

4. **Relational** - This stage exemplifies deep learning. The learning now becomes qualitative. Here the student links and relates the pieces of information, allowing
them to have a deeper understanding of the task or subject. This is the “All the things I know, I can link together and connect my learning!” stage.

5. Extended Abstract - This stage is the epitome of deep and profound thinking. Students will rethink their ideas from the relational level and look at their learning in a new way. They will then be able to use this as a basis for a prediction, generalisation, summary, reflection or creation of new understanding or learning.

An example of a student learning dialogue through the SOLO stages would be as follows:

Prestructural - “Photosynthesis? Isn’t that what animals do?”
Unistructural - “Photosynthesis happens in green plants”
Multistructural - “The plants need carbon dioxide and water to photosynthesise and in doing so make glucose and oxygen.”
Relational - “Plants use light energy from the sun to react carbon dioxide with water which produces glucose for the plant’s energy and a by product of oxygen.”
Extended Abstract - “If you look at the photosynthesis word equation you will see that it’s the reverse of the word equation for respiration - that’s an easy way to remember it!”

So what can you actually use SOLO Taxonomy for? Well, here are a few ideas that I have used effectively in the classroom:

- To create and co-create success criteria for learning
- To use as differentiated learning intentions
- For students to plan and structure extended writing tasks
- For students to deconstruct exam questions to understand marks awarded
- For students to describe and analyse new concepts
- To measure students’ progress
- As a vehicle for self assessment and peer assessment
Why SOLO Taxonomy has proved to be invaluable in my lessons is that the simple yet robust rubric allows students to clearly identify where they’re at, where they need to go next and what they need to do to get there - sound familiar? The key principles of Assessment for Learning easily fit with using SOLO and encourage effective feedback between students and teachers.

Using the common language of learning and eye catching symbols, students can articulate and share ‘feedback’ on how well they and others are doing; ‘feed-up’ on where they are going and finally ‘feedforward’ on the next steps in learning.

Here are a few examples of the type of assessment my Year 7 students are now giving each other:

“I would say that she got to multistructural because she didn’t link gas to the rest of the states. Try to learn more about gases so that you can link them all together. She could get to relational by linking solid and liquid together by saying liquid particles still cannot be squashed – just like solids. She needs to learn more about all of them so you have more info” to link together.”

“I think Tyler’s work is multistructural because he has talked about several ideas about all the particles. To get to relational, Tyler’s work needs to link his ideas together, like to link the properties of the particles together.”

“I think this piece of work is relational because the work is correct and he has linked all the properties of the particles together and linked it into a big picture. It could be at Extended Abstract if you said what the particles reminded you of – he needs to say that it’s like something else and why - creating a way of remembering it for you and other people.”

The importance of connectivity

Connecting ideas and information is a sure way to deepen students’ learning, however it is often overlooked for the safety and apparent requirement of hammering our students with content. The phrase ‘content is the nemesis of deep learning’ has never been so apparent. One of the most effective ways of encouraging students to connect their learning is by using the most important shape in learning...hexagons! We’ve all used card sorts or keyword dominoes, asking our classes to link the cards together in a linear - one answer is correct manner. However, as hexagons tessellate together so can the learning. By placing pieces of information, facts or keywords on the shapes and asking students to link these together, it is extremely difficult for students to stay at the multistructural stage. Students really enjoy fitting the learning hexagons together and explaining why and how they have connected their learning. Try it! Trust me, you won’t look back.

I have also seen and heard the effect SOLO Taxonomy has had on literacy in my classes. Using a series of displayed connectives on my walls students have used the phrases to articulate their learning up the stages. For example giving students a framework of useful phrases such as ‘due to the fact that...’; ‘despite this...’; ‘this means that...’ can really help them write and discuss learning at a multistructural level. Similarly by encouraging them to use vocabulary such as hypothesise; theorise; create; predict etc, students are able to show their learning at the Extended Abstract stage. As well as displaying learning vocabulary and connectives I would also encourage teachers and schools to display the SOLO Taxonomy stages on their learning walls. The eye catching symbols allow students to visualise the hierarchical stages and are a continual point of reference. My classes now confidently use the correct terminology for the five stages, but there
was a time where they were described as the dot, the dash and the Adidas symbol! I have to say as long as your students can use the symbols effectively to reflect on where their learning and thinking is, there is no rush for them to be using the specific terminology - however, you’ll be surprised how quickly they pick it up! In fact students see the benefit of using SOLO Taxonomy almost immediately, they can accurately judge where their learning is at based on the simple rubric and more importantly recognise where they’re going and through either self or peer assessment can follow targets set that support them in achieving their learning goals. Students also really like the fact that they can understand the simple levels of learning rather being confused by the rather overrated Bloom’s Taxonomy or the common site of grade/levelled differentiated outcomes. Should we really only use numbers and letters to show that ‘progress’ has been made in a lesson or in twenty minutes? The common language of learning of SOLO Taxonomy makes this effective feedback visible and effective across subjects. Whoops of delight could be heard in English classrooms across the country as students exclaim “It’s alright Miss, we get SOLO, we do it in History!”.

So how would you introduce SOLO Taxonomy to a class? Well, I would encourage the constructivist approach of creating an opportunity for your students to ‘get it’ on their own. I used sets of five quotes and statements on subjects that are relevant to my students - The X Factor and Leeds United. I then asked students to place the statements on the SOLO stages and explain and justify their decisions. Using a grid with each stage simply explained, allowed the class to complete the task with minimal difficulty (this may have had something to do with the carefully planned subject matter!), as soon as they master the hierarchical taxonomy, which depends on the abilities of the groups - you’re ready to go!

And finally, for all you Ofsted hoop jumpers out there (I guess, we all fall into that category at some stage!) what better way to show real progress of learning in your lessons than using SOLO Taxonomy and asking students to assess theirs and others learning throughout the course of a lesson? If they started at prestructural (and many might if it’s a new concept they are learning) and then reach multistructural during the first part of the lesson it stands to reason they have learnt more and progressed.

You must try SOLO Taxonomy as a frequently used pedagogical principal in your classroom, I guarantee your students will have a much better understanding of how well they are learning. Even more importantly they will be able to know how to reach deep and profound learning.

Tait Coles is Assistant Principal for Learning at Temple Moor High School, Leeds.

Knowledge trails

1) Taxonomy heaven – Research on everything you ever wanted to know about taxonomies of thinking skills
http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/taxonomyheaven.htm

2) LogoVisual Thinking – According to LVT our understanding is increased by:
(a) Exploring connections and revealing patterns (b) Visible and moveable ideas (c) Reviewing and refining understanding through expression. So, do teachers value this?
http://library.teachingtimes.com/articles/logo-visual-thinking.htm

Further information

More information of my SOLO Taxonomy adventures and other learning exploits can be found on my blog http://taitcoles.wordpress.com/ and please feel free to follow me on Twitter @Totallywired77
Connecting with maths

To make maths more engaging and relevant we explore websites to support teaching and learning in school and at home.

The traditional teaching of maths has become somewhat controversial recently with engagement levels low and teaching methods criticised as being outdated. The urge to revolutionise learning through technology seems to be one of the major avenues currently being explored to raise maths standards in UK schools. Michael Gove has recently hailed educational games as ‘having huge potential for maths’ and has expressed his amazement at ‘how quickly children learn when there are in-game rewards’. In his speech to the Royal Society, Gove stated that:

“The Department for Education is working with the Li Ka Shing Foundation and the highly respected Stanford Research Institute on a pilot programme to use computer programmes to teach maths.”

However, it has been suggested that the benefits are still not being fully recognised. A recent City and Guilds survey proved that many students are not connecting with maths and are failing to understand its place in today’s world, with findings clearly indicating that maths needs to be made more relevant.

To support teachers who are striving to stress the importance of maths to classrooms full of maths cynics, there are a number of websites that help students to connect with maths in a motivational and engaging context. Here we look at several different types of interactive mathematical games that will appeal to a wide range of users from EYFS to 16+, many succeeding in bridging the home-school gap. We visit an acclaimed programming site that proves maths to be an innate human attribute, and help students discover and explore maths in the real world via the contemporary hot topic of the moment, the Olympics. Exploring the other side of the coin we explore virtual worlds where maths has the power to transport students into worlds of fantasy.

The interactive element integral to many of these websites may be useful in combating ‘maths anxiety’ in the classroom, with students being able to offer potential solutions, without the fear of getting it wrong, and post their problems to an online community where students and practitioners collaborate to make maths more comprehensive.
Developed by the acclaimed Professor Marcus Du Sautoy and hailed by Michael Gove as ‘enabling children to engage with complex mathematical problems that would hitherto have been thought too advanced’, Manga High certainly seems to be leading the influx of interactive technology that aims to revolutionise traditional learning.

Being so reminiscent of popular contemporary computer games, it succeeds in bridging the home-school divide too. Clandestine in getting students to utilise advanced mathematical know-how means it is sure to be a hit in any classroom, plus it comes at the height of the Manga craze!

Once you have registered your school, for free, you can set class and homework challenges based on different games, and compete with different schools on the global maths league. In this issue we have already looked at the benefits of healthy learning tension, what better way to invoke this than by creating a healthy competitive online learning environment?

This website hosts games that tackle maths problems in all arenas from basic number rules to money management to indices. There are three modes to each game, each increasing in difficulty. The sense of achievement here is heightened by the winning of the bronze, silver or gold medal.

With an exhaustive selection of lesson plans to choose from, the level at which it facilitates the teacher is quite remarkable. Impressive is the means by which teachers can track students’ progress with detailed analytics – you can access active and past challenges, medals achieved, and for UK users a PDF page can be downloaded which assesses the progress of an individual student, showing what they have achieved and what they are lacking in.

As a free resource this website is certainly worthy of Gove’s accolade!

Developed by Cambridge University to enrich the maths’ experience through advice and support for teachers and learners. In terms of aesthetics, this is a far more basic site when considered alongside the vivacious world of Manga High for example, and may not have that immediate enrapturing effect on students. However, this site is built on the solid foundation of some of the best teaching practice in the field with serious pedagogy behind its every feature. The NRich team are both ‘directly and indirectly involved in the development of the National Curriculum’, and as such are well positioned to offer guidance in its implementation.

For teachers there are tasks, games, interactive tools, sets of activities, printable resources, articles and curriculum mapping documents. The NRich packages offer bundles of resources on particular areas where the searching and sifting has been done for you leaving only the most valuable nuggets of information to facilitate learners. Whilst upholding a strong ethos of independent learning and development of problem solving skills, notes are provided to support the teacher as a mediator rather than a spoon-feeder.

For students, games, articles and a monthly publication containing a series of themed problems and articles. The site dips its toes into social networking here by encouraging pupils to submit their own solutions to featured problems, a select number of which are published the following month – this recognition of children’s efforts is a notable feature, perhaps ridding users of the anxiety often felt within a maths’ classrooms. This element, along with the ‘Ask NRich’ web-board (where pupils can submit a maths problem to the NRich team), encourages collaboration via an online learning community. It’s refreshing to see many users responding to others’ problems to aid understanding. The site, above all, is to be commended in its ability to act as an online mediator - providing high quality support, whilst developing students’ independence in their thinking skills and developing teaching strategies by building resources on the premise that the teacher is the facilitator not the lecturer.

Maths Goodies - http://www.mathgoodies.com/

A goody bag of lessons, puzzles, games, worksheets and articles, but perhaps one of the more notable features here are the maths web quests. These require students to engage in an online learning inquiry to build knowledge independently, instantly opening up the humble maths challenge into a cross curriculum project. Here you will find web quests on maths and climate change, maths and sport, and percent in daily life, amongst others. Web quests offer an ideal platform for teachers to stretch maths into, what may be considered, more interesting realms. In depth, independent, online exploration is required and in so doing unexpected mathematical contexts can emerge almost anywhere, which is really the name of the game it seems, to effectively teach maths in today’s classrooms. Following exploration, students will need to complete a series of exercises before evaluating their work.

Despite somewhat lacking in aesthetic appeal, it should not be dismissed on this basis as it has many attractive features, such as the ‘Homework community’, where users can post maths homework problems which are answered by volunteer educators from the world over. This is a good way for students to share their anxieties without being afraid to do so in a classroom environment.

Also, the library of articles presents some interesting ideas, including ‘Creative teaching ideas’, ‘Learn to conquer maths anxiety with technology’ and ‘Creating a safe, supportive maths classroom’.
Maths is Fun strives to make maths relevant to real life, empowering teachers to respond efficiently to that commonly uttered question ‘…but what’s the point?’. The website empowers, challenges, reassures, supports and most importantly persuades the user that maths is relevant to everyone, using premises such as: ‘most of the top-paying jobs need good maths skills!’ With a range of ‘courses’ on the fundamental areas of maths from algebra to geometry to measure all it needs is ‘your thought to make it work’.

Detailed explanations in each course help the learner get to grips with different areas of maths, but the reading is skilfully ‘balanced with doing’ to encourage independent learning. Students are empowered with knowledge, presented in a clear and comprehensible way, enabling them to solve problems independently – a clear set of instructions and sketches, concluding with ‘Your turn’, which includes several questions requiring users to apply their newly acquired knowledge.

Particularly commendable here is the call for the application of students’ critical and, refreshingly, creative thinking skills. No learning by rote and recital of formulae and times tables here. The website lays the foundations upon which students can develop their own understanding: ‘Read it, think about it, read again, write it down or sketch it out, then try using it’. It also urges users to come up with their own methods of problem solving – ‘don’t just follow the steps…play with ideas’.

The site takes into consideration every type of learner and reassures the more apprehensive mathematicians amongst us that ‘even people without mathematical training can use fingers to count, use basic logic to solve problems’, there’s nothing wrong with this, ‘do what suits you’ is a key message. For the more English-orientated student, the website offers a unique supporting tool that draws comparisons between English and maths language e.g., nouns to be considered as numbers; pronouns as variables, such as $x$ or $y$; and verbs as the equals sign!

Turn to the ‘Teacher’s page’ for an entertainment suite of clever maths resources such as ‘tessellation artist’ (use set shapes or go free-hand to create tessellated designs), ‘clocks manipulative’ (helping students learn to tell the time – by altering the time on an analogue clock, a digital clock corresponds respectively). These provide an ideal opportunity for students to have a ‘break’ from their set work during a maths lesson, or can be put to demonstrative use if projected on to the interactive whiteboard. There are also puzzles, games and an extensive maths dictionary.


This website allows users to learn through others’ mistakes presenting real mistakes from real students alongside maths facts that all pupils need to be au fait with in order to avoid the common pitfalls.

The layout is simple: goal, mistake, correction and a brief explanation making explicit these recurrent mathematical errors with the intention of eliminating them from classrooms.

Students have the opportunity to figure out the mistake prior to revealing it (by hovering over the calculation and highlighting the error in red). So the process does entail problem solving and critical thinking, calling upon the user to complete the goal successfully and in so doing recognise the fault.

There are also facts and tools to help students get to grips with some of the more tricky areas of maths such as algebra, trigonometry and calculus. The theory is that by aiding memory skills, with resources such as flashcards, these facts are embedded in students’ natural mathematical functioning, which should therefore prevent future mistakes. You only make a mistake once… even better if it is someone else’s!
Comprehensive, easy to navigate, catering for all from EYFS to 16+; as you would expect you can rely on the BBC schools’ website to provide an all encompassing maths resource bank. At EYFS children can play simple interactive games. For instance a simple counting exercise(Tikkabilla: Tamba’s Abacus) is turned into a visual delight with recognisable CBeebies characters urging children to count along with them – the opportunity to interact with favourite characters is surely quite irresistible and inevitably make the learning experience fun, interactive and memorable.

As we move up the curriculum ladder, the resource bank grows, so at 4-11 there is a wide range of interactive games, but also ‘class clips’ – a library of videos presenting problems for the class to solve; animated videos demonstrating simple mathematical functions; or strategies for solving problems. To add a different dimension to a lesson, listen to a spot of Maths radio. With its focus on mental maths, this audio resource aims to build and consolidate maths skills, whether singing along to counting songs or responding to oral quizzes.

By the time you reach the 11-16 mark the focus inevitably lies heavily with revision, so a range of Bitesize programmes are available here offering support at various stages. The sessions encapsulate the necessary knowledge in simple summaries and include an interactive test.

At 16+ the link to the ‘Skillswise’ section of the site presents practical, no-gimmick, straight forward maths for the older student. One minute videos accompany every topic along with games and assistive technological tools (such as the mental maths conveyor belt to ‘help practice maths in your head’), plus quizzes to test acquired knowledge providing comprehensive mini-courses to gain a grounding in basic maths functioning.

Snappy, newsworthy, contemporary, real life maths activities. New activities are uploaded regularly to this site based upon current news, from Crufts, to the anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic to the economic crisis in Greece! This is a fantastically simple, no-nonsense website that gets students interested and involved in current affairs in a maths context.

The site is not interactive, but by projecting these questions on to the interactive whiteboard you will bring challenge and motivation to the classroom, encouraging students to keep up-to-date with current affairs, especially if it becomes a regular feature of your maths routine.

Example questions include:

- ‘A litre of petrol now costs a record £1.40. Guess how much of this the government takes in tax and ‘duty’.’
- Arsenal are 3 points ahead of Spurs; how many points behind them were they 7 matches ago?
- iPads were on sale for £50 instead of £660. If someone bought £660 worth of £50 iPads and sold them for £500 each, what would their profit be?

In short, a very clever, very simple motivational resource to get students thinking about maths beyond expectation.
Complimenting the National Numeracy Framework, Channel 4 Learning has created games, songs, even a TV series to support the teaching of numeracy through Key Stages 1 – 4 for a multimedia extravaganza.

At Key Stage 1 meet ‘The Number Crew’. Resources at this stage include an animated series, teacher’s notes / resources and a dedicated Internet site.

The 60 part animated series is set aboard the ‘SS Mathematical’, the crew of which encounter various mathematical challenges that can only be overcome by finding the correct mathematical solution. To support the programme teacher’s notes outline plot, make recommendations for effective use in the classroom, indicate curriculum relevance and suggest activities for before and after viewing. Please note, if you have problems accessing the programmes the series can be purchased on CD-ROM from the online store.

At Key Stage 2, there is an entertaining online maths puzzle suite and the ‘Maths Mansion’. This resource is set in a gothic mansion where ‘contestants’ in a surreal TV show must crack a series of maths challenges in order to escape. To really bring the mansion to life there is a CD-ROM which can be purchased to create a multimedia experience, but the ‘viewer’s challenges’ can be attempted regardless.

Other interactive resources include ‘Homework High’, where students can type in a homework question and gain instant access to an extensive list of supportive answers that will explain the particular area of concern. For Key Stage 3 the ‘Maths Zone’ presents an interactive role-play adventure game where two characters witness a bank robbery and need to report the incident to the Police. The game comprises of four puzzles and draws on literacy skills to extract clues from the dialogue to find the solutions. To succeed in this challenge students need to demonstrate maths knowledge that fits within the National Curriculum Framework for KS3.

Scratch - http://scratch.mit.edu/

Creating maths controlled worlds through programming. The traditional Logo turtle has evolved considerably here, but the principle is much the same. By using maths programming language Scratch allows pupils to create interactive art, stories, simulations and games and share these math-inspired creations with others in an online community.

The beauty here is the merging of creativity and logic in a context that simultaneously builds advanced ICT and maths skills. The process starts with a ‘sprite’, (the turtle of the Logo world). Students can control the sprite’s every move: input the number of steps they should walk, the angle at which they should turn, the direction they should face, the co-ordinates of their position, what it says and when, even compose their own music to accompany the sprite’s actions by selecting instruments and controlling the beat, tempo, volume and length of note. The user can choose a set sound or even record their own to make it a totally personal user-led experience.

Hopefully it will prove that maths does have a point, in fact it is quite innate – it determines the direction we turn, the number of steps we take, the amount of time we take to do pretty much anything! This is an excellent form of creative self-expression too, allowing students to create their own sprites, control their decisions and build a story for them using mathematical coding. It’s benefits could also stretch to an ICT or even a literacy context.

Sally Connolly
CROSS CURRICULUM PROJECT PLAN

THE OLYMPICS
The modern Olympic Games came from a belief held by Pierre de Coubertin, that sport had much to add to the education system which existed in France. Coubertin’s basic ideas developed into an Olympic spirit, which is probably best expressed in the Olympic Creed:

‘The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.’

The Olympic Games gives countries a chance to forget differences, and celebrate our shared humanity. Athletes perform to the best of their natural ability in an atmosphere of fairness and honesty. This can be seen from some of the athletes who have competed at the games, who had no chance of winning, but represented their country with pride and dignity. There are very few times when people can put aside their differences, but the Olympics is evolving into the place to do so.

The Olympic Games have evolved since Coubertin first established them in 1896. They have had their problems and these have been overcome.

The history of the Olympic Games from the ancient to the modern provides a rich source for activities and challenges. Great thought was given to the essentials of the Olympic Games: the flag, the oath, the motto, the creed and the flame, which shows the link between the ancient and the modern.

Just as the Olympic Games bring together all countries it provides the opportunity for cross curricular activities. It is evolving into the dream that Pierre Baron de Coubertin held over a century ago.

Here, a question-led text introduces students to the Olympic topic. This can be used to build prior knowledge before beginning the activities, or to supplement independent research led by the posed questions. All worksheets to accompany the activities are available to download from the Teaching Times website at the following link: http://library.teachingtimes.com/publications/creative-teaching-and-learning/volume-3-issue-2.htm
The Birth of the Modern Olympics

How were the Olympics founded?
Pierre Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, the founder of the Modern Olympics, was an unlikely sports hero. Born on January 1st 1863, he witnessed the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian wars. This led him to the belief that his homeland had lost this war due to the lack of physical education in the country’s education system. He held the firm belief that physical education for the masses would have saved France from military humiliation at the hands of the Prussians, led by Otto Von Bismarck.

As a boy Pierre de Coubertin read English novels which stressed the importance of physical strength. He was particularly fond of Tom Brown’s School Days written by Thomas Arnold. As a man Coubertin hoped to incorporate Arnolds’ ideas of a system of school sports, student self-government and post graduate athletic associations, into the French educational system which he believed was too intellectual and desperately in need of a huge injection of a strong component of physical education.

During the 1880s school sports competitions started in Paris. For the first time, secondary education included football. Not long after this the Racing Cub of France was founded. Unsurprisingly, Coubertin was an officer of this club. Coubertin visited England to study the administration of athletics which led to him publishing the results of his studies into the British educational system, which was relied heavily on Thomas Arnold’s theories. The French government was impressed by Coubertin’s work and ideas, so much so they commissioned him to hold ‘athletic congresses’ featuring track and field events along with fencing and horseback riding. However, his plans to revitalise France’s educational system never materialised as he found little support among the French public.

What inspiration did Coubertin take from England?
In 1889 Coubertin travelled to America and Canada to study and examine the structure of the North American sporting organisations. On his return to France Coubertin once again visited England where he met Dr William Penny Brookes, the founder of Much Wenlock Olympic Games. He also learned of the Olympick Games held in Chipping Camden in the Cotswolds, which had been held since 1612. Brookes also told Coubertin of a series of sporting festivals in Athens called the Zappas Olympic Games. Coubertin was inspired. He began to formulate ideas into a grandiose plan of having countries compete in athletic events based on the Olympic Games of ancient Greece.

Pierre Frédy, Baron de Coubertin

The Olympic Games held in Chipping Camden

Coubertin knew that in 1776 the English antiquarian Richard Chandler had rediscovered the site of Olympia in Greece. The first excavation of the site was in 1829 led by the French expedition ‘Scientific de Moree’. Since the 1870s the excavation and
preservation had been the responsibility of the German Archaeological Institute at Athens. The first major excavation began in 1875 funded by the German Government.

How did Coubertin fight for the Olympics?
In 1892 Coubertin introduced the idea of a modern Olympics at a conference he had organised at the Sorbonne, which was also the jubilee of the French Union of Athletics. Coubertin talked about the history of sports and the possibility of renewing the Olympic Games. He made his famous proposal: “Let us export rowers, runners, and fencers; there is the free trade of the future, and on the day when it is introduced within the walls of old Europe the cause of peace will have received a new mighty stay. This is enough to encourage your servant to dream now about the second part of his program: he hopes that you will help him as you have helped him hitherto, and that with you he will be able to continue and complete, on a basis suited to the conditions of modern life, this grandiose and salutary task, the restoration of the Olympic Games.” Unfortunately the French did not support his ideals.

Coubertin was not a man to give up easily. He arranged for another conference at the Sorbonne in June 1894. He invited 79 delegates from 12 countries. Together they discussed how they would revive the Olympic Games. The delegates voted to restore the Olympic Games as an international sporting festival. The festival would begin in Athens, where the Olympics had originally been held in 1896 and would take place every four years.

The conference of 1894 also saw the formation of the International Olympic Committee. Coubertin felt that it was important that the chairman of the IOC should reside in the host country. The first person to take up this post was Demetrios Vikelas. The 1900 games were due to take place in Paris, Coubertin’s home country. Coubertin, therefore took over as president in 1896, when the Greek games finished, and remained the president until he resigned in 1925, some 29 years later.

What was the context for the first Olympic Games?
The decision to hold the first modern Olympic Games in Athens, at the site of the ancient games, was symbolic. Unfortunately Greece was embroiled in political and financial troubles, but the country overcame these to host the first games. Funds were raised to mount the games. The first modern Olympic Games began on 5th April, 1896. They lasted for ten days, and included events such as...
The OLYMPICS ■ CROSS CURRICULUM PROJECT PLAN

lawn tennis, diving, swimming, bicycle races, foot races, fencing, rowing and a yacht race.

At the time the games was the largest international sports event that had ever been held. The total number of athletes at this first Modern Olympic Games was 241, and no women were allowed to compete. The first modern day marathon, was met with great anticipation, and was run from Marathon to Athens (it was historically over a distance of 22-26 miles), and watched by more than 10,000 people. It was won by a Greek runner, Spiridion Louis.

King George I of Greece gave each winner a crown made from wild olive plucked from the trees at Olympia, second prize winners were given a laurel wreath. All prize winners were given diplomas and medals. On April 16th the New York Times described the closing ceremony. In a headline story called ‘America won most crowns’ it was reported that 44 athletes received crowns ‘… of whom eleven were Americans, ten Greeks, seven Germans, five French, three English, two Hungarians, one Dane and one Swiss.’

The Greek officials tried to monopolise the games and its organisation. However, Coubertin was determined to move the games around the world. The IOC agreed with the second games taking place in Paris, and allowing women to compete for the first time.

What were Coubertin’s ideals and legacy?
Pierre de Coubertin had established the modern Olympic Games. Although the following two games held in Paris and St Louis respectively, were little more than world fairs, the games held in Stockholm in 1912 saw a return to the ideals of Pierre de Coubertin.

Pierre de Coubertin felt that the Olympic Games should be filled with pageantry as well as athletics. The opening ceremonies, parades and fireworks are very much part of Coubertin’s ideals and his legacy. Today the games are held on a scale far grander than anything that Coubertin could possibly have envisaged, and yet the games instill national pride and cooperation in the competing athletes, while promoting peace and the prevention of conflict.
Activity 1: Reading the text

**Purpose:**
To encourage active readers and train children in the four reading behaviours: clarifying, questioning, summarising and predicting.

**Curriculum focus:**
Communication – reading, speaking and listening; note taking
Thinking skills - form considered opinions and make informed decisions; suggest how to find relevant information and ideas; ask questions that build on responses to earlier questions.

**Resources:**
Text: ‘The Birth of the Modern Olympics’
Activity Sheets 1a, 1b

**Groupings:**
The pupils work in groups of four or five. (Preferably four)

**Procedure:**
Each pupil is allocated a reading role, and they read the text from that perspective, contributing to the recording sheet.

**Teacher’s note:**
Pupils need to be trained in the roles. This can be done as a class. The pupils work collaboratively and independently. The pupils will need their notes for later activities.

If there are five pupils in a group then one needs to take on the role of group director to ensure that all roles are undertaken conscientiously.

The roles are (see activity sheets 1a for details of each role):

- Summariser
- Questioner
- Clarifier
- Predictor

Activity 2: Olympic facts

**Purpose:**
To examine a brief history of some of the Olympic Games.
To represent data mathematically.

**Curriculum focus:**
Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
History - place people and events in chronological order
Maths – data handling
Thinking skills - build on existing skills, knowledge and understanding required for the task, identify, describe and begin to explain patterns and relationships.

**Resources:**
Activity Sheets 2a, 2b
Calculators, protractors, compass

**Groupings:**
Four or five

**Procedure:**
Read through the list of Olympic Games with the pupils. Discuss how the information can be represented in a pie chart.
Pupils represent the information in a pie chart.
Using the medals table the pupils answer questions about the tables. The pupils will need to draw conclusions from the tables and their knowledge of the Olympic Games and be able to make inferences.
### Activity 3: Olympic timeline

**Purpose:** Research a given Olympic Games and create a visual representation of those games.

**Curriculum focus:**
- Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Art – explore and develop ideas
- History – place people and events in chronological order
- Thinking skills – identify the problem and set the questions to resolve it; build on existing skills, knowledge and understanding required for the task; suggest a range of options as to where and how to find relevant information and ideas; consider others’ views to inform opinions and decisions; develop and combine a variety of imaginative ideas; possibilities and alternatives.

**Resources:** Activity Sheets 3a, 3b, 3c, Internet, art materials (drawing materials, collage materials, A4 or A3 paper.)

**Groupings:** Four or five

**Procedure:**
Tell the pupils that in their groups they will be given a number of Olympic Games to research and represent pictorially. It can be drawn, collaged or computer produced. The visual representations they create will be used to create a class timeline of the Olympic Games from Ancient times to the Modern Olympic Games. They will also report their findings back to the whole class.

You can give the pupils a choice of the games they would like or pull dates out of a hat.

Their research should include a number of sources: books, Internet etc. They may use a research log if they wish.

Before beginning their research ask the pupils to create a mind map of anything they may already know of the Olympic Games they have been given to research. They can add to this as their research progresses.

Their visual representations should be of a uniform size and so as a class they need to decide upon the size of paper that will be used.
Activity 4: The Olympic flag

Purpose: To research the colours of the Olympic flag

Curriculum focus:
- Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
- ICT – research
- Geography – knowledge of countries and their flags
- Thinking skills – identify the problem and set the questions to resolve it; build on existing skills, knowledge and understanding required for the task; suggest a range of options as to where and how to find relevant information and ideas; consider others’ views to inform opinions and decisions; develop and combine a variety of imaginative ideas, possibilities and alternatives.

Resources: Activity Sheets 4a, 4b

Groupings: Four or five

Procedure:
Give the pupils Activity Sheet 4a. Tell the pupils these are the flags of the countries who have hosted the Olympic Games. They are going to name them in their groups.
Discuss with the pupils the colours the Olympic flag is made up of. Tell the pupils to create a mind map comprising their ideas about the Olympic Games. They need to focus on the Olympic flag, but not exclusively as their ideas may be useful later on in the project.
Tell the pupils the colours of the rings and background were chosen specifically. Prompt them with the question: What was the reason for choosing these colours?
Give them five minutes to write down their ideas.
Now tell the pupils that it is believed by some that the coloured rings represent a nation, for example the blue ring represents the European peoples. This is erroneous. The colours represent factors of the Olympic Games - what might those be? Explain that black represents excellence, what might the other colours represent?
Give the pupils time to write down their ideas.
Next pose the question: When was the Olympic flag first flown?
When the pupils have an answer, allow them to research their answers. Ask the pupils how close their ideas were to the answers they have found. They may prefer some of their own ideas to what they find out.

Teacher’s note:
In completing Activity 4a first some of the pupils may realise that the five Olympic rings and their background are the colours that appear on all flags across the world.
Activity 5: Recount writing and composing success criteria

**Purpose:**
To write a biography of an athlete who participated in the 1968 Olympics.
To write success criteria for peer marking.

**Curriculum focus:**
- Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
- History – use sources of evidence to support conclusions
- ICT – use a range of search mechanisms
- Literacy – writing a biography
- Thinking skills – suggest a range of options as to where and how to find relevant information and ideas; determine success criteria and give some justification for choice; build on existing skills, knowledge and understanding required for the task.

**Resources:**
Activity Sheets 5a, 5b, blank paper, Internet, books, leaflets, pens

**Groupings:**
Pairs or groups of four

**Procedure:**
This activity will cover more than one lesson.
Show pupils the photographs of the three Olympic athletes. Ask them what they can see in the photograph.

If you hide the caption under the photograph ask the pupils:
● Does anyone know who the athletes are?
● Does anyone know which Games these athletes competed in?

Tell the pupils they are going to write a biography of one of the athletes in the picture.
The pupils will choose which athlete they will write about and research them using the Internet, books, leaflets etc.
The pupils will need to take notes to assist in their writing.
Before the pupils begin, discuss the features of a recount text.

Discuss with the pupils the purpose of the text:
● What is its purpose?
● Who is it for?
● How will it be used?
● What kind of writing is therefore appropriate?

The layout of the text:
● Layout (e.g. large fonts, diagrams/illustrations, headings, subheadings)
● Structure/organisation (e.g. bullet points, paragraphs)
● Sequence (e.g. chronological, non-chronological)

The language to be used:
● Viewpoint (e.g. first person, third person)
● Main tense (e.g. past, present, future)
● Typical sentence structure and length (e.g. short and clear, long and complex)
● Typical connecting devices (e.g. words showing chronological order: first, next, etc)
● Specialised vocabulary
● Elaborate or simple vocabulary choices

The success criteria checklist the pupils produce can be used in the future when the pupils undertake recount writing. (See example 5b)
Once the pupils have discussed the features of a recount text, they can begin their research. They choose one of the athletes and make notes about their life and involvement in the Olympics.
Once the notes have been taken, the pupils write a biography on their chosen athlete. Once written, the pupils peer mark each other’s biography using their success criteria checklist.
Activity 6: Drawing graphs

Purpose:
This activity is designed to help the pupils to find out about the climate of Brazil, in particular Rio De Janeiro. They explore the impact of temperatures and how this influences the seasons.

Curriculum focus:
- Geography – graphical skills
- Maths – handling data
- ICT – creating a presentation
- Thinking skills – inductive thinking; comparing and contrasting, looking for similarities and differences; activating prior knowledge.
- Communication – speaking and listening

Resources:
Activity Sheet 6a (or alternative Activity Sheet 6b)

Groupings:
Pairs

Procedure:
Working together, the pupils read the data for temperature and rainfall for both London and Rio De Janeiro. They follow the instructions on the sheet and draw line graphs for the data. Alternatively, pupils enter the data into Microsoft Excel and following the given instructions, produce electronic graphs.
It is important to encourage the children to speculate about the way in which the temperature and rainfall data will affect people in London and Rio De Janeiro:
- How will people dress?
- In what way might it affect the Games?
- How might it affect the building of the stadium and the Olympic Village?

Activity 7: How much do we weigh?

Purpose:
To discuss the difference between weight and mass. To calculate weight depending upon the gravitational pull of the planets of the solar system.

Curriculum focus:
- Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
- Science – use data to answer questions
- Maths – calculations
- Thinking skills - build on existing skills, knowledge and understanding required for the task, identify, describe and begin to explain patterns and relationships.

Resources:
Activity Sheet 7, pens, calculators

Groupings:
Four or five

Procedure:
Discuss with the pupils the naming of the planets in the solar system.
Recap gravity as a force and ensure pupils understand that different planets will have a different gravitational pull to others.
Recap the difference between mass and weight. Ask the pupils to produce definitions of both explaining the difference between the two.
Before beginning to complete the table ensure pupils understand gravity acts on our mass, pulling us down to Earth and giving us our weight.
Using the given information, pupils complete the chart about their weight on different planets.
Activity 8: Writing a myth, writing success criteria

Purpose: To create a myth based on a solar or lunar eclipse. To create a success criteria checklist to use in peer marking and for future reference.

Curriculum focus: Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
ICT – use a range of search mechanisms
Thinking skills – suggest a range of options as to where and how to find relevant information and ideas, determine success criteria and give some justification for choice, build on existing skills, knowledge and understanding required for the task.

Resources: Activity Sheet 8, story of Pelops (Activity 10), example of success criteria from Activity 5.

Groupings: Individual

Procedure: Read the story of Pelops and discuss the text type. Establish it as a myth. Discuss the features of a myth. Create a success criteria checklist as was done with the biography writing. This list will be used to peer mark the pupils writing and can also be used in the future, when writing myths is returned to.

Activity 9: Rio de Janeiro Olympics

Purpose: To plan and design an Olympic mascot, logo and stadium for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

Curriculum focus: Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
Design and Technology – planning and designing
ICT – research
Thinking skills – identify the problem and set the questions to resolve it; build on existing skills, knowledge and understanding required for the task; suggest a range of options as to where and how to find relevant information and ideas; evaluate options; determine success criteria and give some justification for choice; develop and combine a variety of imaginative ideas, possibilities and alternatives.

Resources: Activity Sheet 9

Groupings: Four or five

Procedure: Present the children with the challenge that will face Rio de Janeiro prior to the Olympic Games being held in 2016 the ask them to create (on paper) a mascot, logo and Olympic site for the 2012 Olympics. They will need to research Rio de Janeiro as the mascot and logo should reflect the city and the country of Brazil. In groups, the children discuss their ideas and collaboratively produce annotated designs for the mascot, logo and the Olympic site.

Teacher’s note: This activity will be an extended one, covering a number thinking skills. The task could be extended into DT activities where the mascots are made and a model of the Olympic site produced. Rio de Janeiro has already produced a logo, but the children will need to produce one of their own.
### Activity 10: The story of Pelops

**Purpose:** P4C Enquiry

**Curriculum focus:**
Communication – Speaking and listening
Thinking skills – Ask questions that build on responses to earlier questions; identify gaps and begin to build on existing skills; knowledge and understanding required for the task; develop and begin to combine a variety of imaginative ideas, possibilities and alternatives, including those of others; use some prior knowledge to explain links between cause and effect or justify inferences/predictions; consider different interpretations and distinguish between ‘facts’, beliefs and opinions, giving reasons.

**Resources:**
Activity Sheet 10: The Story of Pelops, Flip chart, post-it notes

**Groupings:**
Individual, pair, group, whole class

**Procedure:**
I use P4C as part of my classroom activities as it encourages pupils to think together and opens learning through enquiry and exploration of ideas. In this environment all the pupils have an opportunity to enquire and be heard without the fear of getting things wrong. The pupils are presented with a thought provoking stimulus. Some time is spent in identifying the concepts raised by the stimulus. The pupils raise their own philosophical questions and vote for the one they wish to explore. Discussion takes place in a circle with the teacher intervening and pushing the thinking to a deeper level but aspiring to allow the discussion to follow the emerging interests of the group.

The enquiry is a structured session which starts with a stimulus. The pupils are encouraged to ask questions based on wonderment. They make a collective decision on the question they are most interested in. The discussion follows its own path, guided by the pupils’ thoughts and ideas. Agreeing or disagreeing but always giving a reason.

This encourages respect for everyone and their ideas, the pupils are in a safe place where kindness and consideration are the norm. The pupils are active enquirers with the responsibility of bringing their best thinking to the topic. The topic becomes the locus while the pupils seek supporting evidence from the work they have undertaken and the knowledge they have gained. They become more sensitive to what their peers are saying as well as more reflective about what they say themselves.

I usually sit the pupils in a circle. They all agree that they will respect each other’s views even if they disagree with them. Every child has a chance to speak. The pupils have a signal to use so that everyone’s voice is respected and no one talks over anyone else. The pupils in my class hold out their hand as if they are asking someone to place something in their palm.

The pupils all have post-its. The first questions are written on their own, following the think pair, share model. The pupils write down questions they would like to discuss, not necessarily questions they will find answers to. They can write up to three questions. Next, the pupils go into pairs, with the person they sit next to in the circle. They discuss their questions, and either combine their questions to produce better questions, or due to their discussion may devise completely new questions. Each pair should now have up to three questions they are happy to put forward for discussion.
The next step is to go into a group situation of four or more pupils so that all pupils in the class are in a group. The pupils again discuss each other’s questions and choose the questions they feel are the best ones to submit for the enquiry or again due to their discussion may devise completely new questions. At the end of this discussion the groups choose one question from their list to put forward for discussion. They write this question on a post-it. This is the question they will ‘park’ to be included in the vote. I keep all the post-its with all the questions. Sometimes we return to these for another enquiry.

Once the groups have chosen the question they wish to ‘park’ the pupils are ready to put forward their questions for the vote. One member of the group reads put the question they have chosen and the teacher writes this up on the board. The child then ‘parks’ their post-it on another board in the classroom. (I use part of my learning wall for this). Once every group has ‘parked’ their question and the teacher has also written the questions on the board, the pupils are ready to vote for the question they would like to discuss. There are a number of ways the pupils can vote, I prefer to take a blind vote, whereby the pupils close their eyes and raise their hands when I read out the question the wish to discuss. The question which receives the most votes is the question which is discussed. If all the questions are kept (as I do with all the post-its), other questions can be used to stimulate an enquiry.

The pupils now begin their enquiry into the chosen question.

**Activity 11a: Munich Games**

**Purpose:** To research some of the controversial events of the Munich Olympic Games.

**Curriculum focus:**
- Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
- ICT – research using search engines
- History – enquiry, organise and communicate findings
- Literacy – writing a newspaper report
- Thinking skills – working with others; form considered opinions and make informed decisions; ask questions related to context and listen before asking further questions, suggest a range of options as to where and how to find relevant information and ideas, consider different interpretations and distinguish between ‘facts’, beliefs and opinions, giving reasons, begin to recognise bias and reliability.

**Resources:** Activity sheet 11a, Internet

**Groupings:** Four

**Procedure:** The pupils work together to research various highlights of the Munich Olympic Games. They find out as much as they can about the handball, archery, slalom canoeing and the final of the men’s basketball. The pupils use the information they have found to write a newspaper report on these events and their significance to the Olympic Games. The pupils will use the jigsaw approach to write the report. They will each take one of the events and produce the part of the newspaper report that refers to that event before combining all the writing into one report. The pupils have already produced success criteria for recount writing that can be used for this activity.
Activity 11b: Munich Games

Purpose: To research some of the athletes taking part in the Munich Games

Curriculum focus: Communication – reading, writing, speaking and listening
History – enquiry, organise and communicate findings
Drama – role play
Thinking Skills – working with others form considered opinions and make informed decisions; ask questions related to context and listen before asking further questions; suggest a range of options as to where and how to find relevant information and ideas; consider different interpretations and distinguish between ‘facts’, beliefs and opinions, giving reasons; begin to recognise bias and reliability.

Resources: Activity Sheet 11b, Internet

Groupings: Four

Procedure: The children research some of the athletes taking part at the Munich Olympic Games. They research their achievements at the Games and what has made them famous/infamous.

They also need to research further into the person in order to take part in the activity ‘Five Questions’. Following on from their research the children from group 1 will remain ‘in role’ as one of the athletes. The children from group 2 question the child from group 1 and attempt to identify him or her. To do this they ask five questions. The questions could be:

- One thing about the athlete’s family
- Three things about his/her interests or hobbies
- One thing about where the athlete lives

The children can choose their own questions.

Using Activity Sheet 11b, the children attempt to identify the athlete. They need to decide which information is relevant and which is not relevant.

After the children have attempted both being ‘in role’ as an athlete and identifying the athletes, discuss which of the questions were most useful. How could these questions have been improved upon? Did any of them need changing or re-wording?

Teacher’s note: The children may wish to use the question hand (example provided in CTL 2.4 Cross Curriculum Project) enabling the children to consider the 5ws they will need in their writing.

Jane Jones is a primary school teacher at St Helen’s Primary School, Swansea. Jane has been teaching for over twenty years with the embedded belief that to help children learn they need to be involved in their own learning and have ownership of it.

In a new review feature for Creative Teaching and Learning, Jane Hewitt indulges in Hywel Roberts’ new book that aims to re-inspire the zealous teacher within. And Dr David George reviews Tony Hurlin’s Learning Without Limits to develop art-inspired thinkers.

Oops! Helping children to learn accidentally

By Hywel Roberts

It’s fair to say that we sometimes get books that we think we ought to read, trust me this is a book that you will want to read! I read it in two sittings as I couldn’t put it down – cliché? – Well I defy you to start reading it and take any longer! It should come with a few warnings though:

Don’t read it in a public place – you will get strange looks when you sit there laughing out loud!

This book will cause you to question your own teaching, methods, approaches and motivation – be prepared to do some serious thinking about your own classroom. When was the last time you ‘lured’ your pupils into their learning? Hywel talks about ‘igniting curiosity’, ‘capturing imagination’ and ‘botheredness’!

As a result of your thinking – this book will then cause you more soul-searching as you begin to take risks – stepping out of your comfort zone is never easy!

One of the key strengths of this book is that it’s written by a practising teacher – one who ‘gets it’, who is dealing with a whole range of pupils and their attitudes – it’s not a ‘worthy tome by someone who hasn’t been in a classroom for years’…it’s amazing the number of times he hits the nail on the head. The positivity of this book is really refreshing: patience; being a radiator not a drain; what is my
usp?...Some of these I know but I just needed reminding as it’s easy to get tired and lack the energy to be creative and BRAVE!
To borrow one of Hywel’s favourite words – you’ll be ‘buzzing’ when you’ve read this! Buzzing with ideas, enthusiasm, a sense of ‘I want to give that a go’...definitely a read for teachers who want to be re-inspired! I want to be that ‘positive teacher’, excuse me while I just re-read...Oops!
(PS please read page 37 – number 1 – that’s me...I’m officially a good teacher as I just LOVE stationery shops!)

Jane Hewitt

Read Hywel Roberts’ article in this issue of Creative Teaching and Learning: Edge-of-the-seat-learning.

Learning Without Limits
By Tony Hurlin
Imaginative Minds Ltd, 2009, Price: £65.00 (inc VAT)

Mankind has, since prehistoric times, had a strong desire to communicate through art. Through an endearing blend of enthusiasm and wisdom, Tony Hurlin encourages children to look with seeing eyes at seven great pieces of art and by doing so encourages creative thinking. It is hoped that this insightful book will affect the thoughts of generations of young people.

One never finishes learning about art as there are always new things to discover. To look at a painting closely, which Tony encourages children to do, is to venture on a most rewarding voyage of discovery.

The book generates many questions, but there are no right or wrong answers. Many people believe art should be about ideas; others prefer to enjoy art for its own sake as a thing of beauty; others see the potential for a moral or social message or as a way to express an emotion. All of these aspects are admirably explored through an amazing array of questions.

‘judicious questioning is nearly the half of knowledge’

Children are actively encouraged to look, see and interpret paintings, an approach giving them a desire to draw, paint and write stories. This excellent book by a leading expert exponent of art education provides a most helpful guide for busy teachers and parents.

As a teacher of science who has taught keen observation in students I have learnt a great deal about the scientific method from this book. In other words, Tony is right in saying ‘learning is without limits’!

Dr David George

Learning Without Limits is available to purchase from Imaginative Minds. To order by phone call 0121 224 7599, or fax on 0121 224 7598. Alternatively, visit http://www.thinkingonlinecatalogue.co.uk/ to place an online order.
Focusing on good practice, research and staff development, in the pages of official report summaries and research findings, training programmes and courses, which is emailed direct to your inbox, providing extra information such as legal briefings, Every Child Update is an additional service to Every Child Journal. It is a monthly e-bulletin and responds creatively to the 21st Century Schools White Paper.

The journal will be your professional handbook, informing, updating and developing care sectors, to help professionals improve the life chances of vulnerable children. A new publication that uniquely provides solutions across the education, health and policies and initiatives that will raise pupils’ and schools’ performance. 

Incorporating Managing Schools Today and Primary Leadership Today

School Leadership Today also provides news, research and analysis of the issues affecting today’s school leaders, through its expert articles on how to implement policies and initiatives that will raise pupils’ and schools’ performance.

Every Child Update is an additional service to Every Child Journal. It is a monthly e-bulletin which is emailed direct to your inbox, providing extra information such as legal briefings, official report summaries and research findings, training programmes and courses.

Professional Development Today

Focusing on good practice, research and staff development, in the pages of PDT you will read the latest thinking of writers in professional development who are of world class calibre as well as testimonies from practitioners who make it happen in their schools. This combination of grounded practice, challenging critique and research insights make Professional Development Today the journal to support professional learning for your practitioners.

A new publication that uniquely provides solutions across the education, health and policies and initiatives that will raise pupils’ and schools’ performance.

Type of school: (Please complete all sections)

Primary
Secondary
Independent
Technology College
Sports College

Other (Please specify)

Name
Job Title
Type of school: (Please complete all sections)

I enclose: ☐ Cheque £ payable to Imaginative Minds.
☐ Credit Card (Please give card address if different to delivery address)

Card name
Card address

Card No.

Expiry date

Signature

Print name
☐ Official Order No.

Order form

Magazine Format: Online

School Leadership Today (6 issues) @ £60 pa +VAT
Leadership Briefing (per week) @ £60 pa +VAT
Schools Leadership Today/Leadership Briefing @ £85 pa (SAVE £35) +VAT
Every Child Journal & Every Child Update @ £70 pa +VAT
Professional Development Today (4 issues) @ £45 pa +VAT
e-Learning Update (12 months) @ £48 pa +VAT
Creative Teaching & Learning (4 issues) @ £45 pa +VAT (for an individual)
£52 pa +VAT (delivery to Primary Schools)
£72 pa +VAT (delivery to Secondary Schools/Businesses)
Learning Spaces (formerly C21) (4 issues) @ £48 pa +VAT

Please add 20% VAT for UK

Please add £20.00 for all Overseas Subscriptions.
For Libraries, Universities & Trade orders please telephone 0121 224 7578 as different prices apply.

Call the Subscriptions Orderline 0121 224 7578  Fax back this form 0121 224 7598
Intelligent Learning is a teaching practice course, executed through six half hour video sessions, which address in detail the changes in pedagogy you and your school need to introduce to start addressing the issues of motivation and becoming a thinking and learning community.

The central theme of the course is to give students the skills to ask more and searching questions. …it’s the questioning skills, not of the teacher but of the student that really count in developing their cognitive abilities and engagement. Their questions dominate the learning agenda and the ownership of learning follows.

At the end of the course teachers will have the skills and practical strategies to:

- facilitate more and more sophisticated student questioning
- support children in using concepts to organise their thinking
- manage dialogue and discussion to develop children’s ideas
- plan lessons and study programmes that promotes questioning and dialogue
- create communities of inquiry in their classroom

What sort of teaching allows students to take ownership of their own learning?

What will motivate and excite children’s curiosity and haul them out of passivity?

What style of teaching will develop their intellectual skills to the point that they can become effective agents of enquiry in any field?

Written and presented By Steve Williams

Acclaimed by the NUT

Intelligent Learning is a teaching practice course, executed through six half hour video sessions, which address in detail the changes in pedagogy you and your school need to introduce to start addressing the issues of motivation and becoming a thinking and learning community.

The central theme of the course is to give students the skills to ask more and searching questions. …it’s the questioning skills, not of the teacher but of the student that really count in developing their cognitive abilities and engagement. Their questions dominate the learning agenda and the ownership of learning follows.

At the end of the course teachers will have the skills and practical strategies to:

- facilitate more and more sophisticated student questioning
- support children in using concepts to organise their thinking
- manage dialogue and discussion to develop children’s ideas
- plan lessons and study programmes that promotes questioning and dialogue
- create communities of inquiry in their classroom

In the pack are:

- Six half hour videos on DVD
- Supporting guides for each video, written by programme users in schools themselves
- A CD of supporting articles and materials to stimulate professional development and curriculum design

“Intelligent Learning is a complete DVD training course for promoting independent learning, curiosity, good dialogue and thinking skills in your school at Key Stages 2 and 3”.

Debra Kidd and Rebecca Patterson - Manchester Metropolitan University

To order call: 0121 224 7599 or Fax orders: 0121 224 7598
Products to support thinking schools

Top Ten Thinking Tactics
By Mike Lake and Marjorie Needham
Price: £55.00 KS2

Top Ten Thinking Tactics is a thinking skills programme which has distilled thinking skills research into ten key tactics. These tactics can be systematically practised using the activities in the pack, helping children to build thinking skills as well as showing teachers how these skills can be applied in different areas of the curriculum.

Myself as a Learner Scale
By Robert Burden
Price: £40.00

A short, effective measure of pupils’ perceptions of their abilities and approaches to learning. In its evaluation of pupils’ concepts of themselves as thinkers and learners, it identifies areas where individuals need more help. The scale is a 20-question test that is quick and easy to administer.

The pack contains a user guide, a photocopiable questionnaire and a scoring overlay.

Improving Memory Skills CD
By Mike Lake and Angie Steele
Price: £85.00 inc. vat KS1-2

Improving Memory Skills helps a teacher or classroom assistant to work with children on their powers of memory. In simple steps of increasing difficulty, the programme provides practice in the basics of active memorising and organising information.

Improving Concentration Skills CD
By Mike Lake and Marjorie Needham
Price: £70.00 inc. vat KS1-2

Why can some children pay attention to a noisy animated cartoon or concentrate on a video game for long periods of time, but are apparently unable to focus on school activities for more than a few seconds? This resource offers a structured programme for working with children individually, which aims to help them to listen better, be able to concentrate, learn to focus on what is relevant, improve their reasoning, learn to see and to make connections - and to transfer what they learn to subject lessons. The programme is a simple but powerful way of helping a child towards a new understanding.

Order now by posting or faxing this form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Price (inc. vat)</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent Learning</td>
<td>£235.00 + vat</td>
<td></td>
<td>£176.25 + vat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Concentration Skills CD</td>
<td>£58.33 + vat</td>
<td></td>
<td>£43.74 + vat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Memory Skills CD</td>
<td>£70.83 + vat</td>
<td></td>
<td>£53.12 + vat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Ten Thinking Tactics</td>
<td>£55.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>£41.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myself as a Learner Scale</td>
<td>£40.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>£30.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intelligent Learning Package includes all of the above. Retail cost £532.00 – You pay ONLY £266.00 (50% discount)

Please add P&P £5.00 UK, £12.00 Overseas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Job title:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivery address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone:</td>
<td>Postcode:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I enclose a cheque made payable to Imaginative Minds for the sum of £

[ ] I wish to pay by credit card

Credit Card number _____________________________ Security No. ___________

Start date __/__/____ Expiry date __/__/____ Issue number ___________

Signature: ____________________________

If paying by credit card, please give home (card address) if different from delivery address:

Name on card: ____________________________ Address: ____________________________

Postcode: ____________________________ Email: ____________________________

Post back to: Imaginative Minds Ltd, 309 Scott House, Gibb Street, Birmingham B9 4AA

To order call: 0121 224 7599 or Fax orders: 0121 224 7598

visit our website: www.thinkingonlinecatalogue.co.uk