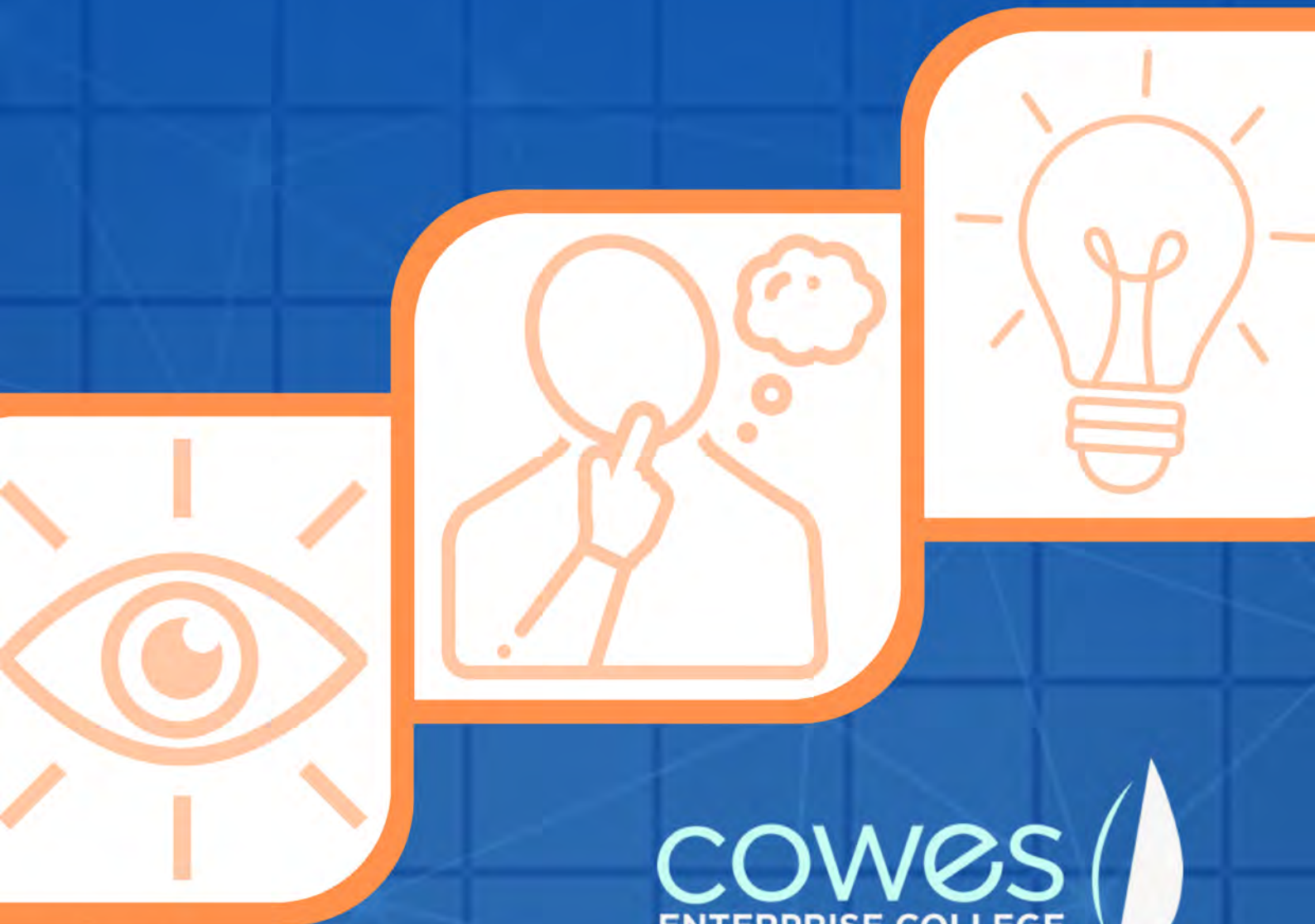
CPD Journal

2024 - 2025



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Educate for life

Securing Attention

Laura Augustus

Explore

I have had the privilege of teaching 7XY8 this year which is made up of 15 students, 9 of which have EHCPs and 3 have a K code. They were all working under age related expectations at the end of year 6 and the reading ages ranged from 6 years 6 months to 8 years 5 months. I wanted to secure their attention at the beginning of every lesson to ensure high expectations and engagement was established from the offset.

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Adopt and Prepare

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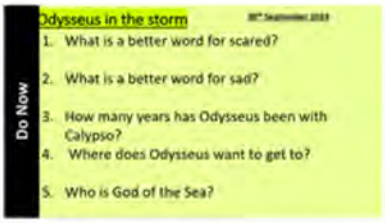
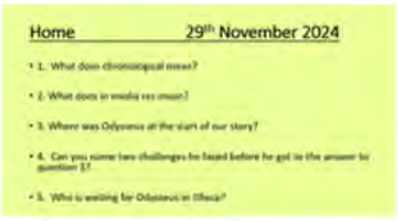
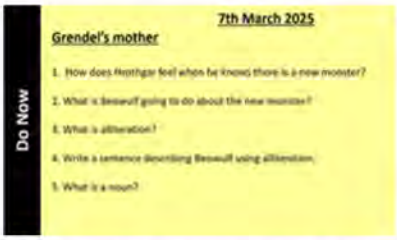
Deliver

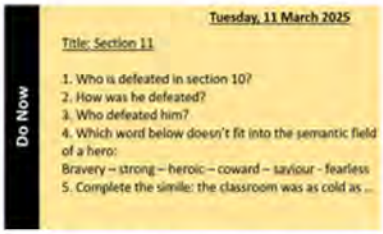
The delivery went very well with the students and they responded to being able to be successful immediately. I was able to form positive relationships with them by rewarding engagement as well as attainment and this allowed for a successful start to their time in English at Cowes Enterprise College. The integration of Pens, Eyes, Posture was also seamless as their engagement in tasks meant I already had their focus. As the routine became the norm, students settled very quickly into lessons and this then allowed me to develop my cold calling as I knew 100% of students had completed the starter and were able to respond to my questions. I was also able to quickly establish the required volume level- level 1- as they were already working in near silence so the new vocabulary and routine for volume levels was seamless.

As the year progressed, I started to make the questions harder-









using meta language in them- once I knew students would be able to be successful with this.

It allowed me to drive thought as some of the questions became two step and their desire to answer all of the questions made them think hard about the earlier answers to be successful in the later ones too. I also challenged them to write more by finishing sentences that allowed more independent thought, but with the first half of the sentence written, there was a support structure in place to elicit the right answers.

Sustain

Although my intentions were to "train" the year 7s to be in a routine, I now find I have established a routine that is easy to maintain and keep in my normal practice. By raising the level of challenge, as the year has progressed, it has allowed me to keep their attention as they are immediately feeling successful in their lessons. By using targeted questioning, I am able to use assessment for learning to see where support is needed, check for understanding or to help refocus.

The pace of my lessons has improved as I can be really clear on timings and expectations. I am also able to use cold calling to help students feel successful as they can add to their answers as we go along without it ruining the aesthetic of their book.

I have also adopted this approach with the four EHCP students in my year 11 class and it has helped to reduce their cognitive load to make a smoother start to the lesson and achieve 100% engagement in the work that is driven with a GCSE focus. In a year 8 class, that I teach once a week, it has also helped with behaviour as they are focused and do not have the opportunity to be off task. I have found it to be a very simple strategy that works to gain 100% engagement and allows me to build a positive rapport with the class as they are thinking hard at the start of the lesson and want to continue this throughout.

Claire Brooks

Explore

I chose to base my CPD entry on my year 8 set 4 English class. There are 28 students, including several who find it difficult to focus; they find extended periods of reading (more than a page) and extended writing difficult. My particular focus though was on securing attention when reading a set text.

Which practice(s) are you exploring and how do they relate to our mental model for teaching? Having initially decided to explore 'driving thought', I realised some students had lost focus since starting the new novel after Easter. There are many variables which might have influenced this, so I have returned to exploring strategies for 100% engagement.

Which practice(s) have you selected for implementation?

- High frequency checks for listening (See below)
- Explicit praise and rewards for students for attention and engagement
- 'All pens moving' when asked to answer short questions about the text.
- Mini-white boards as a quick visual check for attention.
- Purposeful movement breaks e.g students enjoy coming up to the board and using the electronic pen to add capital letters and punctuation to short extracts.
- Use of a timer for the Do Now
- Circulate the room while reading.
- Assign roles/responsibilities to main disruptors that promote learning i.e. spotting appositives or identifying adjectives - not handing out glue.
- Change pace when attention wanes.
- Turn to the speaker when it's a peer.
- Fidget toys for those with one on their passport; see SEND dept about other students
- Students reading characters' words to distinguish between them, therefore, supporting others to follow the text.
- Use of rulers when reading from the book, rather than the screen.

What adaptations will you need to consider?

- Some students prefer reading from the screen with buff coloured background and useful vocabulary whereas some prefer having the text in front of them. Both are an option, but staring round the room isn't.
- New students and those on a DAP: check prior knowledge.
- Seating plan changes to aid concentration.

What outcome(s) are you looking for? How will you know you are successful?

I am looking for every student to know exactly where we are when reading and to have really listened and understood both the superficial and the deeper meanings implied. This will involve listening to each other and my responses to questions and answers. Students cannot write about a theme or character if they are missing basic information because they haven't been paying attention due to break time friendship issues, family breakdown or a general lack of accountability.

Adopt and Prepare

What is your plan for delivery?

I had students who were following 'Pens, eyes posture' but were still not really paying attention.

Cold call students to recap the plot and important points so far for those who have been absent, cannot remember or are new to the school mid-term.

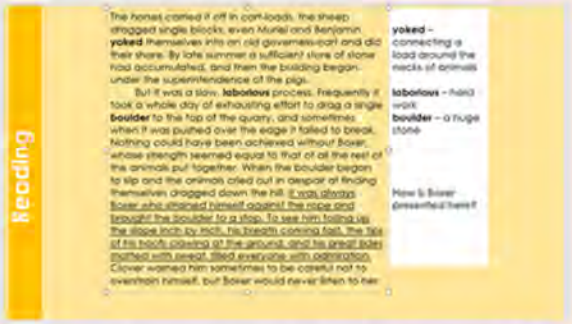
Explain why they need to look where I am pointing and look at the text when reading. Metacognition: helps secure attention, improves spelling and independent reading; using two senses rather than one helps embed the information.

Add other words (often humorous) when I am reading to see if they can spot them. Rewards if they do.

High frequency checks for listening - not understanding.

In the example, vocabulary is in bold font, the key text for the question is underlined but the checks for attention were:

1. Which animals helped to gather stones to build the windmill?
2. Who was the strongest animal?
3. How did the other animals feel about him?



Once assured that students have paid attention to the basics, I can then delve into the analysis; for example, linking the description of Boxer in the slide below to the Soviet workers who believed Stalin's propaganda.

What adaptations will you apply?
Adaptive questioning and meanings of vocabulary in the margin. As well as checks for attention, other questions to clarify cultural references for EAL students, for example, clarifying 'The Red Lion' where farmer Jones goes is a typical name for a pub, which reinforces the idea that he gets drunk. For those students reluctant to talk, even a closed yes or no response can check for listening. If anyone offers an incorrect answer despite listening, I have rehearsed saying, "That's a common mistake because..." in order to sustain self-esteem.

How will you prepare the students?
I decided in advance which questions I was going to ask: simple questions to check for attention, but also relevant ones that would help with text analysis later.

Deliver

High frequency checks for understanding. This was a game-changer. Whereas before, I had focused on driving thought as we read, I decided to focus on deeper thinking after having read the text, when we revisited an important extract. During the initial reading of the text, I asked simple recall questions to build confidence and check for attention. Even the timidest of students, and those target students who found it difficult to focus for more than a minute previously, were buoyed by getting rewards for answering questions correctly and having their voice heard. I had to fine tune the number of questions asked so as not to lose the flow of the text.

Timers for the Do Now aided attention. They were taking up too much time. I have shelved the use of mini white boards until I have enough for all students and enough pens. I need to ask other staff how they organize their use with minimal disruption.

Turning to face the speaker when peers are responding to questions has been mostly successful and they are becoming familiar with this. Some find it embarrassing when peers are looking at them but I found previously that some were not paying attention to some quite insightful comments from peers.

The high frequency, low-stakes checks for listening were particularly effective because I was immediately alerted to students who seemed to be listening and following the reading but in fact, were not. They began to expect these quick questions and were rewarded for just listening and engaging.

Sustain

How will you build this practice into your normal routines and ways of working?
Continue to check for attention by planning which information I would like the students to pay attention to and planning questions in advance.

How could you implement with other classes/groups/students?
I will use mini-white boards with smaller classes or intervention groups next year. I have already started to use the high frequency checks with year 7s when reading Shakespeare and with year 9 when reading the set novel.

Adam Brown

Explore

Class 9X/Pc3 will be the focus of the article.

Securing 100% attention and driving thought have been identified as areas to improve generally within this class. Through research I have explored strategies for securing attention which include establishing entry routines, accountable questioning and setting volume levels for each task. These all relate to the idea that until the attention of all students is secure the learning will be minimal. Some students will be impeded by the ill attention of other which many will miss important information and cues to be able to access the learning tasks at the pace and depth necessary.

Strategies that drive thought could involve adding challenge or scaffolds when questioning, using group discussion and using accountable questioning. The will all provide both the expectation and support structures to ensure that students are processing information in a way that will not only commit it to memory but also build a schema of understanding that could be applied to subsequent learning tasks. The strategies that have been employed for this paper are securing attention through the use of 321PEP and driving thought through think, pair, share; using additional scaffolds to support the structure of discussion and response.

In the interest of consistency across the academy there will be few adaptations to these strategies because in order for them to be affective for these students they must understand the expectation and processes involved. Consideration of SEND and literacy / oracy levels has been made and in order to support students who may struggle with think, pair, share sentence starters will be given and, insisted upon to begin with, allowing them to access the task and build the confidence to contribute. The desired outcomes will be that the lesson time will be maximized. There will eventually be minimal 'lost' learning time due to low level disruption and/or students being off-task.

Adopt and Prepare

A clear plan for implementation was created which specified the strategies and objectives; as well as assessing the readiness of the students. At the start of the cycle students were not used to the strategies and needed to have them explained and justified over a number of lessons.

A clear script was developed to deliver the 321PEP instruction and follow up to ensure 100% engagement. For example, the instruction "pens, eyes, posture in 3 pens, 2 eyes, 1 posture" was used consistently and without variation. Following a moment of silence, in which I scanned the class, the follow line was used "We are about 90% there, I am just waiting for the last few". This was followed by another pause and repeated if necessary.

It was essential early on to insist on 100% before progressing the lesson. In this class there were no students who simply refused to follow this and all became well-conditioned to the expectation. In future some adaptations may be necessary for classes with an individual student who does not cooperate. Secondary strategies will need to be employed to manage this distraction and progress the lesson for all other students.

For the think, pair, share strategy, which is an adaptation of write, pair, share, to suit the practical lesson environment. In order to deliver this strategy students were again required to undergo some training into the expectations and skill needed for it to become effective. For a number of lessons short discussion activities were used to scaffold the process of taking it in turns to speak and actively listen; and develop the ability to provide sufficient depth of response, which would involve some explanation, usually in the form of justification.

A looser script was developed to bring some consistency but also provide the flexibility in the instruction to allow different questions to be applied. For example, "What makes an effective technique for long jump? Start your answer with 'an effective long jump technique involves'..." In this case the script is having a specific open-ended question designed to promote higher order thinking skills such as 'analysis', followed by a sentence starter to encourage a coherent and full response.

This structure can be applied to any question. In some cases students may require visual cues, such as key words and vocabulary to use in their answer. This can slowly be removed as they grasp the language through repetition, over time.

Deliver

Following a period of training for the students, they became more independent and disciplined. Naturally some students still required more prompting and reminding of the procedure and the expectation in terms of response. Explaining to the students the reasons why it is expected that 100% attention is secured and why they are required to practice deeper thinking created a greater engagement, which was reported by students to be based on an understanding of what is required but also the need to be able to articulate learning to demonstrate progress and competence.

It was discovered that the training phase never really ends as students support for students is always required and rarely will there be complete independence. The support did, however, become more focused on specific students and less frequent. As a result of the strategies there was far less 'time wasting' having to repeat instructions or bring students back on task. The lesson has become more enjoyable for both teacher and students as the improved attention, comprehension and demonstration has permitted a more supportive environment that is based on positive relationships, using feedback to drive progress.

Between the Autumn and Spring terms there has been a significant reduction in the behaviour incidents as the consistency of expectations has been established. This has resulted in the majority of students in the class having a 100% ratio of achievement:behaviour points, as recorded on class charts. Although it is difficult to track the improvement overall in terms of working levels, due to the practical skill nature of PE, there is a greater understanding of how these skills can be applied.

This will more likely impact on GCSE results as students progress to a more analytical piece of work in their NEA, which requires careful analysis, planning and justification. The benefits of applying PEP321 and think, pair, share can be expected as according to the mental model of teaching are necessary antecedents for the consolidation of learning.

Sustain

Through the use of repetition in my own practice and using this class to rehearse and refine the implementation of these strategies, I am now able to deliver a more fluid series of learning activities that combine the need for physical literacy with deep understanding of technique and tactical awareness. It has become easier to identify additional opportunities to use these strategies and develop student understanding, during the lesson when something unexpected occurs.

This supports the idea of maximising learning time due to every event being made relevant to progressing. As there is now an established method for training students to be recipients of these strategies, they can be rolled out to all classes. Every scheme of work and lesson plan can make use of these strategies to raise the expectation of participation, thinking activity and attainment.

The same principles have now been applied to classes spanning the full range from year 7 to 13. The process of developing questions and scaffolding responses as well as supporting the development of literacy and oracy skills can transfer from practical to classroom settings; and from KS3 to A Level learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by using the implementation cycle and exploring specific strategies that can be easily applied to everyday teaching, I have been able to transform the learning environment in this class. Students have higher expectations of themselves and are now more engaged and thinking harder. Participation has improved and the number of negative behaviours has reduced. This can all be explained through the use of the mental model of teaching, in which the only way for students to access and learn from a well-designed curriculum is by using strategies to secure attention and provide the necessary scaffolding to support students' ability to process information and apply it in a meaningful way. Small changes in teacher behaviour can have a significant impact on student performance.

Julie Crane

Securing and Directing Attention for 100% Engagement in the Health & social Care Classroom In today's fast-paced world, capturing and maintaining student attention is a significant challenge but one that needs to be addressed in order to reduce distractions and increase focus. The class I am focusing on consists of 23 students, 22 girls and 1 boy. There is a mixture of ability levels and interest in the reason for choosing the subject and includes SEN and PP students.

This essay will explore key strategies to achieve this high level of engagement, focusing on proactive measures, dynamic lesson delivery, fostering a sense of ownership among students, and practical classroom techniques.

Creating an Engaging Environment

I Securing student attention lies in the creation of an environment that is both stimulating, predictable and emotionally safe. Establishing clear routines such as meet and greet, Do now starter in silence along with Pens Eyes Posture 321 means that as soon as the students enter the classroom they know what to expect and what is expected of them. This along with creating a visually appealing classroom can minimize distractions and signal a space dedicated to learning. For myself, the students' books are placed at the back of the room, they will collect them, sit down and complete the do now starter in silence. Relevant care values, skills and attribute posters are displayed around the classroom.

Creating an emotionally safe classroom is also necessary as student will be more engaged when they feel respected, valued, and safe to take risks and make mistakes. This means building positive relationships with students and fostering a sense of community among peers can significantly reduce anxiety and increase their willingness to invest their attention. When students feel a sense of belonging, they are more inclined to contribute actively and direct their focus to the learning at hand.

The use of music can be surprisingly effective in managing the classroom environment and directing attention. Gentle, instrumental background music during independent work can help some students focus and create a calmer atmosphere. Recently I have started to use "Quiet classroom Music for Children – Calming Sensory Bubbles – Morning music for class" as sound during the Do Now Starter and other independent tasks. The students have seemed calmer using this along with more focused. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ekY8EvrZmM

Dynamic Lesson Delivery

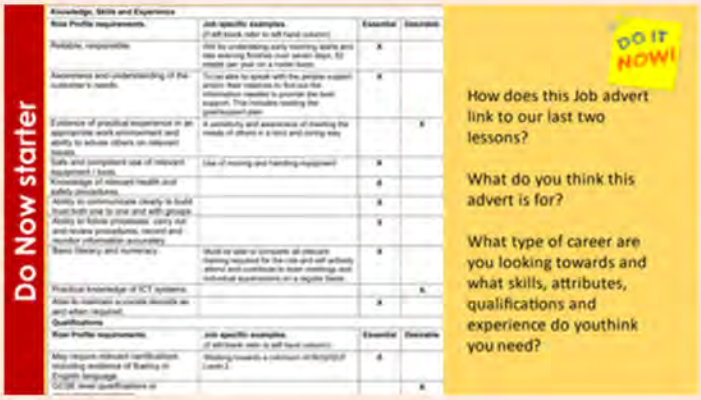
Varying instructional methods of delivery is crucial in order to cater for each students preferred learning style. This means incorporating a mix of direct instruction, paired/group work, hands-on activities, movement, and the use of multimedia/video. For instance, a lesson might begin with a short, engaging video, transition into a brief teacher explanation, followed by a collaborative problem-solving activity, and conclude with individual reflection. The use of video' can be particularly powerful for introducing new topics, illustrating concepts, offering diverse perspectives, as they appeal to visual and auditory learners. In health and social care, the use of the short videos is important for students to reflect on the issues and solutions for different service users. An example is 'The Silent Child' which is a sign language short film that tells the story of six year old Libby who is profoundly deaf. It explores the struggles she has with her family and how she lives a silent life until a social worker teaches her how to communicate through the use of sign language.

Effective questioning, is also a powerful tool for directing attention. Instead of asking simple recall questions, posing thought-provoking questions that require students to analyse, evaluate, or create immediately shifts their attention from passive listening to active thinking. Incorporating frequent opportunities for students to talk, move, and interact with the content keeps their minds active and prevents them from disengaging.

Sustain

True engagement comes when students feel a sense of ownership over their learning and understand its purpose. This moves beyond merely securing attention to directing it towards meaningful goals. One strategy that I am currently exploring is for students to explore the health & social care employment opportunities and explore the importance of care values, skills and attributes that are required by different Health & Social Care Professionals, along with person centred values. This is important as every unit regardless of whether it is a assessed via coursework or exam require students to demonstrate and explain how and why they are required, the benefits for the service user, benefits for the professional and the provider.

Initially this was introduced via a talk from the IOW Council in relation to their Undergraduate Support Worker Scheme. The students had an insight into an opportunity available after their GCSE's. They have looked at the job advert along with the essential and desirable skills/knowledge and experience and I am reviewing their performance each half term in demonstrating the care values, skills and attributes. This helps students see a direct purpose for their engagement, understanding how today's lessons contribute to their future goals and aspirations. There has also been a dramatic shift in the students being more reflective in how they act in the lessons towards each other, the task and towards myself.



Conclusion

All of these methods of securing attention allow for a person-centred approach for each individual to ensuring that each student is more focused on the task required and they are creating the methods high levels of student engagement and attention is an ongoing process that requires a multifaceted approach. By cultivating an engaging and safe classroom environment, employing dynamic and varied lesson delivery methods, fostering a genuine sense of student ownership and purpose, and utilizing practical techniques like "Do Now" starters, strategic music use, "Pens, Eyes, Posture," and the intentional use of video, educators can create a learning space where attention is not just secured, but truly directed towards deep and meaningful learning. When students are fully engaged, the classroom transforms into a vibrant hub of curiosity and intellectual growth, benefiting every learner.

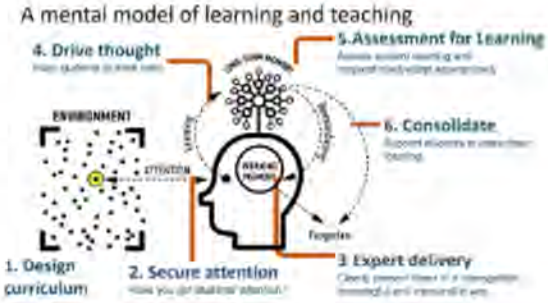
Helen Davis

Explore

I will be focusing my CPD journal on my Year 7 mixed P.E class made up of 33 students, including 10 girls and 23 boys. This group displays a wide range of practical sporting abilities and includes several students, mainly boys, who can be particularly challenging in terms of behaviour.
I will be using this class to reflect on and develop my teaching practice. In particular, I aim to explore strategies for securing and directing students' attention in order to achieve 100% engagement during lessons. This will involve identifying effective techniques to maintain focus and create a learning environment where all students are actively participating.

One key practice I am implementing is the use of a clear countdown routine of 3, 2, 1 (Pens, Eyes, posture which is used consistently across our school. The aim being by one this should gain full attention of all students. In a P.E practical setting we adapted this count down to suit the subject. This translates to 3 (equipment down), 2 (eyes on teacher), 1 (silence and ready for instruction). This routine supports the goal of 100% compliance by creating a consistent, predictable signal/routines that encourages students to focus quickly and collectively, setting a strong foundation for effective learning and behaviour management.

Using the following mental model of learning and teaching. The six key elements shown have been used as a part of our ongoing subject development.



In the context of Physical education, effective curriculum design is essential to ensure that all lessons are purposeful, progressive and appropriately challenging for a group with varied sporting abilities and behavioural needs. As a department we have built a strong curriculum that not only develops fundamental movement skills and sport-specific knowledge but also encourages teamwork, resilience and personal improvement.

A major focus for me is securing attention which underpins, in my opinion, the success of all other elements in this model. Without the students' full focus, even the most well-designed lesson can fall short. Techniques such as the "3, 2, 1" routine (3- equipment down, 2 – eyes on me, 1 – silence) are helping to create clear, consistent expectations, allowing me to begin each activity with full engagement. This consistency is particularly important in a class with a mix of ability levels and behavioral challenges, as it sets a firm tone and supports better self-regulation among students.

Within the "drive thought" element of the mental model for teaching and learning, I have been incorporating strategies that encourage deeper thinking and active engagement in P.E lessons. One key technique that is used within our subject and across the school is Write, Pair, Share – again adapted within the practical elements of P.E where we use Think, Pair Share. This provides students with the opportunity to first reflect independently on a question or scenario, then discuss their ideas with a partner, before sharing a more developed response with the whole group.

This approach allows students to organise their thoughts, build confidence and develop communication skills while also deepening their understanding of key concepts.

We have embedded Think, Pair, share into our P.E schemes of work and within starter activities to promote more reflective and analytical thinking, particularly when discussing tactics, decision-making or evaluating performance. This strategy supports students in going beyond surface-level responses and encourages them to justify their ideas using relevant terminology and reasoning. To ensure full participation and maintain high levels of engagement, cold calling is also used alongside this approach. By selecting students to share responses without hand-up, all pupils remain alert and involved in the discussion, knowing they may be asked to contribute. This not only reinforces accountability but also creates an inclusive environment where every student's thinking is valued as a part of the learning process.

Together, these techniques play a key role in driving thought within the P.E environment, helping students to think critically and engage meaningfully with the content.

By combining strong curriculum design with effective attention-securing strategies, the groundwork for expert delivery can be confidently presented. Assessment for learning can provide real-time feedback and adaptation and consolidation can reinforce skills over time to promote long-term retention and progress. Together, these components form a structured approach to improving both student engagement and learning outcomes in P.E.

For my year 7 P.E class, the 3, 2, 1 strategy is firmly embedded within lessons and used consistently to secure students' attention. This routine – 3 (equipment down), 2 (eyes on me), 1 (silence and wait for instruction) – has become a clear, familiar signal that supports 100% compliance. If compliance slips, I provide a calm reminder and, where necessary, use non-verbal cues such as a stare down to reinforce expectations without escalating the situation. This subtle but firm approach helps maintain focus and minimises disruption.

In addition, cold calling is used regularly to ensure full engagement and to encourage all students to be active participants in the lesson. I am mindful to use this technique consistently and constructively, creating a culture within a P.E lesson where students feel encouraged and supported rather than put on the spot. Positive reinforcement and praise are used frequently to build confidence and recognise effort, helping to sustain a respectful and motivating learning environment.

Importantly, the success of these strategies has been strengthened by the consistency across our P.E department and within the whole staff body in similar approaches being used within different subjects. When students encounter the same expectations and routines throughout the school day, it reinforces a shared understanding of behaviour and learning standards. This collective consistency has significantly contributed to the effectiveness of my classroom management and the overall engagement of the group.

Think, Pair, Share has been introduced and regularly used within my year 7 P.E class as a strategy to promote deeper thinking and improve verbal reasoning skills. While the overall impact has been very positive, it did take some time to establish the routine effectively. At first, a few students struggled with the independent thinking phase – some found it difficult to stay focused and took the opportunity to be off-task, within occasional giggling and lack of seriousness during pair discussions.

However, through consistent modelling, clear expectations, and regular use, the class has gradually become more confident and comfortable with the structure of the activity. Reminding students of the purpose behind each phase and reinforcing the importance of listening and respect during sharing has helped embed the strategy. Over time, students have become more engaged, and the quality of their responses has noticeably improved. Think, Pair, Share has now become a valuable part of our lessons, encouraging more thoughtful contributions and helping even the quieter students to build confidence before speaking in front of the whole group.

In delivering P.E lessons across different teaching spaces – such as the sportshall, the field, 3G pitch and dance studio – it is important to recognise that adaptations to routines like the 3, 2, 1 strategy are sometimes necessary to suit the environment and context. The size and layout of the space, as well as the distance between students and teacher, can affect how instructions are given and received. For this reason, we often use a whistle as an initial attention signal, which can either initiate the full 3, 2, 1 routine or allow us to move directly to "1" (silence and wait for instruction). When a quicker response is needed, such as when students are spread out or physically active across a large area like the field or 3G pitch.

In some situations – particularly when students are involved in high-energy activities or working at greater distance – the whistle is followed by a clear instruction for students to run in and gather quickly, allowing for more effective regrouping and communication. This ensures instructions can be delivered efficiently without losing momentum or clarity. Additionally, adaptations are also necessary when considering the type and use of equipment during the 3, 2, 1 routine. For safety and practical reasons, students need to be taught how and where to place equipment down appropriately – whether it's a ball, racket, or cone – so that they can quickly transition without causing disruption or hazard. Choosing appropriate equipment and planning its use carefully supports smoother transitions and helps reinforce the routine, regardless of the teaching space. These adjustments help maintain the effectiveness of the strategy while ensuring that routines remain relevant, safe and efficient within the varied and dynamic environments of P.E teaching

To measure the success of these strategies, I will be looking for several key outcomes: consistent 100% compliance with the 3, 2, 1 routine, with students responding promptly and appropriately across different teaching spaces; increased student engagement and focus, particularly during instructional moments; improved quality of responses during Think, Pair, Share activities, demonstrating deeper thinking and clearer communication; a noticeable reduction in low-level disruptions. Additionally, I will look for greater student independence and accountability, as well as positive changes in overall class behaviour and participation.

These outcomes will indicate that the routines and strategies are embedded effectively and are having a meaningful impact on teaching and learning.

Adopt and Prepare

These strategies will be delivered to my class through regular practice and by naturally embedding them within the flow of each lesson. Rather than presenting them as separate or standalone routines, they will be introduced through consistent use at key moments – such as instructions being given out, group discussions – so they become a familiar and expected part of the lesson structure. The 3, 2, 1 routine, for example, will be used repeatedly to secure attention, while Think, Pair, Share will be introduced gradually and reinforced through clear modelling and guided practice. Over time, this consistent and integrated approach will help students understand the purpose behind each strategy and respond to them with confidence and routine.

To support the effective delivery of lessons for my year 7 P.E class, a number of adaptations and resources are used to meet the specific needs of the group and the teaching environment. A 'Do Now' starter is incorporated at the beginning of lessons to establish focus and routine from the outset, while our schemes of work clearly outline the structure of each lesson, including the required equipment, teaching space and any additional resources. Given the varied settings – such as the field, sports hall, courts, 3G pitch and dance studio – we adapt our use of signal, with a whistle used to initiate the 3, 2, 1 routine or to quickly gain attention when students are spread out. Effective voice projection is also essential, especially in larger spaces, to ensure clarity of instructions. These adaptations help ensure smooth lesson delivery, maintain engagement, and support consistent routines across different physical environments.

Example Year 7 Athletics lesson – Do Now Starter & Objectives

Example Scheme of Work for Year 7 Athletics lesson

Lesson	Unit Content/Core Knowledge to be covered	Promoting High Standards of Literacy and Specialised Tier 3 Vocabulary to be Used	Teaching of British Values	Employability skills/Career education opportunities
2	Sprint start technique/150m Correct posture, arm and leg position. Components of fitness needed.	Power Speed Strength	[illegible]	Completion of event Following instructions and rules. Sportsmanship

Prepare for Learning To include: Do Now Starter	How do I get the quickest possible start to a race?	Presenting new Information	Constructing Meaning	Demonstrating Understanding
		To include scaffolded activities in order to allow B,S,G to be achieved as outlined in outcomes		
DNS 2 Discuss the steps to set up when using the sprint start technique. 2. Discuss the teaching points for a good sprinting technique. How can good form give you a tactical advantage? Warm up- Jogging and dynamic stretches, add in high skips and bounding as sport specific element.	Learning Outcome- Good/Outstanding progress will be shown by: [illegible]	Sprint start Demonstrate sprint start technique in sections, across the lanes of the track. Students to follow each section and then add on the next part. Begin with the feet, then feet and knee, add the bridging of the hands and then the set position (bum up, head down).	Work in pairs to complete [illegible] on starters commands, allow feedback time and go again. Repeat 3 times and swap (repeat again if needed). Think, Pair, Share Why are strength, speed and power important when starting a race? How does flexibility impact the start? Push off hard with foot on go. Recap sprinting technique and sprint start.	150m sprints- timed with sprint starts. Extension: On the bend, close as possible to the line without touching

Review/Plenary	Evaluation	Resources
Introduce stretching for longer as part of a cool down to increase flexibility.		DNS, Stopwatch, whistle, cones.

To support students in successfully engaging with routines and learning strategies, I will use scaffolding such as clear modelling, step-by-step instructions, visual cues and verbal prompts. For example, during Think, Pair, Share, I will initially guide students through each stage, offering sentence starters or example responses to build confidence. Similarly, I will reinforce the 3, 2, 1 routine with regular reminders and demonstrations. As students become more familiar and confident, this scaffolding will gradually fade, allowing them to take greater ownership of their behaviour and responses, promoting an independent learning environment.

To prepare the students for these routines and strategies, I focused on practice, repetition and clear communication of expectations. From the outset, I explained the purpose of each routine – such as 3, 2, 1 attention signal and Think, Pair, Share – and modelled exactly how students should respond. These routines were then repeated consistently in every lesson with each staff member, allowing students to become familiar with what was expected and when. I reinforced the message that these strategies are part of our learning journey and that full participation is expected from everyone. This consistent approach helped build student confidence and ensured that the routines became a natural and automatic part of the lesson structure.

Deliver

Evaluating the delivery of these strategies, it's clear that consistent implementation has had a positive impact on student engagement, behaviour and focus. The 3, 2, 1 routine has become an effective tool for securing attention quickly across various teaching spaces, while Think, Pair, Share has improved the quality of student responses and encouraged greater participation. As these routines have become more embedded, they have also supported smoother transitions, allowing lessons to move on in a timely manner and maintain a strong sense of flow. This efficiency has reduced the downtime and helped maximise learning time.

Reviewing and assessing these strategies has shown that their success relies heavily on repetition, clarity and consistency – key aspects tied closely to the mental model of teaching. The elements of securing attention, driving thought and expert delivery have worked together to create a more structured and purposeful learning environment. Regular reflection on these practices has allowed for minor adaptations to better suit the context of the lesson.

Sustain

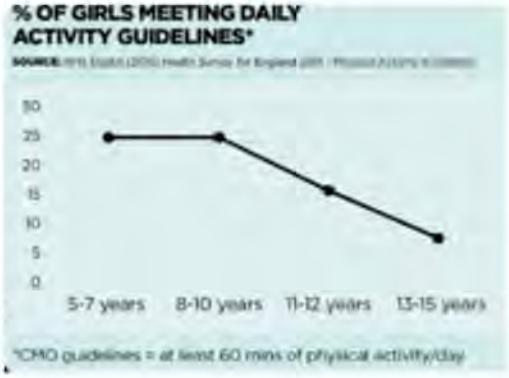
To conclude, I will continue to build these practices into the normal routines and ways of working by maintaining consistency in every lesson, reinforcing expectations, and using regular modelling and praise. As these strategies become second nature to the students, they will form the foundation of a positive and structured learning environment.

Moving forward, I plan to implement these approaches with other classes/students, gradually introducing routines such as 3, 2, 1 signal and Think, Pair, Shar, adapting them as needed to suit different group dynamics and settings. By embedding these routines across multiple groups, I aim to create, alongside my colleagues a consistent teaching approach that supports engagement, behaviour and learning throughout my own teaching practice.

Alexandra Duffin

Explore

The class, niche group of students, that I shall focus on is going to be year 9 girls low ability core PE class. The group of year 9 girls don't really want to take part in core PE anymore and have lost their motivation. Henshaw(2025) states that Only 59% of girls say they enjoy secondary school PE lessons and activities compared to 83% of boys –with motivation and confidence levels being the two biggest barriers, I have also found these shocking figures are why we need to start and continue to explore why girls are less likely to engage in physical activity and are more likely to reduce their activity when aged 11+. Lifelong physical activity has such major influence on physical and mental health that we need to advocate physical activity.



Adopt and Prepare

II have been adopting and preparing my PE lessons to ensure all students feel included, successful, safe and motivated. Here are some strategies I have been using, I consider the physical limitations, low confidence/ anxiety and possible behavioral issues.

I made sure to focus on basic motor skills, teamwork and participation rather than then high-level performance but still having high expectations, and avoid situations where any students may feel embarrassed by using peer support and praise.

Deliver

At the start of every lesson, I made sure to establish clear routines and consistency build automatic attention though: 3-Pens, 2-Eyes, 1-Posture however in PE we use:

- 3-Equipment
- 2-Eyes
- 1-Focus (due to the nature of being a practical subject)

I would make sure to start with a do now starter which is clear using bronze silver gold enabling students are able work at the correct level for induvial needs in the class. Following think, pair, share I will then go on to cold call students to check understanding of the lesson outcomes and complete Q&A.

I make sure to use praise and redirect quickly by using positive reinforcement to keep students attentive "great focus from this group-you're ready for the next challenge" I have noticed where this is a low ability group and easily get distracted and lose focus, I make sure not to use longer transitions in-between transitions of tasks or over complex instructions but to keep all students active with station-based tasks or team challenges, this also helps to build on students having a growth mindset "You got better at that today "focusing on effort and praise small improvements.

For example, we are currently an 8-lesson block of rounder's, I have chosen to look at fundamental and simple skills: throwing and catching and then use progressive drills with basics and build slightly in complexity. I have also modified the equipment they start with, for example, using tennis balls then moving onto rounders balls so students can learn the techniques and build on confidence, giving a good amount of practice time without pressure.

Evaluate the delivery and sustain.

I have discovered that a lack of motivation in PE mainly in girls aged (14-16) is a common challenge particularly among students who feel disconnected from sport and physical activity.

Understanding and evaluating the issue has helped me to create effective strategies to improve engagement and promote lifelong healthy habits.

The main barriers I have discovered, leading to a lack of PE can stem from, low self-efficacy I hear a lot of 'I am not good at sport'. By trying to develop a growth mind set, breaking down the fear of embarrassment or failure and setting skill related tasks, I enable students to have a sense of achievement and drive forward.

Conclusion of evaluation lack of motivation in PE is multi-faceted and often connected to personal, emotional and environmental factors: I shall endeavor to create a successful class environment where I have understanding of individual needs, modifying activities for success and inclusion, by giving more choices in roles for example peer support, leadership and use of praise, recognition and student's personal goals therefore hopefully empowering girls in PE (14-16) and therefore giving students ownership of their engagement by securing and Directing Attention in Core PE lessons.

Neil Evans

This year I took on set 8xy2. In Year 7 this group posed significant behaviour and attention difficulties leading to them facing several teachers through the academic year. Their end of year 7 assessments were extremely low averaging 18.9 marks below set 1. I knew it was going to be a challenge, so I prepared carefully for the start of the year.

September Introduction

When I first met the class in September, we had a long chat. I was honest and put the average statistics on the board, I showed them how far they were off set 1. I painted a clear and quite blunt picture in their minds of how much the behaviour had affected their progress.

But I followed our discussion with how we were going to turn things around. I made it clear to them that we were now "a team", working together, "working to close the gap on set 1", in fact I expressed it as "we are going to hunt them down" and how important "respect" was. To achieve this, I stated clearly that we needed 100% respect and 100% focus.

I expressed heavily how much I believed in them and as a competitive sportsman we were going to win! But I also told them that it was ok to make mistakes as I would help them every step of the way. I emphasised that they must work with me and not against me.

I knew that a group of boys in the class were predominately the cause of the problems, so I designed the talk to probe the competitive nature of the atypical boy.

I felt that they left the first class a little deflated but understood that the situation was going to change for the better.

Development of Behaviour Expectations

From the second lesson onwards, I started to flood the students with positive comments and rewards. I wanted to make it crystal clear when they exhibited the behaviour and effort that matched my high expectations. I highlighted quickly and openly when students demonstrated acts of individual brilliance whether answering a question well, the quality of their work or even when asking a probing question.

It was with this group initially, which I then pushed out to all of my classes, that the weekly commendation award started. I made it clear to them that to be the best student, they needed to provide outstanding classwork and homework. Those who met these standards were shortlisted for the commendation, I tried to share them out as much as possible.

But amongst the positivity, the students also knew of an underlying firmness, as any failure to meet my expectations (demonstrated by lack of respect to me, their peers or themselves) was dealt with quickly and firmly.

Target Group (Students M, D and L)
I quickly noticed that three boys were not meeting my standards so I tried several strategies, from quiet motivational chats to firmer warnings. Every time I had a serious word with the individual, I would follow it up with a positive chat before entry to the next lesson. I continued with the extreme praise strategy towards the rest of the class in the meantime. So, if a firm word was issued, I quickly followed it with several praise comments, often aiming at the child who had an issue.

After several weeks I emailed the three boys' parents and received two replies from the parents of students D and L. Their turnaround was clearly noticeable and student L has now become a perfect student. Unfortunately, there was no response from student M's parents, so homework still continues to be a problem.

Results from the Autumn Exam

	Summer Exam Average	Highest	Lowest	Range	Difference
7xy1	69.2	83	51	32	18.9
7xy2	50.3	67	21	46	
	Autumn Exam Average				
8xy1	63.7	75	47	28	11.5
8xy2	52.2	64	30	34	

To be quite honest I didn't expect an immediate statistical response so was very pleased with the results shown above. The gap had certainly closed but a 39% closure of the gap is very pleasing indeed. The range of results has also closed quite significantly, this to me indicates that the students nearer to the bottom ability of the class have improved substantially.

External Affects
It has been extremely interesting to see how our improvement has affected others outside of the class.

1. Good neighbours to the class have come in and worked in the positive environment that now exists. Having a calm atmosphere, gives me the opportunity to talk to the arriving student.

2. The teacher of set 1 has started to develop a far more positive (and competitive) relationship with their students. I believe that my set 2 students have been sharing their success with their peers and this may have created a more competitive positivity.

3. I have received two troublesome students from much lower sets as their behaviour and truancy became intolerable. The first unfortunately does very little work and zero homework, although he hasn't missed a lesson yet. I have emailed home but there has been no response from parents. The second more recent student, settled in brilliantly but I haven't seen for many lessons now.

Results from the Summer Exam (Raw Scores)

	Summer Exam Average	Highest	Lowest	Range
8xy1	47	65	17	48
8xy2	48.5	64	33	28

Conclusion
The summer results, although quite incredible, are a little misleading. The set 1 had two extremely low scores in their set (both 17) which dramatically lowered their average. Nevertheless, 8xy2 have significantly closed the gap pulling 20 marks on average away from set 3.

The one disappointing part was that my target student M, continued to not complete the homework tasks, even though his classwork was good. The school detention system was not acting as a deterrent and parents were not engaging. The student received the second lowest score and is likely now to move down for Year 9, thus proving the importance of trying to achieve 100% with classwork AND homework. It also highlighted that there is a collection of influences on the success of 100% including parental engagement.

In general, 8xy2 when in Year 7 was causing the department significant concern with the general behaviour. They have now become one of the best-behaved and most successful classes of the year group.

Ashley Higgs

Introduction

This year I have been reflective on how I am securing and directing attention when explaining new mathematical concepts. My journal is going to highlight different techniques and hypotheses that I have inherited from my experience with a particular class, which I will call class X. This class has a wide range of prior attainment, some students are trajected to achieve a grade 5 in their future GCSEs, and others that are trajected to achieve a grade 9. Thus, the biggest hurdle I faced with securing attention in this class is how I would plan the lesson so that each student is adequately challenged, whilst also ensuring the gradient of difficulty is at a level so that all students can access the content. Initially, I noticed that when a student could not access the content, they would be more likely to lose attention. In my PGCE, I studied the impact of mathematical anxiety in students, and this learning has applied to this discussion. I believe that the loss of attention in students stemmed from a fear of failure, and how that anxious feeling can cause the student to shut down by distracting themselves, as appose to building mathematical resilience.

The Plan - Hypothesis

My theory to secure attention with class X was to remodel my lessons so that the students believe they are 'discovering' mathematical ideas as appose to learning them. I believe there is a tendency in teaching to just give students the facts without any discovery element, which takes away the thirst for knowledge. Thus, by building discovery, students will feel less anxious when faced with challenging questions as they feel motivated to be more resilient.

The planning of my lessons for class X is split into two sections:

1. How I introduce a new topic
2. What to set the class for their independent learning task

Execution

With class X, I noticed that some students struggled to access the higher-grade content only because they struggled with one small piece of prior knowledge that was a prerequisite to the content in hand. Reflecting on this revelation, I made sure that when I introduced a topic, I pre-empted it with a 'before you start' section which highlights all of the prerequisites that the students will need to have fresh in their minds to be able to access the new material. This was an overall positive experience as I could see not only were the lower prior attainers being able to build their confidence and gain clarity on what is expected of them to know, but also, to my surprise, the higher prior attainers also tackled some critical misconceptions which would have otherwise not been tackled. I also made sure to add some extension questions to this 'before you start' task so that all students are adequately challenged. Then, when I introduced the topic to the class, I made sure to reference all the 'before you start' topics whenever they are used in the discovery aspect of the learning. Next, on the topic of what to set students for independent work. I have been predominantly using 'exam style' topic booklets which I believe has had many positive impacts on their mathematical resilience. Firstly, the 'exam style' element as a consistency builds routine so the students feel less anxious when they are hit with real exam questions in the future. Also, I have observed that students in class X feel more motivated to tackle questions when they are pre-empted with the idea of them being 'exam style' and feel very accomplished when they complete them – which I believe is effective since this class is not year 11, so there is no physical pressure for their exams yet and they just feel they are getting ahead of the game – which is another motivator!

Summary

To conclude, I believe the desire for knowledge is the most natural method to encourage students' attention in the classroom. If we as teachers can assure our students want to learn, whilst making sure their prior attainment allows them to learn, then their attention will naturally be directed into the discovery of mathematics. This is an amazing subject which feels very satisfying to learn – if a student feels that satisfaction, which counters their feelings of mathematics being too difficult, then they will thrive.

Simon Hughes

Explore

Which class, niche group or student is your focus?

For my CPD Journal this year, my target group was Year 7Y Boys Core PE. I teach all year groups for Core PE and felt that as new students to CEC and our many classroom expectations, this class might take longer to embed and reinforce in lessons, with an end result of maximizing learning time for all.

Which practice(s) are you exploring and how do they relate to our mental model for teaching?

With PE teachers requiring attention in a larger learning environment – Sports hall / outdoor space, some of the practices the PE department have worked on the help secure and direct attention have been Design Curriculum, Secure Attention and support these with effective use of the behaviour policy.

As part of our ongoing subject development, we identified any areas where write, pair, share could be added to run alongside the existing think, pair, share questions that have been planned for since our last curriculum review. This would give students the opportunity to think independently and then share ideas before formulating a more in-depth answer. These questions have been highlighted onto each scheme of work so that all students are engaged in deeper thinking within lessons. The use of cold calling has meant that all students are expected to complete the tasks as they may be asked for their opinions etc.

Which practice(s) have you selected for implementation?

One of the main challenges over the year for my target class has been waiting for 100% compliance when asking for silence. The 3,2,1 practice is now embedded and effectively used in lessons with students understanding the reasons for using it. I still need to remind some students to pause and put equipment down before continuing the countdown. We have used 3 – equipment down, 2 – eyes on the teacher, 1 – instruction. The success of using this has been contributed to by the whole school use of this practice and consistency by staff.

When the class is gathered closely at the start of lessons or for when giving teaching points for new skills, I have also used the countdown to request the class to be ready for active listening to take place. If students have not reached silence by 1, I have been conscious to try to wait and achieve 100% compliance before starting the next task or asking targeted questions by means of cold calling.

What adaptations will you need to consider?
As previously mentioned, teaching space both indoors/outdoors is a factor that has needed to be considered as often the class has been more spread out than in a conventional classroom. Therefore, the effective use of a whistle, instead of using 3 has been used to get students to stop and listen for the next instruction, be it verbal or non-verbal.

The different types of equipment that are used have impacted the speed at which all students have been ready to move on. The inclination to bounce the ball one more time for example is sometimes too much of a temptation for all to stop and wait for the next instruction. This has got better over the year, with students acknowledging the difference between the countdown commands for PE and other classroom subjects.

What outcome(s) are you looking for? How will you know you are successful?
When reflecting on the successes of using the strategies I hoped that students would be able to answer questions/tasks using tier 3 vocabulary and have a good understanding of what they are doing and why. By having silence for starters and using volume level 2 for quiet think/write, pair, share tasks, all students have equal opportunity to focus, think and formulate an in-depth answer.
If students are able to adhere to the 3,2,1 and respect the teacher and each other when involved in class tasks there will be more time successfully used for learning and consolidation.

Adopt and Prepare

What is your plan for delivery?
Before any strategy can be embedded, students need training and to be informed of the expectations. As lessons progressed students were reminded of what was expected at each stage of the countdown. If required, the class paused whilst all complied to the instructions before moving to the next phase. As a department we decided to adapt the commands slightly to suit our practical lessons. The countdown was practiced in the changing rooms for some Do Now Starters and also implemented throughout lessons when a change of task was ready to be made or incase the lesson needed to be stopped eg first aid.

What adaptations will you apply?
Most lessons are practical but do not always involve equipment. It will be necessary to change the instruction to 'Active listening' in 3,2,1. A burst of a whistle is blown first if in large work space/ poor acoustics. This initiates a 'stop' with the class turned and listening for the next command. If needed to class will gather and then return to their workspace.

What resourcing will you use?
I have already talked about the use of a whistle to get attention if in a larger working environment, otherwise projection of the voice is required to initiate the countdown and commands. I have also used a timer on the board, on the occasion I am indoors to indicate when to expect a change of task, which will lead to the next 3,2,1.

What scaffolding will you use and how will it fade?
When the strategy was first implemented longer pauses were used between the stages to ensure sufficient time to scan and ensure all students were compliant. Over time, the length of time between stages should reduce greatly with all equipment down and silent by 1. The target for this to happen will be by the end of the summer term so that learning time is maximized.

How will you prepare the students? Do you have a script? Will you rehearse? Will you rehearse them?
The preparation needed for the students has been discussed in the planning section. Practice in lessons took place over a series of lessons to allow students to become familiar with the strategy, and then when full implementation took place, they were fully aware of the expectations and sanctions if they did not comply.

Deliver

Evaluate the delivery.
There have been challenges over the year with the main one being related to the workspace that lessons are delivered in. Other classroom strategies have needed to be used in collaboration to ensure that the class have successfully followed instructions. For example, use of the whistle to stop the class to then gather them closer for the countdown, or simply to pause ready for the next instruction. This was needed especially if contending with the weather as students would not hear me if windy/raining. Students soon started to appreciate being able to move on with tasks if the class complied more quickly, when in these conditions. Also, when participating in sports they enjoy with having minimal time spent with disruptions etc.
I am still working on maintaining 100% before moving on as the desire to want to continue with lessons is a main objective.

Review and assess the impact of the implemented strategies.
Following reflections of lessons each week/half term, I have seen the positive impact that securing the class's attention quickly and with any delays quickly dealt with has had. Students are appreciating fewer disruptions by others in the class and some are now treating each other with more respect when listening to each other when discussing/sharing ideas.
The feedback from lesson drop ins has reflected the positive learning environment and those students have been able to clearly say what they are learning and why. The efficient use of think/write, pair, share has contributed towards this.

The mental model of teaching.
When looking at our mental model of teaching it has been clear for me to see that by securing the class's attention in my learning environment, and by using a clear and manageable means of setting expectations in regards to listening to the teacher and other class members, students will be able to drive thought and use deeper thinking in order to respond to questions both individually and in pairs. This is a valuable tool when used as part of assessment for learning and consolidating learning.

Sustain

How will you build this practice into your normal routines and ways of working?

These strategies have been rolled out across the school and are expected practice in all lessons. Students should become familiar with this if staff are consistent in their delivery of them. I aim to start all lessons the same and enforce the active listening countdown when completing do now starter questions that require whole class attention. This will then become the 'norm' for students; consistency is key.

How could you implement with other classes/groups/students?

As a whole school strategy, these strategies are already being used with other classes. There are mixed successes with different classes due to the nature of the respective groups. Waiting for 100% is an ongoing work in progress as it can vary from class to class. Support from using the behaviour policy can help with increased successes when implementing and sustaining effective use of the strategies and therefore will have a positive effect on securing attention and allowing deeper thinking and improved ability to formulate more in-depth extended explanations and answers.

Tamsin Jackson

Introduction

Performance has always been important to me from acting in English and French and being a founder member of a small Theatre Company to leading drama workshops both at university and later to groups of EFL teenagers.

Performance is an integral part of teaching. The biggest tool we have to secure and direct attention is our voice. Using it well, with conscious, deliberate thought is one of the most effective, but underused, assets we have in the classroom.

Voice is how you communicate and transmit your precise thoughts and feelings. This also involves the amount of active vocabulary [both English and FL] you have at your disposal and the particular words and phraseology you choose. 'The more responsive and efficient the voice is, the more accurately it will convey your intentions.' Cicely Berry, Voice and The Actor. Harrap.

Explore

A teacher's conscious adaptation of voice whilst teaching will not only secure and direct pupil attention but should also lead to greater engagement.

The biggest obstacle is the teacher not feeling confident to explore the range and power of voice and its delivery. It is often easy to focus on other techniques and neglect vocal control. Vocal self-diagnosis is important. You may need a reliable outside ear telling you where you are technically at fault. Try to analyse your delivery and consider the following points:

- Is your diction clear? Is physical exercise needed or are you just not being precise in thought?
- Over-emphatic speech? Over-explosive consonants?
- Losing the ends of word, trailing off? Rushing to next point without giving time?
- Stiff jaw and closed mouth with lack of mobility?
- Clipped vowels? Not expressing variety or emotion?
- Breathiness? Letting all your breath go in a rush? Anxiety?
- Projection appropriate to size of space or audience?

I refreshed my use of voice as a control device over the last term. I decided to focus on one Year 7 and one Year 10 class and deliberately 'play' with voice techniques to assess the impact on attention and engagement.

Adopt and Prepare

The voice is like a muscle that needs regular exercise. How can we take steps to improve our delivery? I tried these tips:

1. Reminded myself to think consciously about my breathing – opening up my ribs to get the sound coming from my diaphragm. Think deep.
2. Read a text aloud, deliberately exaggerating the muscular movements of my face and mouth. Focused on vowels and then consonants.
3. Practised reading in rhythms, poems, song lyrics.
4. Played with pitch. Read aloud pitching it right up out of my normal speaking range. Gradually let it come down to my normal key, then dip below. Most people are very limited in their usual range when teaching and the result is dull and uninteresting. Deliberate use of pitch change and inflection secures attention.
5. Volume/Projection variety. I practised the 3 levels of projection at home – from mouth, from throat, from diaphragm. Teaching delivery should not be at the same level.
6. Practised using pitch and volume by singing along to the radio and probably annoying the neighbours in the process!

'Freshen Up' Your Classroom Performance

Front of House. Welcome the audience at the door, see they reach their seats quickly and quietly. You then move to a different 'stage' and later circulate in the aisles. Many great performances are not just delivered from the front.

Regulate breathing and think about how it helps to regulate pace of delivery. Pace - leads to attention - leads to learning.

Engage. Think of audience participation, draw verbal responses, invite volunteers 'on stage', do not underestimate the power of choral response. Think of Pantomimes!

Smile. It makes it easier to engage and communicate with your audience. Break down barriers. Be aware of facial expression. Read the room. Be adaptive and reactive. Think of stand-up comedy!

Hesitate. Pause mid-sentence in an unexpected place [a politician's technique]. Breaks and stops can make an effective, captivating performance by retaining attention.

End of Show. Don't be afraid to insist on an orderly dismissal on your terms, even if you feel under pressure, stressed or up against the clock. The audience must leave in a good mood, taking away positive reaction, feelings of success, enjoyment, reflection and a desire to return for more. Calm voice - calm dismissal.

New Catch Phrases. Don't get stuck in a rut and use the same key phrases every time. This can bore the audience and any effect will be lost. To avoid this, revise and update your choice of classroom language at least termly. Draw up a list of new phrases ready to use.

Use props and the unexpected. Be brave. Do not rely on the safety of worksheets and power points and predictable plans. Liven things up with props, artefacts, pictures, puppets. Routines are good but don't let your performance become stale and boring. Surprise your audience to keep interest.

Projection. Try the preparation exercises mentioned previously to strengthen your spoken clarity and projection. Try loud then soft. Throw in a sentence in a 'different' style of voice to punctuate delivery and maintain audience attention.

Evaluation

Pupils in Year 7 responded particularly well to sudden changes of tone, pitch and speed - almost on a subliminal level. Use of props, creative opportunities and occasional deviations from their expected 'normal' lesson structure also appeared to increase attention and enjoyment. When I chose to speak very quietly as a means of regaining full attention, it had an immediate effect. I switched from projected voice to a quieter one to grab drifting attention quickly and subtly. Pupils had to listen harder and, in so doing, any low-level noise evaporated. This was an achievement with a chattery group period 5 on a Friday!

The Year10 class reacted immediately to my change of catch phrases. I was guilty of relying on tried and tested language. I had, for example, fallen into the trap of repeating the slow 'Right....now then...look at the board' but changed it up with the more punchy 'eyes this way in 3, 2, 1'. They also responded surprisingly well to pauses mid-sentence. I used this successfully when I did not have 100% focus.

Humour with rhyme and rhythm worked well with both KS3 and KS4, as did unexpected noises and occasionally using a 'different' voice. The late Queen? David Attenborough?

Over the years I have worked with many PGCE students and ECTs as Subject and Professional Mentor and given advice on the power of voice as a control device in the classroom. As teachers, performers and educators I would urge us all to 'FRESHEN UP' our most valuable asset: OUR VOICE.

Rona Love

Student X – A Year 8 boy
Firstly, I will tell you a bit about student X. He is on our Pupil Premium & Disadvantaged register. He has a progress report with 2 areas of concern: Lack of organisation and talking in class. He has Mentoring Interventions for behaviour, racism ,physical intervention.

His attendance is just below 90%, he has a 1% increment on his behavioral pattern since September but he is -56% on his progress.

It is this last point I wished to address; how can I make a positive impact to improve this in Physical Science? What other factors pertinent to student X do I need to take into consideration and how can I use our ongoing strategies of securing 100% attention and driving thought to improve this outcome?

In terms of our Implementation process, I needed to adapt my approach to student X to equip him with the tools needed to secure attention and gel with the class as his behaviour was geared towards setting himself outside of the group; which started with attendance. Student X often truanted lessons to be seen a s a lad and/or he arrived late with an air of over-confidence. When this happened, I would always tell him – It was lovely to see him and 'd be sure to direct a question at him early on to secure positivity.

My first breakthrough with Student X was on a day that a practical trolley needed moving from my classroom to the Science area – he saw me struggling and immediately got up and helped, without being asked. I responded with Student Responsibility points.
I played this to my advantage and suggested to Student X that I move him to the table by the door, at the front so he could access the equipment trolley quickly to help me during out practical sessions, he did this. He also started to arrive early for lessons and took it on himself to give out the books, again I praised him.

I took a bit of a gamble on Student X's new seating place, I sat him next to Student Y, another boy. He is SEN and his passport says that he enjoys extended writing, wishes to study Triple Science but he has emotional issues when interacting with his peers.

Taking a minute to look at research I will cite research complete by Devon Country Council around attention and concentration

Attention: The ability to focus on something whilst filtering out other information. Attention allows us to 'tune out' information, sensations and thoughts that are not relevant at that moment and instead focus our energy on what is important.

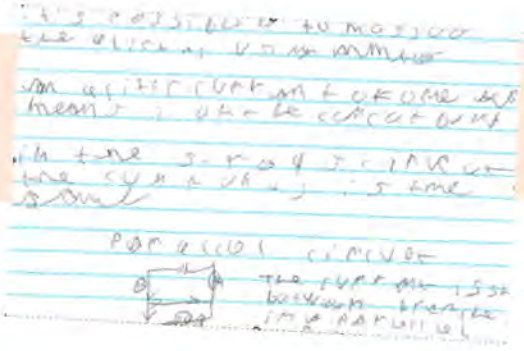
Concentration: The ability to keep our attention on something for a continuous period. It is otherwise known as 'sustained attention'

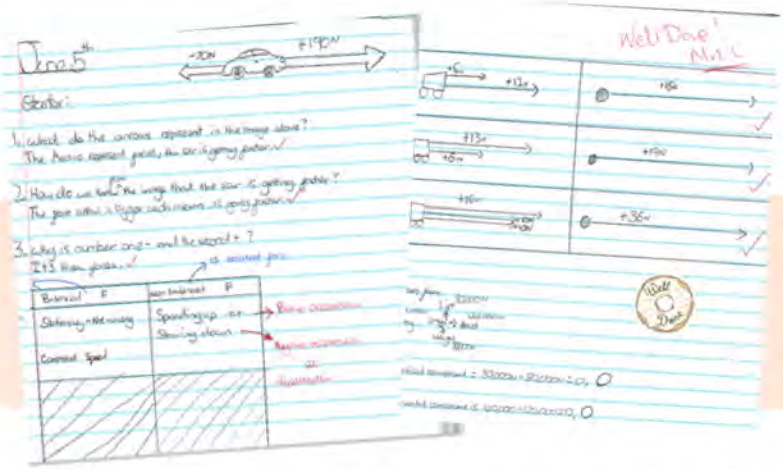
I found some useful ideas under 'Concentration' that I could ask myself if I was applying to student X?

- Using a child's name and questions to help them switch their attention to us.
- Positive feedback. Make sure children and young people get noticed for the times when they do concentrate and when they do complete something, even if it feels like those times are few and far between.

Having student X at the front of the class next to a very studious boy has helped with 1 above, I do talk to him much more. In relation to point 2 above, noticing him and his work has proved to be invaluable in terms of both his punctuality to lessons, (that I notice & praise) and the work that he produces so somewhere in that, his attention span has greatly improved.

On the right is an example of his previous work before I moved him and focused more on securing his attention to aid his concentration.





On the left is an example of his work after being moved to the front of the class to sit with student Y and where I am giving him more attention & recognition – next 2 snips, same lesson.

Some of you may recognize these 2 snips, as they were shown in briefing as an example of a KS3 student improving. I was happy to see this in briefing but not because of 'me' but because I can see proof that a student who could not be a part of our Looking for 100% engagement strategy 'could' move forward, once I acknowledged that he needed help with his attention & concentration skills.

Roger Lyon

Securing and Directing Attention

The class that I have chosen to look at is my year 9 geography class and I have been focusing on strategies to secure and direct attention. As a school we have been looking at a specific mental model of teaching where one of the key six elements is securing attention. Without the attention of the students that you are attempting to engage the outcomes of the lesson will not be successfully achieved. The EEF highlighted that 'Inconsistency in how behaviour was dealt with across different classes was prevalent in over a third of the Ofsted reports on the 95 schools studied.' The principal element of securing attention is that there should be a consistent approach by the classroom practitioner but also consistency embedded across the school. Securing attention is a proactive strategy that can be deployed at classroom level to reduce the chance of misbehaviour occurring: a school-wide focus on this strategy should reduce efforts expended in reacting to poor behaviour.

In order to secure attention, the key practice that I have been focusing on is the trust wide policy of 'pens, eyes and posture.' This has been a whole school strategy since September 2024 and has been introduced with the idea of ensuring consistency of expectation across the school. The whole concept of pens, eyes and posture ensures that 100% of the class are focused and have their attention directed at specific points in the lesson. In short, the consistency of approach across the school will facilitate my classes engagement in this strategy. I was very conscious to not rush through the stages of this technique to ensure that 100% compliance is obtained before delivery of the lesson content commences.

Certain adaptations were considered prior to the implementation of this strategy. In my year 9 geography class, due to the SEN needs of one student in particular where the student uses a fidget toy (silent in nature) they will not be required to lay that object down prior to moving through to eyes and posture. This was a conscious adaptation to the whole school strategy. The intended outcome is for 100% of students to have secure attention and be ready to learn and in my mind the fidget toy enabled this particular student to fully engage in this process.

Outcome

I feel that I have been successful with the adoption of this strategy to secure attention. I feel that the clear expectations expected across the whole school, has meant that students are now accustomed to the consistency of approach. In my mind it has reduced lost learning time considerably and enabled myself as a teacher to focus on extending the learning potential of all students. There has been a noticeable reduction in the necessity to repeat key learning concepts as the initial engagement in the learning has been there from the start. Furthermore, the student for which I had consciously made an adaption is now also compliant with the structure of the approach and no longer maintains contact with their fidget toy during the process of 'pens, eyes and posture.' I firmly believe as highlighted by the EEF, that the consistency of approach in my lessons and in all lessons across the entirety of the school has been the deciding factor in the success of this process.

James Milligan

Explore

Which class, niche group or student is your focus?

Year 8

Which practice(s) are you exploring and how do they relate to our mental model for teaching?

Securing attention through Pens, Eyes, Posture to ensure I can present ideas in a meaningful and memorable way, allowing me to drive thought of my students

What adaptations will you need to consider?

I will need to consider how the commands of PEP may be impactful and safe during the dynamic and varied PE environments.

What outcome(s) are you looking for? How will you know you are successful?

Being able to easily command silence and focus from 100% of my students at key intervals during PE. I will be able to bring practical activities to a halt in an instant and communicate key questions and instructions with ease.

Adopt and Prepare

What is your plan for delivery?

- Practice the verbal expression of Pens, Eyes, Posture on a colleague.
- Encourage peer evaluation of my delivery.

What adaptations will you apply?

Considering when this call may need to adapt depending on the practical activity being delivered

How will you prepare the students? Do you have a script? Will you rehearse? Will you rehearse them?

I will prepare the students by outlining how I expect them to respond to each of my instructions.

Deliver

Delivering my PEP felt initially uncomfortable as all new practices do, and I am glad I had the opportunity to rehearse. I was required to continually evaluate my implementation, as the nature of PE curricula necessitate constant rotation between practical activities where the dynamics i.e. the movement, numbers and flow of the students vary. For example, during a rugby lesson, 30 students may be running around over two areas on the field, whereas in gymnastics, students may be sat for brief period observing the group performance of others.

An additional consideration pertains to the specialist training received by many PE teachers. At the start of a PE teachers' career, training is often limited to sport-specific NGBs such as the RFU. Over time, a trainee or ECT in PE, is expected to learn the craft knowledge related to each practical activity of the curriculum. Within such training, certain commands can be acquired with the expectation they are used. For example, 'stop, stand, still' was taught to me early on when completing football coaching qualifications, yet 'freeze' during dance is a common command so teachers can reflect on movement pathways. Adapting PEP is clearly necessary for such an environment where pens are typically not used. When doing so I was mindful that I needed to stick closely to the structure of the PEP commands in order to not undermine my colleagues and ensure the students were familiar with the requirements when it was used. As such, PEP had been adjusted in the following way to suit the dynamics of PE: 'Stop talking in 3, 2, 1. 3, stop talking, 2 eyes this way, 1 posture, sit/stand up straight'.

Blending PEP appropriately into such engrained habits, presents clear challenges. However, key principles allowed the implementation of PEP to be effective. Namely, preparing the students to receive such an instruction, being loud in it's delivery, and giving the commands in a central audible position (such as in the middle of the basketball game) supported this process.

Admittedly, due to fast flowing practicals, I continued on my reliance of 'stop, stand still', as this allowed me to quickly bring movements to a halt. However, when groups of students were being gathered in, or when initialy instructions were due to be issued, the use of PEP became invaluable. Further, appreciation of cross-academy consistency, as far as implementing PEP myself to support colleagues in other lessons, motivated me to be disciplined with it's use.

Sustain

The regularity of PEP being presented at staff CPD ensured the use of PEP continued to sit in the front of my mind when teaching. PEP is suitable for all year groups during practical PE, and other than when instant ceasing of physical activity is required, it is appropriate for use in all aspects of the PE curriculum.

The power of this technique is clear and magnified when we as a faculty, work together to present consistency and implement this together. The success criteria, are transferable across all subjects, and include ensuring all students ready themselves to listen, present clear focus in relation to the teacher and are actively readily to receive information.

James Moloney

Explore

For this CPD Journal I am going to look at strategies for gaining 100% engagement in my year 9 maths class, a set 4.

Engaging every student in a mathematics classroom is both a challenge and a necessity. With diverse learning styles, varying levels of confidence, and differing attitudes toward maths, a variety of strategies to ensure all students are actively engaged. This CPD journal explores some of the ways that I've tried to implement to achieve 100% engagement in maths lessons.

The practice I've selected for implementation is using mini-whiteboards for 100% engagement. I've selected using mini -whiteboards as it is a current teaching strategy that I use and I wanted to develop it further using the PEP that has been introduced this year at CEC. During the school year we have also started using "write, pair, share" as a technique to drive thought. I have been using mini-whiteboards for this as well. Adaptations that I've needed to consider are the equipment, mainly lack of whiteboard pens.

Outcomes that I'm looking for are 100% engagement and participation from the class, taking away the "fear" of having to explain ideas/thoughts for the pupils that lack confidence in speaking to a class. It will give me instant feedback into pupils' current knowledge of a topic, highlighting gaps in the topic and looking for common mistakes. Other outcomes from 100% engagement in lesson is that pupils hopefully see that they know more than they think and are able to learn quite a lot in a short amount of time when on task. By using mini-boards and bringing in collaborative tasks such as write, pair share pupils have the opportunity to discuss ideas and work with their peers to explain their reasoning.

I will know if I have been successful when I can see during the lesson that 100% are taking part and are able, through cold calling, to verbalise answers.

Adopt and Prepare

My plan for delivery will be to have clear expectations and routines. I established clear rules. Before I started using whiteboards, I establish clear expectations:
"Write clearly and large enough to be seen."
"Don't clear your board until I say so."
"Hold up your board horizontally & hover when you are ready & then show your board when I say."
"If you don't know show me a blank board or put a question mark."

I was consistent in my expectation of board handling, I showed and repeated how I wanted pupils to hold and display their boards. When showing me their answers they were to hold them high and facing me, which ensured I could scan the responses quickly.

Adaptations that I have applied are linked to the type of questions that are being asked, if they are simple questions then it will be individual work whereas if the questions require deeper thought that I will use "write, pair, share" or partner work to allow for collaboration. Other adaptions are linked to scaffolding and using a variety of questions.
Quick Recall: Basic facts, definitions, formulas. (e.g., "What is 7 x 8?" "What is the formula for the area of a circle?")
Problem Solving: Short, focused problems that build on the lesson's objective. (e.g., "Solve for x: x + 5 = 12")
Show Your Working: Encourage students to show their steps, even if the final answer is simple. This allows you to see where understanding breaks down.
Multiple Choice/True/False: Use these for quick checks of conceptual understanding. (e.g., "True or False: All squares are rectangles.")
Open-Ended Questions: Promote critical thinking and discussion. (e.g., "Give me a number between 10 and 20 that is a prime number" "Tell me two different ways to solve this problem.")
Estimations: Develop number sense and approximation skills. (e.g., "Estimate the answer to 37 x 19.")
Pattern Recognition: Identify and extend patterns. (e.g., "Write the next two numbers in this sequence: 2, 4, 6, 8...")
Diagrams and Sketches: Have students draw diagrams to represent problems or concepts. (e.g., "Draw a right-angled triangle." "Draw a fraction model to represent 2/3.")

Using mini-whiteboards will potentially allow for fast-paced and engaging questions and keeping the questions coming at a good pace to maintain interest. I can target questions and, if needed, direct questions to specific students to check their understanding. "Pupil x, can you explain your thinking on this one?" Having prearranged differentiated questions will cater to different learning levels. Have extension activities ready for students who finish quickly. Using scaffolding and starting with easier questions to build confidence and gradually increase the difficulty.

Using mini-whiteboards allows for quick visual scans and I can identify misconceptions or areas where students are struggling. I have focused on common errors, not individual mistakes. I can also give immediate feedback and can show correct solutions and explain the reasoning behind them. All of this will help encourage 100% participation and thinking.
I will prepare students for this be extending and adapting current routines. I have consistently been using mini-whiteboards with all my classes so bringing in new routines or tweaking current expectations will not be not an onerous task.

Deliver

During the delivery of using mini-whiteboards I tried to convey my enthusiasm for mathematics and make the lesson engaging. I gave clear and concise explanations of mathematical concepts. I used multiple representations and real-world examples to illustrate the concepts and try to show the pupils a variety of ways to solve problems. I encouraged student participation by asking open-ended questions and facilitating discussions. I tried to create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas and asking questions.

During questions I circulate around the classroom to monitor student progress and provide individualised support. I would also address misconceptions and provide scaffolding as needed. I give students timely and constructive feedback on their work. I also focus on effort, progress, and specific areas for improvement. Over all I tried to maintain a positive and productive classroom environment. I would also address any disruption promptly and would use the school behaviour policy for this as well as pupils who would not engage with the work.

All of this has allowed for 100% engagement of pupils in lessons as pupils all know what is expected of them and they are able to make progress through lessons which has helped increase confidence and self-esteem in their maths lessons.

Sustain

By using mini-whiteboards on a regular basis it has allowed for new ideas and expectations to be embedded in this class. It has enabled pupils the opportunity to engage with new content and not be afraid to make mistakes as it can easily be rubbed off the whiteboard.

I have regularly reviewed previously learned concepts to reinforce understanding and prevent forgetting. I have used techniques like:

- Spaced Repetition: Review material at increasing intervals over time.
- Interleaving: Mix up different types of problems or concepts during review.

I provide extension activities for students who are ready for a challenge. These activities could involve more complex problems, real-world applications, or GCSE questions. I continuously try to make connections between mathematical concepts and real-world applications. I've tried to foster a growth mindset by emphasising that intelligence is not fixed and that students can improve their math skills through effort and practice. I also give out reward points to pupils for their effort, perseverance and behaviour in lessons.

Achieving 100% engagement in maths lessons is not about a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather a commitment to responsive, inclusive, and dynamic teaching practices. By differentiating instruction, promoting active participation, connecting maths to real life, leveraging technology, fostering a supportive classroom culture, and using ongoing assessment, teachers can create an environment where every student is involved, challenged, and excited about learning maths.

Lisa Pitman

Securing Attention for Year 7 Science Students: Effective Strategies, Challenges, and Solutions

Getting a roomful of Year 7 students excited about science is not just about teaching them what atoms are — it is about sparking their curiosity and holding their attention long enough for learning to happen. At this age, students are still developing their concentration skills and emotional regulation, so even the best-laid lesson plan can unravel with a single rogue pencil tap or an ill-timed sneeze.

There is a growing body of research, and plenty of classroom experience, that offers practical ways to engage students meaningfully. According to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), structured routines, active learning, and metacognitive strategies such as Write-Pair-Share and Pens-Eyes-Posture (PEP) significantly boost engagement and outcomes (EEF, 2019). But as any teacher knows, applying theory to a live, often unpredictable classroom requires flexibility, creativity, and a bit of humour.

This report explores how attention can be secured through the phases of explore, prepare, deliver, and sustain, while also addressing the common issues and solutions that arise in a Year 7 science classroom.

Phase 1: Explore – Capturing Initial Attention

The explore phase sets the foundation for engagement by sparking curiosity and establishing focus. The EEF emphasise that using interactive and relevant learning approaches helps capture students' attention (EEF, 2018).

First impressions count. The start of a science lesson sets the tone for everything that follows. If the first five minutes are flat, the rest of the lesson can feel like pushing jelly uphill.

Strategies to Capture Attention

- Demonstrations & Inquiry-Based Questions: Starting with an exciting experiment (e.g., a chemical reaction producing an unexpected colour change) grabs students' interest.
- Real-World Links: Asking questions such as "Why do astronauts float in space?" makes science relevant and meaningful.

Issues That Arise & Solutions

Issue	Cause	Solution
Disengaged students	Lesson lacks relevance	Use student-centred examples (e.g., linking states of matter to everyday activities like cooking).
Excessive noise	Excitement turns into off-task behaviour	Set clear noise-level expectations using a scale (e.g. 1 = silent, 2 = whisper, 3 = discussion).
Some students struggle to engage	Lack of prior knowledge	Use pre-assessments, a fun quiz or concept map to gauge students' understanding before starting.

Phase 2: Prepare – Structuring the Learning Experience
Structure brings safety and predictability—two things' students of all ages thrive on. When students know what is expected, they can focus more easily. The EEF highlights that explicit instructions and structured learning routines improve concentration (EEF, 2017).

Effective Preparation Strategies

1. Write-Pair-Share: Helps students process and discuss ideas before engaging with new content. Before discussing, students jot their thoughts down. This gives quieter students a voice and prevents the "I dunno" freeze.
2. Pens-Eyes-Posture (PEP) Routine:
    - Pens down → signals active listening.
    - Eyes on the teacher → ensures focus.
    - Posture straight → creates a learning mindset.

When we explored forces acting on a skydiver, I asked, "What forces are acting on a skydiver as they fall through the air?" Students wrote for one minute, then paired to discuss. One shy student, Student A, typically avoided speaking up. But because she had time to write, she pointed to her sentence ("air resistance is a force opposite to gravity"), and her partner echoed it to the class. Student A beamed. By giving her that initial writing step, I turned her reticence into confidence.

In a forces lesson, some pairs wrote only single words like "force = mass × acceleration." I stopped the class, put the timer on the board, and said, "Let's see if we can write two full, clear sentences in three minutes." The calmer pace led to richer discussion; students began asking each other, "What does that actually look like when you push a shopping cart or kick a ball?" They started using real-life examples to explain how changing mass or acceleration affects the force needed, making the learning far more meaningful.

Issues That Arise & Solutions

Issue	Cause	Solution
Some students ignore routines	Lack of reinforcement	Use non-verbal cues (e.g., teacher pausing until all students adopt PEP). Consistency is key.
Students rush through Write-Pair-Share	Focus on speed rather than depth	Set a minimum response requirement (e.g., at least two full sentences) before pairing up.
Students forget key scientific terms	Limited vocabulary knowledge	Provide science glossaries or word walls in the classroom.

According to Rosenshine (2012), explicit instruction and structured classroom routines improve attention by reducing cognitive overload, allowing students to focus on new content more effectively.

Phase 3: Deliver – Maintaining Attention Through Active Learning

Delivering a lesson is not a one-way broadcast—it is a performance, a dialogue, and sometimes a delicate balancing act. The deliver phase requires teachers to actively engage students to prevent cognitive overload and distractions. Research suggests that cooperative learning and questioning techniques improve focus and reduce passive learning (EEF, 2019).

Strategies for Effective Delivery

- Using Write-Pair-Share throughout the lesson: Keeps students engaged and encourages participation. Example: "What forces act on a falling object?" → students write, pair, and share responses.
- Clear instructional cues: Using PEP before key explanations to reset focus.
- Hands-on activities: Allowing students to conduct their own experiments keeps them actively involved.

Issues That Arise & Solutions

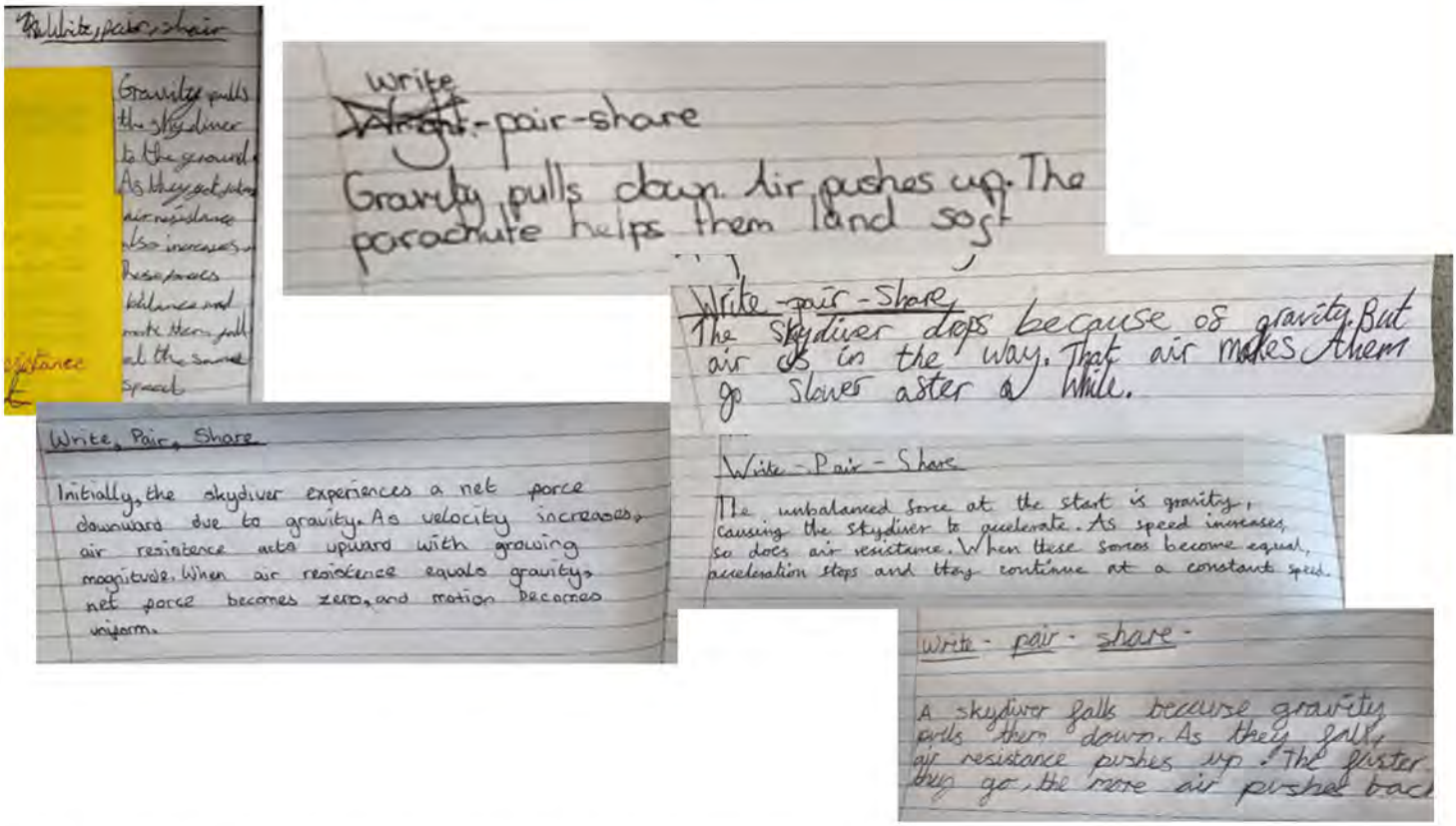
Issue	Cause	Solution
Short attention spans	Students lose focus after 10–15 minutes	Break lessons into mini-sessions with structured activities every 10–15 minutes.
Off-task behaviours during group work	Lack of clear expectations for discussion	Use structured group roles (e.g., leader, recorder, timekeeper).
Cognitive overload during new concepts	Too much information at once	Use step-by-step scaffolding (e.g., pause after each concept for a mini-Write-Pair-Share).

According to Marzano (2007), active learning strategies such as questioning and structured discussions help maintain engagement and prevent distractions, ensuring better knowledge retention.

Mid-lesson, while teaching about contact and non-contact forces, I asked, "Think of something you've pushed or pulled recently, what forces were involved?" Students scribbled for a minute, then shared: one described pushing open a heavy door; another talked about pulling their dog on the lead. By anchoring the theory in their real-world experiences, their engagement shot up, and they were able to reference these examples confidently in later assessments.

We ran an experiment to investigate how force affects the acceleration of a trolley on a ramp. One group accidentally misaligned their ramp, and the trolley veered off. Rather than fixing it for them, I asked, "What's going wrong here and how is that affecting the force acting along the ramp?" Students from other groups crowded around to help troubleshoot, discussing friction, angles, and force direction. The mishap turned into a collaborative moment of problem-solving that deepened understanding and held everyone's attention.

Example of a Write-Pair-Share activity used in the classroom:
Write–Pair–Share Prompt: "What forces are acting on a skydiver as they fall through the air? How do these forces affect their motion?"



These “Write–Pair–Share” responses from students about a skydiver falling through air prompted a wide range of productive classroom discussions. Here's how each type of response likely contributed:

1. Basic Conceptual Understanding
“Gravity pulls down. Air pushes up. The parachute helps them land soft.”

“The skydiver drops because of gravity. But air is in the way. That air makes them go slower after a while.”

Discussion Generated:

- These responses opened up opportunities to correct misconceptions (e.g., “air is in the way”) and introduce accurate terminology like air resistance.
- Prompted discussion around everyday vs scientific language (e.g., “land soft” → “reduce impact”).
- Allowed peers to expand on these ideas using correct physics vocabulary.

2. Emerging Scientific Language
"A skydiver falls because gravity pulls them down. As they fall, air resistance pushes up. The faster they go, the more air pushes back."

Discussion Generated:

- Helped scaffold others' understanding toward proportional relationships (speed ↔ air resistance).
- Encouraged refinement of phrases like "air pushes back" into more formal descriptions.
- Opened the floor to predict what happens when these forces become balanced.

3. Balanced Forces and Terminal Velocity
"These forces balance and make them fall at the same speed."
"When these forces become equal, acceleration stops and they continue at a constant speed."

Discussion Generated:

- Introduced or reinforced the concept of terminal velocity.
- Enabled comparisons between different explanations of balanced forces and their outcomes.
- Encouraged deeper reasoning about why the speed stops increasing.

4. High-Level Scientific Explanation
"Initially, the skydiver experiences a net force downward due to gravity. As velocity increases, air resistance acts upward with growing magnitude..."

Discussion Generated:

- Modelled how to write formal, accurate scientific explanations.
- Served as an anchor for class discussion, especially for mid-attaining students to build from.
- Prompted questions about what happens next (e.g., what if the parachute opens?).

This kind of task is excellent for formative assessment and provides a clear pathway to improve students' written explanations in physics.

Phase 4: Sustain – Reinforcing Attention Beyond the Lesson
The real challenge is not just getting attention—it is keeping it across lessons and weeks. This is where reinforcement and reflection come in. To maintain engagement, students need consistent reinforcement and opportunities for reflection. The EEF highlights that formative assessment and student reflection significantly improve long-term retention (EEF, 2018).

Strategies to Sustain Attention

- Exit Tickets: Students write one key takeaway and one question they still have.
- Peer Review: Students assess each other's conclusions from experiments, reinforcing accountability.
- Inquiry-Based Projects: Allowing students to explore science topics of their choice keeps motivation high.

After an investigation into how mass affects the force needed to move an object, I asked students to swap their write-ups and provide peer feedback. One student noted that her partner hadn't included the units for force in their data table. The partner replied, "Oh! I forgot that force is measured in newtons!" This simple exchange reinforced accuracy and accountability

Issues That Arise & Solutions

Issue	Cause	Solution
Students forget key ideas by the next lesson	Lack of reinforcement	Start each lesson with a quick recap or quiz.
Some students do not complete exit tickets	Low motivation	Make exit tickets part of the lesson's routine and reward thoughtful responses with participation points.
Attention drops in long-term projects	Loss of interest	Allow students to choose topics related to personal interests.

Conclusion

Year 7 science lessons do not need to feel like crowd control. With consistent routines like PEP, active strategies like Write-Pair-Share, and an awareness of attention rhythms, teachers can create an environment where focus and curiosity flourish.

Securing and sustaining attention for all students needs a structured approach that addresses both engagement and classroom management. The Pens-Eyes-Posture (PEP) routine ensures immediate focus, while Write-Pair-Share fosters active participation throughout the lesson. Additionally, using clear instructional cues, hands-on activities, and structured group roles helps support attention and prevent distractions.

However, challenges arise, including behavioural disruptions, cognitive overload, and disengagement. Yes, there will always be the occasional flying glue stick or giggle fit at the word "Uranus," but with well-planned strategies, most of the chaos becomes manageable—and sometimes, even magical .

Key Takeaways:

- Consistently reinforcing classroom routines.
- Use real-world hooks and demonstrations to ignite curiosity.
- Establish and consistently apply classroom routines like PEP.
- Break lessons into structured, active chunks to keep attention alive.
- Using peer discussions and formative assessments to sustain engagement.
- Reinforce learning with reflection, peer review, and student choice.

By implementing these EEF-backed strategies, teachers can create a focused, engaging, and effective learning environment, leading to improved student outcomes in science. When attention is secured, learning becomes not just possible—but powerful

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Michelle Vidovic

Explore

The group being explored and focused on is 10D GCSE PE.
This class is made up of two sub-groups; half of the class is a mixed group of individuals who are quiet and ready to learn and the other half, which is incredibly challenging, is a group of boys with a strong friendship group who are highly disruptive to the others. This currently makes 59 minutes of learning virtually impossible.

Practices I am going to explore include:

- 321 Pens, Eyes, Posture
- Seating plans with meaningful interactions
- Use of white boards
- Practical lessons as rewards
- Zero tolerance
- Scaffolding
- Set routines
- Curriculum design and resources
- Hands Down Q+A
- Write (think)-Pair-Share
- Short loop generative learning tasks
- Tracking the board

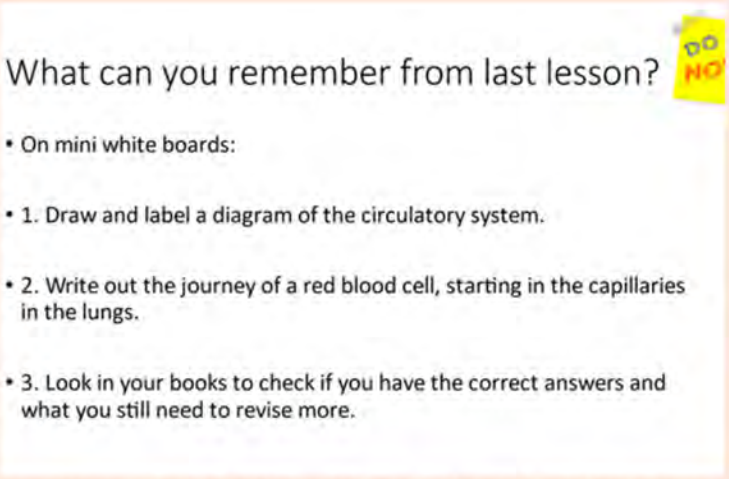
I intend to use all of these methods over time but will start with changing seating plans and introduce different strategies one at a time, ensuring they are embedded before moving on. I hope this will allow me to gain the students focus in order to allow driving thought and full engagement in tasks.

Adopt, Prepare and Deliver

IMy plan was to take all my teaching back to basics and focus on improving one aspect of the lesson at a time. Starting with behaviour and entry routines. This then allowed techniques to slowly be integrated and routines to be set, making the learning environment both manageable and meaningful.

Whilst this process, took longer than expected, and it felt at times that I was wasting learning time, it has now allowed the whole class to work effectively and engage in the content. This, in turn is now allowing me to add in more and more class Q+A and targeted questioning which was not possible to start with due to the behaviour and lack of focus.

Start of lesson routine- In order to ensure quick entry into the class I taught student's how I wanted them to enter by standing on the door and allowing them in one at a time, having checked uniform, told them where to sit and checked they had the correct equipment. I found that to ensure this was manageable having white board packs made up for the starter and pencil cases students could pick up on their way in made it a much smoother process. The starter was then on the board for them to complete.



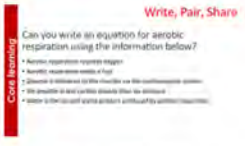
This is the same process for each lesson in the classroom. I have adapted starters to ensure they are suitable to be done on the white boards independently so that the entry routine and start of lesson is always the same.

Seating plans with meaningful interactions- Reviewing data on class charts enabled me to look at purposeful interactions and find which students don't work well together. Enforcing the plan and moving a few individuals at a time to find the best combination for my classroom's learning environment. This to some extent became trial and error until changing the seating plan and working with others to remove a student or two at a time to look at where the main issues were, allowed the class to settle and engage in the lesson content more successfully (rather than focus on discussing other things with each other).

My next step was to introduce PEP, 3, 2, 1 and insist on 100%. Where students didn't, I asked them to leave the room. I then allowed them to re-enter after the class had settled one at a time. If they continued to disrupt then they were removed from the lesson. This allowed my expectations to be enforced.

The first 10-15minutes of my lesson is now as follows:

1. Come in the room, collect a whiteboard pack and a pencil case (if needed).
2. Sit down in the given seating plan, get books out and read the board.
3. Complete the Do Now Starter on the board in silence whilst the register is being taken on white boards.
4. Review of Do Now Starter using targeted Q+A.



Once this was completed, I began to introduce write, pair, share within the lesson with a mixture of hands up and hands down Q+A.

Another strategy was to introduce the use of a visualizer. I trialed this first with another class in order to ensure I could use the technology; this was because the other class has a better record of behaviour and I felt more confident with their patience. I wanted to ensure the first use with 10D was smooth so that it didn't become a further distraction or excuse for behaviour to deteriorate.

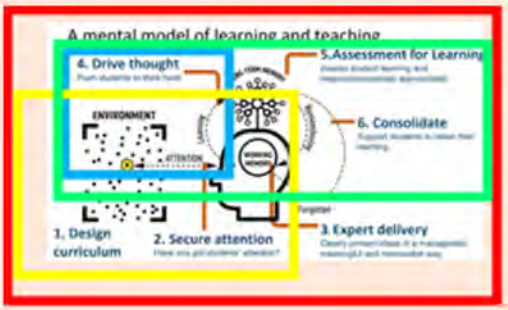
With 10D, I used this method to deliver a piece of work surrounding calculations and the drawing of a graph. I found that in the past this has been a difficult lesson, to ensure all students had completed the task correctly but by using the visualizer the students were engaged and asked questions as we went, which enabled all the students to complete the tasks and when books were marked this was one of the best pieces of work for all students.

Sustain

Our normal way of working now is that students get a first go at independent tasks on their white boards, so that they are not worried about making mistakes in their books. They then use feedback from their partner work to ICE their board before feeding back and getting teacher input to ensure it is ready to write into books. I started with very short tasks to start with and began to build them up over time, allowing students to form longer and more confident answers. Using hands up and hands down allows students to independently want to engage but also allows me to secure attention and ensure all students know they are expected to be able to offer some form of answer. This has also allowed me to complete AFL much more effectively for the whole class.

Having seen the work done after the visualizer lesson I decided to provided students with new books and re-state expectations. To ensure that the presentation is sustained I checked all books at the end of the first lesson for THUD and will continue to do this as much as possible (marking every other lesson).

I have embedded the same routines with all theory classes and adapted it to fit core classes.
In conclusion, being able to influence the groups behaviour using these tools to secure attention, then allowed me to drive thought and complete tasks with them to a higher standard as I was able to complete more assessment for learning, enabling me to deliver the correct consolidation tasks for the individuals within the group. Without first securing the groups attention as a given routine, this was not possible, or at best took longer and did not allow the learning time to be maximized.



Victoria Wells

Explore

The focus is a Year 11 mixed-attainment GCSE History class of 20 students. The group includes 3 students with EHCPs (linked to ASD, speech, language, and communication needs and visual impairment), 6 K-coded SEND students (with working memory and processing needs), and 1 EAL student at good proficiency.

The selected practice is the use of Mini Whiteboards (MWBs) for whole-class response during questioning and review. This aligns closely with the academy mental model of "Every student thinking, every student participating". The strategy supports active engagement, real-time formative assessment, and the development of student accountability, especially for those who typically remain passive during whole-class questioning.

I have selected the use of MWBs during review tasks, "Do Now" starters, and post-explanation checks for understanding.

- Cold call follow-ups to MWB responses.
- Whole-class "show me"

I will consider adaptations, for example

- SEND students may require sentence stems or visual prompts to support recall.
- Clear behaviour expectations around MWB use (e.g., "pens down when finished") must be explicitly taught
- Use of visual timer to pace writing time and reduce anxiety.

Intended outcomes include:

- Increased response rate across all students.
- Improved focus and reduced low-level disruption.
- Greater teacher insight into class-wide understanding

Evidence of success:

- High percentage of MWBs shown on signal (from initial 50% to 100%).
- Improved scores in low-stakes quizzes due to stronger recall and retention.
- observation shows increased participation from quieter or lower-attaining students.

Adopt and Prepare

To support the effective use of mini whiteboards, the following resources were created and used:

- "Do Now" slide examples to immediately engage students and prepare them for the MWB recall focus
- Pre-prepared sentence stems
- Retrieval prompts from previous lessons (e.g. individuals or events previously studied).
- Visual success criteria slide used initially showing how to respond on MWBs (e.g., "Use a full sentence", "Check your spelling").

Example "Do Now" Slide (used with MWBs):
Topic: Treaty of Versailles (1919)

- Write your answer on your whiteboard (each question is revealed in sequence):

Question:
Why was Germany unhappy with the Treaty of Versailles?
Support:

- Sentence starter:
- Germany was unhappy because...
- Key terms to include:
- War Guilt Clause · Reparations · Military restrictions · Land losses
- Extension:
- Which term of the treaty do you think was the most unfair, and why?

Instruction: Use your whiteboard. Show me when I say "3–2–1, boards up."
Support: Key words visible on the side of the board for those who need it.

Scaffolding is essential to ensure all students—especially those with SEN needs—can participate meaningfully.

Initial Scaffolds:

- Key words shared
- Sentence starters

Visual prompts:

- 💰 = Reparations
- 🪖 = Army size reduced
- 📜 = Guilt clause
- 🗺️ = Lost land

My plan for delivery was:
Week 1: Introduction and rehearsal of MWB routines during "Do Now" tasks.
Week 2–3: Embedding MWB use during guided practice and questioning.
Week 4+: Full implementation during modelling, retrieval practice, and concept checks.

I will include adaptations such as:

- Sentence starters printed on stickers or laminated cards for identified students.
- Visual aids for complex vocabulary.
- Clear, consistent instructions rehearsed (e.g., "Write. Show. Wait.").

Deliver

The mini whiteboard strategy was implemented during the introduction and retrieval phases of a lesson on the Treaty of Versailles. The task required all students to respond to the question: "Why was Germany unhappy with the Treaty of Versailles?" using sentence starters, key vocabulary, and optional visual prompts.

The strategy of using mini whiteboards was introduced over a four-week period and embedded into the lesson sequence on the Treaty of Versailles onwards. Whiteboards were used during retrieval starters, mid-lesson comprehension checks, and structured reflection tasks.

Positives:

- Strong routine uptake: Within the first week, 90% of students were consistently using mini whiteboards correctly. The structured "Show Me" routine allowed for seamless transitions and improved classroom control.
- Increased engagement: Students across all needs profiles, including EHCP, K-coded SEND, and the EAL student, engaged with greater frequency and confidence when using MWBs compared to whole-class questioning.
- Low-stakes confidence building: Students who previously hesitated to share ideas out loud (especially those with speech and language needs) began offering ideas through written responses. This led to a noticeable improvement in whole-class participation over time.
- Instant feedback loop: MWBs allowed the teacher to assess understanding of Treaty terms immediately (e.g., War Guilt Clause, reparations) and re-teach where necessary. Misconceptions were picked up more quickly and rectified using this method.

Areas for improvement:

- Some over-reliance on scaffolds: A small number of students initially leaned heavily on sentence stems without progressing to independent responses. This was addressed through phased withdrawal of supports.
- Time management: Resetting boards and pens took longer in early lessons. This was improved by assigning student monitors and embedding routine transitions into the lesson structure.
- Might not always be appropriate to use as often as I did. It was appropriate due to the Year 11 revision phase towards the end of the course.

Review and assessment of the impact of the implemented strategies:
Quantitative Indicators:

- Retrieval scores on key terms improved from an average of 56% in Week 1 to 72% by Week 4.
- Exit tickets and mid-lesson whiteboard responses showed growing confidence in using historical vocabulary (e.g., "reparations," "disarmament," "territorial loss") accurately and with explanation.
- Qualitative Indicators:
- Increased contributions from typically passive students.
- EHCP students demonstrated greater independence in planning verbal and written responses using MWBs as a rehearsal space.

This delivery strongly aligned with the academy's mental model of "Every student thinking, every student participating." By using mini whiteboards, the teacher ensured that all learners engaged in meaningful processing during key moments of the lesson, rather than relying a small sample of selected students.

The practice also supported responsive teaching — allowing me to adapt pacing, reteach terms, and check conceptual understanding in real time. Importantly, it embedded a culture of accountability without increasing anxiety, which was especially beneficial for students with additional learning needs.
As a result, the use of MWBs not only secured attention but also enhanced comprehension, participation, and progress.

Sustain

Further steps:

- KS3 Implementation: Introduce MWBs with Year 7 and 8 classes to build routines early and promote strong habits of participation. This allows for a long-term culture of visible thinking across key stages.
- Targeted Use in Intervention Groups: Deploy MWBs in small-group interventions (e.g., Year 11 revision groups) where teacher-to-student feedback can be made immediate and specific.
- Peer Observation and Coaching: Encourage wider adoption by modelling effective MWB use in shared planning or lesson study cycles. Share practical strategies in staff briefings or teaching and learning newsletters.
- Department-Wide Resource Bank: Create and maintain a shared digital folder of MWB tasks by topic (e.g., quote retrieval, analysis stems, vocabulary check-ins) to save planning time and promote consistency.

Conclusion

The introduction of mini whiteboards as a strategy to secure attention and increase student accountability has proved effective within the Year 11 History class. Through careful planning, rehearsed routines, and differentiated support, MWBs have helped shift student engagement from passive to active, especially for learners with EHCPs, SEN codes, and EAL needs. The strategy has enabled real-time formative assessment and rapid feedback, allowing for better responsiveness in teaching.

As the class progressed towards their final exams, MWBs will remain a core classroom tool—not only for maintaining attention, but also for deepening understanding and retention through regular, visible practice. By embedding this practice into daily routines and sharing successes across departments, this approach can be sustained and scaled to benefit a broader range of learners.

Driving Thought

Cecelia Bloom

Explore

Year 7 lower achieving students in 7XY1
Think pair share using white boards.

I was exploring, **'Stacking and building- by driving thought'**, during this activity. All students were writing on their whiteboards, then all were discussing with their partner. Some students were selected to share. At this point I selected the less able students to share to ensure their understanding and participation in the activity. **(One boy did not want to share, so he shared with me first, then I called on him to share with the class.)**

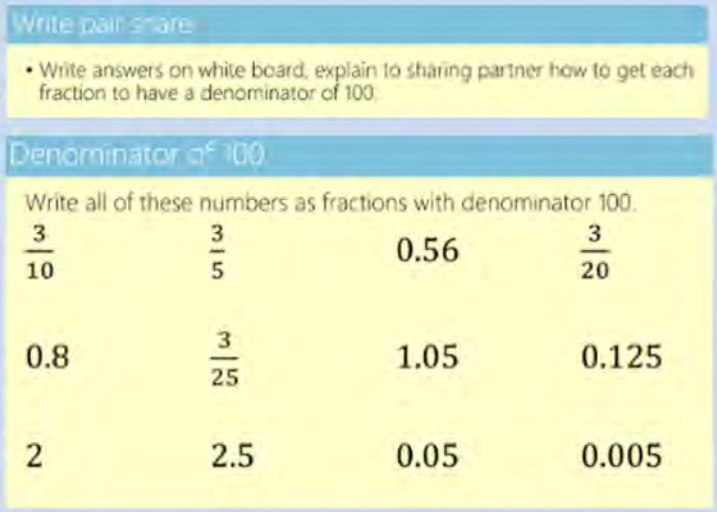
The practice that I was following was 'to drive pupil thought by **asking pupils to justify and give reasons for answers** during the **share** stage of **write-pair-share**'

I wanted students to be able to explain how they got their answers so I could identify any incorrect thinking involved.

I will know if I am successful when I have continued this into the next few lessons.

Adopt and Prepare

I introduced the first power point to prepare students for the activity, so that they knew they were going to do a write pair share task. I then showed them the questions and in silence they completed the task, showing their workings. I gave students 4 minutes as we had a lot of writing to do.


Write pair share

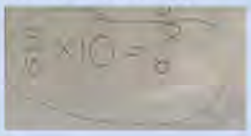
• Write answers on white board, explain to sharing partner how to get each fraction to have a denominator of 100.

Denominator of 100

Write all of these numbers as fractions with denominator 100.

$\frac{3}{10}$	$\frac{3}{5}$	0.56	$\frac{3}{20}$
0.8	$\frac{3}{25}$	1.05	0.125
2	2.5	0.05	0.005

As they were completing the task I went round to see if there were any issues with the writing that they were doing. I did notice that students were writing;

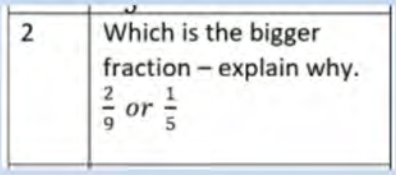


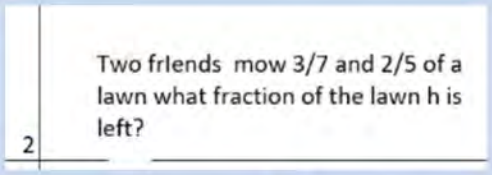
I would use this in my discussions before I started writing on the board. Is this correct? If not why not? Below are examples of their work.

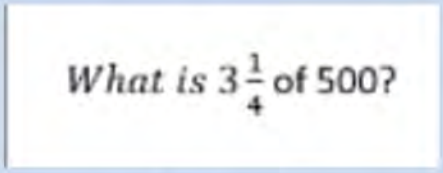
I then gave students 4 minutes to discuss their work, trying to make sure each of the pairs discussed their work.

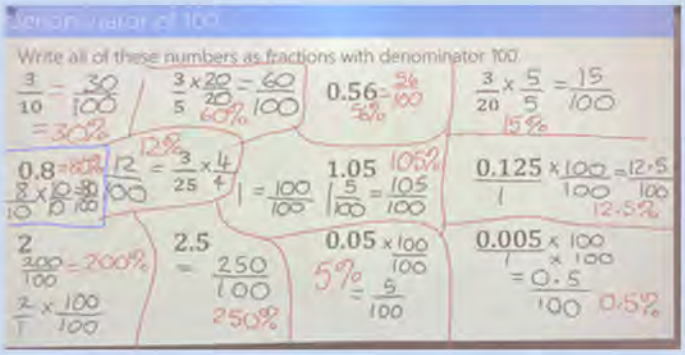
Before we went over the answers on the board, I showed students the miswriting that I had noticed on a few white boards. We discussed what was wrong.

This was interesting as this miswriting had come up in this starter and the previous starters. Examples are given below:









Some students corrected their work.
Once we had finished these examples, I did ask what could a fraction over 100 be used for? I was told, that a percentage could be written from them. This is shown in red in the picture on the left.

We did discuss that some fractions had decimals in and that this was only allowed as an interim to the final percentage answer.

This activity felt successful in getting these two points across;

- How to get an equivalent fraction with 100 as the denominator.
- Not to multiply by a whole number, but by a whole number on the numerator and a whole number on the denominator.

I will notice this in their books over the next few lessons, in the starter questions 3 and 4.

I will use this with my new year 10 class, it will allow me to see full participation in activities and whiteboards will allow me to see answers from all students.

Kendall Bottos

Explore

My focus has been on the boys in my year 8 maths group who are notably lacking in confidence and hesitant to engage with new mathematical topics. In our unit on proportional reasoning, I have committed to a consistent teaching approach by using ratio tables as the foundational method to solve problems. This choice has been deliberate in order to reduce cognitive overload and provide students with a single, reliable strategy they can apply across different contexts.

<u>My Turn</u>

6 tickets cost £90.
Complete the ratio table to find

i. the cost of 2 tickets.
ii. how many tickets I buy for £165.

	6	
	90	

<u>Your Turn</u>

5 tickets cost £60.
Complete the ratio table to find

i. the cost of 2 tickets.
ii. how many tickets I buy for £84.

	5	
	60	

The practices I am exploring relate directly to the mental model for effective teaching, particularly the principles of expert delivery and driving thought. The expert delivery is seen through my consistent and clear modelling of ratio tables across the unit. By focusing on one method, students are able to consolidate their understanding and apply the process to a wide range of proportional problems. This, in turn, supports driving thought, as it enables students to extend their reasoning by applying the same method in unfamiliar contexts, thus deepening their conceptual understanding.

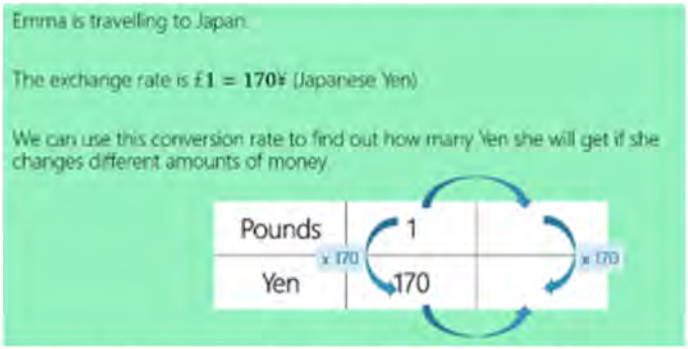
The specific practice I selected for implementation involved clearly modelling worked examples, including how to solve exchange rate problems using the same ratio table approach previously taught for best value problems. This ensured continuity in learning and reinforced the underlying connections between different proportional reasoning problems

In order to support this group effectively, I had to consider several adaptations. These included allocating sufficient thinking time for students, modelling answers in real time using the visualizer, and preparing scaffolding resources in advance for students who required additional support. By demonstrating how to present their work and offering guided practice, I aimed to create an inclusive learning environment where students could access the material confidently.

The outcomes I was aiming for were: firstly, for students to demonstrate greater independence in starting tasks, and secondly, for them to maintain effort even when faced with more challenging problems. Success would be evident if students began working without hesitation and could correctly apply ratio tables to a range of question types.

Adopt and Prepare

My delivery plan centred around structured modelling using the visualizer, combined with interactive strategies like "my turn/your turn" and cold calling to check for understanding and encourage participation. This format allowed me to gauge whether students were ready to proceed independently or required more collaborative practice.



My Turn	Your Turn
£1 = 25 Mexican pesos Change £70 into pesos.	£1 = 25 Mexican pesos Change £30 into pesos.

My Turn	Your Turn
£1 ≈ €1.15 Change €175 into pounds.	£1 ≈ €1.15 Change €240 into pounds.

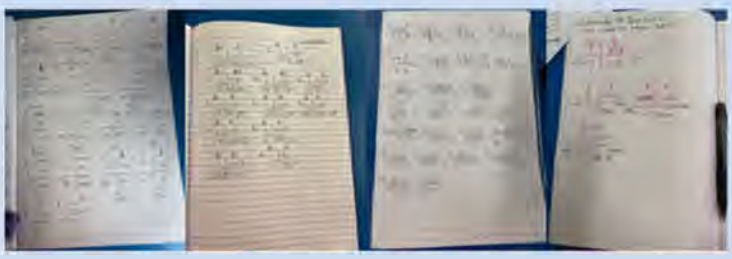
Based on responses from cold calling, I adjusted the pace of the lesson and the amount of scaffolding provided. For example, I used the visualizer to go through the initial questions on the worksheet alongside the students, ensuring they had a solid starting point. I utilized the OAT slides but adapted them to suit the specific needs and pace of my class.

Scaffolding was gradually faded throughout the lesson. Initially, students practised converting pounds into a foreign currency with support, followed by a discussion of common misconceptions.

We then reversed the problem converting from another currency to pounds and after a second round of guided practice, students were given a mixed set of questions to complete independently.

Deliver

The delivery of these strategies had a noticeably positive impact. The consistent use of ratio tables improved students' confidence, and this was evident not only during the proportional reasoning unit but also when we later tackled percentages. Students were able to transfer their understanding of ratio tables to percentage problems, showing a deeper grasp of the concept and a greater willingness to attempt the work.



Using the visualizer proved particularly effective. By modelling the layout and approach directly in a student exercise book, I provided a clear visual reference for how their work should look. Evidence from student books shows that the majority were able to complete most of the questions independently and correctly.

In one example, a student initially required one-to-one support and setup guidance, but as shown in his black pen work, he quickly began applying the method successfully on his own.

Sustain

I plan to embed the use of ratio tables as a standard method for approaching proportional reasoning topics across my teaching practice. This method lends itself well to a variety of contexts including percentages, exchange rates, best value, direct proportion, and compound measures. Once students have mastered the approach, it provides them with a versatile tool they can carry forward, reducing the need to re teach procedures and enabling them to access more challenging problems with confidence.

With other classes, I intend to implement the same approach by ensuring sufficient time is spent on introducing and securing the understanding of ratio tables early on. Taking the time to embed this method properly at the beginning of a topic is more effective in the long term and allows students to make links across the curriculum. This strategy has already proven beneficial with my Year 8 group, and I am confident it can be scaled and adapted successfully for other groups.

Laura Burnett

Scaffolding to extend written responses

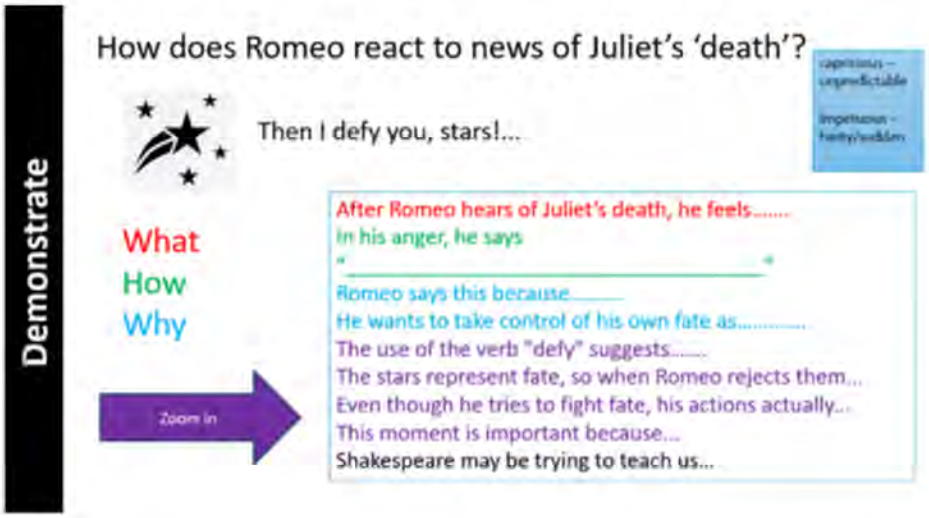
For this study, I have focused on the students in my Year 9 class—a small 'nurture' group consisting of eight learners with reading ages ranging from six to twelve years. All but two of these students receive targeted reading support outside of their English lessons, and many face significant pastoral and emotional challenges that impact their learning.

Over the course of the term, I have found these students to be eager to succeed and actively engaged in their learning. They have made noticeable progress since the beginning of the academic year, which I attribute not only to the small class size but also to the consistent use of targeted scaffolding to support their writing development.

Despite this progress, students continue to struggle with extended writing tasks, largely due to a lack of confidence in their abilities. Many perceive themselves as being 'not good' at English and often become disheartened when they encounter difficulties. Therefore, my aim is to foster greater independence in extended writing by focusing on three key strategies: adapted writing frames, the use of mini-whiteboards for drafting responses, and a dedicated weekly session for independent writing that students come to expect and prepare for. This approach is intended to build their resilience and writing stamina over time.

Since meeting the class in September, I have consistently worked to reduce cognitive load and help students feel successful in the lesson. For example, I print 'do now' tasks to provide a clear and accessible starting point. Given that several of these students arrive late to lessons, this ensures they can quickly settle and focus on the content without the added pressure of copying down dates and titles:

Since trialling this earlier in the year, I have found that students now benefit from this clear and immediate focus at the start of each lesson. They are able to settle quickly, and feel successful within the first 10 minutes of the lesson. Printed comprehension sheets have also been a regular feature in lessons, offering students structured opportunities to engage with the text while reducing cognitive load Calibri (Body).



Together, these strategies have supported students in building more confident and analytical responses. I have increased my use of printed writing frames to guide students in organizing their ideas, particularly when responding to exploratory questions about characters and themes in class texts. As a department, we have used the 'SEIZE' writing frame (Statement, Evidence, Inference, Zoom, Effect) to teach analytical writing. However, with this particular group, I have found a simpler, alternative to be more effective in building students' confidence and making writing tasks more accessible. To support this, I have implemented colour coding to help students break down paragraph structure in a clear and accessible way. This visual approach is paired with simplified prompts such as "what, how, why, zoom," which guide students through the stages of analytical thinking:

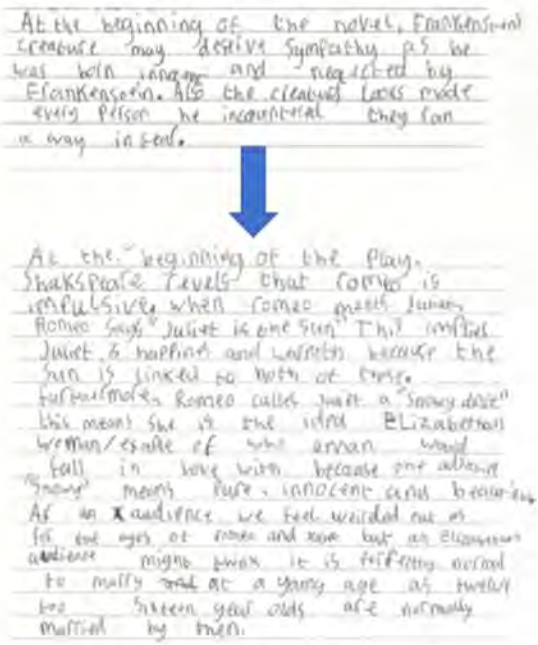
1. What - First give a short one sentence answer to the question that you will go on to prove.
2. How - Second, give proof or evidence from the text to prove your 'what' statement is true.
3. Why- Finally, analyse the evidence and explain why it proves your original idea.

These prompts encourage students to identify what is happening in a text, how the writer presents it, why it is significant, and then to 'zoom in' on a specific word or phrase for deeper analysis. This step-by-step method has made complex analytical tasks more manageable, particularly for students who lack confidence in their writing. It has also helped students better understand the purpose of each part of a paragraph by linking specific colours to distinct stages of analysis.

Over time, the visual cues have supported students in independently planning and structuring their writing, as they begin to associate each colour with a particular type of thinking or sentence function, such as introducing an idea, providing evidence, or offering interpretation. In addition to this, I have used structure strips containing key vocabulary to further scaffold student responses. These strips serve as both a guide and a prompt, ensuring that students incorporate subject-specific terminology in their answers. Encouraging students to 'zoom in'—often by mind mapping a single word or idea per paragraph—has fostered more independent thinking and helped students approach writing tasks with increased clarity and confident.

I have also found it useful to allow students, before committing to paper, to rehearse their writing on mini whiteboards. They allow students to experiment with ideas, respond to prompts, practise using key vocabulary and make mistakes without the pressure of it being 'assessed' as a formal piece of writing. This not only encourages participation from all learners but also creates more opportunities for immediate feedback, discussion, and clarification.

The example student work below demonstrates the increase in engagement over the year since implementing these strategies:



A student's complete summative assessment in December 2024

The same student's summative assessment in April 2025 (five paragraphs in total written)

To build this practice into my normal routines, I intend to embed these scaffolding strategies consistently across lessons, so they become familiar and expected parts of the classroom experience. For instance, I will continue to use colour-coded paragraph models during shared and guided writing tasks, gradually encouraging students to apply the same colour-coding independently in their own work. The simplified prompts ("what, how, why, zoom") will remain a staple in my lesson planning and modelling, ensuring that analytical thinking is continuously reinforced. Structure strips will be available for each extended writing task tailored to suit the specific skills and vocabulary required, making them a routine reference tool rather than a one-off intervention. Over time, I will aim to reduce the level of scaffolding, supporting students to rely more on their internalised understanding rather than printed supports.

To implement these strategies with other classes or groups, I would first assess the specific needs and abilities of each cohort to adapt the approach accordingly. For example, while high-attaining students may only need minimal structure strips or may engage with more complex analytical prompts, lower-attaining groups could benefit from more explicit modelling and collaborative practice before working independently. I will also experiment with using live editable document students can write into on a laptop, to help prepare them for GCSE access arrangements. Department-wide, there is scope to standardise the use of simplified prompts and colour coding, offering a shared language for writing that can be reinforced across year groups. Ideally, this would be embedded into a consistent approach to questioning and oracy, encouraging students to articulate their thinking clearly, engage in structured discussion, and develop confidence in verbal reasoning alongside their written work.

Marie Callinan

Explore

I have chosen 10xyEn4 as my focus group to explore how the process of teaching and learning through talk drives thought as the product of joint construction achieved through shared understanding and shaped by skilled questioning.

Some questioning styles are more effective than others in targeting learners' 'zone of proximal development', i.e. the space Vygotsky theorized was between learners' actual and potential development in one given learning situation. Empirical pedagogy has historically directed teachers to diagnose learners' developmental level and match learning to this. According to Vygotsky theory, this dependence on one determined developmental level is limiting. His research shows that learners with the same developmental levels, if guided through problems by a teacher using certain modes of representation e.g. questioning, can display a high level of difference in capability.

How I will target my students' prospective development through questioning will depend on their readiness to engage in talk-in-interaction. Habitual use of the 'Write, Pair, Share' teaching tool should empower the students to practice contributing prepared ideas that they have thought hard about.

The importance of positive interpersonal exchanges will be fundamental to engage learners' cognitive and communicative functions and guide them to future self-regulation. I will work on my adaptive teaching skills in order to make real-time adaptations to individual needs and responses and therefore build a positive and appropriately challenging environment in which relationships are secure. I will be more vigilant in following through on rewards as well as sanctions in order to establish and reinforce productive behaviours such as efficient and effective classroom routines.

I am expecting to see students acclimatize to this new method of gathering information and giving feedback. I am hoping that the subject knowledge taught will be consolidated through the multiple contributions made during the WPS exercises and that this learning will be more effectively internalized which will improve retention in their long-term memory.

Adopt and Prepare

The teaching through talk technique I traditionally used was the IRF triad (Initiation, Response, Feedback) which I would use to employ a range of different question types. A development of this practice is the Write, Pair, Share activity.

WPS is an oral language support strategy that allows students to formulate a response in writing before sharing with a peer and then through the guidance of teacher questioning, share it with the class. It tends to be a relatively low-risk strategy in which formal writing turns to social talk.

By embedding regular writing practice that externalizes their thinking, students' oral language is developed through preparedness and then scaffolded by careful questioning which pushes students to think hard and gives me the opportunity to assess students' learning and respond appropriately.

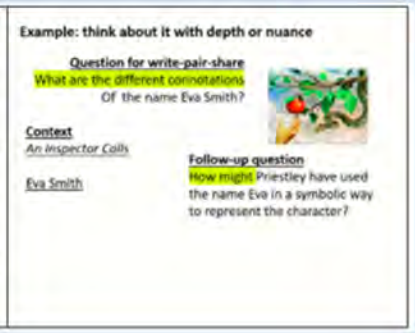
The key to the success of this technique is to select an appropriate question for the paired talk and routinely using the cold-call method at the 'share' stage in order to secure the students' attention. The use of 'How' and Why' questions and requests for evidence further pushes for academic language and methods.

Following training received by Janine Metcalfe-Taylor on effective ways to drive thought in English through questioning, I was able to adapt my classroom resources to embed the WPS activity and follow the 'How, What, Why' triad in lessons across the units I have taught 10xyEn4 this year.

I learned from the training that whilst teaching Shakespeare's Macbeth, questions such as 'What did the Captain say about Macbeth?', & 'What was symbolic about the weather at the beginning of the play?, were good to begin with as they built on what the students knew already. Metclafe-Taylor stressed the importance of being mindful not to play the 'guess what's in my head' game' with the students when asking such questions and to avoid the use of questions as exposition to the story. Both are easy mistakes to make if not conscious of their pitfalls. My question on the right develops this type of questioning by pushing my students to think about the subject more.

Good quality follow-up questions can also push students to think about things in a different way. Questions such as, 'If you removed the captain's speech, how would that alter the play and our understanding of Macbeth? Or, 'If Scrooge had had a happy childhood, how might this have impacted the story? Are effective in this instance.

To ensure that students remain attentive AND hard at thought, it's important to create opportunities to drive thought through questions that invite depth or nuance in their answers. Making connections to prior knowledge and processing new learning can be achieved by approaching familiar ideas in a different way. Exploring different interpretations of a theme, word or in this instance a common name with biblical roots, is an effective way to help students commit the knowledge to their long term memory.



Another good quality question notices a general concept or conceptual theme and applies it across the curriculum. This again supports the transition of learning from working-memory to long-term memory by re-firing synaptic connections, strengthening existing nueral pathways in the brain and reinforcing the knowledge.

Deliver

By using WPS, I deliver ideas in a manageable, meaningful and hopefully memorable way. However, despite having students write their response and share it in a pair, I still find that there are sometimes reticent students who are not comfortable to present their ideas. To further support these students, I have begun to use the 'question, pause, name' format when selecting them to contribute and I continue to build a 'have a go' culture to normalize mistakes as valuable learning in themselves. It's also become apparent that I need to regularly front-load the 'share' rules of 'no hands-up' to prevent to more confident students from answering the questions for the quieter ones. The embedding of this cold-calling method is critical in driving thought as it ensures that all students must be actively thinking hard and not passively processing which in turn rehearses knowledge therefore securing it in the students' long-term memory.

Sustain

I expect to see 10xyEn4 continue to acclimatize to the discourse and structure of the WPS activities and gradually begin to understand and value the method as one that challenges them to expand their understanding, build their oral language confidence and retain information more effectively. I have already used the method with my other classes and will continue to design questions for them that drives them to think more and differently, to add nuance and make connections.

Gemma Calloway

Explore

Year 12 English Language is my focus: a small group of students who are motivated and striving. Therefore, I am focusing on 'driving thought' in a more deliberate classroom practice in this area. In particular, my CPD this year is dwelling on crafting questions to push harder thinking, and challenging the group. With regards to adaptation, I intend to use a scaffolded analysis model for questioning to move the students from observation and pattern/feature-spotting (one part of A01 objective), to interpretation and speculation of alternate contexts and pragmatics (A03 objective). Success will be measured through marking work with A03 pinpointed in its progress and development stage. This can also be used as a self-reflection/review tasks for students.

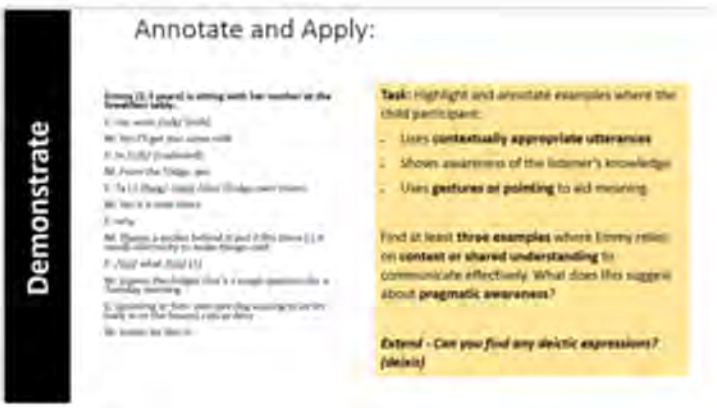
Adopt and Prepare

Currently, we are studying Child Language Acquisition (CLA), and I am using this unit as an opportunity to embed more demanding thinking. In this topic, students often feel confident identifying features, writing academically (A01) and naming theories (A02), but further challenge lies when interrogating how social, cultural and contextual influences shape the language – which forms part of their analysis (A01). Therefore, I am deliberately crafting questions that move beyond knowledge of stages and theorists, and instead demand critical engagement with environment, interaction, and pragmatics. These links allow students to explore broader discourses that are essential to the synoptic nature of the course.

I can align these questioning strategies with the OCR assessment objectives across the course — particularly Paper 2, where students must engage with ideas about language in use and language change. Contextual analysis is more purely headed under Assessment Objective 03 (A03).

However, by embedding some of this into the Child Language unit as well (which is assessed for A01 and A02), I intend to provide students with a more synoptic and speculative approach – which, in turn – can be applied as deeper analysis for higher levels of their A01 and A02 on this unit. Noticeably, context and pragmatics is where students need the most support to broaden their sense of why language 'behaves' as it does in a particular moment, and how wider historical, cultural and ideological factors shape both language and attitudes towards it. Therefore, I am consciously developing questioning sequences that build from linguistic observation to contextual interpretation. For instance: 'What is the speaker doing?' moves to 'Why might this linguistic choice reflect their social identity?' and then to 'What larger ideological or cultural narratives are possible influencing this moment/text?'

Within my curriculum delivery and resourcing, I intend to build on and re-work previous materials to embed this approach to questioning more deeply. I am more developing more explicit scaffolded questions with some of my resource adaptations for the Child Language unit for now. To support this, I have redesigned a set of questions and prompts to use. Below is one example of how these more speculative question prompts are being used on a lesson PowerPoint to broaden students' thinking (yellow box).



Deliver

I am using the 'I Do – We Do – You Do' model to scaffold this work. Early in the sequence, I model analysis and contextual interpretation explicitly, then shift toward shared deconstruction of texts before students attempt independent responses. Over time, I will expect this set of students to generate their own evaluative and exploratory questions. I use my visualiser most lessons with the class, to verbalise analytical thought processes and help students understand how to move from the text itself to abstracted cultural commentary. Now, I am making sure the questioning is more visual/explicit within the resourcing.

Students are showing signs of responding to these prompts, expressing greater curiosity about the socio-cultural contexts of language use and acquisition, and are asking more open-ended questions themselves. In discussion and written work, they are beginning to consider alternative cultural perspectives, which has enriched their engagement with CLA and Language Discourses. Their responses now show greater confidence in theorising and in integrating 'pragmatic' insights alongside their AO1 and AO2 content.

Sustain

Within my curriculum delivery and resourcing, I intend to build on and re-work previous materials to embed this approach to questioning more deeply. For example, in CLA, instead of simply asking 'Which features suggest this child is in the two-word stage?', I am now prompting with 'How might the child's environment be influencing this development?' and 'To what extent can we rely on the caregiver's utterances here as representative of interaction?' These questions begin to introduce the more speculative and contextualised thinking needed to access the higher levels.

To sustain this, I plan to include a 'contextual angle' in every analytical task. I have also built a resource bank of scaffolded question sets (one extract is copied, below) to prompt the thinking from description to contextual interpretation. Additionally, I have a lengthy document giving students 'tone' vocabulary, which – only on anecdotal student feedback for now – is allowing them to access a wider scaffolded approach to 'why' language is used in a certain way/when. A section of this resource is also copied, below. (In fact, my present view is that developing vocabulary/accessibility to 'mood' and 'tone' could be highly opportunistic ways to get students to think more broadly, creatively and analytically. I am interested in exploring research or any reading on this idea.)

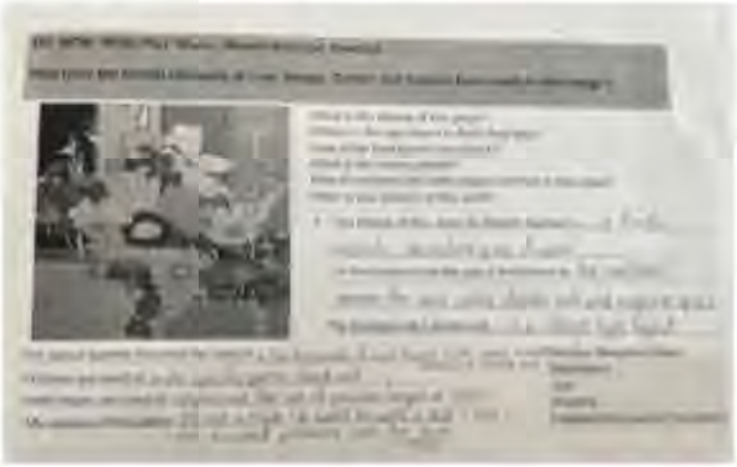
The set of prompts are highly transferable to other units — including Language Change and Gender and Language — where students often struggle to access the full breadth of AO3. By routinely asking 'Why is this happening in this context?' and 'How else might this be interpreted?', I can help students build the analytical reflexes that underpin higher-level responses.

Helen Cater

I Art GCSE is marked through 4 Assessment objectives. AO1 involves critical analysis and interpretation of art works, engaging with critical thinking where students make links with artists and designers with their own art works and processes. This objective is partly met through sketchbook and portfolio annotation and reflections that underpin the practical explorations and although written work is not assessed separately, the higher achievers will write competently and critically about their own work and that of artists. Activities to deepen thinking encourage students to engage independently and take ownership of learning whilst supporting less confident pupils.

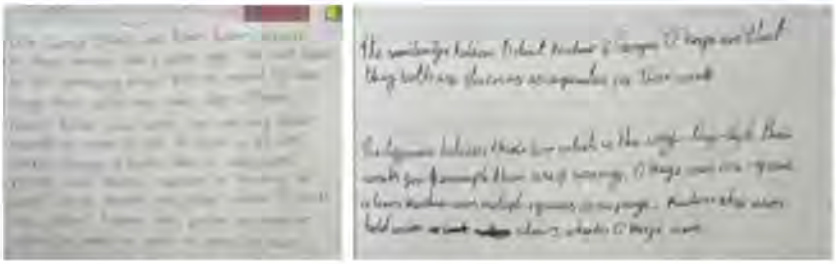
Therefore, I decided that the year 10 Fine Art group would benefit from systematic use of Write, Pair, Share activities at the start of lessons to promote deeper thinking and to enable more developed analysis.

The year 10 group has 23 students 6 of which have SEN passports and thus from the outset scaffolding was important in aiding them to structure written answers and gain confidence in their ability to write or discuss artist work. Our current department strategy for written work using Describe/Evaluate/Develop would also adapt to the Write/Pair/Share model and would direct questioning. Describing an artwork can be quite complex and students need structure to begin to unpick a painting and describe the formal elements and composition. Questions could be designed to direct that process but also to evaluate and make judgements, as well as seeing connections to their own work and how they intend to develop ideas further.



On giving a Write Pair Share to describe how the formal elements had been used in an image I observed that less confident (often SEN) students found it a challenge to know where to start. This meant adapting the process to give them more structure. The following lesson I adapted a worksheet to give the same question but with a clear set of questions, sentence starters and keywords to use in the answer.

By answering each question students began to think more deeply about the piece and achieve a structured paragraph which could be written up at a later date. To take this even further, I then provided an example paragraph and asked students to write about a similar image in the same way. Although this may have been almost too structured, the intention was for weaker students to gain confidence and then to remove the scaffold in later analysis tasks.



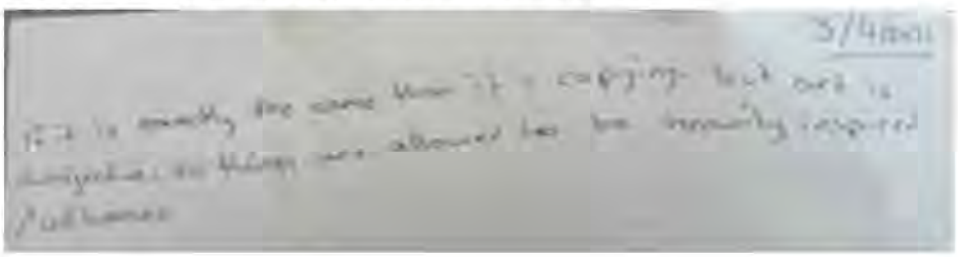
Compare and contrast questions to identify similarities and differences between the work of two artists in a write, pair, share task, also provided opportunity to push for deeper analysis. Some students were able to give extended answers, whilst others in the group still identified key points.

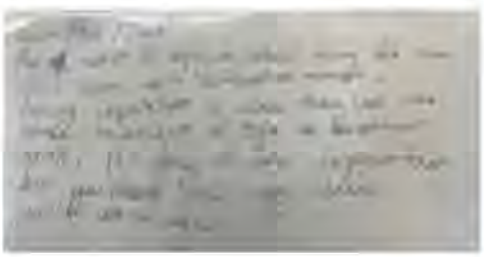
Questions were developed in order to get students to think about the artist or theme that they were working on. Another lesson asked students to identify visual links between an artist's drawings and his glass sculptures. Again, some students were able to write quite detailed answers, whilst others were still able to capture main ideas.

As I had verified in previous research with year 7 (using a gallery questioning structure of See, Think, Wonder) students are far less reluctant to share verbally if they are able to jot down ideas first. The 'pair' part also enables them to verbalise thinking and is particularly supporting of weaker students. Sharing then enables the teacher to get pupils to justify their ideas and give reasons for their answer. However, in practice I have found that it is this part that needs to be developed further and needs skilful questioning to draw out these responses. As Lisa Lockley puts it in an article in TES, "By asking students to interrogate their own understanding they are inevitably thinking harder."

Reviewing the strategy

Write, pair, share provides a wealth of opportunities to compare, contrast, describe, evaluate, justify and give opinions. The teacher can direct and focus learning onto key elements, prompting to extend and push for how and why answers by asking for evidence. I have found that it can also become a basis for extended writing. However, pace is important and the written part may need tighter timings, as this is part of a practical lesson. I also need to hone my questioning in order to get students to verbally justify answers and provide evidence for their thinking and this is what I intend to focus on moving forwards. Pertinent questions could be developed for each lesson as a routine entry, before practical work begins.





There is also a good opportunity for this to be implemented at KS3 and has already begun to be used with some groups, although not systematically. I was surprised at the reflective quality of answers from year 9 when asked “When is an Artist copying and when are they being inspired/ influenced by other cultures? Is this OK?” .

Questions are always set within a context and in this case, consolidated ideas about Picasso and his use of African Art in his work but also attended to the broader reflection in general. From that I learnt that we should not be afraid to challenge our students with difficult or complex ideas. Going forwards, department planning for the curriculum could include developing sets of relevant questions for deeper thinking across each topic.

Lorna Churms

Explore

In my Year 9 mixed-ability Religious Studies class, I identified a need to improve the quality of student discussion and subsequent written responses. Many students struggled to articulate their thoughts clearly, and this was reflected in their written work. I chose to focus on paired talk as a strategy to bridge this gap, aiming to develop students' verbal reasoning before they commit ideas to paper.

After exploring various strategies, I selected "Write, Pair, Share" over alternatives like "Think, Pair, Share" or "pose, pause, pounce and bounce". The key reason was that "Write, Pair, Share" encourages individual accountability before discussion, ensuring all students have a starting point. This is particularly beneficial in a mixed-ability setting, where some students may be reluctant to speak without preparation. Writing first allows them to gather their thoughts, and the paired discussion helps refine and extend their ideas.

To implement this effectively, I needed to make several adaptations:

- Sentence starters and vocabulary banks were created to support lower-ability students during both the writing and discussion phases.

- Seating plans were adjusted to pair students strategically, balancing ability and confidence levels.

Success would be measured through:

- Improved quality and length of written responses.
- Increased student participation in paired discussions.
- Student self-assessment and reflection on their verbal and written contributions.

Adopt and Prepare

To implement "Write, Pair, Share" effectively, I planned a phased approach across a half-term unit on "Moral Decision Making." Each lesson would include a structured paired talk activity linked to a key question or ethical dilemma.

Planning and Adaptations:

- Lesson plans were adapted to include clear timings and prompts for each stage of the strategy.
- Scaffolding included sentence starters, model answers, and visual aids. These would be gradually phased out as students gained confidence.
- Resources included PowerPoints with prompts and scaffolded workbooks.

Phasing Out Support:

- Initially, students used sentence starters and teacher modelling.
- By week 3, students were encouraged to generate their own sentence openers.
- By week 5, scaffolds were removed for higher-ability students and reduced for others.

Preparing Students:

I introduced the strategy with a metacognitive focus, explaining its purpose and benefits. We practiced the routine with low-stakes topics to build confidence. Students were involved in setting discussion norms and reflecting on what makes a good partner in paired talk.

Deliver

The delivery phase revealed several insights. Students responded positively to the structure of "Write, Pair, Share." The initial writing gave them confidence, and the paired talk helped them clarify and extend their thinking. This was particularly evident in their written responses, which became more analytical and better structured.

- Observation notes highlighted increased engagement, especially from quieter students.
- Classroom discussions saw students being able to work more collaboratively together.

This aligns with the mental model of teaching that emphasizes scaffolding, gradual release of responsibility, and the importance of talk in learning. By embedding talk as a thinking tool, students were better prepared to write with clarity and purpose.

Sustain

To embed this practice into my regular teaching, I have:

- Made "Write, Pair, Share" a routine part of lesson structure, especially before extended writing tasks.
- Careful planning of discussion prompts and sentence starters that can be adapted across topics.

Wider Implementation:

I plan to introduce this strategy to my key stage 4 groups, adapting the complexity of prompts and scaffolding accordingly, especially around exam responses.

Next Steps:

- Monitor long-term impact through summative assessments and student progress data.
- Continue refining the strategy based on student feedback and classroom observations.

Sara Cody

Explore

One of my key CPD targets this year has been to work on extending higher level learners. Last year's Sociology results showed a much higher percentage of students achieving a B grade than the national average, which was pleasing, but our A and A* grades were slightly below average. This led to the conclusion that our primary target is to work on extending higher level learners in this subject. Sociology A level requires evaluation at a high level for A and A* grades, as well as a developed argument. It also requires the ability for retrieval and recall of a number of different studies and theories.

Additionally, the OCR specification states that learners should:

- 'Analyse critically the nature and sources of information and to base reasoned judgements and arguments on evidence '
- Organise and communicate their knowledge and understanding in different and creative ways, and reach substantiated judgements.' (OCR 2016)

These higher level skills apply primarily to the AO3 objective and to unit 2 and 3, section B, of the specification. My plan this year has been to use paired talk in the classroom on a regular, structured basis, with the primary aim of increasing the students' use of critical analysis, to enhance exam evaluation response at A/A* level.

I also considered the following aims:

1. Increase student attention and engagement with concepts to benefit the retrieval and recall of sociological material.
2. Enable more students to fully access the arguments in sociological debate, including those who struggle with extended writing.
3. Enable students to critically engage with each other's arguments, providing and justifying judgements.

Adopt and Prepare

I planned to use this paired talk technique specifically with reference to unit 2 Section B, 'Understanding social inequalities' as this is the first point in the course that students are specifically required to use extended evaluation.

Prior to this unit, I had established regular paired talk in the classroom for the following routines:

1. As a starter activity for recall and to check understanding.
2. After new learning, to extend understanding.

All students were therefore accustomed to working with paired talk and had established the expectation that they would speak during the time available, work to set timings and then reflect on their pair's performance. I began by using scaffolding of sentence openers and a structure on the whiteboard for them to follow. Students quickly became accustomed to this. The intention was now to extend this to establish paired talk in discussion, on at least a weekly basis, with the further aim to critically analyse, elaborate and justify.

The planned routine was as follows:

1. Allocate students into A/B pairings.
2. Explain task and brief timings. Use timer or hourglass.
3. Student talks for set time.
4. Paired student uses mini whiteboard to quickly rate their partner's performance.
5. Teacher strategically reviews whiteboards with directed questioning.
6. Repeated with other student in pairs.

Deliver

In evaluation, this strategy has been both enjoyable and effective and has been easily incorporated into my classroom routines.

After trialling the technique a few times, I worked on extending thought further by adding in an additional level of discussion in the following ways:

1. An extra stage in which students follow their mark by criticizing the argument of their paired student.
2. Students to use notes or textbook to add an additional element of evidence or to challenge.
3. Paired talk to be extended to group or whole class discussion.

Positives:

- Students are all active at the same time which aids engagement.
- Peer assessment engages their evaluation skills and provides efficient feedback and peer-led learning support.
- Requires little preparation in terms of resources, students can refer to their notes or textbooks as extension.
- Can be used to check pre-learning.
- Very effective for pace if used with brisk timings.
- It can be adapted during the task to add in levels of difficulty and extend thought further.

Evaluation:

- Mini whiteboards need to be on the tables at all times, so this works better for 6th form groups.
- Some students are less engaged and pairings have to be reviewed to ensure maximum effect.
- Teacher must be aware of student performance and relationships to maintain a positive learning atmosphere.
- Timings need to be carefully checked and adjusted if necessary to maintain pace.

Sustain

Once the routine is established, this has proved easy to sustain. The students enjoy it and it is a useful 'filler' which can be added to the end of a lesson or to re-engage classes. Setting it as a regular starter activity, planned into PowerPoints, is also straightforward.

I have gone on to add it to my planning for year 13, specifically in Unit 3 Section B, which also requires critical analysis and evaluation.

I would like to consider further ways of extending this technique to specifically target A/A* grades using examination criteria.

Charlie Day

Explore

My focus was on a Year 9 mixed ability science group with the aim of driving deeper thinking through scaffolding strategies to extend both writing and oral responses. Mixed ability settings often present the challenge of ensuring all students are stretched while still feeling supported. The chosen focus was to improve students' ability to construct extended, reasoned answers, particularly in response to questions that require explanation or evaluation—areas frequently highlighted in science assessments.

Several strategies were considered for this purpose, including "write, pair, share", and the use of knowledge organisers. However, the strategy I chose was the integration of grade descriptors and sentence starters into lessons supported by "write, pair, share" activities to ensure students were able to think about scientific concepts and produce extended writing. This approach was selected because it directly models what high quality scientific writing looks like, provides clear success criteria, and helps students understand the expectations of higher-order responses. It bridges the gap between knowledge recall and analytical writing—an area where many students, especially lower ability learners, struggle.

Unlike more discussion-based strategies which promote collaboration but sometimes lack written outcome evidence, grade descriptors offer explicit scaffolding that can be adapted to suit all learners. By embedding these into lessons, students are more likely to internalise what constitutes a strong scientific explanation or justification and understand how to achieve the highest grades.

To implement this strategy effectively, several adaptations were required. First, I needed to source or create grade descriptors aligned to age related expectations and exam boards. Secondly, to support all students, specifically lower ability students the descriptors were paired with sentence starters. Students also received additional teacher support, such as worked examples and guided group work, to help them access the criteria.
To evaluate the success of this strategy, I planned to monitor improvements in the quality of extended written responses through book checking and provide verbal feedback to students as and when students show me their books. This would provide the support students require to attain the higher-grade descriptors.

Adopt and Prepare

In preparing to adopt this strategy, I planned a series of lessons that embedded grade descriptors into plenary activities where students were able to freely write about a topic in order to help drive thought about the subject content of the lesson. Initially, I introduced the descriptors explicitly, with students able to discuss what does high quality scientific writing look like. We discussed the importance of aiming for the highest grades and the differences between command words used in grade 4 responses, grade 6 responses and grade 8 responses.

Lesson resources included:

- Grade descriptors
- Sentence starters
- Peer assessment
- Verbal feedback
- "Write, pair, share" activities to drive initial thought

Scaffolding was delivered through teacher modelling, guided writing sessions, and structured group activities. Sentence starters were used heavily in the early lessons but planned to be gradually removed as students developed independence. Similarly, teacher support was most intensive in the first few lessons, with gradual withdrawal to encourage student autonomy. Revision guides to provide support for subject content materials.

To prepare students for this change, I explicitly explained the rationale behind the new focus. We discussed how being able to write like a scientist is not only crucial for exams but also in communicating ideas clearly. Students were reassured that support would be provided and that the aim was to build confidence and independence over time.

Deliver

The delivery phase involved a six-week implementation period across the first GCSE topic students learn in Year 9. Each lesson embedded "write, pair, share" in the main part of the lesson and grade descriptors as part of a plenary activity.

Student engagement was high. Many reported that they appreciated knowing exactly what was required to achieve the highest grades. Low-ability students initially struggled, but with consistent use of sentence starters and teacher support, their confidence noticeably improved with many students feeling that they were achieving the highest grades possible, removing the attitude of "that will do". Many students also started to see it as a competition with who was able to produce the best writing.

Assessment of impact included more book checks to ensure students were writing high quality pieces of work and comparing responses to 6-mark question before and after implementation.

Sustain

To sustain this practice, I will continue to embed grade descriptors into my normal teaching, as a regular part of writing tasks. This will help students internalise the structure of high-quality answers. Sentence starters will remain available for those who need them, but their use will be monitored and reduced as students grow more confident.

I plan to extend this approach to other classes, particularly in Key Stage 3, to build confidence with scientific writing and application before students start examination courses.
I aim to collect student voice feedback termly to assess ongoing impact and refine my approach. Where students show sustained improvement, I will attribute it to a clearer understanding of expectations and the confidence that comes from structured support.

By embedding this strategy into my teaching routine and adapting it to suit the needs of different classes, I hope to foster a culture of thoughtful, well-structured written communication in science—an essential skill in addressing the lower performance of high prior attaining boys at Key Stage 4.

Julia Doughan

Explore

Which class, niche group or student is your focus?
Year 10 Spanish GCSE class

Which practice(s) are you exploring and how do they relate to our mental model for teaching?
Driving thought: Scaffolding to extend written and oral answers, paired talk and questions to drive thought.

Which practice(s) have you selected for implementation?
Scaffolding and paired talk. Better use of scaffolding to enable all students to access tasks with confidence, paired talk to enable students to explore ideas in a low-stakes environment. The key here is to have questions that give students a starting point for effective discussion that helps to clarify their ideas and progress their understanding.

What adaptations will you need to consider?
SEN students, demotivated students – a range of strategies to engage and build confidence. Adoption of paired talk routines to give them the structure within which to work to reduce cognitive load and prevent wasting time through repeatedly having to explain the process. Explicitly teach paired talk routines to build success.

Carefully consider how much and what sort of scaffolding is given for each task and how to gradually remove it to build independence.

What outcome(s) are you looking for? How will you know you are successful?
Greater independence and confidence when writing and speaking in Spanish. Students should able to produce longer, more detailed pieces of writing and have the confidence to extend spoken responses to include opinions and justifications alongside other details such as time phrases and sequencers.

Adopt and Prepare

What is your plan for delivery?
The initial starting point is to revisit instructions for paired talk, explicitly teaching students what is expected of them and rehearsing the process with them. Start to use paired talk each lesson to embed the process. Once the process is very familiar to students, with the corresponding reduction in cognitive load, start to introduce more demanding questions and more frequent brief talks.

What adaptations will you apply?
As a starting point, I will carefully consider the seating plan and whether it is conducive to pair work. There are some students who need extra support and will benefit from working with someone who can give them the encouragement and support they need to make the first steps. I shall also consider how I shall scaffold activities to enable all students to succeed. Initially, this will mean providing much of the work for students with, for example, a range of options that they can choose from to help build confidence, rather than expecting all of them to develop answers independently from the start. Repetition of the phrase or phrases to be used will support those students who struggle more with the written word and need to hear the Spanish several times before they feel confident repeating it themselves.

Here is an example of a write / pair / share task done with this class.

In this early example, students are given structures they can use for the whole task, including a range of opinions and justifications. As they become more confident, scaffolding for the second part of the task will be withdrawn bit by bit and they will be prompted to provide this extra detail independently. Eventually, this will be withdrawn altogether as these are structures and vocabulary that can be applied to any of the topics they study and will recur throughout the course. They are also essential for students to do well in their GCSE and need to be firmly embedded with all students.

Students will be explicitly taught the expectations for this sort of activity. Already they are becoming more familiar with the idea of those on one or other side of the room (window or door) sharing their answers first.

Deliver

Students have enjoyed this way of working and the majority seem to thrive on the low stakes pair work which takes the pressure off them as individuals. Some of them are beginning to speak with more confidence which then has an impact on their writing skills as the two are very closely aligned. Students who previously would opt out and say they don't know, have started to give short answers and even volunteer information.

There is still a way to go with bringing all students on board as one or two are still very reluctant to participate or even engage with the learning on any level.

The main challenge now is to keep pushing students to extend their answers and not fall back on the same phrases. For example, using a wider variety of adjectives to justify their opinions or becoming more confident giving opinions about past and future events as well as using the present tense. This is something that I can build into the resources to ensure students can practise, and become more confident using, a broader range of structures including past, present and future tenses and higher-level vocabulary.

The repeated use of these techniques has meant that students are now beginning to know what to expect in terms of how the task is carried out which removes some of the cognitive load and enables them to focus more fully on the requirements of the task itself. Students know that they will usually be asked to follow up their answers with more detail, and many are becoming more confident with, for example, giving justifications for opinions – a key requirement of the Spanish GCSE and something all students will need to master.

Sustain

How will you build this practice into your normal routines and ways of working?

I am responsible for developing the resources for the Spanish KS4 curriculum for the new GCSE. As a result, I will ensure that opportunities for paired talk are found throughout the course. Initially, this will be at least once a week, although I will, where possible, start to include it in each lesson.

Year 10s are already using this in their lessons and I shall continue to embed these routines in the year 11 curriculum as I develop it for next year. As a result, all students across KS4 Spanish will have these opportunities built into their lessons.

Holly Downer

Explore

I am particularly interested in driving the thought processes with my Y12 Film Studies class. I will be exploring the nature of questioning and crafting questions to drive thought in this group as for most of them, Film Studies has presented a new challenge, lexicon and stream of processes as well as a new mode of working as independent students in Sixth Form.

The links to the mental model of teaching with this group are to do with driving depth of thought and branching links of thought together across concepts. The connection between working memory and the cognitive load of new information is clearly in this example highly attuned, so removing this load or moving it into working memory so that it can be stored in long term memory for use across the range of films and concepts studied across the course is paramount. I have selected practices such as Write-Pair-Share and the use of summary to build on this form of questioning. A-Level Film Studies demands that students develop not only analytical skills but also an ability to link historical, aesthetic, and theoretical concepts across periods and styles. Students within this class have already studied six film products on the course and will be embarking upon an exploration of the Silent Film movement, and particularly the work of Buster Keaton in the context of American Silent Film Comedy. Without targeted strategies, students have at points struggled to retain key concepts or to connect stylistic features with broader theoretical frameworks, so I am looking to see how these strategies may be utilised to enhance thought, retention, and conceptual synthesis.

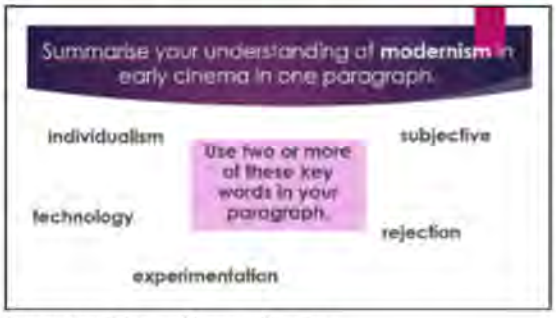
Only one of the students in this group have prior knowledge and learning of Film Studies at KS4 level, so adaptations to ensure stretch and challenge for that student will need to be considered as well as supporting those without that prior conceptual knowledge. Ultimately, students will need to be able to write an extended essay response to an exam question that is assessing their knowledge and understanding of the focus film product, as well as their application of this knowledge using film language, conceptual understanding across a self-established thesis question/line of reasoning. I am hopeful that by driving deeper thought is this focus on the application of knowledge in a written context that will become stronger for students and also give them adaptability and confidence within an exam context. Mock question responses and marking will ascertain whether this has been achieved, as well as student voice in terms of confidence.

Adopt and Prepare

I will be using these strategies to embed conceptual thinking early on in the study of American Silent Film Comedy unit so as to increase linked thinking across film concepts and ensure students are able to apply their understanding as we continue to analyse film products throughout the unit. I will be introducing them to the film concept of modernism as a cultural movement, its origins and its application within film as an art form at the start of 20th Century. After initial pre-learning activities undertaken by students around the definitions of modernism leading into lesson, I will deliver taught instruction/lecture-style information and then use Write-Pair-Share and summary writing to consolidate their understanding.

Example resources from pre-learning/taught instruction leading into driving thought strategies.

I will pose the carefully framed question: **What are the key concepts in modernism relevant to our understanding of early cinema?** and encourage students to make independent notes for no longer than 90 seconds. I will then ask them to pair with a table peer and reflect verbally on their findings. If appropriate, this stage in the process could also be utilised by the pairs to come up with applied evidence from their first film product in this unit, thereby recalling prior learning and applying this. The results will then be shared in whole group discussion. I will also then prepare a summary activity using key concept words to consolidate this activity.



Summary activity used for consolidation.

By encouraging the use of given key words, my intention is to remove some of the cognitive load required in recalling these new concepts and allow students space to synthesise and apply their understanding more specifically. This then allows students to model their own process of application which can be replicated in other areas of the course and learning. Eventually, this process will not need to be as heavily scaffolded as students will be able to generate these key concepts themselves and apply them readily.

Deliver

The sequence of activities as stated above were rolled out in lesson in early May 2025 and were very successful at introducing these concepts at a suitable moment in the delivery of this unit so as to encourage students to build their understanding and negate experiences of 'cognitive overload' with new concepts. In particular, the summary exercise was particularly effective at giving students something tangible/concrete from which to apply film language analysis later in the unit. Essentially students here are creating a thesis statement for a longer line of enquiry that they can illustrate using applied examples from their study of the set film products.

As a further development to this, I encouraged students to write their summaries on cue cards, which could then be redistributed anonymously and utilised as a teaching resource as the 'Do Now' in a follow up lesson. In the example above, students had to highlight the key words from memory in a bid to ensure their working memory was being used and allowing these key concepts to move into long term memory and therefore be used more readily in recall and application when faced with exam questions and response planning. As a possible extension to this next time, I could use these in a recall game like a kind of bingo where I read definitions of these terms out and students have to identify them from their definitions rather than the words themselves. They could also be used to add specific film examples from the set products to aid revision prior to exams.

Example of a student summary paragraph from the exercise detailed in this journal. Note the use of peer highlighting and ability to share cue card as teaching resource.

Sustain

I will continue to build the use of Write-Pair-Share, guided discussion and summary scaffolds into my work with A-Level Film Studies as a means of embedding and consolidating new concepts and the functionality of linking and applying these across the course, thereby driving the thought in my class deeper and more consistently. It is clear that in subjects that rely on subjectivity, but also are entrenched in unfamiliar concepts and the high level thinking required for successful application of these such as Film Studies or Drama at any Key Stage level, that driving thought is essential for students to build confidence, technique and accountability of their cognitive choices.

Catherine Eriksson

Explore

I aim to plan, document and reflect upon the journey taken to guide a group of year ten students through the requirements of successfully completing extended Geography exam questions.

Preparing Year 10 mixed-ability students to independently and successfully answer extended GCSE questions requires a strategic and structured approach that drives deep thinking. To foster genuine independence, we must explore and apply multiple stages of the mental model of teaching, ensuring that students develop the cognitive resilience and confidence necessary for success. This demands a robust curriculum that establishes a strong foundation and consistent strategies that secure student attention while providing a clear, and inclusive delivery.

Achieving independence in extended responses is not the result of a single intervention but rather a package of carefully integrated and progressive teaching strategies. Students must be immersed in a learning environment where key subject terminology is routinely reinforced through glossaries and active practice, utilising whole school strategies such as write-pair-share to channel thinking and create a foundation to build upon to succeed. Students should develop the ability to articulate confident judgements, using structured techniques such as 'this means that' to clarify their reasoning and form an argument. Exposure to model answers, alongside opportunities to compare, critique, and refine their own responses. Evidence from case studies and structured resources provide essential context, enabling students to construct well-supported, evidenced arguments.

Of course, adaptations need to be made to ensure that tasks are accessible to all learners. A confident understanding of students' SEN passports is essential to tailor support appropriately, ensuring that individual needs are met without compromising the depth of learning and level of outcome. Additionally, environmental and time factors that could influence focus levels must be considered, with structured approaches to engagement and participation that allow all students to fully access the learning. It is essential to tailor the environment to the needs of each individual students, applying access arrangements appropriately and consistently. Additionally, the year ten stage is a strong opportunity to refer any key assessment observations to ensure that students' needs are met for future assessment opportunities.

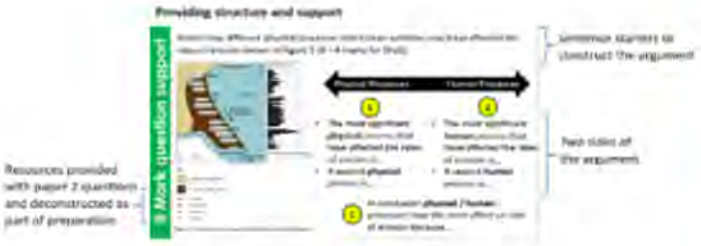
How do I know if I have successfully navigated the students through the process?

Success is measured through several key outcomes. Increased confidence in both planning and answering GCSE questions, with students demonstrating an established routine where they instinctively communicate their judgements without hesitation. The use of structured techniques, such as 'this means that' and referencing case studies as evidence, will become second nature, requiring little to no prompting. Additionally, overall attainment in extended responses should improve, with students producing more structured, well-supported, and higher-scoring answers. An argument should be clear throughout with balance being created with evidence of common phrases apparent.

Adopt and Prepare

To ensure students are fully equipped to answer extended GCSE questions independently, a structured plan for delivery is adopted. This approach will incorporate both long-term planning and the required curriculum content, ensuring that students are systematically prepared for success. A key feature of this plan will be the consistent use of WAGOLL (What A Good One Looks Like) examples, allowing students to see high-quality responses, analysing their strengths, and understanding what constitutes a fully developed and well-structured answer.

The initial focus will be on practising the planning stages, which are arguably the most challenging aspect of extended responses. Without a clear plan, students often struggle to structure their ideas, leading to disjointed or incomplete answers. By embedding explicit planning techniques, students will learn to break down questions, structure their responses logically, and ensure each paragraph contributes meaningfully to their argument (on the right).



Once a solid plan is in place, the process of writing becomes more straightforward, as students can confidently link their ideas into clear sentences and paragraphs.

A key foundation to the planning process is the use of assessment arrows (above) providing opportunity for students to commit to a judgement, plan their argument and extract evidence from prior learning and resources. These serve as visual cues and a strong routine to help students logically connect their points, ensuring their arguments develop in a coherent and reasoned manner.

Students will become familiar with key structures, phrases, and expectations, allowing them to approach extended responses with confidence and clarity. The use of a half-term timelines are essential in making progress visible, showing students where they are in their learning journey and how each stage contributes to their final target outcome. By seeing their development mapped out, students will gain a clearer understanding of their own progression and be able to reflect on their growth. Through this structured and transparent approach, students will develop the independence, resilience, and skills required to confidently plan and answer extended GCSE questions, ensuring success in both practice and final assessments.

Deliver

Upon reflection of delivering a series of set lesson sequences, several strengths emerged, along with areas for further improvement. A focused pace remained consistent, ensuring that students were engaged, focused and actively involved.

As the sequence evolved, evidence of success became increasingly visible (figure 2). Students demonstrated growing confidence in their approach to extended responses, with many voluntarily sharing their work—a particularly encouraging sign. I was especially pleased to see students leaving their books open, making their answers readily available for review. This demonstrated a sense of ownership over their learning and a willingness to engage with feedback.

Additionally, students showed improved accuracy in self-assessment and target setting, using assessment criteria (see figure 3 showing the adapted, student friendly level mark scheme below adapted from Edexcel publications) more effectively to reflect on their own progress. The reflective process also highlighted the need for longer term scaffolding with careful consideration to remove at the appropriate time once success is consistent.

Assess – Paper 2 and 3 (8 marks)

	Level 1 (1-3 marks)	Level 2 (4-6 marks)	Level 4 (7-8 marks)
AO3 (4 marks)	**Attempts** to apply understanding to deconstruct information but understanding and **connections are flawed.** An **unbalanced or incomplete** argument that provides **limited** synthesis of understanding. Judgements that are supported by **limited evidence.**	**Applies understanding** to deconstruct information and provide some **logical connections** between concepts. An **imbalanced argument** that synthesises mostly relevant understanding, but **not entirely coherently**, leading to judgements that are **supported by evidence occasionally.**	**Applies understanding** to deconstruct information and provide **logical connections** between concepts throughout. A **balanced, well-developed argument** that synthesises relevant understanding coherently leading to judgements that are **supported by evidence throughout.**
AO4 (4 marks)	Uses **some geographical skills** to select information with **limited relevance and accuracy**, which **supports few aspects of the argument.**	Uses **geographical skills** to obtain accurate information that supports **some aspects of the argument.**	Uses **geographical skills** to obtain accurate information that supports **all aspects of the argument**

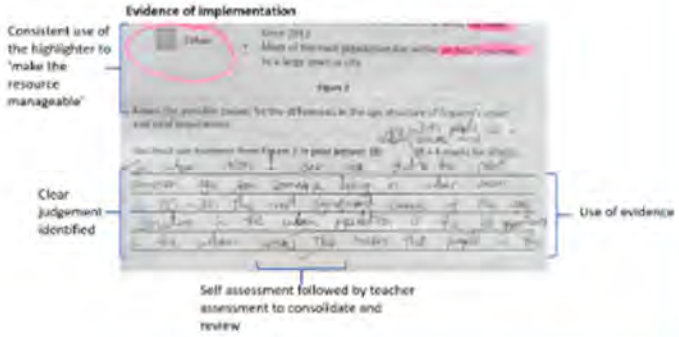
Level:	Mark:
Strengths	Targets

However, some challenges also became apparent. For some students, the questions remained particularly challenging, requiring additional support and scaffolding. This was provided through structured interventions, additional modelling, and targeted feedback, ensuring that all learners could access the tasks. One of the more difficult aspects was catering for all access arrangements within the class environment, as time and space constraints sometimes made it difficult to provide the level of individual support that some students required.

Overall, the programme demonstrated strong progress, with students actively engaging in the learning process and developing greater independence. Moving forward, further refinements will be needed to ensure that support structures continue to be tailored and responsive, particularly for students with additional access needs.

The success of the programme reinforced the benefits of utilising the mental model of teaching, which provided clear stages for students to move through, ensuring that learning was structured, progressive, and accessible. By breaking down extended responses into logical, manageable steps, students were able to build confidence at each stage, from planning and justification to linking evidence and refining their answers.

The importance of a detailed and structured approach was evident, as it allowed students to see their own progress and understand how each stage contributed to the final outcome (figure 4).



Sustain

The implementation of this programme has not only benefited students but has also provided valuable insights into my own teaching practice. The structured approach, built around the mental model of teaching, has reinforced the importance of breaking down complex tasks into clear, logical stages. Moving forward, this method will continue to shape my approach, ensuring that students develop independence through carefully scaffolded learning experiences. One of the key takeaways from this process has been the power of routine and consistency in fostering student confidence. This has always formed a core belief of my teaching practise but taking the opportunity to reflect on this has reinforced its importance.

By embedding structured planning techniques, using assessment arrows, and maintaining high expectations for justification and evidence use, students became more assured in their responses. Continuing to implement and refine these strategies will ensure that future cohorts benefit from the same clarity and structure, helping them to navigate the challenges of extended GCSE questions with increasing independence.

Additionally, the emphasis on adaptation and accessibility has highlighted the need for ongoing reflection and refinement. While the programme successfully supported many students, challenges around access arrangements and individual needs remain an area for development. In the future, I will explore more ways to integrate differentiated support within whole-class teaching, ensuring that all students—regardless of their starting point—can engage fully and successfully.

Ultimately, this opportunity to analyse and reflect has reinforced the long-term value of structured, high-expectation teaching. By consistently applying these principles, refining strategies based on student needs, and maintaining a focus on deep thinking and independent learning, I can continue to enhance both my own practice and student outcomes.

Jo Gibson

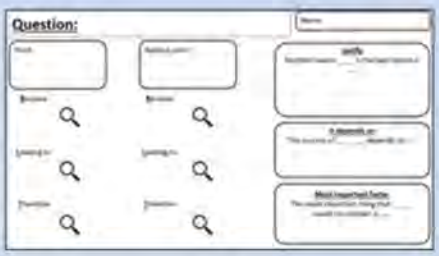
Explore

My focus for my teaching practice this academic year is GCSE Business year 10. Higher attainment in the 9 and 12 mark responses is my key focus as students need mastery of these skills to realistically get grade 7 or above. I am focusing on driving thought through written responses to extract material. This links to our mental model of teaching step 4 to push students to think hard and apply the theory to an extract. This requires a unique skill set of strong subject knowledge, appropriate information selection from an extract and writing a fluid response to the specifics contained in a question. To implement this successfully a staged approach is required. I received some feedback on StepLab when I was launching 12 mark evaluate exam answers with my target group. The feedback stated "A good activity that involved lots of independent thought and writing; but one that will need to be repeated regularly for them to master the skills" (ADB), a link was also provided about students providing evidence to back up the points they have made.

Reflecting on this and the need for students to engage with the extract I developed the scaffolding sheet I had been observed with. I was hoping this adaptation would ensure students were actively using the extract in their written evaluations to give a specific answer about 'that business, in that situation'. The success of this will be seen in the quality of future written evaluations for year 10.

Adopt, Prepare and Deliver

My plan for deliver is to structure the lesson where the starter activity involves some recall questions about key issues presented in an extract. Then project the updated scaffolding sheet. Students also have a copy of this to write on. The updated / with evidence sheet:



As a class, in discussion, we went through the question and decided on a point and balance point. Then students did a 'Write, pair, share' activity to complete the BLT (because, leading to, therefore) development of the points. They then find a quote or extract information that goes by the magnifying glass. They then plan their final conclusion using the JIM acronym (Justify, It depends on, Most important factor). Students then write up their full response at noise level one in timed conditions.

This scaffolding will be used for activities in year 10. It will then be removed in a stage process where it is replaced with peer assess structure cards, the one for evaluate is on the right:

These are printed and laminated. Students in year 11 will use them to annotate their own answers, others answers in peer assessment activities and in model answers of varying quality. Context / information or references to the extract will be highlighted so students can see whether this is throughout their answer as this is a requirement on a 12 mark evaluate question.
Students engaged well with the frameworks and using them to get their ideas down. They have shown good subject knowledge in context when using the framework. This activity needs to be repeated with the scaffolding to secure the students' knowledge and technique, as responses without the scaffolding are weaker for most students.

The positive impact of these strategies is that it enabled students to interact with the extract and use it in their evaluative responses. My assessment for learning activities have shown that current year 10 are not ready for the scaffolding to be removed so I intend to display the scaffolding sheet but not give a personal copy to students so they have access to the scaffolding image to help commit this to their working memory.

Sustain

I intend to build on this good practice for A level business. I launched 'Assess' and 'Evaluate' questions with exam toolkits that had lots of scaffolding and introduced the idea of 'chains of reasoning' using the board game Mouse Trap as a stimulus.

I also focused on the A level curriculum in terms of introducing new content in the double lesson each week to make sure I was presenting new concepts and ideas in a manageable and meaningful way. I then used the next single lesson to present an extract / case study around that topic. I used a similar framework model as GCSE so I projected one on the board and students had a personal copy. We did a 'write, pair, share' activity for students to come up with their two points and then it was developed into two PEACH

(Point, Effect, Apply, Context, However) arguments and a conclusion using JIM. Students now use this sheet as a planning mat and a visual aid only to commit this structure to their long-term memory.

Dannii Godfrey

Explore

Which class, niche group or student is your focus?
7KLS – History

Which practice(s) are you exploring and how do they relate to our mental model for teaching?
Scaffolding pair talk through write, pair, share.
Securing attention and driving thought for students to think hard.

Which practice(s) have you selected for implementation?
Driving thought through write, pair, share (WPS)

What adaptations will you need to consider?
Seating plan in order to suit paired work
Use of white boards to engage students further and ensure effective external thoughts
Scaffolding of responses to support students replying to questioning
Use of Volume Level to regroup class promptly
Planning scripts and follow on questions

What outcome(s) are you looking for? How will you know you are successful?
Confident and effective pair talk.
Students modelling high level responses in write, pair, share and able to respond to follow on questions.
Students responding promptly to Volume Levels in order to regroup and assess understanding

Adopt and Prepare

What is your plan for delivery?

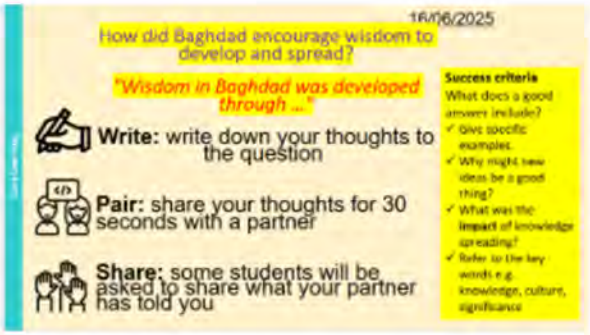
- Plan questions for every lesson to rehearse write, pair, share
- Create a script to introduce the task, and planned responses and follow up questioning
- Create resources to scaffold responses and support students
- Design cues to ensure pace is maintained
- Design a seating plan which engages all students
- Plan structure of questioning e.g. Window side start

What adaptations will you apply?

- Ensure that whiteboard, pens and rubbers are used in a consistent manner to limit disruption with a new resource. Students will need to be aware of expectations in relation to setting them aside when not in use
- Have a set WPS slide on each lesson's ppt to create a consistent approach
- Meticulous planning to allow for building on questioning

What resourcing will you use? – please share an example e.g. snip of do now or writing frame etc

- Sentence stems
- Write, pair, share slide on each ppt
- Follow on challenge questions
- White boards, pens, rubbers



What scaffolding will you use and how will it fade?

- Sentence starters
- Success criteria and key terms to support scaffolding
- Print outs of the slides for those who require further scaffolding and support
- As students become more confident in the use of WPS, sentence starters will be removed. The success criteria will continue to support students in meeting the requirements of the task.

How will you prepare the students? Do you have a script? Will you rehearse? Will you rehearse them?

Students will be prepared and rehearsed in order to create an effective routine. This will be done by organising and delivering multiple Write, Pair, Share activities in order to set expectations and success criteria. This may initially require multiple tasks in order to ensure the students are fully aware of the WPS expectations and desired outcomes. I will write a short scrip to support my rehearsal of delivery of the task, and also to support in predicting the necessary follow up questions.

Deliver

Initially, students found it challenging to communicate in pairs or a three if not sat with their peers. Regular rehearsal and expectation reminders were necessary in order to engage all students. With continued use of praise and modelling, students grew more confident in their approach and engagement.

To ensure that all students were engaged and productive, I would occasionally adapt feedback by asking students to share their peers' thinking about a topic or question. This improved student responses and participation as it set an expectation of 100% compliance and participation.

As WPS became common practice in all History lessons, the students quickly picked up the expectation of them and provided very thorough responses. The use of whiteboards ensured that all students were able to externalise their thinking in a very visual way. This in turn, ensured accountability.

Review and assess the impact of the implemented strategies.
Write, pair, share tasks are now common and well-rehearsed with this class. Students are able to externalise their thinking with confidence and have improved their communication skills. The department WPS slide has allowed for quick planning and adaptation in order to ensure that WPS features in all lessons. Students are also well rehearsed in ad hoc WPS if a misconception is identified and requires further teaching or thought. Furthermore, the tasks support in ensuring active listening has taken place as students are accountable for sharing their feedback on a targeted questioning basis.

Additionally, the use of whiteboards encouraged full student engagement in the task. The sentence starters supported students delivering higher quality responses and feedback. Students enjoy using the whiteboards and have evidenced maturity in their use. Students now know how to put whiteboards and resources aside at the end of the task in order to avoid further distractions. Overall, the WPS activities have been a positive addition to History lessons. Through planning these weekly WPS tasks, it has ensured that I consider questioning that will challenge students and drive thought, as well as complement their learning outcomes and keep the lesson well-paced.

Sustain

How will you build this practice into your normal routines and ways of working?
I have adopted this model in other Key Stage 3 lessons and have also introduced it to Key Stage 4. I intend on continuing to use this activity and delivery to externalise thought and guide students in independent and shared tasks. The example WPS slide will be used with all year groups to support delivery and model success criteria. A consistent approach will quickly see the WPS as common practice within all year groups.

Andy Green

Explore

I selected a Year 9 Design Technology class for this project, specifically focusing on Maritime lessons. Maritime at Key Stage 3 is a cross-curricular, STEM-based workshop where teams of up to four students work collaboratively on a design, make, and test challenge. My goal was to assess students' knowledge retention and application across Key Stage 3, with particular attention to individual engagement and cognitive depth, especially among middle and lower attainers. For higher attainers, I aimed to see how well they could apply their knowledge by crafting questions that drive deeper thought.

Having previously used strategies like Think, Pair, Share and Write, Pair, Share, I wanted to explore ways to deepen individual responses in writing. I introduced the Think Harder strategy, which emphasises cognitive challenge, metacognition, and student ownership of learning. This aligned well with our departmental mental model of creating a high-challenge, low-threat environment—where students are encouraged to participate actively and develop independence through structured, reflective thinking.

My intention was to use scalable questions that allowed students to self-select based on confidence and understanding. I hypothesised that over time, this would help students better absorb and apply maritime vocabulary and concepts in written form—crucial skills for GCSE success. The Think Harder approach also complemented our broader DT initiative of integrating more 'my opinion' tasks, helping students personalise their learning, strengthen cognitive connections, and improve written outcomes. I also wanted to observe whether students would increasingly opt for more challenging questions, developing the mindset required for written exam responses and ask themselves:

"Can I write an exam-style response and make meaningful connections within the question?"

Adopt and Prepare

We recognised the need for a department-wide strategy that ensured depth, consistency, and sustainability. During a departmental meeting, I introduced a shared template based on the Think Harder framework. This template offered a common structure for questioning and written responses, making it accessible for both staff and students.

The template included four tiers of questioning, aligned with GCSE DT command terms:

1. **Recall & Understanding** – Basic knowledge
2. **Application & Explanation** – Knowledge in context
3. **Analysis & Evaluation** – Deeper reasoning
4. **Creation & Problem Solving** – Higher-order thinking

Figure 1: Department-wide template for scalable question design aligned to Think Harder strategy

Figure 2: Collaborative planning session—staff generated lesson-specific questions rooted in their specialisms but underpinned by the shared theme of Safety.

We agreed to begin with a common theme—*Safety*—as a foundation for initial exploration across lessons. This ensured consistency in implementation and gave staff a focused starting point for adapting questions to their specific specialisms and contexts.

In my own lessons, I adapted the format further by embedding the question template into our **DO NOW** tasks. This provided a routine structure, helping students approach writing tasks with increased familiarity and confidence.

'Think Harder' - Year 9 Maritime			
STARTER	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**
What would you include when rating something?	What are the benefits of a hydrodynamic hull, with the straight line/ accuracy test?	How would you explain the benefits of bulkheads?	What advice would you give to a 'materials scientist' developing a new composite material?
	• Bow • Hydrodynamic • Aerodynamic • Bow wave • Buoyancy	• Superstructure • Hull • Cargo carrying • Capsize • sinking	• Materials properties • Lightweight • Buoyant • Density • Surface area
Each of these questions need completion. **Use the keywords and terms within your answers.**			

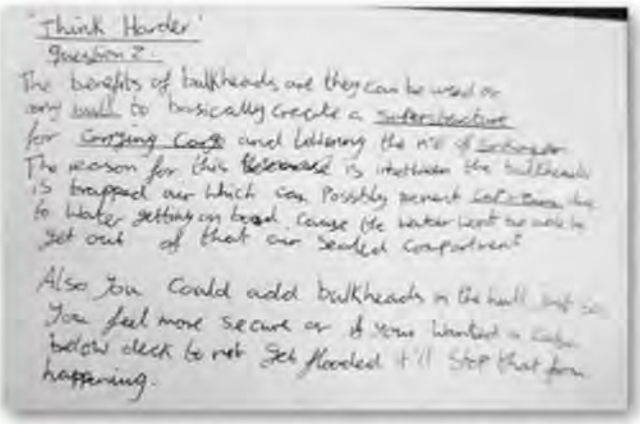
Figure 3: Example of DO NOW adaptation using the Think Harder framework.

Deliver

Students were explicitly taught the purpose of the Think Harder strategy and how it would benefit their learning. I introduced it with a script to establish expectations:

"In this lesson, you're going to think like detectives. It's not just about getting the right answer—it's about showing how you think. Some questions may have more than one right (or wrong) answer, and you'll need to explain your reasoning."

We regularly rehearsed sentence stems and reasoning structures, which helped students become more confident in using subject-specific vocabulary and explaining their thought processes.


'Think Harder'
Question 2
The benefits of bulkheads are they can be used as any wall to basically create a superstructure for carrying cargo and lowering the risk of sinking. The reason for this [illegible] is that between the bulkheads is trapped air which can possibly prevent [illegible] the water getting on board cause the water won't be able to get out of that air sealed compartment.

Also you could add bulkheads in the hull so you feel more secure or if you wanted a cabin below deck to not get flooded it'll stop that from happening.

Figure 4: Student response to the question 'How would you explain the benefits of bulkheads?' showcasing keyword integration and structured reasoning.

Delivery was consistent and well-received. While some students initially struggled with shifting from "getting it right" to "explaining their thinking," routines and modelling helped build confidence. Quieter students participated more, and class discussions became increasingly analytical and reflective.

The strategy supported our mental model by promoting challenge and resilience and moving students from surface recall to deeper learning. It also reinforced the importance of modelling, scaffolding, and maintaining high expectations.

Student choice of question revealed positive trends:

- **84%** selected Question 2 (Application & Explanation)
- **16%** selected Question 3 (Analysis & Evaluation)
- Some higher-attaining students chose to answer all three questions within the allotted time.

Figure 5: High-attaining student response answering all three levels of questions, demonstrating self-motivation and depth of understanding.

Sustain

To ensure sustainability and cross-curricular coherence, I plan to strengthen links with the English department. This collaboration will help refine the literacy aspect of our question design and ensure clarity and accessibility for all students.

Moving forward, I will develop the strategy by reflecting on the following questions:

How will I embed this practice into my routines?

- Integrate Think Harder questioning and reflection into weekly planning.
- Continue using metacognitive sentence stems and self-review checklists.
- Incorporate low-stakes tasks like "What's the best question we could ask about this?" to embed challenge as part of classroom culture.

How could I extend this approach to other groups or subjects?

- Adapt for other Key Stage 3 classes by adjusting complexity.
- Provide more structured scaffolding and modelling for lower-attaining groups.
- Apply Think Harder prompts in subjects like Science (practicals) or History (source analysis).
- Expand across the department to better align in-class writing practice with GCSE written exam requirements.
- Share information and ongoing results with whole academy staff in a common briefing format.

Figure 5: Science YELLOW written assessment piece.

I am keen to see how we can move the Think Harder framework we are developing to be a focused assessment piece akin to the Science YELLOW assessment sheets. This will align us with a linked subject and provide students with a connected approach to assessment across the two departments, building on the Science work to date.

Andy Gulliver

Explore

IA current and ongoing area of pedagogical focus is Year 10 GCSE Computer Science. Historically, students in this cohort have struggled with applying deeper learning and understanding to exam-style questions, particularly the extended response or “big mark” questions. To address this, we are exploring and embedding Think, Write, Pair, Share (TWPS) strategies to promote collaborative learning, deeper cognitive engagement, and metacognitive reflection.

Originally rooted in Think-Pair-Share, this approach has been adapted to include a "Write" stage. This adaptation is critical in Computer Science, where written reflection and structured articulation of thought can support long-term retention and structured exam responses. While traditional writing is not central to the subject, whiteboards have become a powerful low-stakes medium to implement this strategy and scaffold early thinking. Further, to enhance deeper learning and its impact is to also focus on solo taxonomy to identify a range of questioning techniques.

According to Rosenshine’s Principles of Instruction, effective teachers frequently check for understanding to:

1. Prompt elaboration and connection to prior knowledge, thereby strengthening long-term memory.
2. Identify gaps in understanding and reteach where necessary.

Mini-whiteboards serve as an effective formative assessment tool, allowing rapid whole-class feedback and fostering inclusion. Once routines are established, they empower students to share, discuss, and refine their thinking in real time. In addition, we use whiteboards on a roll for collaboration and extended thinking. The key outcome of this strategy is to improve student confidence, depth of thinking, and collaborative reasoning in preparation for “big mark” exam questions. The quality of student dialogue and written output will indicate progress in their conceptual understanding.

Adopt and Prepare

IInitial adaptations include:

- Whiteboard use as a visual thinking and writing tool.
- Flexible student pairings, changed regularly to promote wider collaboration and peer scaffolding.
- Emphasis on exam-context learning: e.g., digital technology’s ethical and moral implications.

This term, we are trialling a DO NOW starter and a WRITING FRAME structure to prompt deeper engagement:

- DO NOW Example (Whiteboard task):
- Define Ethical and Moral.
- Explain the difference between them.
- How are ethics relevant to emerging digital technologies?

These tasks lay the foundation for an extended response by encouraging students to think individually (Write), share ideas with peers (Pair), and refine or challenge their understanding collectively (Share).

Targeted Exam Focus:
The strategy targets AO1 (Knowledge and Understanding) before progressing to AO2 (Application). Initially, TWPS sessions emphasise core concepts like:

- Key technologies and terminology.
- Definitions and ethical implications.
- Cultural and societal impacts.

Only when students have developed confidence and fluency in AO1 will they move to AO2 tasks—applying their understanding to real-world scenarios, problem-solving, and structured exam writing.

To scaffold deeper thinking:

- Use question stems and writing frames – refer solo taxonomy and a range of questioning techniques to "prise open the box of thought"
- Embed routines such as Pen, Eyes, Posture (PEP) and 3-2-1 to ensure full student engagement and visible readiness to learn.
- Provide verbal models and evolving scripts that guide student talk and structured responses.

A key reflective question underpinning task design is:

- "What do I want my pupils to think hard about, and how can I prompt them to do this?"

Deliver

Implementation will be gradual, ensuring skills and content knowledge are built and revisited. Delivery is underpinned by:

- Clear routines for Write-Pair-Share using whiteboards.
- Explicit expectations and modelling of high-quality responses.
- Opportunities for peer feedback and group discussion.
- Use of low-stakes rehearsal followed by high-challenge exam-style tasks.

Pedagogy here is reflective and iterative strategies will be adjusted based on:

- Observed student engagement.
- Assessment outcomes.
- Differentiation and accessibility.

Collaboration with colleagues will support ongoing refinement, helping to share best practices and align approaches across the department.

Sustain

The goal is to embed deeper thinking and collaborative learning routines into daily classroom practice. While KS3 content differs in depth from KS4 and KS5, many of these routines (e.g., structured questioning, mini-whiteboard use, peer dialogue) are transferable and scalable. Current observations show increased engagement and willingness to take intellectual risks. Students understand this is a developing model, and their input is valued in shaping it. As the strategy becomes embedded:

- Students will internalise the structure of extended responses.
- TWPS will evolve from a scaffold to an instinctive habit.
- The practice will extend to KS3, where early habits of thought and collaboration can be nurtured.

By making thinking visible and collaborative, Think-Write-Pair-Share fosters both independent thought and peer-supported learning, ultimately helping students become more articulate, analytical, and exam-ready Computer Scientists. Thank you for taking the time to peruse this article.

Daniel Havard-Swan

Explore

Which class, niche group or student is your focus?

8TMW. This class has a mixture of different students including EAL, PP, LAC, SEN and medical needs. One student in this class I have undertaken R&R with. I am seeking to drive the thinking in this class in the hope of making my students confident and comfortable with writing independently by writing a PEEL paragraph.

Which practice(s) are you exploring and how do they relate to our mental model for teaching?

To allow thought to be driven effectively I need to ensure I have an effective curriculum in place, I have secured the attention of the whole class and the content and skills are delivered in an expert way. To support this History lessons, follow the 'Cowes Way' by allowing multiple opportunities for knowledge recall to develop the long-term memory of our students regarding core knowledge. Further to this we are building in 'write, pair, share' to structure, externalize and deepen thinking. To secure attention I ensure the whole class are engaged and to signal this I announce to the class 'pens, eyes, posture' with the countdown. If students are not following the 'Cowes Way' and our required behaviour expectations there are opportunities for a 'reset', for example, the student can step outside of the room and re-enter.

Which practice(s) have you selected for implementation?

The chosen practice is writing a PEEL paragraph supported by 'write, pair, share'. This is important for GCSE History. We need students to be writing PEEL paragraphs in 5 minutes to allow them to complete all of the questions and their different requirements. To prepare students for this core skill: point; constructing an argument, evidence; selecting evidence to support your argument which shows a detailed understanding, explain; analyse and evaluate information and link back to the question; reiterate argument and summarise key points. Some of the skills required for writing a structured paragraph are also driven forward with 'write, pair, share' where students are given a specific question to respond to with success criteria. The writing part to this task is part of writing a PEEL paragraph where students are constructing an argument, their 'point'. 'Pair and share', the sharing of ideas allows collaboration and for students to listen to and engage with other ideas which in turn might help their thinking and writing. While the focus of 'write, pair, share' is verbal oral confidence will hopefully build written resilience whereby students will have the skills and confidence to hopefully be able to write independently and fluently. This combined approach to constructing an argument and to think deeply about a topic via writing a PEEL paragraph and 'write, pair, share' is important as acknowledge by John Hough, he states, "historical writing is a formative process, allowing is to explore and support claims about the past and shape them into an argument"1.

What adaptations will you need to consider?
To complete the tasks, I needed to be mindful of students with SEN, processing issues and those who are anxious of making mistakes. These students need to be supported and encouraged to have a go at writing and committing their thoughts to paper in an environment where it is okay to make mistakes and it is okay to struggle with tasks. I am increasingly seeing the aforementioned students in 8TMW engaging with written tasks and are more focused. SEN students in 8TMW are sat at the front of the room so I can easily access them to support them with tasks. In the recent lessons we have had a VI Form student in the class. I have guided her to support SEN students in the front row. All of these students welcome and respond well to the additional support. It is now recognized that explicit instruction is an important part of writing tasks in History lessons, rather than leaving such tasks to chance. This involves purposeful planning.2 To facilitate explicit instruction I needed to guide the thinking of my students. This included scaffolding to help support their historical writing with sentence starters to facilitate thinking, modelling my thinking to talk students through the task, and colour coding to show the different parts of a PEEL paragraph. Rachel Ball acknowledges the importance of scaffolding by stating that "effective use of scaffolding empowers students... that they can reach the same destination as their peers".3

What outcome(s) are you looking for? How will you know you are successful?
The measures of success for this will be students are able to write a paragraph, complete an extended piece of writing, working towards writing a PEEL paragraph, using detailed information, evidence of explain sentence starters and being able to do sustained independent writing. Some students will struggle to be able to write independently and need more support than others. Further to the important writing element to externalize thinking the accompanying 'write, pair, share' task allowed students to share their thinking. And by listening to other students, they could make additional notes in their books. This process builds a classroom which supports achievable targets and a space where ideas can be shared and developed by cold call questions and extended questioning. I am pleased that some students who were previously reluctant to engage are now asking for help and attempting tasks, notably the student who I have had an R & R meeting with. This is further supported by focusing on positive comments in written reports.

Adopt and Prepare

What is your plan for delivery?

The plan is to prepare students for what a PEEL paragraph is, how we approach writing a PEEL paragraph, what is involved in the process and why this important for driving thought. Students need to be aware of the different parts of the PEEL paragraph and how this is structured. This allows thinking to be driven forward by developing answers to analyse and explain points.

What adaptations will you apply?

The necessary adaptions will be a clearly structured approach to being with, with lots of support and guidance. Explicit instruction seeks to build clarity and confidence for the purpose of the task and support initial student engagement. Moving forwards in the long-term I would work towards removing scaffolds as students gain confidence and comfort with writing a PEEL paragraph. This would allow this task to be more independent, and less teacher led. For more able students additional challenging elements to the tasks are given to seek to further drive their thinking, analysis and evaluation.

What resourcing will you use?

For this task students will need explicit instruction to guide them. This will involve how to write a successful PEEL paragraph (see figure 1), sentence starters in a structured format to plan/guide their thinking (see figure 2) and an example PEEL paragraph to show students what they are working towards (see figure 3).

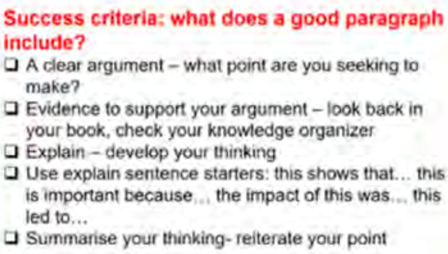


Figure 1: lesson slide - success criteria list to remind students of what the task requries

Figure 2: lesson slide - sentence starters and the structure of writing a PEEL paragraph

Figure 3: lesson slide - a colour coded example answer of a PEEL paragraph

What scaffolding will you use and how will it fade?

To embed writing a PEEL paragraph and for students to feel confident and comfortable with doing so will require time and practice. This is important to facilitate the fluency of students' writing and to build upon their prior learning.4 Initially a lot of scaffolding, prompting, encouragement and support will be required; including, sentence starters, example answers colour coded and clear success criteria to guide students (see figures 1-3). With practice and overtime, some of the prompts and scaffolds can be removed for example, a switch from a full example answer to one paragraph or a partial answer, less sentence starters and asking students to create a success criteria list rather than showing them one in advance. This would be reviewed at intervals to check if students are working at the expected level and if additional support and prompts are required.

How will you prepare the students? Do you have a script? Will you rehearse? Will you rehearse them?

I will prepare students for the task by explaining what a PEEL paragraph is, how it drives their thinking and extends it, I will talk them through how to write a PEEL paragraph, and what knowledge is required for each part of the PEEL paragraph.

Deliver

Evaluate the delivery.

I will review how students respond to my instruction and if they understand my verbal questioning. Write, pair, share is a useful and collaborative way to check students understanding and the use of 'cold call questioning'. This also seeks to build confidence with subject knowledge and core skills. I would review the writing being produced by the students to see where they are up to on their journey of writing a PEEL paragraph. I would consider if students were able to construct an argument (point), what evidence are they including in their paragraph, if are they able to explain their points (using explain sentence starters) and can they reiterate their key points (link back).

Review and assess the impact of the implemented strategies.

I would review the following:

- Are students able to write independently?
- Do students have the confidence to be able to work independently?
- Are students able to answer the question? Complete the task?
- Are students able to write in detail?
- Do students have the subject knowledge to be able to construct an argument and have the necessary evidence?
- Are students working at/towards being analytical? – Explaining their points and consider historical significance
- Are students using explain sentence starters? For example, the impact of this was... this led to... this shows that... this is important because...

Initially students in 8TMW were not receptive to the ideas of writing a PEEL paragraph. Moving forward more students seem to be developing confidence and resilience with their writing. They are referring to their knowledge organizer, asking for help if needed and they are developing their core subject knowledge. Cold calling and extended questioning show that most students in 8TMW have understood the core subject knowledge. Moving forward analysis and explanation still need support. Most of the class can outline their point/argument and support this with evidence. Most students in 8TMW still need guidance and prompting to explain their points and to use explain sentence starters. I do so verbally or write comments in green pen in their book.

Tie back into the mental model of teaching.
The design of the History curriculum is seeking to get students to write in PEEL paragraphs. The lesson slides are carefully scaffolded in the hope that these skills will transfer into their long-term memory via explicit instruction and practice, so students feel confident and enabled. To ensure this task is delivered and completed successfully I will require the attention of all students. To drive this forward I will use the queue of 'pens, eyes, posture' to signal to my students that their attention is required. If needed I would remind students of why their attention is needed and important to maximise their chance of success. The teaching of writing a PEEL paragraph is chunked and supported via scaffolding in the hope that all students are able to access the information and engage with the task. This further seeks to support cognition and to not overload their thinking. To ensure students remember my guidance and instruction I will use questioning to ask what does PEEL stand for? What are our explain sentence starters? What is the core knowledge we need for this task? Thus, questioning will be used for the purpose of memory recall and to check understanding.

Sustain

To get students on board with writing and critical thinking I seek to continuously acknowledge, support and reward good responses via names on the rewards board, giving reward points. This would also include giving higher awards such as a postcard, Cowes Commendation or the Resilience award. Students in 8TMW are keen to show me their work and proud of the work they are doing. To foster this, I seek to extend their writing and deepen their thinking by asking them to use explain sentence starters and explain their points. I am working on a resource to be stuck in all KS3 exercise books (see below figure 4) about how to write a PEEL paragraph and how to consider/measure historical significance. Students would be reminded and prompted to look at this sheet (stuck on the inside front cover of their exercise book) so it is accessible.

Figure 4: a sheet to be stuck at the front of exercise books on how to write a PEEL paragraph and how to judge historical significance

How could you implement with other classes/groups/students?
To facilitate writing a PEEL paragraph with other classes I would need to be aware of the different types of students and learning needs in the class. I would check Pupil Passports and review where adaptations and additional/less scaffolds are needed. After the delivery of the lesson, I will review what worked well and what needed amendment.

Michael Hoare

Explore

The class I have chosen to explore write-pair-share with is a year 12 economics group. There are 18 students in the class from a range of backgrounds and educational attainments. The class is more varied in academic outcomes than classes I traditionally teach in Maths due to setting. However, they are all very able students. Due to the nature of the subject students are regularly given time to discuss topics, but the level of discussion between students varies greatly. The subject has a variety of components and is essentially assessed in 4 ways: knowledge, analysis, application and evaluation. By introducing write-pair-share in lessons I want the students in my class to share more of their ideas around the higher-level assessment criteria (evaluation and application). I want the pupils to apply the economic concepts they are being taught to real life scenarios and also think harder about the limitation of economic policy and theory. I think by discussing the ideas pupils will feel they have more ownership of the ideas and will more likely remember them. I also think it will make the lessons more interesting for them and for me.

Adopt and Prepare

In order to ensure that the students knew what was expected of them I decided to adapt my teaching slides by introducing a banner as a clear indicator of the task. Along the right hand-side of the presentation I introduced a banner with the writing "write- pair- share" on. This was in addition to the existing banners I had in slides indicating a "thoughtful task". My reasoning for this was to make the adoption of the write pair share easier and more structured for the pupils as they were already aware that slides with the "thoughtful task" banner meant they were expected to think about a task to share their ideas or write something down.

I chose not to explicitly write sentence stems on the board but the overall question was always stated on the board. In some tasks I would put clues or prompts to reduce cognitive load or make recall more effective. Often my plan in lesson was for the students to discuss the analysis or evaluation independently and not the knowledge of the topic so by sometimes giving prompts or the base knowledge I was planning to ensure students could build upon this. I did plan sentence starters before the lessons and wrote notes in my PowerPoints so I knew what to say in order to provide some scaffolds.

Deliver

In terms of delivery with the write section I aimed to encourage students to use a mixture of whiteboards and their own workbooks. Whiteboards when the topic of the pair-share was more ambiguous or when pupils were more likely to make mistakes and their own books when information discussed was important recall knowledge. While students were writing I circulated and helped some pupils who I believed required a little extra help.

For the pair section: the class was already sat mostly in pairs, there were no particular barriers to them talking to each other. To encourage a structured and accessible discussion between the peers I gave direct instructions to say timings and who went first, I used "window side" and "door side" as verbal indicators. I tried to keep timings short, around 45 seconds per pupil. While pupils were sharing their ideas I continued to circulate and talk to groups I thought needed more help.

For the share section I asked pupils to share ideas from their whiteboards where applicable. I would have already got an idea of what they had written from circulating and then from seeing the whiteboards again from the front. This allowed me to address misconceptions or key learning points. I also tried to insist on full proper sentences and correct subject specific language.

Sustain

Students seemed unconvinced by the new approach at first and resorted to the "normal" discussion structure we had worked on. This saw inconsistent levels on the "write" produced. Some students used bullet points as we often used before. Some students didn't use correct English and others skipped this step and moved straight on to the pair step. The pair step was also inconsistent at first and some pairs appeared to have conversations rather than taking their turns. After a little take up time both of these elements improved and students felt more comfortable talking about what they had written. Pupils also appeared more confident in sharing their answers with me than previously. However, it does need to be added that none of the pupils had any experience of the subject before the beginning of the year and they have all been gaining confidence throughout the year as they learn more. In terms of going forward this should be relatively easy. I have adapted some of my PowerPoints already so they will be ready to go for next year's group. I will need to continue adapting other lessons for the future too. With the class, I think it is a case of just updating the sign posting and consistently using write-pair-share. With future classes I actually think adoption may be easier: for one thing I am more experienced, the next class should also come in with most of the students having experienced write-pair-share in some capacity and I won't be teaching them a different less structured discussion style that they then have to adapt away from partway through a year.

Craig Mussell

Introduction

In recent lessons with my Year 7 science groups, I trialled a new approach aimed at improving student responses to extended, written answer questions. I had noticed that many students found these types of questions challenging, often due to uncertainty about how to structure their answers or a lack of confidence in recalling key content. To address this, I introduced the write-pair-share strategy as a way of preparing students before they tackled long answer tasks. This report outlines how I implemented the approach, the rationale behind it, and the positive impact it has had on student outcomes.

Rationale for the Strategy

Long answer questions in science serve an important role in assessing students' ability to explain concepts, justify ideas, and make links between different areas of knowledge. However, many Key Stage 3 students struggle with this format. In my Year 7 classes, I had observed that while students could often recall individual facts, they found it difficult to organise these into coherent, developed explanations. They also lacked confidence in approaching these questions independently.

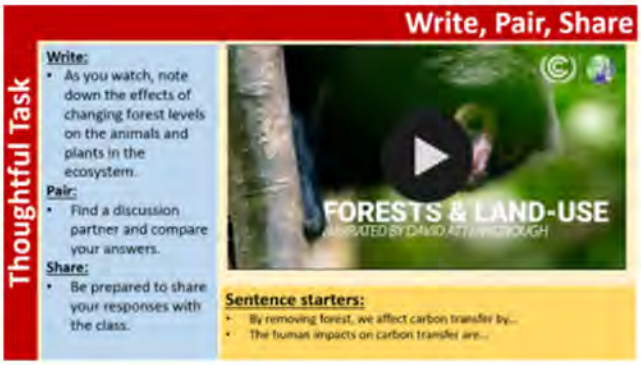
I selected write-pair-share as a preparatory activity to support retrieval, encourage discussion, and build familiarity with key concepts. The strategy promotes active engagement with content in a low-stakes way, and allows students to articulate their understanding before committing to a full written answer. In particular, it aligns well with oracy and literacy, where structured talk is used to develop thinking, and with the importance of retrieval practice in embedding knowledge in long-term memory.

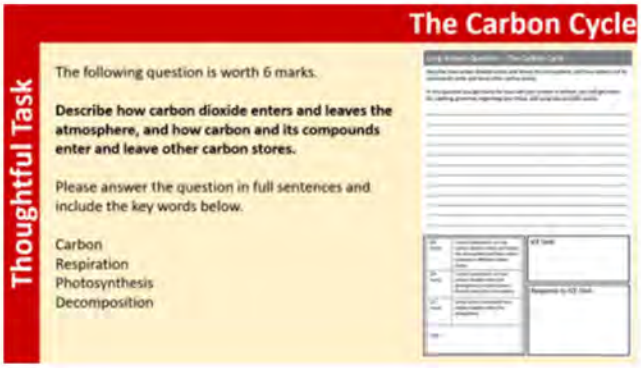
How the Strategy Was Implemented (including an example)

The write-pair-share activity was used as a pre-writing tool, taking place before students attempted their extended answer tasks. Rather than asking students to launch straight into a long response, I first posed a focused question, video for summary or set of prompts designed to review the key content they would need. For example, ahead of a question on the carbon cycle, students were asked to write individually whilst watching a video clip on a forest ecosystem, and how altering it impacts on carbon transfer.

Once they had written their initial thoughts, students were paired up and asked to compare answers for 30 seconds each. They discussed which key ideas they had both included, and where they might have gaps. I circulated during this time, prompting discussion and helping to clarify misconceptions. Pairs then shared their thoughts with the class, and we built a model answer together using student contributions.

To support this process, I provided scaffolds such as success criteria, diagrams, videos or vocabulary banks. This ensured students could focus on selecting relevant information and organising it clearly, rather than being held back by uncertainty over terminology or structure. The activity was brief —typically 5-6 minutes in total—but provided a valuable foundation before moving on to the full long answer question.





Observed Impact

The introduction of write-pair-share as a preparatory activity led to noticeable improvements in both the quality and confidence of students' written responses. During the individual writing phase, I observed increased focus and willingness to engage with the question, likely because the task felt more manageable. In paired discussions, students were often able to self-correct and deepen their understanding by hearing a peer's perspective. For example, one student who had initially stated that plants give out carbon dioxide in the carbon cycle was able to revise their summary ahead of attempting the full long answer response.

When it came to writing their full answers, students produced responses that were generally better structured, more accurate, and included more relevant scientific vocabulary. I noted an increase in the number of students achieving the criteria for 3-4 or 5-6 marks for explanation-based questions. In one class, over 70% of students improved their score on a six-mark question after the introduction of the new strategy, compared with their previous attempt. Much of this was due to feeling like they had the required tools to convert their thoughts into written sentences.

Student Voice

Feedback from students suggested they valued the write-pair-share process. Several commented that it helped them "remember what we had done before" or that "talking to a partner made it easier to know what to write." One student said, "It's not as scary to do a big question when we've talked about it first." This aligns with my own observations that students appeared more confident and engaged when writing independently after the activity.

Reflection and Next Steps

Overall, the use of write-pair-share has had a positive impact on students' ability to tackle extended response questions. The approach provided them with a structured opportunity to consolidate key content, clarify misunderstandings, and practise organising their ideas before attempting more formal written work. While time can be a constraint in lessons, the short duration of the activity means it is a practical addition to regular teaching without significant loss of curriculum coverage.

In future, I plan to embed this strategy more systematically across different science topics, and explore its potential with other year groups, including Key Stage 4. I am also considering integrating it with peer-assessment, where students could use the shared ideas to evaluate each other's responses against success criteria. It is hoped that use of the marking criteria would provide students with the knowledge of how to access the upper mark bands in these long answer responses. By building students' confidence and supporting their thinking, write-pair-share has proved to be a valuable tool in improving the quality of extended writing in science.

Bethaney Padden

Explore

My focus for my CPD journal has been on students across my year 9 and 10 classes. I have focused my attention on those students who try to opt out of cold calling, wait for the answers to do now starters to mark in red or feel they lack confidence when tasked with an independent task like 6 marks longer answer questions.

Using embedded strategies, I explored ways to reduce the cognitive load for students. Referring to the mental model of teaching I developed my practices to link with it.

1. Design curriculum – building in opportunities to check understanding with lots of repetition to assist with recall of prior knowledge.
2. Secure attention – consistent use of "3 Pens 2 eyes, 1 posture" to ensure students are engaged as well as "reminder, warning, consequence " to ensure students are clear on what is expected as well as consequences for not following instructions.
3. Expert delivery – use of lots of different techniques to secure scientific key concepts e.g. practical activities, videos, spelling tests, dual coding, labelled diagrams
4. Drive thought – my focus for this journal, ensuring there is a "no opt out" policy when it comes to trying do now questions, cold calling questions or practice exam questions. It is not ok to leave questions blank, the expectation is you use your book or the resources you have to access the work. I will support with verbal and written sentence starters as well as asked other students to build an answer together.
5. Assessment for learning – use of both formative and summative assessment to check learning and understanding. Self-assessment in red pen and ICE tasks to improve on teacher marked work.
6. Consolidate – Most importantly, can I get students to retain their knowledge moving forward, this is the most difficult one, as of yet I am finding this one the most challenging to achieve. This could be when scaffolding and resources are removed and students attempt questions closed book.

Practices I have chosen to implement include: open ended questioning, write pair share, linking to real life scenarios e.g. production of food salt crystals and creating a culture of curiosity where students want to know more about these scientific concepts.

I will adapt resources to best suit the ability of the students in front of me and have different expectations for each student. All students will have access to the same work to keep expectations high, however, some will be provided with more scaffolding and others will be expected to extend their work further e.g. linking calculations to previous physics equations we have learnt about.

I am looking to increase independence within year 10, and confidence in using their notes to retrieve key knowledge. I will check to see if I am successful using cold calling and scanning to check engagement starting with students who are reluctant to complete the work independently.

Success will be evident if students can consolidate this learning without the use of their books and independently without scaffolding from me. The mindset list above will act as a checklist for success.

Adopt and Prepare

I have planned lessons based on what students will be thinking about rather than which activities will be completed. Retrieval practice is already embedded into the start of the lesson (do now) however, not all students buy into this currently and some have a fear of failure so wait to fill the answers in. I want to continue to embed a culture of learning with low stake quizzes and questioning needs to include high order questions in Bloom's taxonomy e.g. explain why rather than just define or what or recall to check the depth of understanding too. Write pair share, use of scanned model answers to model thinking process will support this.

I will have to consider the student's individual circumstances, how they are feeling, how the environment may be affecting them. The working memory has a limited capacity. When considering tasks, the cognitive load of the students needs to be a consideration. When teaching year 10 students, they found it beneficial to use guided timings and use of knowledge organisers. Building in the "silent times" in lessons to drive pace for both teaching and learning.

Metacognition – this one I feel is a challenging one for the lower ability KS4 students I have in mind. They often lack the confidence needed to drive their own independent thought and study. By using modelled thinking and answering and slowly removing sections of these scaffolds, moving to sentence starters, word banks and independence I am hoping to see this improvement. By encouraging students to buy into the "why" we do e.g. timed exam practice, self-assessing in red pen. It is important there are sentence starters, sentence stems, keywords available for students to use.

Success will be seeing an improvement while removing scaffolding. I will need to concentrate most on fading the scaffolds. I have found that students will struggle to independently complete exam questions if the scaffolding remains. I will share the importance of the activity with students, using timing to make it pacey and use a positive environment of write pair share to build confidence in students before the task so they will able to tackle it.

Deliver

The importance of enough time to plan, discuss and reflect for students is vital to achieve quality work. Then students are able to improve the quality of their written conclusions including a wider variety of scientific vocabulary. Second time of carrying out the separation technique practical with a different salt, students could confidently carry out the experiment with little input from myself and the student who received a sanction for not following instructions last lesson now verbally and in writing explained the importance of tying hair up and only turning the gas tap on when the flame is there.

Figure 1 and 2 mid-topic review was successful, longer answer question did have a plan which included lots of keywords however, the student still did not include as much as required. Good to see the student responding to the ICE tasks effectively.

Figure 3, 4 and 5 shows a year 10 student's checklist, notes, longer answer question then exam style questions. It was great to see the student become more comfortable with tier 3 scientific vocabulary, it is clear to see they are now confident with the order of the neurons however, they were still reliant on sentence starters and a modelled example to achieve all parts of the reflex arc. When the student attempted the shorter exam style questions it was great to see sustained progress. Figure 6 shows another example of another student who picked out independently the need to use the word impulse instead of message and self-assessed well. Figure 7, 8 and 9 are examples of year 9 work demonstrating the use of dual coding, circling of keywords and self-assessment. I was happy with student recognition of the importance of keywords and at the time found my model answers beneficial for students especially when I showed just the annotation of questions as a starting point of my lower ability students. However, upon reflection, students were still not showing working out how I would expect and not all answers were improved in red pen to the standard I would expect.

Sustain

Moving forward, I think I should ensure there is more scanning and live marking to improve the quality of student responses immediately. Figure 10 showed my most recent success with a year 10 group which is starting to show sustained progress. Students are being encouraged to use evidence-based reasoning e.g. explain why sand is separated by the paper but not the salt based on what they have learnt previously. Students are actively taking part in their learning. It has been great to see an improvement in confidence in year 10 students.

Appendix

Figure 1: Carbon cycle attempt 1 and 2 and plan for longer answer question (year 10)

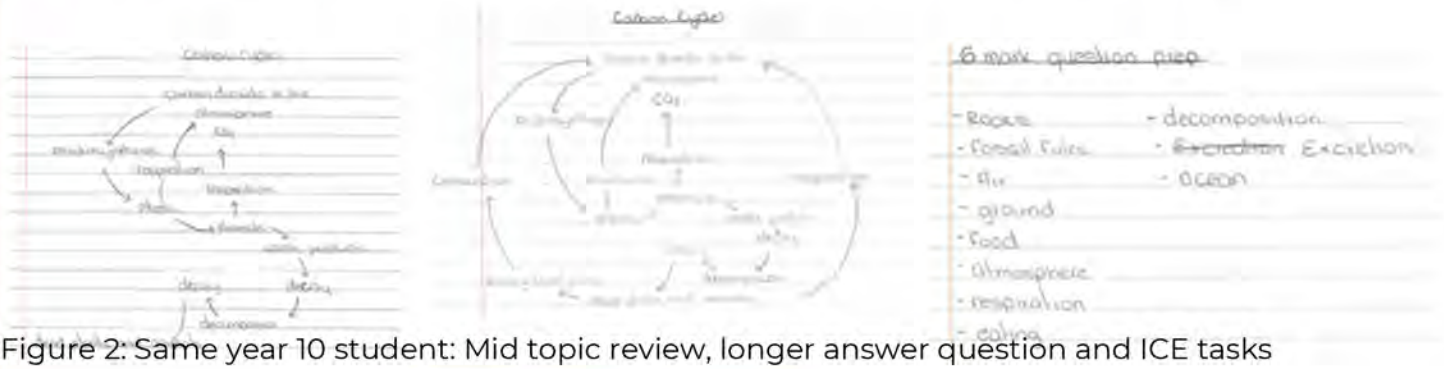


Figure 2: Same year 10 student: Mid topic review, longer answer question and ICE tasks

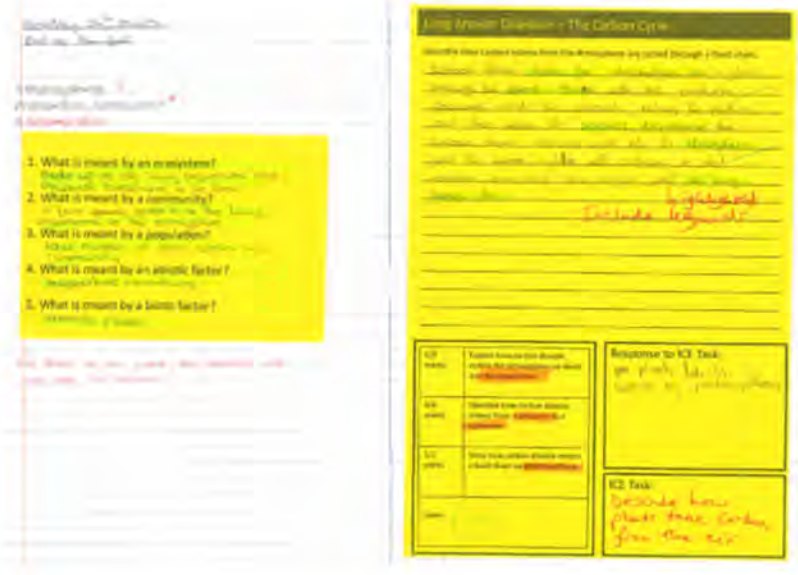
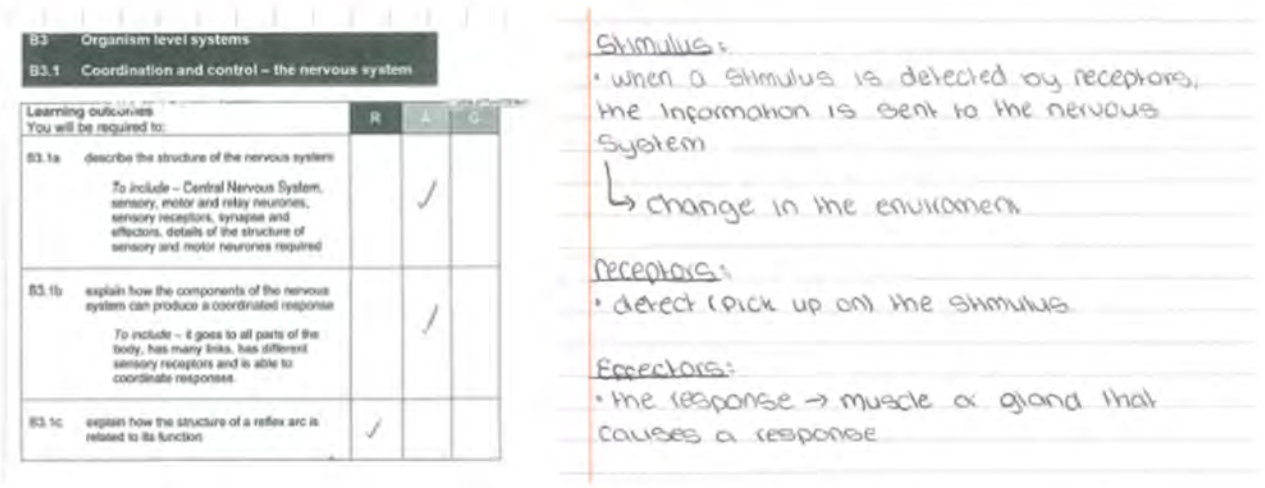


Figure 3: Self assessment of Biology topic in preparation for mocks and notes on keywords to prepare for longer answer question



B3 Organism level systems

B3.1 Coordination and control – the nervous system

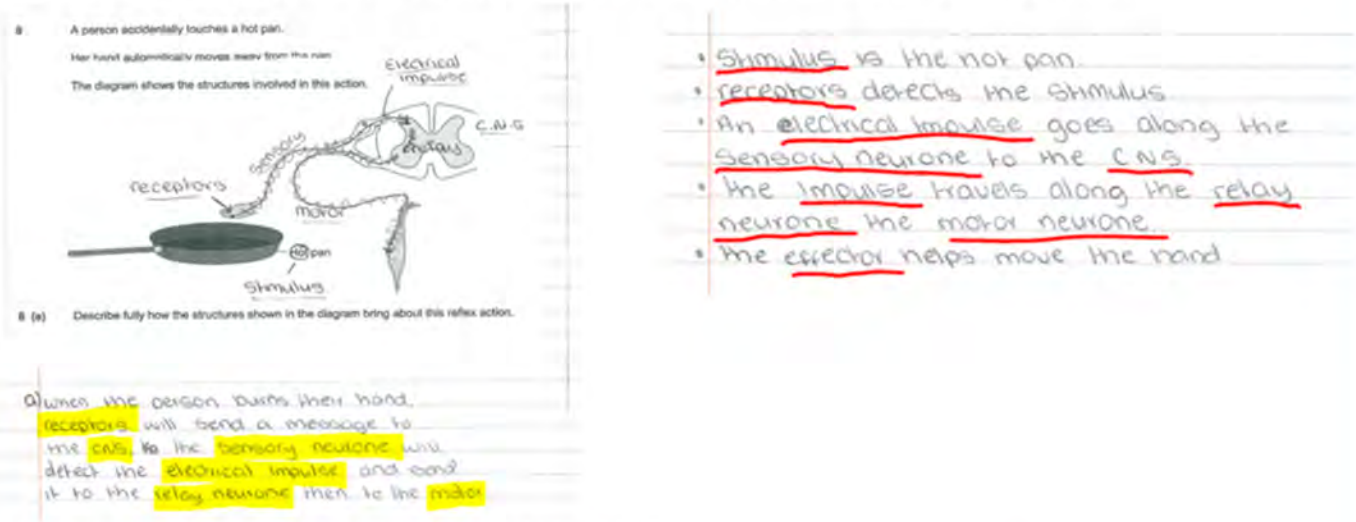
Learning outcomes You will be required to:		R	A	G
B3.1a	describe the structure of the nervous system *To include* – Central Nervous System, sensory, motor and relay neurones, sensory receptors, synapse and effectors, details of the structure of sensory and motor neurones required		✓	
B3.1b	explain how the components of the nervous system can produce a coordinated response *To include* – it goes to all parts of the body, has many links, has different sensory receptors and is able to coordinate responses		✓	
B3.1c	explain how the structure of a reflex arc is related to its function	✓		

Stimulus:
- when a stimulus is detected by receptors, the information is sent to the nervous system
  - ↳ change in the environment

Receptors:
- detect (pick up on) the stimulus

Effectors:
- the response → muscle or gland that causes a response

Figure 4: Longer answer question attempt then with improved bullet point version using model answer on board



8 A person accidentally touches a hot pan.

Her hand automatically moves away from the pan.

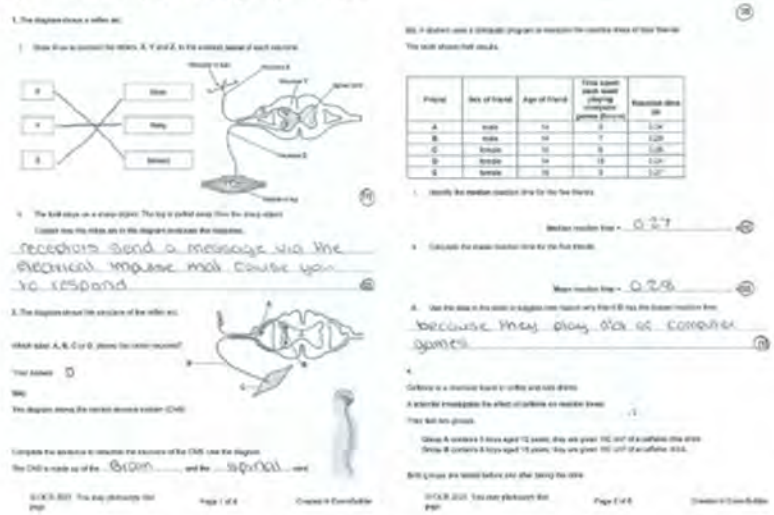
The diagram shows the structures involved in this action.

8 (a) Describe fully how the structures shown in the diagram bring about this reflex action.

a) when the person burns their hand, receptors will send a message to the CNS, to the sensory neurone who detect the electrical impulse and send it to the relay neurone then to the motor

- Stimulus is the hot pan
- receptors detects the stimulus
- An electrical impulse goes along the sensory neurone to the CNS
- the impulse travels along the relay neurone the motor neurone
- the effector helps move the hand

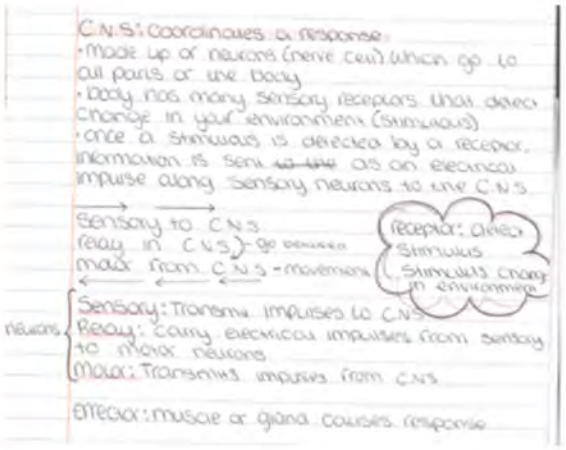
Figure 5: Exam style questions completed independently by student

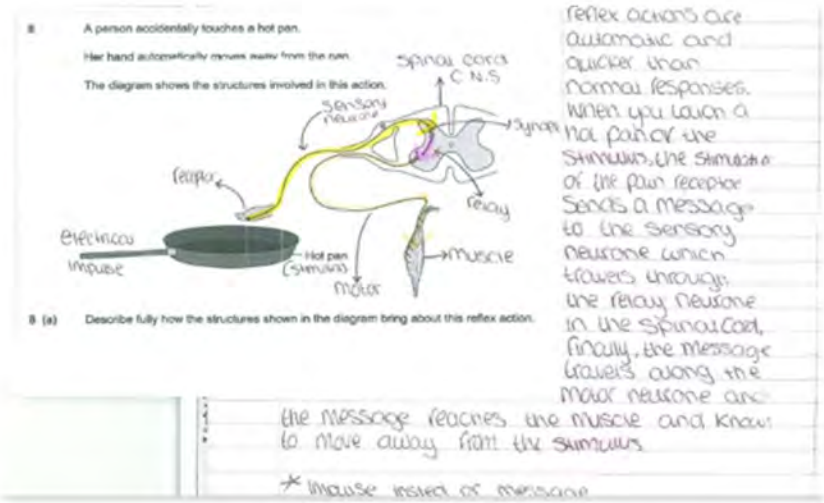


receptors send a message via the electrical impulse and cause you to respond

because they play lots of computer games

Figure 6: Second year 10 student example demonstrating notes, 6 marks question and exam practice questions





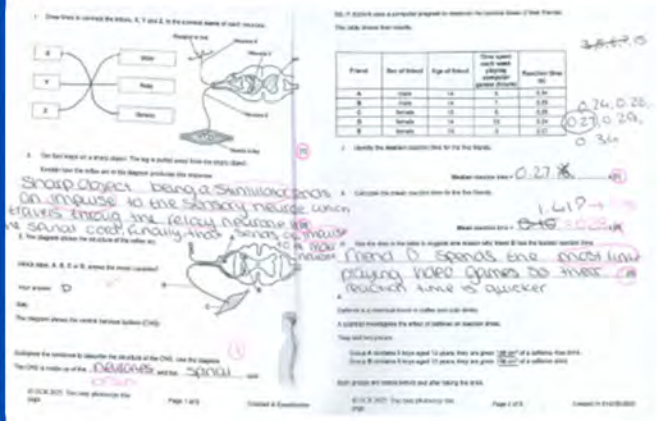
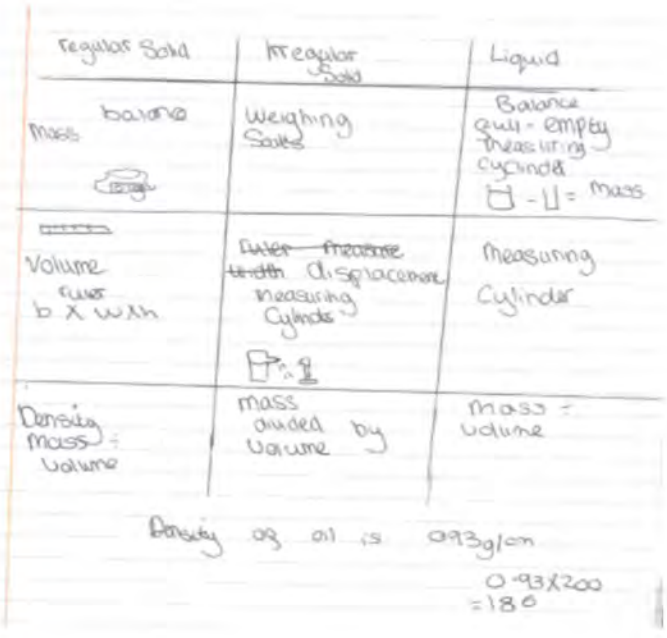


Figure 8: Year 9 student example of circling important keywords in answer.

Figure 7: Year 9 student example of dual coding to summarise practicals to find density of various substances



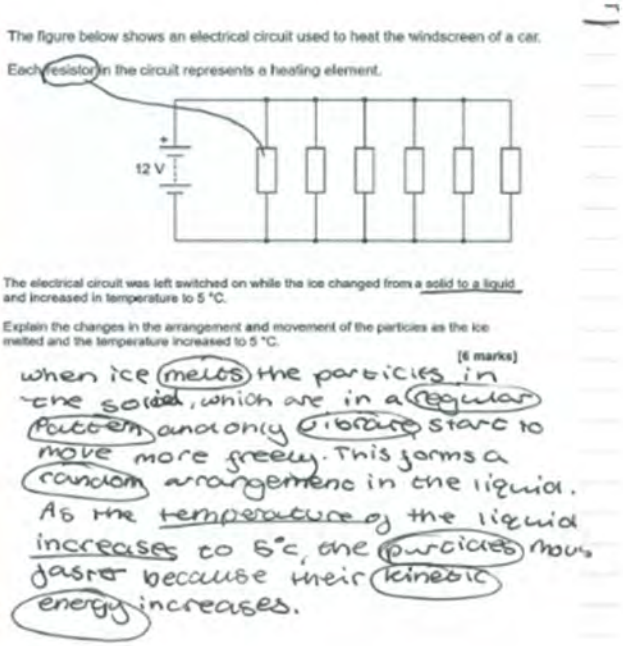


Figure 9: Year 9 student's work example self-assessed in red pen as well as the teacher model answers I used to support students during self-assessment

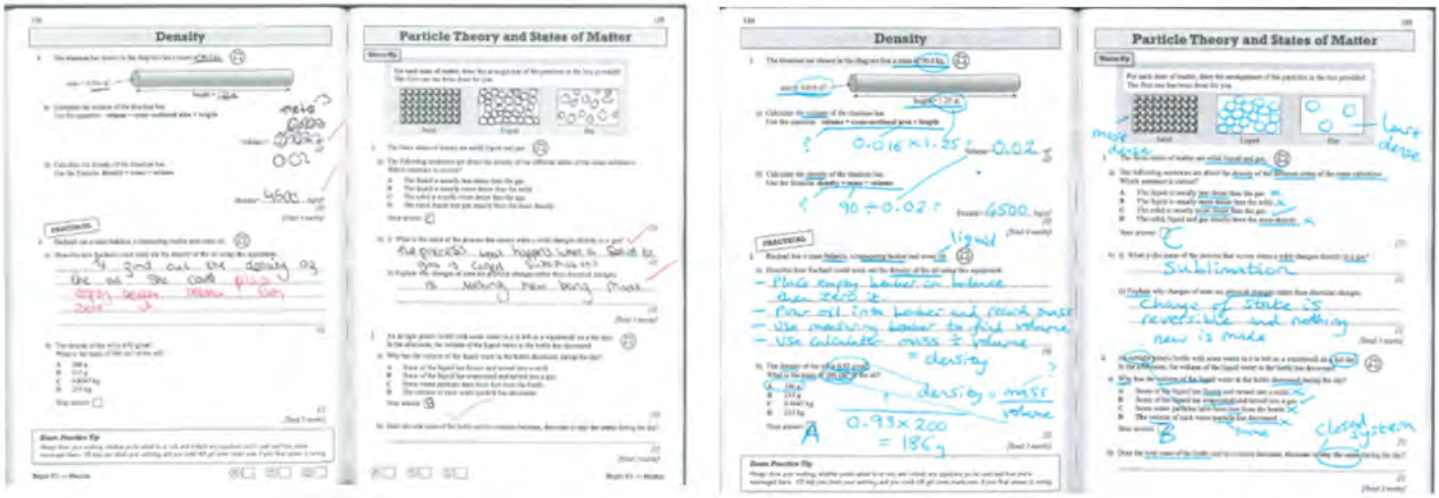
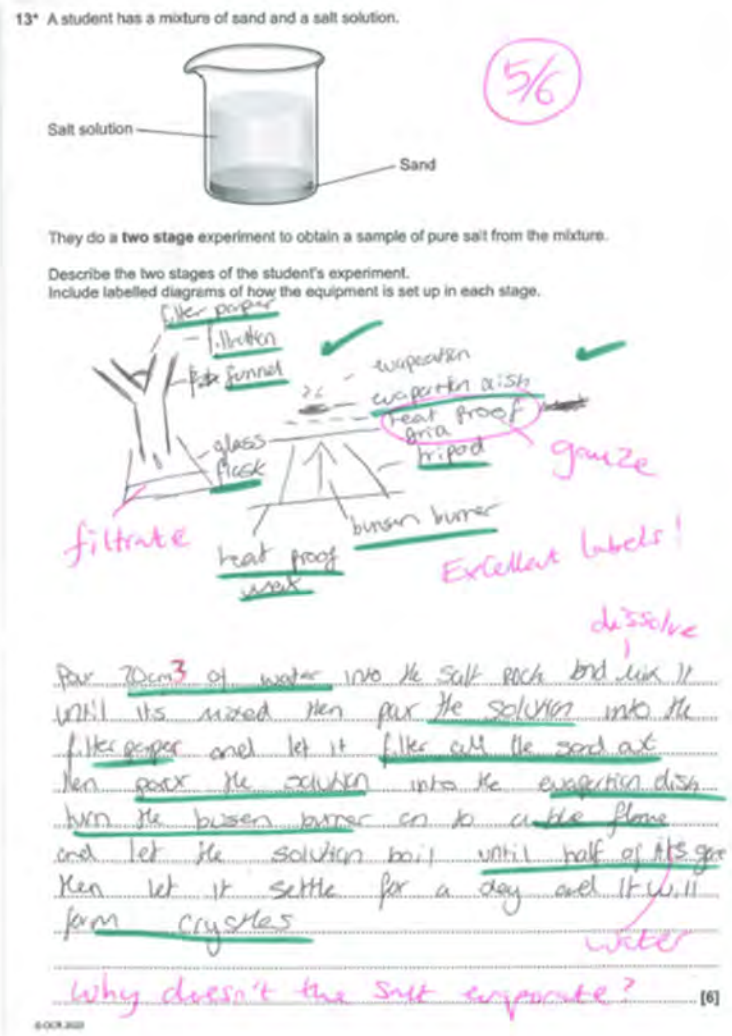


Figure 10: Year 10 student's work teacher marked. This was completed closed book after multiple attempts of similar questions involving labelled diagrams and two practicals completed linked to this style of question.



Nila Pretty

I chose Year 8 as my focus group for implementing practices to encourage hard thinking in Spanish.

The practices that I explored were:

1. Driving thought through questioning about the 'why' as to the objectives of the lesson in order to make the objectives relatable to pupils, and therefore increase motivation for learning. For example, the objectives of the lesson are to be able to use three tenses in speaking and writing. I could ask the students, 'Why is it important to talk about the past, present, future when learning a language? How does the verb tense change the meaning of a sentence? Can you think of a time when using the wrong tense could cause confusion?
2. Driving thought to encourage extended answers when speaking using the write, pair, share method. This would also link to assessment for learning and consolidation of learning.
3. Driving thought to promote hard thinking about grammar rules. This, again, would relate to the strands 5 and 6 of the mental model of learning strands of AFL and consolidation.

The practices I chose for implementation were driving thought to encourage extended answers when speaking and to promote hard thinking about grammar rules in order for deep understanding to take place and for these to be embedded in the students' long-term memory.

Adaptations I need to consider:

I may need to incorporate additional scaffolding questions to guide students toward the correct answers and prompt them to provide examples, helping to demonstrate genuine understanding of the concepts.

Outcomes

- Extended Speaking: Students should be able to produce more developed spoken responses, incorporating complex structures such as time expressions, varied tenses, and accurate adjectival agreements.
- Grammar Application: Pupils should show increasing confidence and accuracy in using grammatical structures in both writing and speaking tasks, reflecting deeper understanding.

Measures of success will be

- Book scrutiny to assess application of grammar rules in writing tasks.
- Observation during paired speaking to evaluate the use of extended answers and grammatical accuracy.
- Performance in assessments, particularly the ability to recognise and use multiple tenses across all four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing).

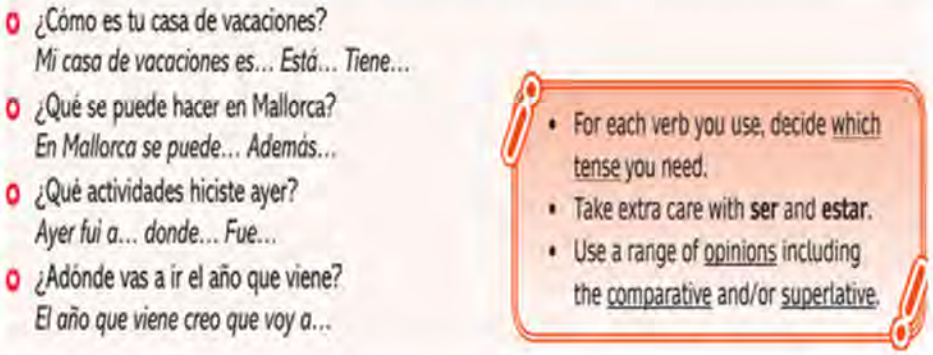
Implementation

During the implementation phase of the Write-Pair-Share strategy, the focus was on embedding this practice into regular classroom routines to improve students' ability to produce extended spoken responses, with greater grammatical accuracy and confidence.

Initial Introduction and Routines

I introduced students to the routine and ensured they understood the purpose of each stage—writing as a rehearsal, pairing to clarify and improve ideas, and sharing to build confidence and fluency. As part of implementing strategies from our recent staff CPD, I used the 'door and window' partner approach and clearly explained this system to students to structure paired work. With the focus group, I introduced timed writing using the 3, 2, 1, stop method (in the target language) to support thinking and recall. I repeated this structure for the paired discussion phase, clearly indicating which partner should begin speaking. Following this, I took feedback from students, using adaptive questioning and bouncing responses between individuals to extend and deepen answers where appropriate. To further develop this practice, I aim to incorporate a follow-up phase where students refine or expand their answers in writing after the class discussion, to reinforce learning and encourage metacognitive reflection.

An example of a scaffolded resource to extend speaking answers (taken from the textbook)



An example of a resource to drive thought about grammar:

Scaffolding is provided through the use of sentence starters to support students in both speaking Spanish and discussing grammar rules, alongside sentence builders and thought-provoking prompts displayed on the whiteboard to guide and structure their responses.

Reflection

The Write-Pair-Share structure created a supportive environment that reduced the pressure of spontaneous speaking. Writing first allowed students to rehearse ideas, resulting in more thoughtful and structured spoken responses. During pair discussions, students refined their answers and gained confidence by testing their ideas with a peer before speaking to the wider class.

Over time, more students began using a wider range of vocabulary, time expressions, and connectives in their responses. Those who were previously hesitant to speak became more willing to contribute.

The focus on driving thought about grammar rules led to deeper engagement with key structures, particularly around tense usage and adjectival agreement. I have been less consistent in getting students to write down their thoughts about grammar rules, particularly outside of my focus class. While I regularly use thought-provoking questions to drive deeper understanding of grammar, these have mostly been pre-prepared for the focus group. Although this questioning approach is part of my general method for teaching grammar across all classes, I recognise that I haven't always followed it up with written reflection or consolidation in every group. This is an area I intend to improve, ensuring that all students engage with grammar more actively through both discussion and written reasoning.

I will integrate Write-Pair-Share as a consistent structure during speaking and grammar-based activities, particularly when introducing new vocabulary, grammar points, or during consolidation phases. It will become part of the classroom routine by:

- **Embedding it into lesson planning:** I will plan at least one structured speaking task per week where students are expected to write a short response, discuss it with a partner, and then share with the class. Grammar rules will also follow this
- **Using sentence starters and scaffolds:** To support all learners, especially those who struggle with language production, I'll provide support in the form of sentence frames, grammar prompts, or vocabulary lists/ sentence builders.
- **Making it low-stakes and regular:** By using this method frequently in a range of contexts (e.g., grammar drills, opinion questions, retrieval starters), students will grow comfortable with the process, helping to reduce anxiety around speaking.
- **Linking to assessment:** The answers students produce can be captured informally or in books, providing useful insight into their understanding for AfL purposes.

The Write-Pair-Share strategy is highly adaptable and can be scaled or modified depending on the needs and levels of different classes:

- **Lower-attaining or less confident groups:** Provide more support at the writing stage—such as sentence stems, word banks, or partially completed answers. I may also reduce the complexity of the speaking task, focusing on accuracy with simple structures.
- **Higher-attaining or more confident groups:** Challenge them to incorporate more complex grammar or thematic vocabulary into their responses. Encourage peer feedback during the "pair" stage and ask them to explain why certain grammar structures were used.
- **KS3 and KS4 adaptation:** At KS3, it can be used for developing foundational speaking and writing fluency. At KS4, it supports exam preparation, especially for speaking tasks where students need to give extended responses using a variety of tenses and opinions.

Sarah Rouse

Explore

My focus is a group of year 8 girls in set 6, who are not confident and are reluctant to attempt new work and topics in mathematics. The strategy is to craft questions to use on whiteboards to drive thought. I will plan questions, in the expert delivery part of the mental model of learning and teaching, to use on white boards so that students are pushed to think hard but in a guided way
To build confidence, there will be worked examples visible for them to look at. I will have a bank of scaffolded questions ready to use in line with students' confidence and the expected/desired thought process.
The desired impact is that students become more confident to attempt questions on their own with no prompting.

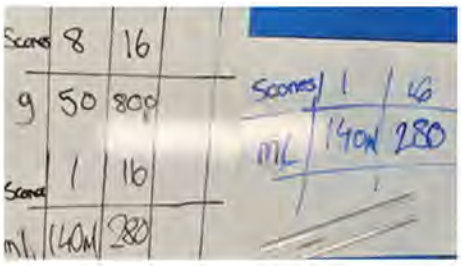
Adopt and Prepare

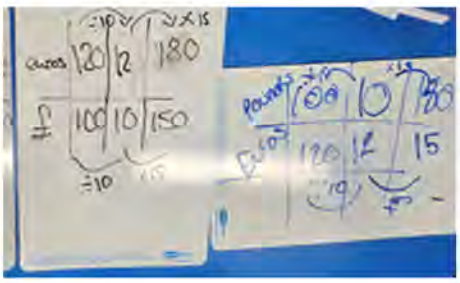
During the lesson on direct proportion, I will model several examples on the board explicitly explaining and visually modelling how ratio tables work. In line with the school's mental model of learning and teaching a series of questions were planned, the first had the table and several values in for the students to complete. The scaffolding will then slowly disappear so that in the end they have to draw their own tables and complete them. This technique helps students build confidence as they move from simpler to more complex problems, ensuring they understand each step before moving on and driving their thought. Students will have clear expectations explained to them that they will need to draw the tables (and show their working) on the white boards for each question.

Deliver

After the explanations on the board. The first question was put up with only one space in the ratio table for them to fill in.

This was the result - table copied, value filled in....no working shown.





As the scaffolding was progressively removed, students successfully began drawing their own tables, showing their methodology, and were able to articulate their thought processes.

The students were happy and engaged using the whiteboards. I think this is because of two reasons;
1)They can get immediate feedback by comparing their answers to others and from the teacher when asked to hold them up.
2) The use of whiteboards created a low-stakes learning environment. Students who are often hesitant to commit answers to paper appeared more willing to take risks. This allows them the opportunity to try and they do not seem so concerned if they get it wrong as it is not permanent.

The students were also proud of their progress and achievement and then felt able to do questions straight into their exercise books.

Referring back to the mental model of learning and teaching.

1. Design Curriculum – questions were carefully designed to enable students to think and progress.
2. Secure Attention – students were engaged using the whiteboards and holding them up.
3. Expert delivery – The wording of questions was carefully considered when explaining.
4. Drive thought – Scaffolding reduced through the task and the questions became more complex
5. Assessment for learning - Although this was based on driving thought, the process provided opportunities for immediate peer and teacher feedback, a key component of effective Assessment for Learning. I believe it was the immediate and positive AFL that gave the students the confidence to try harder and more complex questions.
6. Consolidate – Questions planned for upcoming DICE starters to reinforce learning.

Sustain

Seeing the success of this process, I will build the use of whiteboards into more of my lessons in order for the students to gain confidence in thinking through topics and as a result progress in their mathematical ability. I will try and give them more opportunities to do this in lessons, work out their problem solving on the whiteboards and then they can copy their workings into their books.

The strategy will be extended to other classes, where students may benefit from the opportunity to develop their problem-solving skills in a supportive, low-stakes format before committing work to their books.

Ultimately, the strategic use of scaffolded whiteboard tasks proved to be a highly effective method for transforming student confidence and extending their mathematical thinking in a low-set classroom.

Katie Samuel

"Attention is the gatekeeper of learning' - Peps McCrea

Recognising the increasing issues that students face in retaining attention in a world of technology and social media (for example, Vedechkina & Borgonovi (2021), highlighted the correlation between the increase in time spent on technology with the decrease in attention and productivity in teenagers), I have chosen to focus on how we can retain attention and drive thought through questioning. For my research, I focused on my year 9 class; they are a mid-low set, meaning historically they have always struggled with extended writing.

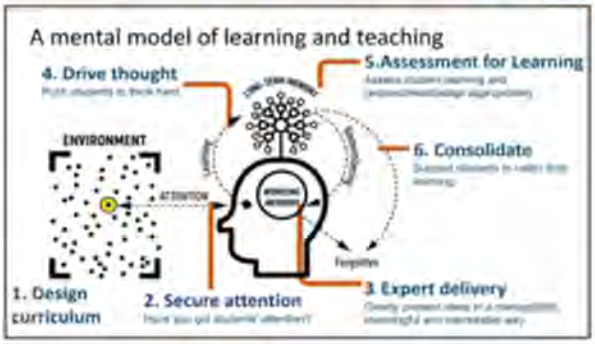


Figure 1: OAT Model of attention

Within the class, they have a reading age range from 10 years to 15 years but with an SAS of 83-107. With a class size of 36, it contains 4 EHCP students; with 10 further SEN students; 2 EAL; and 8 PP. Within the English GCSE exam, they need to be able to comprehend questions aimed for a reading age of 16 and write long essays in short periods of time. Therefore, I have chosen this in order to help them develop this vital skill that will not only help them in English, but any subject in which they need to either extend their writing or explore their own thinking. Furthermore, the current topic is Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', this will help them develop their inference skills .

"You see, but you do not observe" – Arthur Conan Doyle

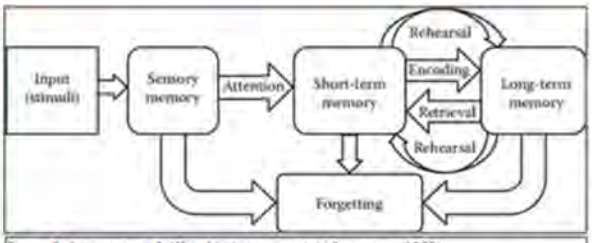


Figure 2: Atkinson and Shiffrin Multistore model of memory (1968)

An issue highlighted by the famed literary detective, Sherlock Holmes, is that we 'see' but don't 'observe'. This explains how, within our lives, we are not paying specific attention to our surroundings, even when looking straight at them. This notion perfectly applies to the problem with attention within schools. Students may appear to be 'seeing' the work we present, but they are not paying attention – they are not observing, and therefore are unable to retain the information or create synaptic links. The Atkinson-Shiffrin model of memory (1968) suggests that in order to retain any information from our surroundings, we need to ensure that we are first paying attention to move it from our sensory memory to our short-term memory; we then need to rehears the information to solidify it into our long – term – memory for creating synaptic links and easy retrieval. Therefore, I have chosen to explore a practice that I have been starting to embed since January. The idea of which flows through the lesson, starting with simple 'what' questions, that slowly develop into 'why' questions.

In relation to our mental model of teaching, this method successfully links in with a multitude of aspects.

Design curriculum:
By using this method, it requires a lot of thought around planning lessons, in determining where it would most beneficially fit. It also requires us thinking about what is the most important concept for the students to understand and retain. We also need to be able to have our own multiple interpretations of key extracts to ensure that we are able to steer the students into thinking on multiple levels and interpretations.

Figure 3: Write- pair - share example from a year 9 lesson

Secure attention
One of the most applicable advantages of this method is in ensuring we are securing the attention of our students because we are breaking the information down into small ideas; starting with the obvious answers – the 'quick wins' that give the students confidence to continue. This also means that we can refocus the class before asking the next question, forcing their attention back to the work.

Expert delivery
Group 18, Grouped objectBy presenting this through PowerPoint, I could ensure that the questions appear on the screen one at a time (to avoid cognitive overload), and that each answer is discussed before moving forward – allowing students to build on their previous discussions. This ensures that students are both considering the options as well as being able to correct any misconceptions during the early stages of analysis. Again, by phrasing the majority of the questions as 'what' or 'how', it encourages students to maintain focus on each individual question. This is then uses to shape their thinking for the following question, building their analysis.

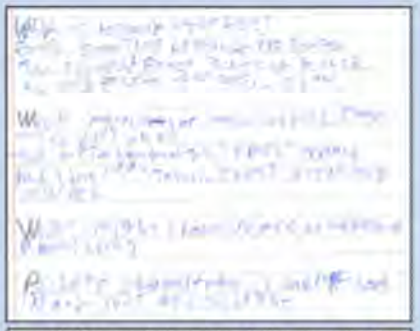


Figure 4: An example by student X of write - pair - share

Drive thought
This process allows students to develop their understanding and create analysis on a single word level. An example of this is student X (a PP medium prior attainer with an EHCP, [figure 4] and student Z [figure 6]), shows how by breaking down the work into these 'write – pair – share' chunks has helped them understand the character. I have also used in my year 10 class (bottom set) which starts with the question 'what does Macbeth hallucinate' (a dagger) and builds up to 'what would happen if the 'dagger was replaced with a sword?' – prompting them to consider the connotations of key words from the text, before asking them 'why does Macbeth hallucinate a dagger?' The idea behind this is to then encourage the students to develop their own thinking. Within this lesson, the students discussed the connotations of who would use a sword (soldiers, knights, heroes) and who would use a dagger (thieves, murderers, traitors) to understand why Shakespeare uses the idea of the 'dagger' to emphasize Macbeth's fall from grace.

Figure 5: Student Y - year 10 Macbeth

Figure 5 shows the extended answer written by a PP SEN (ADHD) student with low attendance (88.4%). This essay showed significantly more detail than previous work completed and the student was able to articulate their opinions and provide evidence.

Figure 6: Student Z - Year 10 - Macbeth

Assessment for learning

I have found that this works really well in terms of assessment for learning. By using the class discussions, it allows me to monitor understanding and quickly correct misconceptions. More importantly, I believe, is that it starts the students 'thinking about their thinking' – to look at multiple interpretations or ideas and develop their analysis. It also gets them to start questioning their own ideas – Why do we know Macbeth is a traitor? Why was Romeo and Juliet's love doomed? Why was Odysseus not the best hero? Students are encouraged to examine their own thoughts and start to develop an understanding of how they form these thoughts – what evidence have they consciously, or subconsciously, used? This awareness then helps them develop their answers and ensure the validity of their opinions (a vital skill with 'real-world' applications).

Consolidate

By using the write- pair – share the students are able to develop ideas which then use the prompt question to consolidate their ideas into an analytical paragraph by using prompt questions and sentence starters [figure 7]. This process consolidates a variety of skills to promote success with analytical writing. These ideas can be continued to be consolidated by using the 'what' questions in subsequent starter activities.

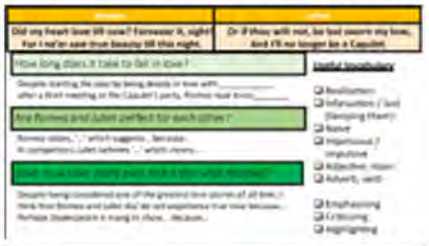


Figure 6: Support for longer writing - year 9

Figure 7: Previous support task for

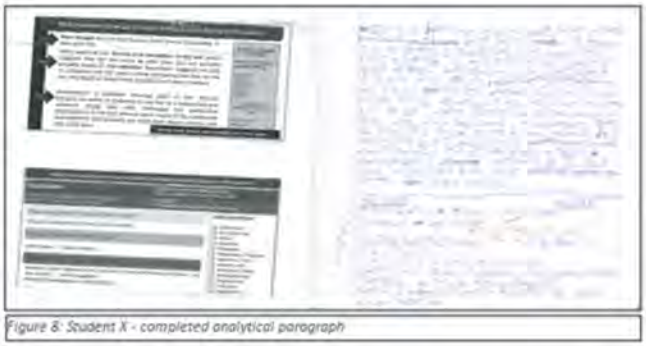


Figure 8: Student X - completed analytical paragraph

Due to the high level of need from some of my students, I need to ensure that I balance the amount of support questions without risking cognitive overload. Comparing figures 7 and 8, both student X, you can see the difference in accessibility between the two support styles. When attempting the structure of figure 7, student X became overwhelmed and apprehensive with the cognitive overload of the success criteria becoming a barrier to their success. However, figure 8 shows how by using the write- pair – share to consolidating with an analytical paragraph (simplifying it down to using only three key prompt questions), allowed for the student to succeed in independently writing an analytical paragraph. Further evidentiary support can be highlighted by looking back at Student Y, comparing their assessment at the end of the Macbeth unit (which used the write-pair-share), in which the student scored 17/40, compared with an assessment on the previous unit that, despite examined the same skills, the student scored 11/40; a 15% increase between the two assessments.

Overall, I believe this method to be a successful process and have since began to embed it into all my lessons.

David Sanchez-Brown

Explore

In year 12 Economics I will explore how to drive deep thinking to ensure students are prepared to answer extended exam questions requiring syntheses and complex concepts. I will also explore how to ensure students are able to demonstrate and practice deeper thinking skills in an academically challenging but emotionally safe environment.

My focus on driving though will further assist with developing consistent practices for consolidation and reworking of previous learning to counter the problems with Ebbinghaus forgetting curve. Key to the concept will be the consistent requirement to demonstrate thinking through the use of large white boards and regular opportunity for students to demonstrate and explain their thinking process and outcomes. Peer discussion, modelling and opportunity to practice will ensure success.

I will consider the following:

- Use of large white boards to demonstrate thinking
- Establishment of workable routines to signal- think/write pair share in lessons
- Practice, model and sustain effective peer discussion routines
- Rehearse instructions- test with focus group and invite feedback
- Plan and test model questions to secure deeper thinking
- Adapt 3,2,1 model for securing attention in sixth form
- Explore texts and other stimulus for discussion to stimulate deeper thinking and drive thought
- Explore different timings for peer discussion, peer tutoring, public speaking presentation to peers
- Explore tools to check learning and monitor progress with deeper thinking skills.

Success criteria will be a class of sixth form students comfortable and confident to demonstrate their thinking process to each other and visitors to the class- able to give and take effective feedback and reflect and evaluate their own performance and development.

Adopt and Prepare

Year 12 economics lessons will include 50% learning lesson time directly designed to drive thought and deeper thinking. I plan to be in a position to evaluate progress by end of May. First, I need to secure white board and related resources for the classroom. Then:

- Train students in constructive feedback techniques
- Build confidence in class to be open about their learning journeys
- Take feedback on timings of activities- is 1 minute too long?
- Choose strategies to ensure full participation- no opt out
- Create consistent high challenge low threat environment
- Create sentence starters to scaffold peer discussion and peer presentation
- Create bank of learning activity templates
- Create model answers to show excellence
- Create essay models and scaffolds to model logical structure and sustained argument.

Deliver

I re-established a safe learning focused on growth mindset:

1. Building and maintaining positive relationships- Warm with high expectations.
2. Relentless focus on expectations and rigorous challenge
3. Championing our safe learning space to learn from mistakes and misconceptions
4. Encouraged collaboration rather than competition
5. Focus on timely and bespoke feedback
6. Emphasised importance/relevance of pre-work and expect 100% compliance

Student feedback was positive and they expressed an appreciation for high challenge coupled with support and warmth.

Next, I developed consistent attention securing strategies tailored to sixth form. After rehearsal and feedback form students, final script:
"Your full attention in 3, pens down 2, looking this way, 1, silence and attention please"

Students appreciate the verbal cue to signal verbal instruction or transition of learning phase. It helped to include the students in the development process to give them ownership and sense of belonging to learning culture. This differs significantly from KS3 & KS4 practice.

We practised paired talk/discussion focused on a narrow point with tight time limits (30 secs). At first the time limit seemed to short but with further practice, we were able to reduce the time to 15 secs for most recall-based discussion. Question formation is important here; I began with exam style questions such as:
"Evaluate how price elasticity of demand would affect the sale of luxury goods"

However, the question was too broad with little guidance on structure I found that the paired talk activity did not drive deep thinking, rather highlight recall of prior knowledge. Students fed back that it was more successful when I asked a series of narrow-specific questions which tested recall and synthesis. To help me, I chose to use "why" and "how" as a command rather than "evaluate" or "discuss":
"Why might the PED for petrol be different in the short run compared to the long run?"
"Why are addictive goods often price inelastic?"
"Why do agricultural products tend to have more inelastic supply than manufactured goods?"

I discovered that pre-learning is a key tool to driving deeper thought. By reviewing key concepts and vocabulary before lessons, students were able to engage deeper processing and synthesis of new information. This preparatory work allowed students to approach lessons with greater confidence and readiness, enabling them to participate more actively in discussions and apply higher-order thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation. The expectation for students to be proactive in their learning, even before the lesson has started, embedded study routines to drive deeper thinking and rigour. Pre-learning reduces cognitive load during the lesson to enable deeper thought during teacher led lesson time.

The final stage of the process was to facilitate a method for students to demonstrate their deeper thought through formative assessment. The most effective and popular among students was the use of mega white boards (as opposed to mini ones). Large, wall-mounted white boards at which students worked in groups of 3 or 4. Following a series of paired talk activities related to one theme or topic. Students were asked to plan a response to a wider exam style question ("evaluate, discuss, compare" command words). Their plans and responses captured in writing and relevant diagrams on the mega white board. The process of discussion, writing, re-working, sequencing and editing of the responses enabled students to demonstrate and practice their thinking- at also gave me an instant overview of misconceptions I could address immediately. I also made sure to keep to strict time limits for these tasks (no more than 5 mins).

Focussing on collaboration rather than competition helped make the learning environment feel like a safe space to verbalise thinking and learn from mistakes or misconceptions. Students were regularly encouraged to view the boards of other groups in a cross-fertilisation exercise of ideas and deep thinking.

Sustain

The development of routines and insistence on 100% compliance of pre-work is the key driver of sustaining this model to drive deeper thought. The focus of well crafted, sequenced questions for paired talk with tight timings then sets the ground-work for students to be able to demonstrate their deeper thinking skills through mega white board discussion and argument planning. I will extend this ethos into all my A level teaching.

Claire Slade-Carter

Explore

This journal entry focusses on "driving thought" in the classroom. Using the mental model of teaching and learning, and expanding to consider the additional information within Peps Mccrea's visual framework on the science of learning, both highlighting the importance of managing working memory and directing attention to build long-term memory, I've been considering how this approach can support neurodiverse learners. I have focussed this in relation to young people with ADHD and have specifically focussed on a 13-year-old student with ADHD in an RS class of 32 students.

Driving thought refers to the deliberate act of guiding students' cognitive focus toward the most valuable learning content. In RS, abstract concepts, such as morality, belief, and identity are central, but are so broad reaching that driving thought with direction and carefully planned questioning is imperative to students successfully engaging with deep thinking and moving away from a default 'I don't know'. For a student with ADHD, who may struggle with attention regulation and working memory limitations, a teacher consciously driving thought provides a structured cognitive scaffold. By explicitly cueing what to think about, we reduce the cognitive noise and help the student engage meaningfully with the material, reducing intrinsic and extrinsic distractions and fostering an environment where they experience success and develop confidence and self-esteem in relation to their capabilities in a classroom.

In class, when exploring the concept of social justice in religious traditions, rather than presenting a broad discussion, I posed a focussed question: "How does the Golden Rule in Christianity compare to karma in Hinduism?" This narrows the cognitive field to two specific contexts and channels the student's attention toward a specific comparison, making the task more manageable and purposeful. Comparison is a skill that has been explicitly taught and embedded throughout the RS curriculum and is already familiar to all in the group.

The mental model underscores that working memory is limited and easily overwhelmed, especially for learners with ADHD. Driving thought helps mitigate this by reducing the extraneous cognitive load of irrelevant information or tasks that distract from the core learning. In line with Cognitive Load Theory, it also enhances germane load, the mental effort devoted to processing and understanding the core content. For learners with ADHD, this balance is crucial, benefitting from clarity, structure, and repetition, all of which are embedded in the practice of driving thought.

However, there are limitations, over-scaffolding or excessive prompting can lead to dependency, where the student waits passively for direction rather than developing independent thinking skills, so it is vital that scaffolding evolves over time in order to deepen thinking as concepts are built upon and new skills such as evaluation are developed. It is also vital to ensure consistency in language and direction, continually changing the language of directions, or changing the phrasing when repeating instructions or questions to drive thought may inadvertently increase intrinsic load, especially for students with ADHD who may already be managing sensory or emotional distractions. This is also something to consider when working with young people with autism.

Prompts must be concise, consistent, and aligned with prior knowledge. Visual aids such as consistent use of diagrams, sentence starters, and retrieval practice also supports this process. Dual coding (combining visuals with text) can help anchor abstract RS concepts in memory. Regular formative assessment, such as exit tickets or mini whiteboard checks, can also help gauge whether the student is truly engaging with the intended thought process and is quick to embed within classroom practice.

Driving thought has thus far proven to be a powerful tool for supporting student A in RS, with a significant reduction in off-task behaviour and an extension in the length and depth of their verbal and written responses. I have noted similar impact with other learners with ADHD and also dyslexia, where working memory and cognitive load are significant considerations in planning and delivering content.

Sallyanne Stanford-Clark

Explore

I chose my small year 10 triple chemistry group on which to base this project. I wanted to observe the effect of a different method of teaching calculations on a whole group, where there is a range of abilities and where some students relish the challenge of chemical calculations and some feel out of their depth when they read the word calculate in a question.

Students entered for both foundation and higher-level papers are required to carry out chemical calculations in a range of different situations. Although the mathematical skills required are straight forward, students often have difficulty in knowing where to begin.

I am exploring using paired talk to drive thought in the approach to calcuation problems. I want to encourage students to think hard about the calculation they are being asked to perform and the method which they will apply to solve the problem. This ties in with the mental model of teaching as, after thinking and talking about the steps involved using their working memory, students can then put this into practice using examples, to enable them to embed the methodology into their long-term memory. This should lead to a greater incidence of remembering as students consolidate and retain their learning.

Adopt, Prepare and Deliver

Students are used to being led step-by-step through a calculation and then practising the calculations individually, with some needing more help than others. I am adapting this model to allow students to talk about (a) the expression or formula they need to use and any need to rearrange this, (b) the data needed for the calculation and where this may be found, (c) application of the above for the completion of the calculation. Their responses to the three talking points will then be shared with the class, and any comments, improvements, or misconceptions can be addressed. Following this paired completion of a worksheet, with questions of increasing difficulty, would then be attempted, leading to questions to be attempted individually.

Initially, students were reluctant to engage in talking about how to approach the calculation, and it took longer than anticipated for them to carry out the calculation. Some students didn't see the value in discussing the areas listed above and went straight into the calculation. However, I persevered and through asking questions about the methods employed, students began to see the value of discussion before attempting the whole problem.

In all, the topic "Monitoring Chemical reactions" contains at least six different types of chemical calculations and as the topic progressed students became more prepared to share ideas with each other through paired talk and more confident in their approach to calculations in general.

Review

Over a period of about six lessons, students became more confident about selecting the correct formula to apply and identifying the data required in the question as a result of being given the opportunity to talk and share ideas with a partner. I could see that more students engaged with the calculations the further into the topic we got. Students were more likely to attempt a calculation when allowed to think about it together. However not all students made the move from paired work to individual work, which may suggest that more time is needed to practise this technique for some students, but it may also suggest that the paired thinking is a support which they do not want to give up in favour of harder, individual thought.

In general, students benefited from paired working to consolidate ideas and gained confidence in their ability to tackle more complicated calculations over time.

I intend to build this approach to calculations into my teaching when introducing a new calculation. I can see this being a valuable way to introduce calculations for both Key Stage 3 classes where calculations are quite straight-forward, and also at A level where calculations are much more complex.

Elizabeth Stannard

Driving thought- pushing students to think hard in preparation for GCSE exam questions that are not scaffolded.

Explore

I will discuss my Year 11 GCSE Film Studies class of 16 students and their needs in Figure 1. There are no high prior attainers in this class. The data will be slightly skewed by the two students who are persistently absent and, therefore, will be ungraded in the summer exams.

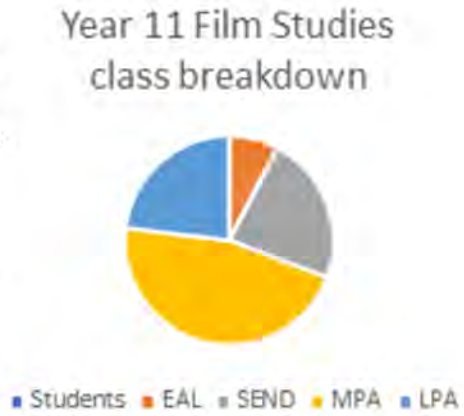


Figure 1: Year 11 Film Studies class breakdown

I will explore how I drive thought through tasks connected to the film Juno. This is the last part of a two-year course and asks for various skills and the knowledge and understanding that the students have built over time. To drive thought, I have planned to take ideas from initial learning in their short-term memory to embedding them into their long-term memory and use continual repetition of ideas to ensure that students do not forget what they have learnt. The outcome I am looking for is that 100% of the class understand the tasks and can apply their knowledge of Juno to exam questions in class and the GCSE exams in the summer.

Adopt, Prepare and Deliver

My delivery plan is based on the Great Teaching Toolkit plan for activating hard thinking (see figure 2).


4. Activating hard thinking

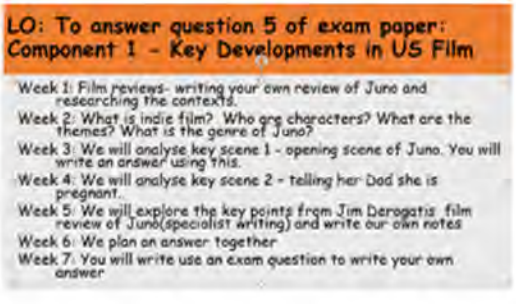
1. Structuring: giving students an appropriate sequence of learning tasks; signalling learning objectives, rationale, overview, key ideas and stages of progress; matching tasks to learners' needs and readiness; scaffolding and supporting to make tasks accessible to all, but gradually removed so that all students succeed at the required level
2. Explaining: presenting and communicating new ideas clearly, with concise, appropriate, engaging explanations; connecting new ideas to what has previously been learnt (and re-activating/checking that prior knowledge); using examples (and non-examples) appropriately to help learners understand and build connections; modelling/demonstrating new skills or procedures with appropriate scaffolding and challenge; using worked/part-worked examples
3. Questioning: using questions and dialogue to promote elaboration and connected, flexible thinking among learners (e.g., 'Why?', 'Compare', etc.); using questions to elicit student thinking; getting responses from all students; using high-quality assessment to evidence learning; interpreting, communicating and responding to assessment evidence appropriately
4. Interacting: responding appropriately to feedback from students about their thinking/knowledge/understanding; giving students actionable feedback to guide their learning
5. Embedding: giving students tasks that embed and reinforce learning; requiring them to practise until learning is fluent and secure, ensuring that once-learnt material is reviewed/revisited to prevent forgetting
6. Activating: helping students to plan, regulate and monitor their own learning; progressing appropriately from structured to more independent learning as students develop knowledge and expertise

Great Teaching Toolkit greatteaching.com Evidence Review | 6

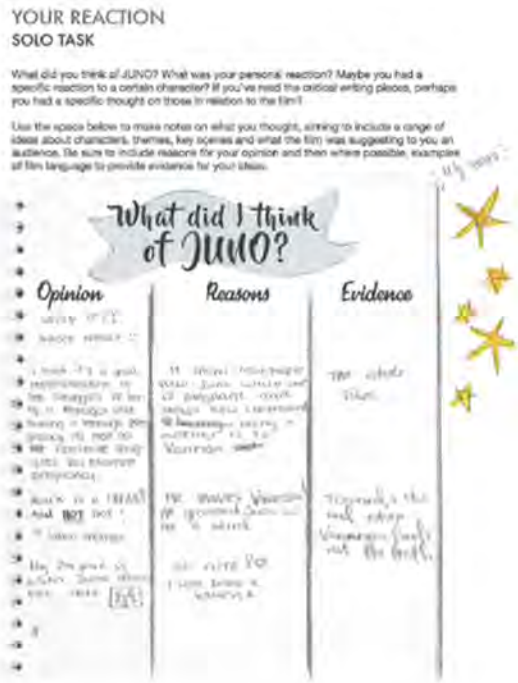
Figure 2 EEF Great Teaching Toolkit 584543-great-teaching-toolkit-evidence-review.pdf

This outlines activities that happen over a period of time during lessons and independent tasks. Using a range of tasks to move ideas from short-term to long-term memory takes about 8 weeks to achieve. We initially spent 2 of our 3 hours of timetable lessons on this work, dropping to 1 hour to allow for coursework completion.

Step 1 Structure: The overall structure of the unit for students:


LO: To answer question 5 of exam paper: Component 1 - Key Developments in US Film

Week 1: Film reviews- writing your own review of Juno and researching the contexts.
Week 2: What is indie film? Who are characters? What are the themes? What is the genre of Juno?
Week 3: We will analyse key scene 1 - opening scene of Juno. You will write an answer using this.
Week 4: We will analyse key scene 2 - telling her Dad she is pregnant.
Week 5: We will explore the key points from Jim Derogatis' film review of Juno(specialist writing) and write our own notes
Week 6: We plan an answer together
Week 7: You will write use an exam question to write your own answer


YOUR REACTION

SOLO TASK

What did you think of JUNO? What was your personal reaction? Maybe you had a specific reaction to a certain character? If you've read the critical writing pieces, perhaps you had a specific thought on those in relation to the film?

Use the space below to make notes on what you thought, aiming to include a range of ideas about characters, themes, key scenes and what the film was suggesting to you an audience. Be sure to include reasons for your opinion and then where possible, examples of film language to provide evidence for your ideas.

What did I think of JUNO?

Opinion | Reasons | Evidence

Steps 2 and 3: Explaining and Questioning

Week 1 – After watching the film, students write their independent reactions to it. After the Do it now, every lesson on Juno starts with the overall structure to recap what we have already done and where we are moving to next. I explained that they must decide their opinion of Juno, as this is a key part of the exam response. We then had a brief discussion of students' reactions to the film. First, we were in pairs, then, as groups, and I circulated to listen to their ideas. I asked questions, including 'Why do you think this?' 'What is it you like/dislike about the film?' By verbalising their answers, students can test their ideas and listen to their peers, helping them to create a deeper opinion. When the students filled in the worksheet, giving their views, the reasons, and thinking about some evidence for this.

Steps 4 and 5: Interacting and Embedding

Week 4: We analysed key scene 2 –Juno telling her Dad she is pregnant. This is done as a class using the worksheet, Figure 5. We watch the sequence as a class and work through the sheet together using discussion, pair work, teacher-led analysis and repeated watching to get as much detail as possible and to drive knowledge and understanding of film form and how it creates meaning. Students then use these notes to embed their knowledge and opinions by writing an exam-style answer on genre conventions and mise en scène, see Figure 6.


Juno sequence–Juno tells her parents she is pregnant

How do the characters treat each other?

Choose 2 characters and describe their behaviour towards each other

How does the film form support this? One point for each

Describe a shot and explain its effect

Cinematography

Sound

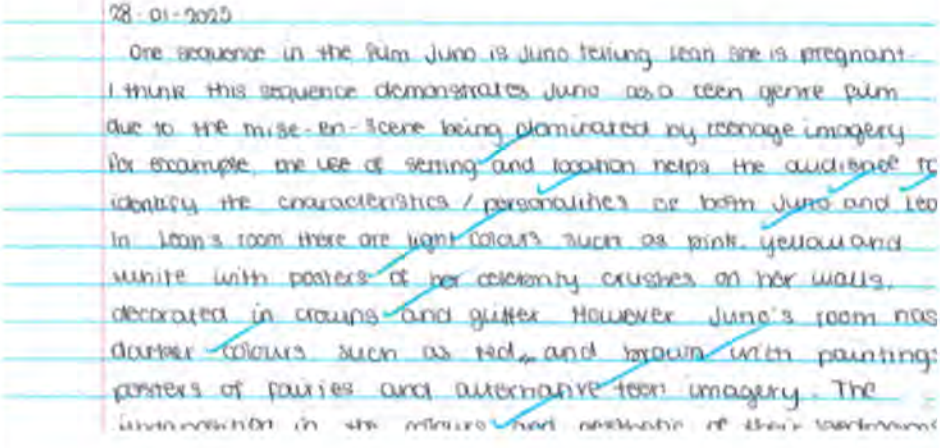
Mise en Scene

Editing

1 close up

1 two shot

1 three shot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One sequence in the film Juno is Juno telling Dad she is pregnant. I think this sequence demonstrates Juno as a teen genre film due to the mise-en-scene being dominated by teenage imagery for example, the use of setting and location helps the audience to identify the characteristics / personalities of both Juno and Leo. In Leo's room there are light colours such as pink, yellow and white with posters of her celebrity crushes on her walls, decorated in groups and glitter. However Juno's room has darker colours such as red and brown with paintings, posters of bands and alternative teen imagery. The

Steps 5 and 6: Embedding and Activating

Week 6-We focused on constructing an answer using a detailed set of worksheets to create an essay plan. First, we read an exam question and an example answer before students attempted this task. Students have already worked on the key ideas from the specialist writing, but here they begin to try to use them to form a detailed essay. The scaffolding here is that there are examples within the boxes, some students will copy these to give them confidence that they can do it, while others will write the key points in their own words.

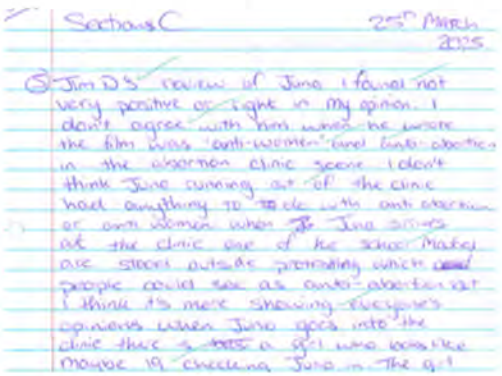
This extended scaffolded approach spirals knowledge, understanding and opinion over time towards independent exam answers first in class and then exams.


1. Identify the example of specialist writing you are using in the box provided in your answer book
2. Choose one key idea from the table below
3. Describe the key idea in your own words in the box provided

1. Kids don't talk like Juno
2. Juno is too intelligent to not use birth control
3. The screenplay writer has created characters that are caricatures (exaggerated and stereotyped)
4. We can debate Juno as an anti-abortion film and therefore anti women.
5. The character of Loring played by Bateman is a more honest character than Juno


4. Outline what this key idea suggests about your chosen film
5. Show how this idea compares with your own views on the film (use one sequence to demonstrate this).

Week 8: Students took a mock exam in class for 1 hour and 30 minutes, which included this question under exam conditions. I marked and provided feedback to students as quickly as possible to address key issues across the paper and ensure that misconditions were addressed. Across the class, the main problem with these questions was using the technical language needed to get full marks.


Section C 25th March 2025

5 Jim D's review of Juno I found not very positive or right in my opinion. I don't agree with him when he wrote the film was 'anti-women' and 'anti-abortion' in the abortion clinic scene I don't think Juno running out of the clinic had anything to do with anti abortion or anti women when Juno sees at the clinic one of the school Mates are stood outside protesting which people could see as anti-abortion but I think it's more showing everyone's opinions when Juno goes into the clinic there is a girl who looks like maybe 19 cheering Juno on the girl

SECTION C: US independent film

Answer ***question 5*** *on* ***one*** *of the following films:*

- *Little Miss Sunshine* (Dayton/Faris, 2006)
- *Juno* (Reitman, 2007)
- *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2008)
- *Whiplash* (Chazelle, 2014)
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (Gomez-Rejon, 2015).

5. Explore how **one** example of specialist writing on the chosen film you have studied has deepened your understanding of the film. Refer to at least **one** sequence from your chosen film to illustrate your answer.

In your answer, you should:

- identify the example of specialist writing you are using in the box provided in your answer book
- briefly describe **one** key idea from the example of specialist writing you have studied
- outline what this key idea suggests about your chosen film
- show how this idea compares with your own views on the film (use **one** sequence from your chosen film to illustrate this). [15]

Sustain

The lessons have been developed over several years by both Film studies teachers and then adapted depending on the needs and speed of the class. We embed knowledge and understanding of each film at the forefront of our teaching and then work through the specific focus for that film. This is the ongoing focus of our teaching: to continually develop our resources to drive thought in a more continuous and successful manner.

Sarah Welton

Explore

Due to the nature of the support needed within the class, I have chosen to focus on my 8xy/En8 class. Within this small class of 15, I have 6 SEND, 7 on the SEND watch list and 12 with various medical needs, as well as 6 students having passes of differing needs.

Knowing the increasing difficulty of our curriculum as they move through CEC, I wanted to focus on the use of paired talk to maximise their oral proficiency in order to give them enough self-confidence to apply their knowledge to extended written work. I decided that the use of mini-whiteboards would support their assessment for learning also in order to combat some of the handwriting reticence that appears with students of this calibre. Additionally, I want to include sentence stems and follow up questions in order to not only improve their oral vocabulary, but also to drive thought in regard to the topic.

However, this is a class who struggle with 100% engagement and silence. It often takes an extended period of time to settle them during the Do Now Starter, and (seeing the examples of write-pair-share practices with OAT) the concept of allowing them to speak and then be quiet and attentive within a minute currently seems incredibly challenging! It is not always easy to secure their attention for an extended period of time, and they can devolve into discussing irrelevant topics, leading to calling out during the share stage. Knowing these students, they will need to approach this task often and consistently to truly embed the outcomes I would like them to have.

Of which, the outcomes I would like to see is all student engagement through the checking of mini-whiteboards, relevant discussions and use of explicit oral sentence stems to support their communicative skills. My hope is that by building on this from the use of whiteboards, it will then prepare them better for their writing tasks due to having pre-planned ideas and perspectives, as well as application of vocabulary in order to consolidate their learning.

Adopt and Prepare

In the lessons, I am going to consistently use the visual aid embedded to the right in order to clarify the task at hand. I will need to spend a significant amount of time explaining what each of these sections mean with a hope that, as we practice and it is implemented across the school, the task will become easier and faster.

As stated in the Explore section, I am preparing to use mini-whiteboards to check the students' assessment for learning; however, more than that, I have a group of students who are reluctant writers because of their handwriting. I have always found that the temporary nature of mini-whiteboards allows these students to access the work more readily because they can erase their handwriting after the discussion takes place.

Also, after the training with Janine Metcalfe-Taylor on February 12th, I want to include a follow-up question to drive thought further with these students by considering a different perspective on the first question. The example slide she used (screenshot on the left) would currently be too difficult because of the cognitive load of information offered, but also the range of answers available. I cannot go too broadly with this class as many of them are incredibly literal and struggle to retain information. My immediate adaptation from this training would be to offer them sentence stems as well as a simplified slide to minimise cognitive overload from excessive information.

Deliver

During the delivery stage of this process, I did indeed adapt the slides to minimise the information. I also colour coded the sections and made sure to use the exact same model every time. This helped the students to find the information needed immediately every lesson. One thing I quickly realised was that the green sentence stems slowed down the students during the writing stage, but also confused them in the pair stage; to support this, I have edited the slide to only show the first purple question, then the green during pair and share, then the same structure for the building question.

However, as anticipated, it was the pair part of the task which caused difficulty; interestingly, it wasn't only the immediate want to go off task, but also a reticence to discuss with other students around them that caused issues at this stage. At this point in my delivery stage, the school had a CPD meeting with Gary Seal who offered to support with training of this. I asked him to come and observe me with this class in order to give feedback on my strengths and weaknesses so far on this journey.

His feedback was incredibly positive and reinforced all the support and scaffolding I offer to the students in order to achieve. His supportive comments were also realistic and easy to adapt into my teaching. He stated that, whilst teaching the students how to complete this concept, I should simplify the tasks even further to minimise the cognitive process (similar to my visual stimulus discussed above). Additionally, he had heard some of the students completing the tasks immediately and then moving off task. To support this, he recommended using very short time frames and sticking with them. This, in addition to the simplified cognitive load, should mean that students adjust to the fast pace required of them. In turn, this would then allow me to maintain securing their attention by consistently keeping the tasks moving forwards.

Sustain

I have adjusted this task again and use it in at least every other lesson (but leaning more towards every lesson). Students know exactly what to do during these tasks and can prepare themselves quickly (I have also utilised this with them as a 'movement break' to meet their passport needs too). I've changed the timing and structure slightly without them realizing: first task, 5 seconds – one word, 10 seconds to discuss, 10 seconds to share; second task, 30 seconds to consider – short answer, 20 seconds to discuss, 1 minute to share. My hope is that I can move them towards longer discussions and shorter sharing times, but for now this is working to keep the lesson fast paced and responsive.

I have also been developing having their 'building' question lead towards something in the latter part of the lesson, so they leave their response to one side and then apply it to their written work. This has helped them to see how these discussions can link and extend their ideas further (as initially considered in the Explore section). Moving forwards, although I have been using this task with my other classes, I need to work on the pacing with higher ability students – especially with supporting their oracy to verbalise higher conceptual perspectives.

Kelly Wiltshire

Explore

I have decided to focus on year 7, specifically 7CMB in order to explore the question above. Throughout our curriculum we have focused on 4 assessment objectives and assessment objective 2 and 3 is for students to formulate explanations and to 'think like a geographer' in order to produce an extended answer. In addition, as part of the wider OAT priorities this also linked to the 'write, pair, share' strategy and the CEC priority or wanted students to be secure in extended pieces of writing.

Knowledge – This will assess knowledge of key terms, locations and facts. These will be multiple choice, definition or brief one sentence responses.

Understanding – This will assess explanation of processes, for example to explain the formation of a V-shaped valley. These will be short answer questions requiring a few sentences to complete an explanation.

Application – This will assess the ability to evaluate or assess based on a place studied in the topic, and will be a structured, extended answer.

Geographical skills – This will assess map skills, data interpretation skills and image analysis. These will be multiple choice, definition or brief one sentence responses.

Figure 1 – Copy from Year 7 curriculum booklet (www.cowesec.org)

Our aim for our geographers is to have a 7-year journey and the topics and skills that they develop on that journey are reinforced and built upon as they progress through each topic. The ability to demonstrate knowledge, understanding, application and geographical skills form the basis of our curriculum plans for all year groups. Our curriculum is ambitious as it aims to cover a broad spectrum of location, places, concepts and skills using contemporary examples to support. This links to stage 1 'Design curriculum' and therefore is the foundation to help explore and design opportunities for extended writing.

Stage 2 relates to 'securing attention' and this links to having secure classroom management and consistent use of the CEC behaviour policy, use of the Cowes Way regarding lesson planning and also making sure that the lessons are engaging and accessible for all students. For year 7, we have put together a curriculum to inspire a sense of awe and wonder about our physical and human surroundings for our geographers. We also want to enable students to think about the world they live in and to be able to communicate that thinking to others and as such they will have the opportunity to take part in our Maritime Showcase as part of their Maritime Futures curriculum.

Stage 3 in the mental model of teaching I am aiming to ensure 'expert deliver' and alongside the factual (substantive) knowledge, students will also be taught the key disciplinary concepts in geography – see overleaf.

Location	for students to be able to locate places, features and people at a range of scales, from local to global. For example, we want year 7 geographers to be secure in their use of OS maps, grid references, distances and locating features.
Place	Here we want our geographers to understand what activities and processes take place in various locations on our Island, in the UK or globally. We will explore the social networks that in turn create values, attitudes and behaviours. For example, in our continent study of Africa we look to explore the misconceptions surrounding Africa and develop our understanding of how places vary.
Human processes	This is our study of the interrelationships between people, place, and environment, and how these vary spatially and over time, across and between locations. In year 7 we work to develop an appreciation for the diversity of our complex and varied world
Physical processes	This is our study of Earth's climate, atmosphere, soil, streams, landforms, and oceans. We also examine how human culture interacts with the natural environment and the way that locations and places can have an impact on people. Year 7 geographers will go on a boat trip to investigate 'How has Cowes become an important Maritime town?' and use this to prepare for the showcase.
Geographical skills	These provide the necessary tools and techniques for us to think geographically. These include GIS (Digital mapping), photo and satellite image interpretations, interpreting data and fieldwork.

Finally stages 4 'Drive thought' I feel links to all 3 prior stages in the mental model of teaching. I have decided to focus on this area as this in area that I would like to develop with year 7. I want to consider the importance of embedding how to 'write like a geographer' at an early stage of their CEC geography career. We have made the decision as a department early on to focus on adopting similar strategies to support students throughout. This will help to build consistency and confidence through repetition

I have decided to focus on 'Drive thought' as I think that is a key priority to develop our year 7 geographers and to have high expectations for the extended writing that we expect them to produce at GCSE and A Level.

Figure 2 – Example of poster used in lesson to signpost skills to be developed in Geography

I will need to consider student passports in order to reflect upon those students who require adaptive teaching strategies in order to support and scaffold pieces of extended writing and / or explanations. In addition, I will also consider the prior learning or pre-learning that is needed in order for explanations to be successful, for example pre-teaching of key words, understanding of the human or physical processes and concepts and repetition of the structure. We have aimed to have consistency with our expectations in order to make sure that all geographers are able be secure in the expectations when it comes to explaining geographical ideas, concepts or processes.

In terms of outcomes, we are looking for students as they progress through their journey as a CEC geographer, to have developed explanations rather than comprehension responses. We want students to be able to explain ideas fully (we call it 'double development' or 'double TMT') as would be expected for a GCSE 4 or par of the 8-mark question. Ultimately, we aspire to full level 4 A Level answers but this is a long term goal and aspiration:

Figure 3 – Example of Level 4 A Level exam answer

For our year 7 geographers, we are wanting them to end the year being able to explain with developed ideas and be confident with an explanation or series of explanations in order to support an idea. I will know that I have been successful through looking at the quality of written classwork tasks but also the end of topic test scores that are achieved for the 3 assessment points in year 7. The 2, 3 or 4 mark questions will support that judgement and the frequency of 'green boxed' answered (where I draw a box with a green highlighter around a whole answer to signpost where the expectations for the question have been met in full).

Adopt and Prepare

In topic 2, 3 and 4 there are opportunities in the topic to consider developed ideas and explanations and also opportunities to have judgements and opinions. In topic 2 we start with simple TMT sentences focusing on repetition. We also introduce the idea of forming judgements and having opinions (See topic overviews below).

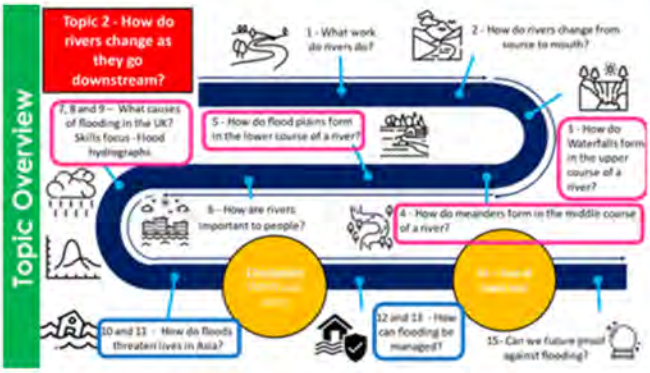


Figure 4 – Topic overview of topic 2

Opportunities to explain

Opportunities to develop judgments and opinions

Then in topic three, we ensure that students can do the same techniques but applied to a human geography topic.

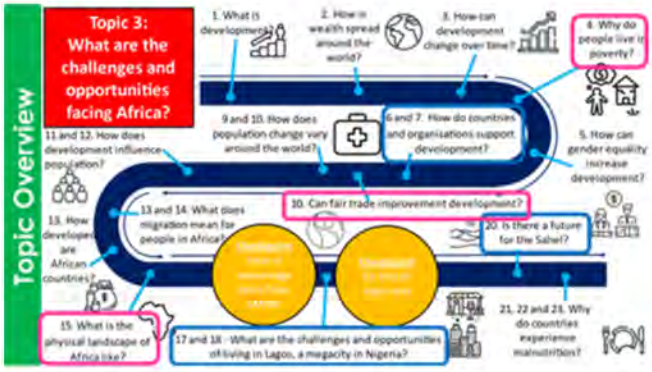


Figure 5 – Topic overview of topic 3

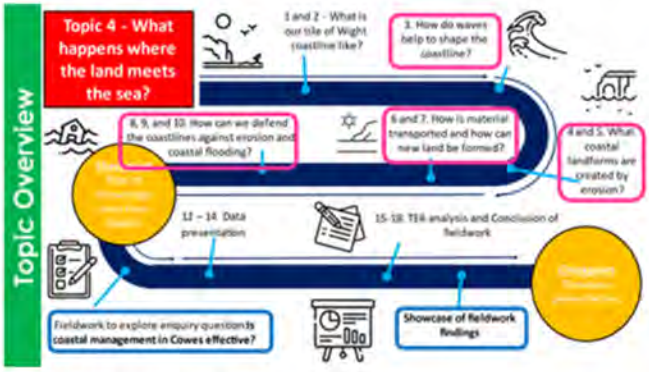


Figure 6 – Topic overview of topic 4

Depending on what day of these week, some lessons fall on a Monday and these groups have been disadvantaged disproportionally by the loss of lessons due to Bank Holidays / Development Days, therefore adjustments to the sequence of learning have been made accordingly to ensure coverage of key skills. Adaptations to support learners in included in the resources for each lesson and challenge opportunities exist too for learners which is important in the year 7 classes in particular because of the size of the class groups and also the diversity of the abilities in each group.

The language we are expecting geographers to use is shown in posters las shown in figure 7. This helps use to establish a common language that can be rehearsed in advance, modelling can be consistent and students can also rehearse their explanations through cold calling (with or without student prompts) and WPS opportunities were suitable.

Attached are examples of resources we have used in lessons to support with the development of ideas, these also indicate the scaffolding used to support learners.

Figure 7 – 'Write like a geographer' poster to support series of poster in geography classrooms.

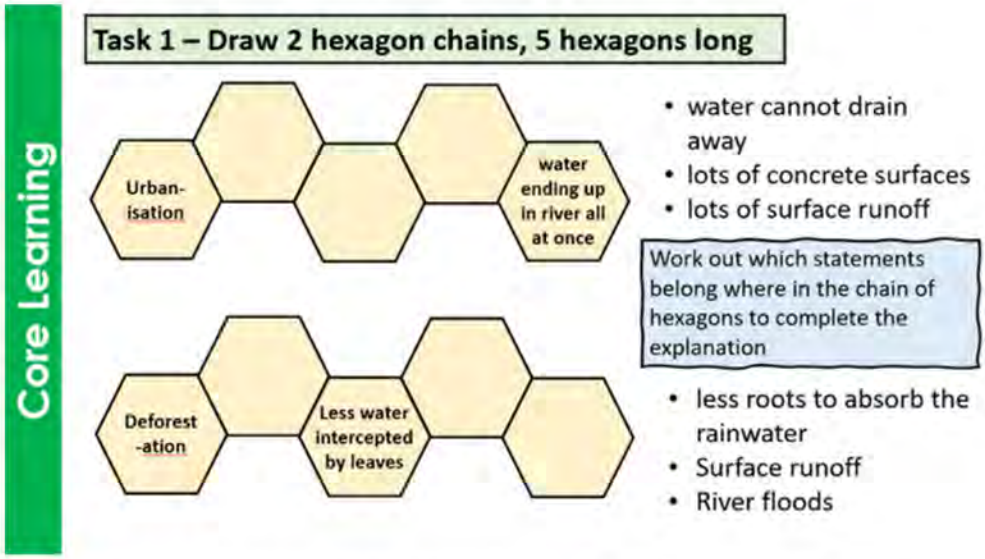


Figure 8 –task using hexagons to support the scaffolding of explanations this led to...

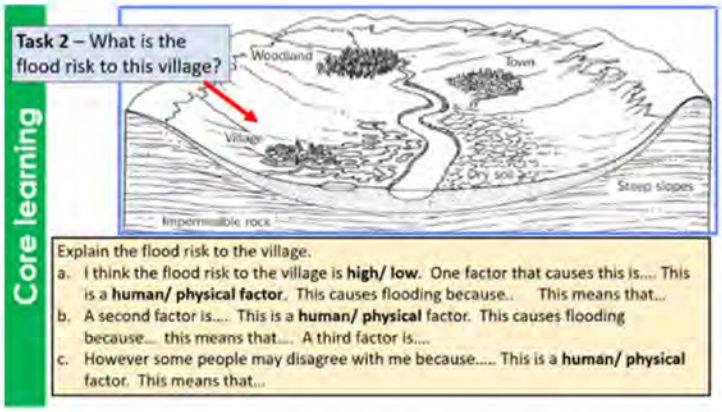


Figure 9 –... the task where students had to explain their judgement about human and physical causes of flooding (this is an example of scaffolding used in topic 2 in year 7)

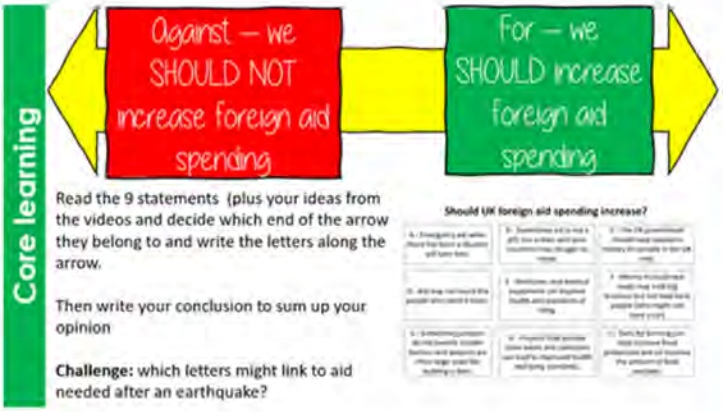


Figure 10 – Example of task set for students to classify their ideas before...

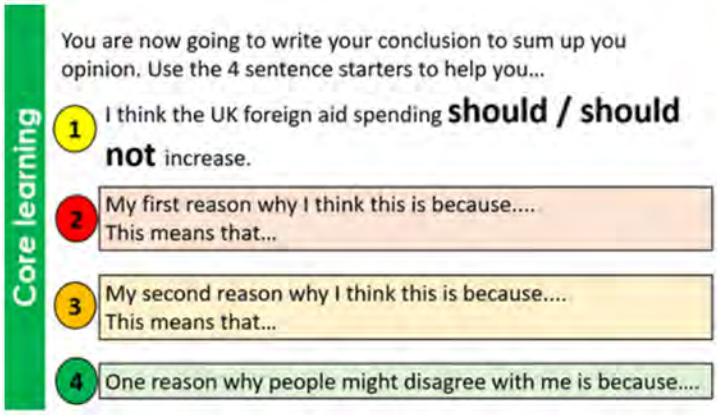


Figure 11 – ... the sentence starters (as per the Cowes Way) to produce a conclusion in topic 3 (spring term of year 7).

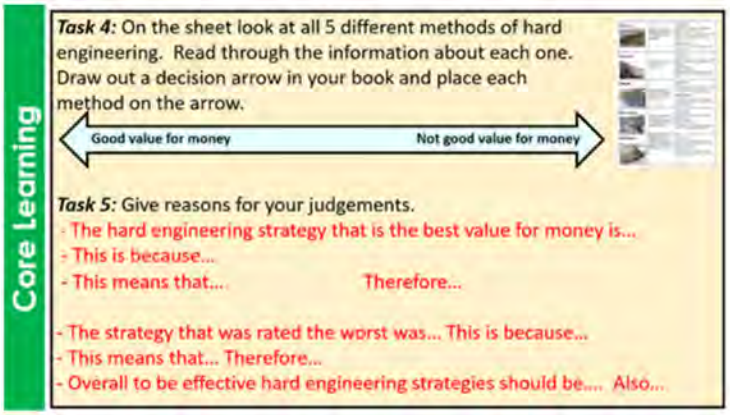
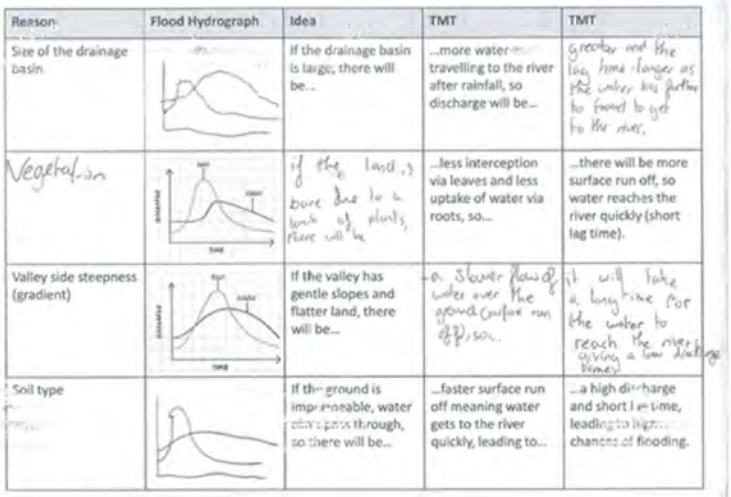


Figure 12 – A more complex judgement needed in topic 4 (Summer term of year 7) Adaptive teaching to still support with sentence starters, but students had to consider the idea of 'value for money' with regards to coastal management. Also see figure 15 and 16 for examples of student outcomes.

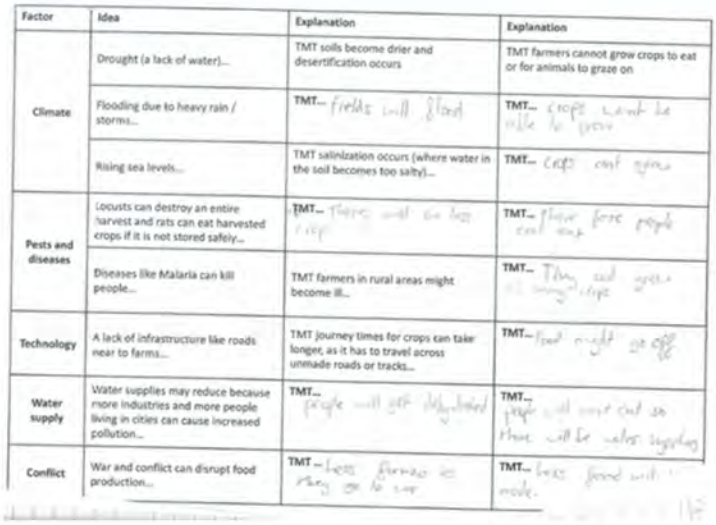
Deliver

The examples included below show how we have tried to implement opportunities to 'Drive thought' in our lessons. We (KLW and HMO) have conducted a curriculum review in the summer of 2024 for the year 7 curriculum and therefore the resources, ideas and strategies used in the classroom in the 2024-2025 cohort have been about embedding and refining the strategies. We are then seeking to ensure with the increased time in lesson time for year 8 and 9 has the curriculum sequencing to allow time for these tasks to be continued.



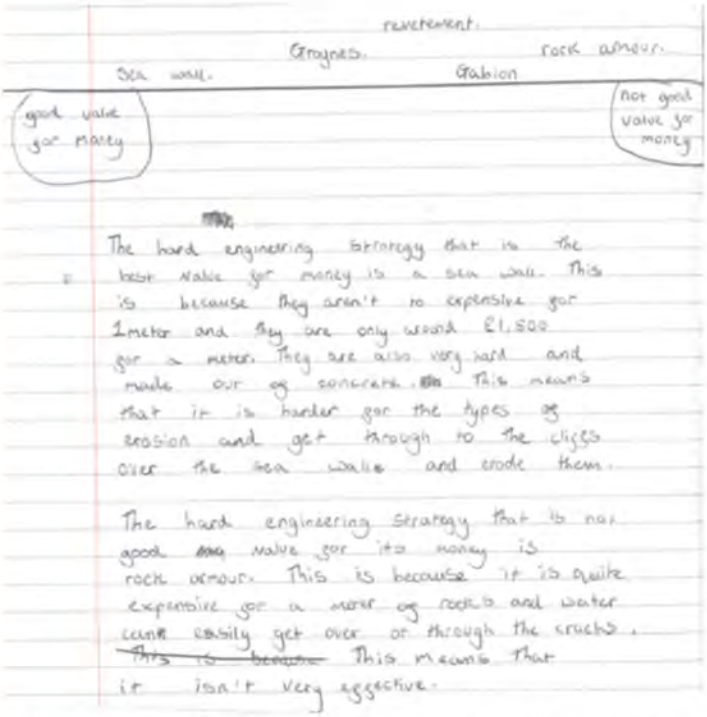
Reason	Flood Hydrograph	Idea	TMT	TMT
Size of the drainage basin		If the drainage basin is large, there will be...	...more water travelling to the river after rainfall, so discharge will be...	greater and the lag time longer as the water has further to travel to get to the river.
Vegetation		if the land is bare due to a lack of plants, there will be	...less interception via leaves and less uptake of water via roots, so...	...there will be more surface run off, so water reaches the river quickly (short lag time).
Valley side steepness (gradient)		If the valley has gentle slopes and flatter land, there will be...	...a slower flood as water over the ground (surface run off), so...	it will take a long time for the water to reach the river, giving a low discharge (river)
Soil type		If the ground is impermeable, water cannot pass through, so there will be...	...faster surface run off meaning water gets to the river quickly, leading to...	...a high discharge and short lag time, leading to high chances of flooding.

Figure 13 – Example of year 7 work - Explanations of factors that influence a flood hydrograph



Factor	Idea	Explanation	Explanation
Climate	Drought (a lack of water)...	TMT soils become drier and desertification occurs	TMT farmers cannot grow crops to eat or for animals to graze on
	Flooding due to heavy rain / storms...	TMT... fields will flood	TMT... crops cant be able to grow
	Rising sea levels...	TMT salinization occurs (where water in the soil becomes too salty)...	TMT... crops cant grow
Pests and diseases	Locusts can destroy an entire harvest and rats can eat harvested crops if it is not stored safely...	TMT...	TMT...
	Diseases like Malaria can kill people...	TMT farmers in rural areas might become ill...	TMT...
Technology	A lack of infrastructure like roads near to farms...	TMT journey times for crops can take longer, as it has to travel across unmade roads or tracks...	TMT...
Water supply	Water supplies may reduce because more industries and more people living in cities can cause increased pollution...	TMT...	TMT...
Conflict	War and conflict can disrupt food production...	TMT –	TMT...

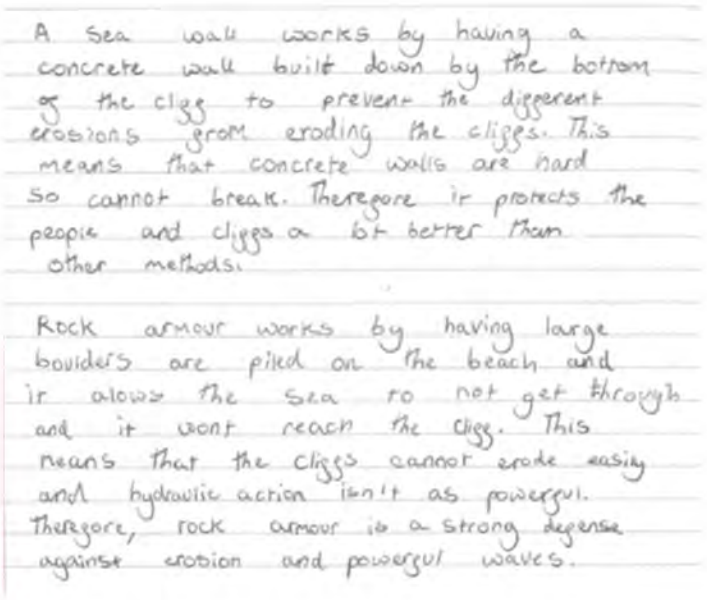
Figure 14 – Example of year 7 work – 'Double development' of ideas about causes of malnutrition



revetement.
Groynes. rock armour.
Sea wall. Gabion
good value for money
not good value for money

The hard engineering strategy that is the best value for money is a sea wall. This is because they aren't to expensive for 1 meter and they are only around £1,500 for a meter. They are also very hard and made our of concrete. This means that it is harder for the types of erosion and get through to the cliffs over the sea walls and erode them.

The hard engineering strategy that is not good value for its money is rock armour. This is because it is quite expensive for a meter of rocks and water could easily get over or through the cracks. This is because This means that it isn't very effective.



A sea wall works by having a concrete wall built down by the bottom of the cliff to prevent the different erosions from eroding the cliffs. This means that concrete walls are hard so cannot break. Therefore it protects the people and cliffs a bit better than other methods.

Rock armour works by having large boulders are piled on the beach and it slows the sea to not get through and it wont reach the cliff. This means that the cliffs cannot erode easily and hydraulic action isn't as powerful. Therefore, rock armour is a strong defense against erosion and powerful waves.

Figure 15– Example of year 7 work – classification of coastal management strategies with justifications included

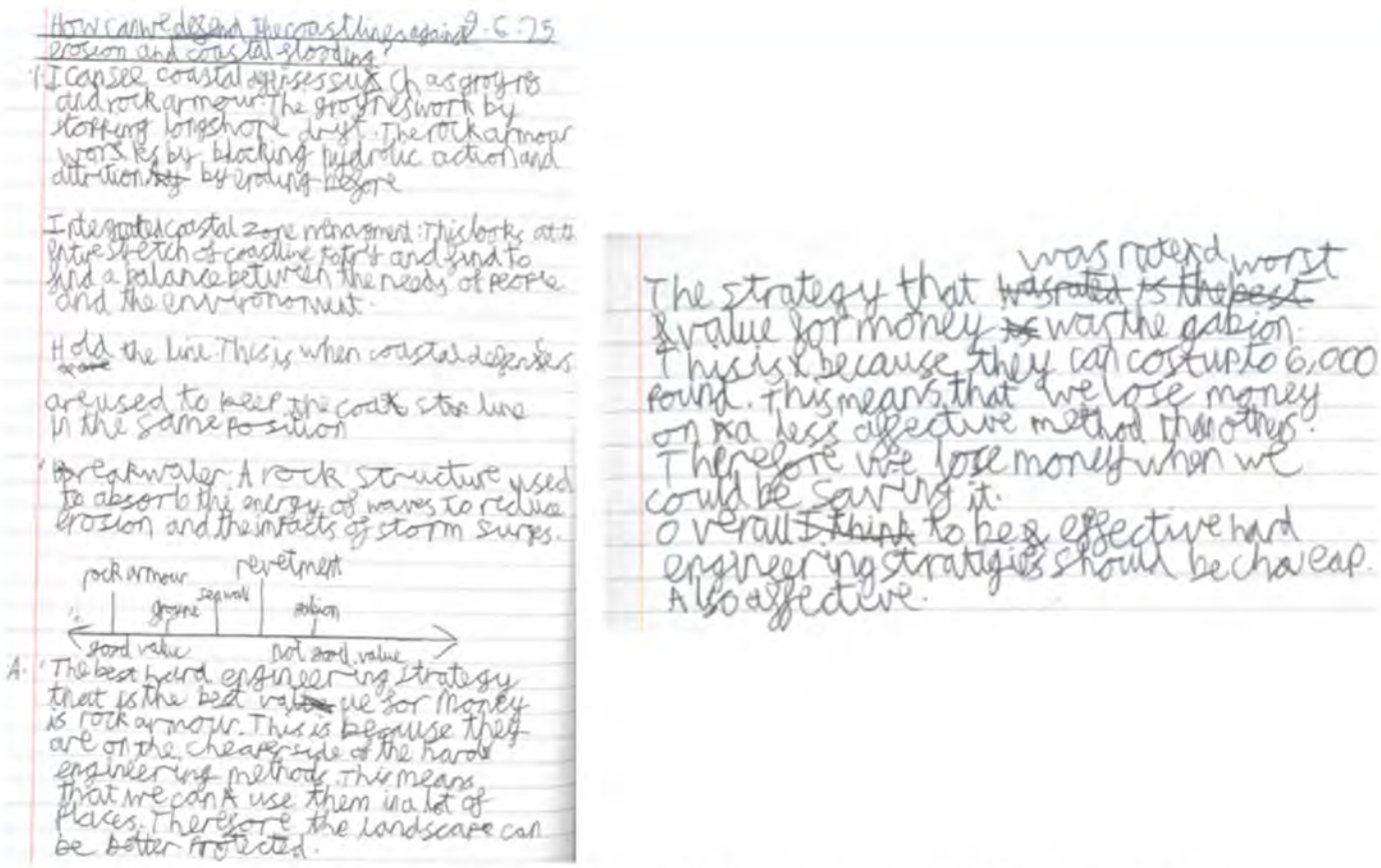
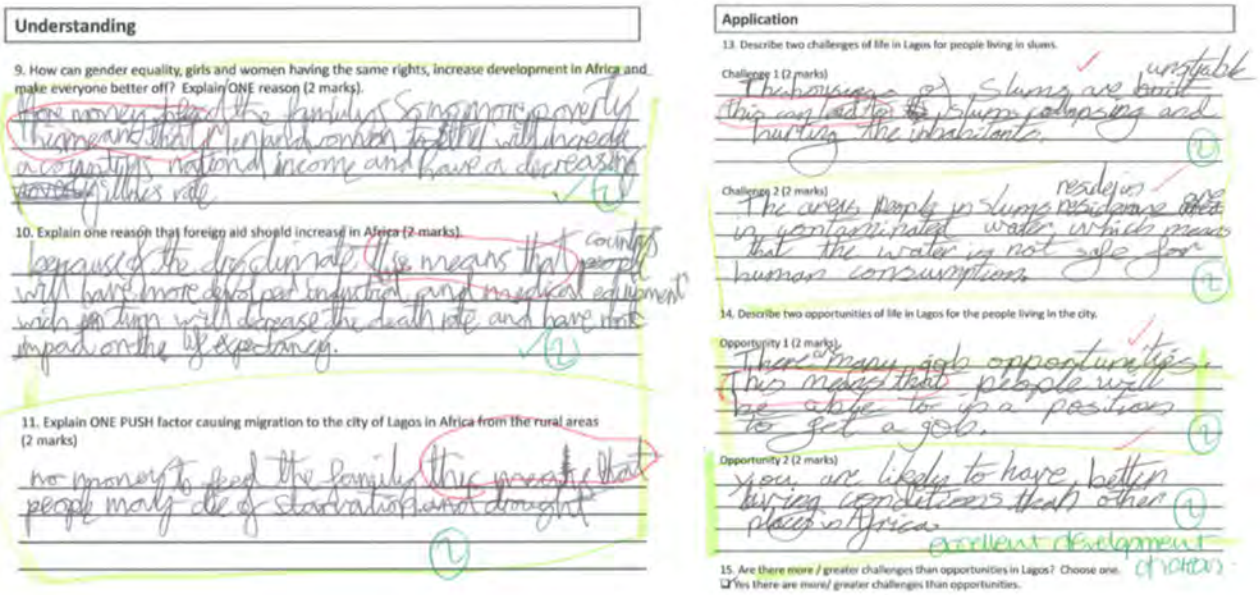


Figure 16 – Examples of year 7 work – organization of coastal management strategies with justifications included

Below are examples of success end of topic test answers for topic 3, where students have operated with increased independence and been successful in the reduction of scaffolding.



Application

13. Describe two challenges of life in Lagos for people living in slums.

Challenge 1 (2 marks) First is having to living on water as there's not enough space. The water is intoxicated from the sewers leading to health problems.

Challenge 2 (2 marks) Loads of flooding chances. This means that if it gets flooded then everything will have to be rebuilt that makes families, businesses and tourism go down/fail

14. Describe two opportunities of life in Lagos for the people living in the city.

Opportunity 1 (2 marks) The new building eko atlantic will bring new attraction and job opportunities. Therefore having a second chance at life

Opportunity 2 (2 marks) Eko atlantic will also bring more space to live in as its a long building. This means that tourism will be high

15. Are there more / greater challenges than opportunities in Lagos? Choose one.
- ■ Yes there are more/ greater challenges than opportunities
- ☐ No there are more / greater opportunities than challenges

Now give a detailed reason or two reasons to support your answer. (3 marks)
Lagos is a big overpopulated mega-city that is a big slum. Most people live in toxicated leading areas causing low life expectancy. There's high floods and ~~events~~ This means that houses can get ruined and won't be able to rebuild and there's no health facility

Application

13. Describe two challenges of life in Lagos for people living in slums.

Challenge 1 (2 marks) It is easy to get diseases because of dirty water [illegible]

Challenge 2 (2 marks) They may lose their homes due to flooding and because of poverty they will not be able to rebuild and face the possibility of homelessness.

14. Describe two opportunities of life in Lagos for the people living in the city.

Opportunity 1 (2 marks) People may receive better money and could be able to avoid poverty and having to live in a slum.

Opportunity 2 (2 marks) People could obtain far better healthcare than in rural areas because they are probably surrounded by hospitals and clinics, and even schools.

15. Are there more / greater challenges than opportunities in Lagos? Choose one.
- ■ Yes there are more/ greater challenges than opportunities
- ☐ No there are more / greater opportunities than challenges

Now give a detailed reason or two reasons to support your answer. (3 marks)
People move to Lagos for better opportunities in life, however usually end up in poverty, living in slums. Another reason is they might not have the correct qualifications for the job that they are going for, and so end up in poverty.

Figure 17 – Four examples of year 7 end of topic test answers where answers have been 'green boxed' to indicate detailed explanations

Our lesson plan model in Geography reflects the elements of the Cowes Way with stages in lessons build to then drive thought. Connections between lessons are purposeful and repetition of skills / language etc. are deliberate in order to build consistency and confidence.

Sustain

We will build this practice into our normal routines and ways of working by the rehearsal of teacher talk and modelling of expectations always in lessons. This can be done in cold calling and follow up question where students are prompted, if they have not done it automatically, to develop their explanations and responses.

Collaborative planning (KLW and HMO and now just KLW) at KS3 will help to provide consistency for the new topics / lessons to be introduced in year 8 and 9, in addition to the annual curriculum review process whereby current topics and activities are carefully considered. This will help to ensure that all geographers in all classes get the opportunity to develop their competency to write like a geographer'.

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