



T&L Times

Edition 13

Welcome

Welcome to our final Teaching and Learning Newsletter of Term 4. Our quote this week really focussed my thoughts on our current teaching and learning across our schools. We are now at the point when we are needing to be focussing on what is important whether that be identifying and filling gaps, teaching new content or just ensuring the well being of our pupils and staff is where it should be. In many cases we are having to streamline our curriculums to make sure we really focus on the essentials.

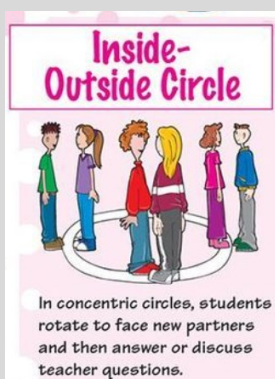
We have a unique opportunity with the easing of formal examinations at the end of this academic year to be really creative towards our curriculum decision and really tailor it towards what our pupils need moving forward. We can be creative, experimental and take a few risks. As our quote says 'if things don't turn out—take another shot'

Thank you for all of your support of Teaching and Learning during this term and have a great Easter break.



Quick Kagan—'Inside-Outside Circle'

This week we bring you our latest Kagan strategy that you can try out in your classroom. A big thank you as always to Mark Nolan (Assistant Head at Rivermead) for providing these. This week is



How to Use

1. Split the Class

Decide which half of the students will form the inside circle and which half will form the outside circle.

2. Question

Put a question or statement on the board. Give students at least ten seconds to think of an answer on their own.

3. Share

Ask students in the inside circle to share their response with the classmate facing them in the outside circle. When they have done this, ask them to say "pass," at which point their partners in the outside circle will share their responses.

4. Rotate

On your signal, have the outside circle move one step to the left or right and discuss the same question with the new partner. Option: post a new question or give the new partners a different discussion point.

Teaching and Learning Talk

Each week our Teaching and Learning leads in our schools are sharing with you something which they think will help you to develop Teaching and Learning. This week we have a contribution from **Lois Banks**, Assistant Head, Maths Lead and Key Stage 1 standards lead at Hoo St Werburgh. She has been keen to share with you Mary Myatt's latest blog on Oracy in the classroom. High quality talk is often not timetabled in to the day and is often regarded as an optional extra. This blog gives clear approaches to support oral language in the classroom.

I Hope you enjoy!



'Writing floats on a sea of talk' - James Britton

Why do we privilege writing about everything else? It's odd that high quality talk in classrooms is often regarded as an optional extra, something quite nice to do, rather than an entitlement for all pupils. Why, as a sector, do we think written outcomes matter more than talk? High quality talk, and its twin, listening, underpins reading and writing. And yet in too many classrooms, it's something that is just assumed will happen, without being explicitly taught

Continue reading here [Walking the talk — Mary Myatt Learning](#)

Ofsted News

- Ofsted has announced that it will inspect schools and colleges on site next term "to provide reassurance about how well children and learners are catching up".
- The inspections will be "lighter touch" with a full programme of graded inspections not beginning until September.
- The exception, under the rule will be "where the evidence strongly suggests that a school's current grade is no longer a fair reflection of its work".
- So for schools with "inadequate" or "requires improvement" ratings that have "clearly improved", Ofsted says "inspectors will be able to convert to a full, graded inspection either immediately or later in the term".
- Other than where significant concerns are raised, Ofsted will not inspect secondary schools during the first half of the summer term, to allow them to focus on teacher-assessed grades.

Nifty Notes

Over the last few terms we have been listening to and collating notes around a series of webinars and online courses. Sometimes you may not have time to listen to a full webinar but might be interested in the notes from the session. If you are interested in any of the following notes then please drop me an e-mail on dadsp001@rivermeadinclusivetrust.org

1. Awarding grades GCSE
2. Reluctant Readers
3. Preparing Students for Internal Assessments
4. How to Support Anxious Learners
5. Ofsted Update—Jan 21
6. Leadership of Teacher Learning
7. Managing Behaviour
8. Black Box Thinking
9. Remote Education
10. Collective Professionalism
11. NAHT Conference—October 2020
12. EEF Remote Professional Development Report
13. Peer on Peer Abuse
14. Supporting Staff to Manage Anxiety in Pupils
15. Blended Learning
16. Bereavement and Loss



Worthwhile Websites

The go-to for any fledgling scientists, Fuse School focuses on Maths, Chemistry, Biology and Physics. There are hundreds of videos created by teachers available here – all of which are short and concise, so as not to be overwhelming, which in turn encourages learning. From neuroscience to radiation, these are big topics condensed into powerful nuggets of meaning. Fuse School is a booster to main lessons and a brilliant way of revising. There's even a social network, which means children can safely talk about their specialist topics or share queries with peers all over the globe.

To access the site then press CTRL and click below

[FuseSchool \(fuseuniversal.com\)](https://fuseuniversal.com)



Sixty Second CPD

Holding Honest Conversations

Talking to parents about their child's behaviour can be hard. Defensiveness, blame and denial can quickly escalate, causing huge rifts between home and school. This strategy will help you to tackle difficult conversations with parents.



1. **Time:** Think carefully about the best time to approach the parent. If they can't talk at the moment, agree a time slot before you close the conversation.
2. **Approach:** How you approach the parent initially will have a huge impact on how the conversation unfolds. Consider your walk towards the parent, your eye contact as you approach them and your greeting. Keep it casual, yet formal. Explain that you'd like to catch up about their child.
3. **Space:** Avoid getting into the conversation outside an office / classroom space; redirect to a formal location. Thank the parent for coming along for a chat.
4. **Talk:** Explain the issues the school is facing but only talk about the behaviours, not the child (There was an incident when Joey spoke rudely to.....' Instead of 'Joey is rude'). Tell the parent what you've already put in place to address the issue. Describe the outcome you want to see. Ask if there is something else they think you could do and explain how they might be able to support the school.
5. **Offer:** Offer the parent the chance to share their thoughts, making a note of any concerns.
6. **Close:** End the conversation by thanking the parent for their support and assuring them that by working together, improvement is possible.

Why it works

Planning a difficult conversation ensures that you get as close as possible to the result you need.

Top Tip

Within the next week, follow up with the parent. Whatever the outcomes, keeping the lines of communication open will support improvement.



Perfect Podcast

This week we have a podcast recommendation — **Mr Barton Maths Podcast**

[Craig Barton](#), a maths teacher, TES advisor and creator of [mrbartonmaths.com](#) has his own podcast where he interviews inspirational and interesting educational guests. Although it says in the name that it's a 'Maths Podcast' it goes much much further than that. From education to in depth research teaching as a whole, it includes something for teachers and educators at every stage of their educational journey!

Mr Bartons Maths Podcast has played host to some big names in the world of education (not just mathematics) including Nick Rose, Lucy Crehan, Jane Jones, Former **HMI National Lead for Mathematics at Ofsted** and **Mark McCourt of Emaths** and those celebrated [mastery blogs](#). He even managed to interview his hero Simon Singh, author of Fermat's Last Theorem and the Codebook.



Many teachers are using these podcasts as 'CPD on the go' and they come highly recommended as does Mr Barton's book *How I Wish I'd Taught Maths*.

To access these podcasts then press CTRL and [CLICK HERE](#)

Digestible Documents

If a child is suffering with mental health issues including depression then this is going to have an impact on their ability to learn effectively. This week we look at some notes from an online course from Creative Education around signs of poor mental health

Spotting the warning signs for poor mental health

Absence of lateness

- Registers will pick up when a child is late or absence.
- If this changes could we be asking if there is a problem and can we put in further support.
- Is something happening at home which is causing them problems in getting to school at times?
- Have we got systems in place to pick up and deal with lateness or absence if it occurs?

Illness

- Might start suffering with physical illness e.g. headaches, stomach aches and general sickness.
- Are there patterns when the pupils are feeling ill e.g. is it just before maths.
- If a child is in pain or feeling ill then this is a sign that we need to do something.
- If we are in physical pain or suffering then this can have a negative impact on our mental well being.

Withdrawal

- If a child is seeming more withdrawn then this could be a signal
- There could be negative self talk going on in their head or life
- If they are scared to talk then they may put up the shutters and move away from them

Loss of Enjoyment

- A lack of interest or enthusiasm in things which used to bring us joy is a real sign of mental health concerns and in particular depression.
- This may really turn up in the playground or not being part of clubs etc.
- Might pick up with snippets of information – maybe they have stopped playing with friends or going on their computer to game with friends.

Academic Change

- Look out for academic performance drops suddenly. It means they may need immediate support.
- Be aware of academic change in the other direction – maybe they become obsessed with learning and drop everything else. This could be an unhealthy sign.

Hiding body

- Might be hiding abuse or harm done to themselves
- Might be hiding work gain or work loss
- Could be massive lack of self esteem and want to hide away.
- Might wear lots of layers of clothes or long sleeves in hot weather.

Weight Change

- Either increasing in weight or losing weight – can point towards depression.
- Could mean a change in appetite which could link to mental health worries

Change

- Any change is something you need to think about – appearance, behaviour and anything which is different to 'normal' for them.

Conclusion

If you are worried then it is better to look on the side of caution – if the change is sustained and over time then this should be something which you take further.



Dr Pooky Knightsmith

Pooky has a PhD in child mental health from the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London. She is the author of several books, and is a former chair of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition. She runs Creative Education alongside her husband and Mother-in-Law.



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