



TEACHING AND LEARNING NEWS

A half termly update on teaching and learning, research and pedagogy

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Happy New Year!

Welcome back to a new year and another edition of Teaching and Learning News. This term, the Futurezone network of schools is looking at Growth Mindset in more detail, with an exciting joint inset coming up in February at Union Chapel, Islington. With that in mind, this issue includes some useful links for developing growth mindsets in your classroom.

The Power of Deliberate Practice

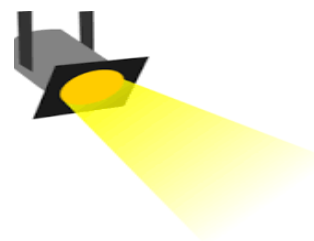
Following on from our recent TLC inset on Developing Growth Mindsets, what do opportunities for mastering knowledge and understanding look like in your classroom. Do children just practise more of the same, or is their practice purposeful and deliberate?

Remember, Anders Ericsson believes that Deliberate Practice does the following:

- Develops skills for which effective training techniques have been established.
- Takes place outside one's comfort zone and requires you to constantly try things that are just beyond your current abilities
- Involves well-defined, specific goals and often involves improving some aspect of the target performance (it isn't vague)
- Is deliberate and requires a person's full attention and conscious actions .
- Involves feedback and modification of efforts in response to that feedback.
- Depends on effective mental representations (learn more on page 5)
- Nearly always involves building on or modifying previously acquired skills by focusing on particular aspects of those



Spotlight on Great Practice



Expert Teachers Course

(Angel Teaching School Alliance)

As members of the Angel Teaching School Alliance, we receive free access to a number of CPD and training opportunities. This year, Rosa (Yr. 5) and Chloe (Yr. 3) are enrolled on an Expert Teachers course, run by the alliance. This course consists of six twilight training sessions throughout the year based on the research of John Hattie, comparing expert teachers with experienced and novice teachers. The course supports participants to develop their practice with a focus on challenge, deep representation and monitoring and feedback. In addition to attending twilight sessions, Chloe and Rosa have been completing reading and CPD tasks in their own time. Recently, they have been using state of the art IRIS software and equipment, purchased by the teaching school alliance to video themselves teaching and save it onto a secure network.

Rosa shared some of her views on the course so far:

“I always find that the most useful courses I have been on give me ideas that I can take straight into my classroom. The Expert Teacher Course at EGA has been a great opportunity to understand what excellence in teaching looks like, with a focus on choosing a specific part of your own practice to deliberately change and improve.”



Iris Hardware Rosa and Chloe have been using

Rosa explained, “I trialled using pre-assessment before new Maths topics, I found that this improved the level of challenge I planned into our lessons and also encouraged the children to think about their own learning journeys. I also trialled raising my own expectations in questioning and communicating with the children in my class. The most interesting strategy was to reduce ‘tells’: continue taking a range of answers even if a right answer has been given and don’t give anything away! It is more difficult than it sounds! This has been absolutely fantastic to keep the children engaged, confident and willing to take a risk. There is a big focus on listening to each other, because they are always allowed an opportunity to change their answers and learn. “

What's Coming Up? C.P.D.

- **Thursday 9th February-CPD and Tea in the staffroom (Abi)** - Tax codes, tax relief and teachers pension scheme - know the essentials.
- **Monday 20th February**—Whole School Inset (am Matthew Syed at The Union Chapel, pm at NGPS- Mindsets).
- **Monday 27th February**—Phase meetings
- **Monday 6th March**—TLC inset—Building Growth Mindsets Part 2.
- **Monday 20th March**—Futurezone maths cluster meeting.
- **Tuesday 21st, Monday 27th & Tuesday 28th March**— Parent Workshops on Growth Mindsets

Have you got something you'd like to share that you've tried in your classroom? We all benefit from sharing examples of great practice. Email or speak to Jess if you would like to share your experiences in the next edition of Teaching and Learning News.

NGPS at BETT

On Saturday 28th January, some of the digital leaders attended the BETT show with Donna. ...one of the largest EdTech shows in the world. During the day the children worked together, exploring new technology, acting as judges. They then presented the Best of BETT awards on the main stage. If you'd like to watch the video of their day, please see Donna for details.

Maintaining The Pace

Have you ever found that the pace of teaching in your classroom drops and children lose focus or find it hard to concentrate?

Here are some top tips to develop your pace and maintain pupil engagement:

- 1) Video yourself teach and watch it back. Notice how you are using lesson time. How often are you distracted from your delivery? How quickly are you talking and how does your tone of voice impact the pace? Do you repeat yourself unnecessarily?
- 2) When you need to stop to manage behaviour, are you giving warnings quickly without disrupting the flow of learning? Be aware of entering into a dialogue which takes you off on a tangent.
- 3) Add timings to your flipcharts to remind yourself to reduce the level of teacher talk.
- 4) Try asking another adult in the classroom to use a stop watch to monitor the amount of teacher talk in a lesson, starting the timer every time you speak to the class. You might be surprised.



How Can We Support Parents to Enable Growth Mindsets?

Often, work in school to develop growth mindsets can be undone at home, however good parents' intentions. These 5 tips can be shared with parents to support growth mindset development at home:

- 1) Verbally praise kids for skills that don't sound predetermined: hard work, persistence, rising to a challenge, learning from a mistake, etc. rather than being 'smart', 'brilliant' or 'gifted'.
- 2) Be a growth mindset role model. Be honest: how often do you say "I can't (cook/sing/balance my bank account)" or "I'm terrible at (sports/spelling/public speaking)" as if there's no hope for you? Make sure you're sending the right message—maybe even take on something new! Encourage children to finish any sentence about something they are currently unable to do with the word "yet!"
- 3) Encourage your child to forget taking the easy route (where little learning is done) and instead embrace challenges. A sheet full of questions he/she already knows the answers to won't "grow the brain" like one deeper problem to solve (even if he/she doesn't get the correct answer.

4) Remember growth mindset isn't just academic; it applies to many areas of life (athletic, musical, social). Having trouble getting the basketball into the net? Keep making mistakes on a guitar chord? Tried to initiate play with someone and it didn't go well? Discuss the next step for improvement.

5) Discourage envy of peers and talk to your child about what he or she can learn from others who appear more successful.

While skills may come more easily to some, most often there's a (possible unseen) element of practice, persistence and hard work which leads to achievement.



What Are Your Top Strategies for Growing Growth Mindsets?

In the next edition of Teaching and Learning News, we'll be sharing the top 10 strategies used in classes at Newington Green for building growth mindsets. What are you already doing in class to grow brains and develop a growth mindset culture in the classroom?

If you'd like to share any ideas, please email or speak to Jess or share them in the next TLC meeting.

Understanding Mental Representations

In his book 'Peak', Anders Ericsson defines mental representations as one of the key features of deliberate practice, but what are they, and why are they important?

Ericsson writes, 'A mental representation is a mental structure that corresponds to an object, an idea, a collection of information, or anything else, concrete or abstract, that the brain is thinking about.'

In other words, sometimes when we want to commit things to our long term memory, we construct images/maps/aid memories in our mind to access the information properly. One simple example of this is memory by association. If I remember someone's name is Kat, I might picture a pet cat in my head. That's a mental representation.

In a similar way, an expert chess player can use mental representations to predict the next move in a chess game.

We are forming mental representations every day, but they can also be used to help us learn more quickly. Expert learners, who have studied using deliberate practice can construct more complex and detailed mental representations, which help them to notice patterns.

This also links to Jean Piaget's work on **schemas**, defined as '...a set of linked mental representations of the world, which we use both to understand and to respond to situations.'

How as teachers can we help children to build effective mental representations to aid learning?

