



## CWLC Teaching and Learning News

DON'T LET STUDENTS SAY 'I CAN'T DO THIS', TELL THEM THEY JUST CAN'T DO IT **YET**

MARCH 2015

# What does a growth mindset school really look like?

In November, three of us were lucky enough to be invited to visit Huntington School in York by their headteacher, John Tomsett. Huntington has adopted growth mindset as a key part of its ethos and it features in all aspects of school life. We are extremely grateful to John and his staff for the chance to see what growth mindset looks like in practice, three years down the line. It certainly gave us food for thought about what may or may not work for us, and will further help our explorations into what it might look like at CWLC.

### Key features of growth mindset at work at Huntington School:

- The whole-school Performance Development target has growth mindset as first objective, rolled over for 3 years.
- The School Development Plan only has two points: **Growing Great Teachers** and **Growth Mindset**
- Fortnightly CPD is built into the school day to develop great T&L with a GM focus

- Key staff have developed lessons and sessions on growing memory
- Displays can be seen throughout the school with GM quotes from famous people and Huntington students alike.
- At the annual school awards evening, the onus is on GM and prizes are given purely for students displaying most impressive GM behaviours
- Termly mantras are used, e.g.: 'The power of YET'.

**Rachael Stevens [AHT]:** *Throughout our visit, there could be no doubt where the school's priorities lie. The headteacher and his SLT are very well aware of the transient nature of many educational 'silver bullets' and fads; they recognise that GM is due for both some bandwagon-jumping by schools who want the outcomes but can't/won't engage with the key ideas and persevere with them, and also the inevitable criticism GM will receive for its increasing popularity. Huntington's leap in academic results over these three years show a marked change in the school's direction though.*

### Simon Beasley [Head of Drama]:

*I thought that the ever-present nature of the school vision and its roadmap for the attainment of that vision were excellent. It felt like it was something concrete and real and over time it had sunk into the marrow of the school. The approach to teachers' professional development was innovative yet common-sense driven. The fact that staff were encouraged to take risks with their teaching via their CPD was brilliant.*

### Andy Morrison [Trainee English teacher]:

*There were several striking aspects of Growth Mindset evident within Huntington School. The school's ethos is driven partly by Head's passion and interest in the idea – not just a handful of teachers' thoughts. Staff understand that praising effort and challenging are better than praising intellect or natural ability.*

See the T&L folder on the shared area for resources and suggestions about trying out growth mindset thinking in your teaching. Also look out for Growth Mindset So Far: a document detailing our past, present and future involvement with growth mindset thinking.



# Making your marking manageable

Mary Myatt is a lead inspector for Ofsted, an adviser, writer and trainer supporting schools think imaginatively about learners' progress.

## 'Should I be marking every piece of work?'

This was a question put to me as I worked with a group of teachers recently. My answer was 'No'.

What inspections are looking for is that there is high quality feedback which crucially is acted on by the student or pupil. Too often what we see is feedback without any response. So, how can it be moving learning forward? The student has ignored it, not because they can't be bothered, but because they haven't been expected to.

Now feedback is going to look different in different subjects. It won't look the same in English as in maths or science or drama. The important thing is that high quality work is affirmed and the reasons given. And that misconceptions

are picked up and used as the focus for discussions either in the book or in the classroom. Mistakes and misconceptions are a good thing because they make us go back to first principles and talk through what a good or correct response is.

If I am looking at students' books and see that every piece of work has been marked, has high quality feedback, but no action by the child, I check with the teacher how much sleep they are getting. This is not feasible. Mostly though this isn't the case. Lots of books have lots of ticks, the odd comment and no expectation that anything should be done as a result of that comment.

So, to sketch out what kind of marking makes a difference to learning and is also reasonable, practical and leaves enough time for the teacher to go have a life outside of school. For starters, it is better to think of it as feedback.

To support learning, written comments are much more effective if they are expressed as questions: 'Could you give an example?' 'What else does this make you think of?' 'How does this compare with..?'

The teacher should not be providing the child with the answer, but expecting them to think and to refine their work as a result. This doesn't happen by magic. Schools who have got the hang of this know that they have to dedicate time during lessons for children to act on the feedback. **And there's no getting away from it, this means we have to be prepared to cut content in favour of learning. So no contest.**

To summarise, provide plenty of feedback during the lesson. Use post it notes, stamps and symbols. Marking outside the lesson should be reserved for more substantial pieces of work which have been developed over time. So fewer pieces, done in more depth.



*Time given for students to undertake improvement in their work on a regular basis has a significant effect. Building in DIRT (Dedicated Improvement and Reflection/Response Time) saves time later, as key errors are being corrected by the students themselves. Some departments like students to complete DIRT in differently coloured pens, so you can see if they have acted on their feedback.*

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# Our Silver Arrows



We have been developing our own version of Tom Sherrington's Silver Arrows: the classroom strategies that have the evidence behind them as having high impact. These are the areas we've decided on so far, under the headings that we recognise at CWLC as being priority concerns.

So if you tweak your teaching in just one way, do one of these...

## Literacy

### Key words

Always use correct terminology when explaining; share key words each lesson / SoW. **Insist** these are learned and used accurately in written work and speaking.

More to follow. We are developing more Silver Arrows in the coming T&L meetings. If you would like to help with this, come along to the next meeting. The more the merrier!

## Questioning

### Think, pair, share

*Don't rely on hands up!*

*A question is posed, students have time to think about it individually, and then work in pairs to develop their answer further. This can then be shared with other pairs or the whole class.*

*This can then be 'Bounced' on, in order to fully develop the best response possible.*

## Marking & Feedback

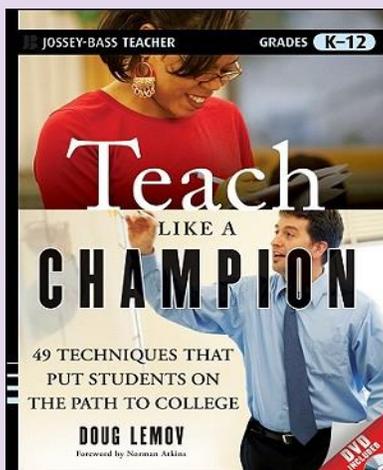
Don't do the work for them! Highlight or mark errors with © (check & correct) which students can correct themselves (have dictionaries out on tables). When work is incomplete or shows misunderstandings, ask questions. Build DIRT into your lessons and insist that all corrections are done and all questions answered.

## Behaviour

**Signal** for attention.

**Pause:** wait, adopting an assertive stance, scanning for eye contact.

**Insist** on full attention, using names where necessary.



Are you looking for inspiration or feeling your classroom practice could do with a bit of a boost? Is questioning an area that you are looking to develop? Look no further...

# Book review

Often when I am so busy that I can't see the wood for the trees the last thing I feel I have time for is to read a book about pedagogy. But this is just what I did, and the benefits outweighed the costs. The good ideas I picked up gave me renewed enthusiasm for the day-to-day activities in my lessons.

The book I read was, "Teach Like a Champion" by Doug Lemov. This is one of the texts that has recently been added to our Teaching and Learning library, as featured in our last issue of the Teaching and Learning newsletter.

Whenever I go on a course or take part in CPD activities I feel that the training is most productive if I can take something away that I can implement in one of my lessons THE VERY NEXT DAY. "Teach Like a Champion" meets this requirement as it is a practical handbook. It contains "49 techniques to put students on the path to college". Each of these techniques has been used by **real** teachers in **real** classrooms with **real** students, with the intention of raising aspirations, as

well as standards of learning. If you only have time to read part of the book, I would recommend the first chapter: "Setting High Academic Expectations", the focus of which is on questioning skills that demand and generate high quality answers.

There is a DVD to accompany the book, but my one criticism is that the recording of the students' voices is not clear. However, the clips are short, which makes them manageable if you are pushed for time. Like me, I am sure you will come across techniques in the book that you already use, or perhaps have used in the past but have forgotten about. Sometimes it is nice to be reminded that we get a lot right, while at the same time collecting tips to make our practice even better. Don't be put off by the cheesy title: there is no requirement to wear medals or whoop. Enjoy!

**Teresa Thomas, AHT**

# How was it for us?

## Sharing best practice



Martin Goffe

Before Christmas all year 10 students undertook their MFL speaking exam which count for 30% of the final grade, so is a very important aspect of their course. Results this year were the best ever. The following is an interview with Subject Leader Martin Goffe and teachers Jen Dunn and Jane Parr on the outcomes of the exam examining why the students did so well.

### What was so good about the results?

JD: It was fantastic to see the high expectations of the students and how seriously they viewed the assessment.

JHP: My group achieved 15 A\*'s and 1 grade A!

MG: This year students achieved 26% A\*/A and 74% A\* - C. When the current year 11 did their first speaking exam they achieved 63% A\* - C and the year before that students achieved 40% A\* - C, so we are on an upward climb! The biggest differences are the increased numbers of A\* and A grades overall and a huge increase in set 3 and 4 students achieving A\* - C grades.

### What were the reasons for it going so well?

JHP: Good systems, which were launched last year, are now embedded and the year 10s have seen year 11 going through the same process.

MG: I changed the SoW for years 7 - 11 in early 2013. Every half-term, every student is assessed in some form. Year 9s now do

'watered-down' versions of GCSE controlled assessment, so they are better prepared for them, and have already had the chance to know which learning methods works best for them. We also start teaching the GCSE curriculum in the June half-term and re-jigged the classes and who is teaching them.

JD: I teach the parallel top sets and the students had high expectations of their ability and wanted to perform well. They got straight to work at the preparation stage and there was no complaint about difficulty learning the finished draft. They used their time effectively, carefully copied up their work and used flashcards to break down each question.

### What did you do differently this time in the run up to the exams?

MG: We did launch assemblies, which SLT attended, explaining the importance of these exams and their value towards the overall GCSE mark. I also sent letters home to parents, and we encouraged all students to attend our support sessions on Tuesdays after school. I also informed them that they do 3 (of 4) controlled assessments in year 10 - if they do well enough, no speaking exams at all in year 11: a good incentive I think! I personally tried to get into as many lessons as possible (mainly G band as I teach S band) to give pep talks, congratulate students, etc.

JD: I recommended a language app "Dragon Dictation", so the students could read their answers into a phone/tablet and see if the device recognised what they had said.

### What did the students do differently this time in the run up to the exam?

JD: For me, the difference was in the work ethic. They clearly all put in a lot of time and effort and WANTED to do well.

JHP: My students in particular were very conscientious about going to the Tuesday after school club and getting them to go home was an issue!

MG: They love using cue cards! They saw the older students last year using them and I think they wanted to emulate them. We find the younger students, right down to year 8s, want to use flashcards when they do their "formal assessments".

### Were there any students who really surprised you? How? Why?

JD: Some students really excelled.

Pronunciation was at times exceptionally good

and I always feel that is the hardest aspect for the speaking exam to 'teach', as it is often difficult to hear and replicate the accent of a native speaker if you are not regularly in contact with this medium i.e. living in the country.

JHP: I was surprised that all of them did quite as well as they did. I was expecting a selection of grade B's, A's and A\*'s so I was surprised at the number of A\*'s.



Jen Dunn

### What would you do differently next time? Are there any further tweaks you would like to make?

JD: Yes, I had a quieter student 'slip through the net', so to speak. He did not quite achieve a C grade. He had prepared C+ answers on paper, but when it came to the exam, although he had prepared well, he struggled with the overall flow of the responses, thus leading to hesitation and costing him vital marks. I would keep a closer eye on the 'quieter' student next time.

MG: I could invite an MFL lecturer in to talk about the importance of learning and succeeding in MFL, or invite local businesses that promote language learning to the launch assemblies. Credit for this successful rounding of assessment needs to be shared by the whole team: Jane Parr and Matt Syner (when he was Head of French) contributed some excellent ideas, as have the rest of the department in departmental meetings. The crux of it is that we have raised the profile of the department and convinced students that a good grade in MFL is possible, and most importantly, worthwhile!

Many thanks to Martin, Jen and Jane for sharing their experiences.

All the best for the next assessment! TT