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The Alleynian Review 2019-2020

Foreword

We are thrilled to bring you the inaugural edition of The Alleynian Review, a collection of academic articles written by educational thought leaders at Dulwich College (Singapore) and Dulwich College International.

The Alleynian Review was conceived as a way to give a platform to our hugely talented staff to share their thought-provoking ideas on topics as diverse as digital literacy in the 21st century to revisiting the value of homework to encouraging staying power in children when acquiring new skills. Twelve authors were chosen based on their passion for particular subject matter areas.

I am incredibly proud of the quality of teaching at Dulwich College (Singapore) and the part we play in guiding our students to live, learn and graduate worldwide. Encouraging life-long learning, critical thinking and the pursuit of discovery is part of the Dulwich difference. In the words of one of our founding College's most renowned alumni, explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, "The questions are always more important than the answers".

On behalf of the authors and the broader teaching staff, I hope you enjoy sitting down to read The Alleynian Review and are inspired to think in new and novel ways about the diverse and ever-changing field of education.

Warmest Regards,



Nick Magnus

Headmaster

Dulwich College (Singapore)





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The Alleynian Review:

Learn languages; live better

Senior School Mandarin teacher, Adam Moorman, draws from personal experience and scientific exploration to argue the lifelong gifts of the process of language learning, beyond that of fluency.



Choosing which language to pursue at school can be a complex decision, and one in which competing views can push students this way or that. A bad learning experience for their parents might discourage children from studying French; the desire to be in a class with friends might pull someone towards Spanish; a news article or TV show might make Mandarin seem attractive. However, experience tells us that it is better to take all of these outside opinions with a pinch of salt; better to drill down into our own motivations and ambitions rather than hastily following the advice of others.

Similarly, in order to make the best decisions, we must appreciate all of what language learning entails. Many students and parents concentrate on three areas: How easy is it to become fluent? Which language will be most useful in the future? Which language promises the best grades? While understandable in the circumstances, these questions focus too narrowly on the outcomes of language learning, missing the myriad benefits of the process.

Studying any foreign language is a hugely valuable experience with lifelong benefits, and it is crucial for anyone beginning, or even just considering beginning, to take a more complete view of the process and all of the positives it brings. Only in this way can each learner choose the language that suits them best.

Be realistic

Teachers will know the familiar scenario of frustrated students dropping languages, feeling they will never be fluent. But what does it mean to be fluent? Is it necessary, or even possible? If emulating a native speaker is the best measure of fluency, then most students are immediately doomed to failure. This damaging but generally unquestioned goal of language study has no real scientific basis and, as Mehmedbegovic and Bak (2017) convincingly argue, simply being able to communicate in a language makes people multilingual and promises many of the benefits described below.

Rather than hoping to mimic native speakers, we should consider the different levels of language competency and what they bring. Do we aim to be able to comfortably use the language at work? Or do we want to be proficient enough to spend a gap year travelling and working abroad? All of these are equally valid objectives, and are more concrete and helpful than an elusive goal of fluency. By considering what level we are aiming for, we remove a potential barrier to progress and increase our chances of success, motivated by the practical application of what we are learning.

Moreover, fluency is a moving target. When asked if I am fluent in Chinese – after more than ten years of study – I answer that I am very fluent in certain situations, but struggle to express myself in detail on unfamiliar subjects. Ask yourself how easily you could debate the pros and cons of raising interest rates in English, or critique an impressionist painting, and it is easy to see that rather than a catch-all state of flawless communication, fluency is bound by topic and context.

A difficult language to learn?

If attaining fluency is such a challenge, is it better to choose a so-called easy language? Although studies do show that certain languages are harder to learn than others (depending on the learner's mother tongue), my experience of learning

five languages – and teaching three – suggest that rather than some objective measure of difficulty, the overriding factors in success are the individual attitude, circumstances and motivation of each learner.

These can be hard to quantify and unpack: while some people have obvious links to particular languages or a clear career goal from a young age, others do not. Personally, I had none of these, but always managed to find something captivating about the different languages I studied, something that I generally couldn't articulate to other people if asked. Sometimes, following a gut feeling is really the best move a learner can make.

Language learning is so personal and subjective that we should not attach undue importance to the apparent difficulty of a language. French has countless similarities with English, but many find its grammatical complexity an insurmountable obstacle. Students ask, why is a table feminine, or a book masculine? Why do adjectives become plural? Why are there two words for "you"? Proximity to English alone is not enough to make a language accessible, and could even cause difficulties, as we find it hard to separate and define different languages.

Mandarin, on the other hand, is considered among the most difficult languages to learn for English speakers. It has characters rather than an alphabet, different tones to master, and no set way of saying "yes" or "no". But the compensation is a much simpler structure and grammar, no tenses or verb changes, and the knowledge that, with 1,000 characters, we can read about 90% of common written material. While the language is very different from English, for many students the difficulties it presents and the way we must constantly reassess things we take for granted are what make it attractive.

I have worked with students of all different backgrounds, some who could make no sense of Spanish but loved Mandarin; others who rejected their Chinese heritage and chose French. Who reaches their target is more a question of who taps into their personal motivation and keeps going, rather than of the language itself. What discourages one person fascinates another, and students are best advised to choose the language they enjoy, rather than one others tell them is useful or easy.

Higher grades?

As we consider how to choose well and succeed, we should also investigate the broader academic benefits of language study, which go far beyond the acquisition of new words. Too often, we see different subjects in isolation, failing to appreciate the links between them and the ways in which they mutually benefit each other. Although we ourselves may impose academic boundaries, these do not necessarily reflect the working of our brains, and where different fields meet, they can complement each other, bring new insights, and catalyse the development of new skills.

This is true of language study, where received wisdom has shifted away from a negative "limited resources model" in which the brain's capacity for learning is finite, to one in which languages are increasingly appreciated for their positive impact on other subjects. Thankfully, studying French does not mean that a student's Maths will suffer, as once feared.

In fact, the opposite may well be true. Research has

found myriad benefits to foreign language study, including improved performance in standardised testing in Maths and English. This may be down to the enhanced expressive ability that results from studying another language, whose impact is notable in our command of own language. We learn to understand languages as systems, reflecting on our mother tongue, and allowing us to better express ourselves. Our vocabulary increases, boosting our reading skills and giving us more ways of communicating concepts. And with a greater range of concepts at our disposal, we learn to express ourselves in more nuanced ways, articulating more numerous, more varied, and better-quality ideas.

Our brains are incredibly adept at synthesising different ideas, and foreign language learning is instrumental in nurturing this flexibility. At the root of this is a set of cognitive skills known as Executive Control, which is developed by learning languages. Improved Executive Control fosters cognitive flexibility, which allows learners to more easily filter out distractions and maintain their focus. Similarly, speakers of more than one language multitask more quickly and easily than monolinguals, switching between tasks and coping with the unexpected.

Improved executive function also boosts working memory, allowing multilinguals to access information and tackle problems more logically than monolinguals. In short, learning a new language encourages our brains to flip between different systems, make new connections, and retrieve information more quickly, skills that are needed in many aspects of both academic and working life.

Finally, learning languages often becomes a lifelong habit. Learning one foreign language makes subsequent acquisition easier, as I have discovered. I went from undertaking French and Spanish GCSE at school, to Spanish A-level and Italian GCSE at college, to a BA in Spanish and Portuguese at university. When I moved to Taiwan after graduation, it seemed quite natural to start learning Mandarin. Looking back, when choosing my GCSE options, I had no idea that learning Spanish might open the door to other languages, but it is not hard to imagine how Dulwich College International students, who are already comfortable in at least one foreign language, will go on to new learning experiences around the world after school.

Beyond education

Language learning has lifelong benefits, not only for our academic performance, but also for our life choices and our health in general. The ways in which foreign languages exercise our brains can help to safeguard their long-term health. The most important of these is the slowing down of cognitive decline, delaying the onset of degenerative conditions like dementia. Moreover, Bak et al. (2014) found that people who speak two languages or more show a delayed onset of Alzheimer's disease by almost five years.

But perhaps most valuable of all, and hardest to quantify and analyse, is the way that learning foreign languages can change our perception of the world and affect the choices we make. A receptiveness to other languages and cultures can break down invisible barriers that inhibit our choices and open up new experiences that we never imagined might exist. When I won a scholarship to study in Portugal at the age of 19, it was my first experience of spending anything more than a week's holiday overseas. I had no idea what direction my

future would take, but I am sure that the experience helped lay the foundations for living in Spain, Taiwan, Mainland China and now, Singapore.

It also established a lifelong desire to learn the language of the place I was living and interact with the people there. When choosing my GCSEs, how could I have foreseen any of this? Could I say that learning Portuguese and Italian – which I barely use – was a wasted effort? Without these earlier experiences, could I have still learnt Mandarin? How would my life be different if I had never been able to enjoy the literature of another culture in the native language, or to spend significant periods of my life in a second, or even third language?

These are the truly hidden benefits of language learning, so personal, so valuable, and so hard to predict and measure. But the reassuring thing is that all of my friends who persisted with languages have experienced their own versions of them, and just imagine what lies ahead for our students, already so international and worldwide at such a young age. We live in a world in which bilingualism is increasingly the norm, in which a knowledge economy requires ever greater flexibility and adaptability, and in which there is a constant need to upgrade our skills to stay relevant.

The question we should ask ourselves is not one of 'should I continue with languages', but rather 'which should I study next?'

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The Alleynian Review:

Stoicism in skill acquisition - teaching children staying power

Head of Junior School Music, Mimi Munro, examines how students can tackle the conundrum of failure versus excellence in the pursuit of their disciplines, through illuminating some important lessons from the ancient Stoics.



Last spring, as I prepared to swim across Lake Windermere, I became familiar with the Stoics. Training between fifteen and twenty hours a week, both in the pool and in the ice bath, places demands on my resilience like nothing I have experienced before, and many ask not just how I stick with my programme, but why. "I'm training for life" is my usual flip response, but, as I think about that statement, the more it rings true. If I can handle a six-hour swim in cold water, then I can take other, smaller challenges in my stride. If I can keep my concentration on my stroke with nothing else to think about, other than the prospect of my next feeding stop (Bovril, bone broth, tea and digestive biscuits, in case you are wondering) for those six hours, then I can concentrate on adulting long enough to complete a tax return on time. This swimming project involves a high degree of single-mindedness, making sacrifices and prioritisation. Yes, I chose to do this swim, but as a result of this large choice, in the months leading up to it, I made hundreds of "micro-choices" that I believe lead to my success.

In the international school sector, we should celebrate the incredible wealth of opportunities afforded to our children. However, this range of choice can be to the detriment of the resilience, sense of commitment and pursuit of quality that we are also trying to teach; leading our children down the garden path of faddishness and Epicureanism. This article seeks to examine the culture in which we are teaching and how the words of Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and Epictetus can inspire us to help children harness their inner Stoic to help them succeed in their versions of an ultramarathon swim.

Stoicism was founded in Athens in the third century BC. The most famous practitioners were Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and Epictetus, who will feature heavily throughout this article. The main Stoic strands of thought I will explore are:

- The brevity of life and the value of time
- Relying not on events but our reaction to them

The modern interpretation of Epicureanism generates the idea of a Friar Tuck like figure, imbibing and ingesting with equal gusto. However, the original ideas behind Epicureanism are surprisingly balanced: Enjoy life's pleasure, but not too much for fear of pain later. Neither take part in politics or public affairs in order to avoid stress, nor worry about death or the Gods. This all seems very reasonable but how does that relate to an international school education?

I find the idea of 'avoiding pain by flying in the middle of the radar' to be somewhat opposed to the risk-taking that we are frequently encouraging our children to do. The idea of enjoying things in a shallow way, and trying out lots of activities but never fully committing to one, is what I find troublesome. Fear of failure is crippling. Sometimes we have to encourage our children to stick their neck out and take a risk, even if we know they might fail. It's great if a child does all the co-curricular activities on offer but what have they risked excelling at? Have they made a choice? Or do they do lots of things for fun, without ever investing any of their pride in a specialism for fear they may fall short or get bored? Of course, we need to throw up the sticks and see where they land. In my career, I have discovered many musicians who didn't even consider themselves as such until they had an orchestral instrument thrust upon them in Junior School. Likewise, your child may have a talent for textiles or a brain for biology and this simply won't be discovered until they give things a whirl. However, there are only so many hours in the

day but an infinite number of accomplishments a child can try.

Quitting

"There are two kinds of flowers when it comes to women: the kind that sit safe in a beautiful vase, or the kind that survive in any conditions" (Quinn, 2017).

I find the words "I quit" followed by whatever hobby has fallen by the wayside incredibly disappointing. The phrase itself is so throwaway and reflects so poorly on the person saying it, I wish they would choose another way of framing the unpalatable truth: they don't want to do it anymore. "I quit" is final and it invites no discussion. "I don't want to" leads to questions being asked and thoughts and ideas being unpicked. What if we insisted that our children had to make a case for giving up an activity and really explored why they chose to "quit"? I propose that we will often find failure (perceived and actual), as well as struggle, to be prime drivers for these decisions. I also propose that we can potentially head this off at the pass by having the difficult conversations with our learners at the beginning of their newfound love affair with their chosen pastime.

- How will you cope when you have a test at school you need to work for?
- Will you need to make sacrifices in terms of your social life?
- What about your daily schedule - will you need to retire and rise earlier to fit in activities before school?

I find that one practical approach to the self-mastery of Stoicism is rehearsing the bad times and what your possible reaction to them will be. In the fascinating podcast *Ear Hustle*, inmates of Saint Quentin Prison describe in frank detail how they manage the prospect of lengthy lockdown protocols. I was struck in particular by one gentleman's strategy of delayed gratification in creating a gourmet sandwich.

"Well, you know, one day you may get Graham crackers, so you got to hold onto the Graham crackers. Then the next day you'll get a banana. So you save that. And then when you get your peanut butter and jelly you can make a Graham cracker, peanut butter, banana and jelly sandwich. And those are the best sandwiches" (Poor & Woods, 2019).

So perhaps, instead of being bowled over by opportunities and grabbing as many as we can hold, why not string them out over a longer period in order to gain a richer experience as a result?

In *The Enchiridion*, Epictetus advises:

"In every affair consider what precedes and follows, and then undertake it. Otherwise, you will begin with spirit, but not having thought of the consequences, when some of them appear you will shamefully desist... Otherwise, take notice, you will behave like little children who sometimes play like wrestlers, sometimes like gladiators, sometimes blow a trumpet, and sometimes act a tragedy... Thus you too will be at one time a wrestler, at another gladiator, now a philosopher then an orator, but with your whole soul, nothing at all."

Marcus Aurelius also advocates a single-minded approach: "Give thyself leisure to learn some good thing, and cease roving and wondering to and fro."

And:

"They will say commonly, meddle not with many things, if thou wilt live cheerfully."

As adults, we can see that going to scheduled sessions, be they training sessions, musical rehearsals or workshops in the art room, is only part of the process of learning a new discipline. It is necessary to practice. It is necessary to practice with precision. As Bruce Lee allegedly put it:

"I don't fear the man who has practiced 1000 kicks once, I fear the man who has practiced one kick 1000 times."

Returning to the idea of micro-quitting, I do feel that setting strong foundations of practice routines and discipline when trying new things is key. At the outset, it gives a new activity a backbone of rigour to complement its novelty.

Your child has taken up the ukulele. What are the non-negotiables? Little and often practise, listening to artists, taking part in performances? Let's say you negotiate these terms, allowing the fledgling ukulele player some choice in terms of what nights and how long to practice. Allow them the choice of a ukulele greatest hits playlist on Spotify, helping them to plan their first performance. Once all this is done, they should understand what micro-quitting looks like: practicing for only nine minutes instead of the agreed 15, 'listening' whilst doing homework to kill two birds with one stone, bouncing a performance to the following term.

Once one micro-quit has happened, it is easier for more to occur. In my swimming training, it would be similar to setting a target at the beginning of a pool session: 20x100m on 2:00, target time: 1:35 for each. I typically enjoy the first three or four of these reps but obviously, as time progresses, they become ever harder. My reptilian brain is deafening "it's ok, just come in at 1:45, it's only ten seconds difference". I know that if I micro-quit on rep number 12, the following eight will be far more challenging mentally, as the rate of perceived exertion will be much greater when I try and claw my pace back.

Seneca encourages us to abide by whatever moral rules we have deliberately set ourselves as if they were laws, regardless of what others may think (Ziccardi, 2013). In the same way, I believe we should encourage our children to set themselves truly high standards in this refusal to micro-quit. To succeed, they must learn the skill of sticking to their non-negotiables when working at their hobbies even if those around them don't have the same interests or values.

And so, when we face a problem that gets in the way of the non-negotiables, we might draw upon a Stoic approach: the situation is unpleasant, but I can see beyond the unpleasantness and understand why it is difficult (the task is too challenging for my current level of fitness) and why I am doing it (to get fitter). Taking the emotional angle out of the setting is key. In the same way, if a child is finding the mastery of a skill frustrating, simply working on keeping calm and understanding the reason why they are striving for mastery in the first place can help. Simply, "if I do X then Y will happen". This self-control is extremely challenging and doesn't always come to children naturally, but it is crucial in the journey of mastering a difficult, new skill. Sometimes, this is as simple as training yourself to hit the 'red pain' button and get a bit tougher!

Eleven-time cycle tour champion Eddy Merckx sums up this point adroitly:

"What is talent, really? Is it the fact that your heart pumps more volume than the average person's or that your blood turns less acidic when exercising? No, talent has to do with your capacity for suffering" (Merckx in Malnick, 2016).

Lack of time

Lack of time is the number one reason I encounter for children giving up on a musical instrument: "I don't have time to practise". In my opinion, if a child wants to play an instrument and loves it, they will make time. Did they have time to watch Netflix or go on Instagram? If so, then I am certain they can make time to spend 20 minutes on the piano. What do we want - children who can learn to try new things and discard them after the initial experience wears off or struggle sets in, or children who become proficient at fewer things and hone their capabilities of stickability and patience? Could they do well in fewer things and then transfer these skills to other areas of their life when faced with new challenges?

Seneca has stern words about this, writing *On the Shortness of Life*:

"In guarding their fortune men are often closefisted, yet, when it comes to the matter of wasting time, in the case of the one thing in which it is right to be miserly, they show themselves most prodigal."

He asks the reader to consider the length of time they spend with a moneylender, a friend or arguing with one's wife. I am asking you to consider how much time is frittered away on social media. The Stoics believed that nature cannot be controlled and neither can time. Our self-mastery in responding to the challenges that the fleeting nature of time presents is crucial.

Seneca also talks about the preciousness of time increasing several-fold when we have less of it: at the end of our lives or perhaps, heaven forbid, when facing capital punishment.

Consider the notion of preparing for a competition, test, or concert. The date looks to be far in the future but then suddenly, it is upon us and every moment of preparation time becomes as valuable as gold.

He also warns against procrastination in "Postponement is the greatest waste of life". Seneca also alludes to the idea of 'being in the moment'. According to him, time is separated into three parts; the past, which is certain, the present, which is fleeting, and the future, which is unknown. From Seneca, I understand that a mind free from distraction can move between all three areas: reflecting on the past, being in the present moment and making plans and preparing for the future.

Seneca calls a mind which is distracted "engrossed" and although this is counter-intuitive to how this word is used today, the idea is that a distracted mind cannot be anywhere else but in the present, "being distracted as they are by many things".

Risking choosing

In my experience, many children 'check out' of a particular

activity because they compare themselves unfavourably to their peers. Person X might get more flashy parts to play or make their way into the first team. The fact is, this is often because they put in the work behind the scenes by practising hard or putting in a more concentrated effort on the sports field. These things may appear to come easily to a child's peers, but on closer inspection, talent is often mistaken for hard work.

Epictetus likens this choice of commitment to a simple transaction, but I think parallels with prioritising goals can easily be drawn:

"For how much is lettuce sold? Fifty cents, for instance. If another, then, paying fifty cents takes the lettuce, and you, not paying it, go without them, don't imagine that he has gained any advantage over you. For as he has the lettuce, so you have the fifty cents which you did not give."

So your child has chosen not to train? They have gained more free time. Another child has chosen to train so they have made gains in their fitness, but not had the luxury of relaxation time. I believe that it is our place as teachers to guide our children not just into making choices, but also into being able to step away from the emotions of decision making and weigh up the pros and cons afforded to each.

Think back to when you were learning how to ride a bike. On one end of the spectrum, you were riding along with training wheels, and the other has you whizzing along, confidently and safely. Somewhere in the middle lies the difficult bit. The bit where you fall off, the bit where you have to get back on, the bit where you're a bit bashed and bruised. This rings especially true for adult cyclists who take road cycling seriously and have to learn how to clip into their pedals! However, unless you risk the unpleasant bit, you will forever be using training wheels. Year 5 students particularly enjoy the analogy of picturing a 35-year-old riding with stabilisers on!

Soviet psychologist Vygotsky termed this unpleasant area of falling off bikes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where a learner must struggle through a zone of difficulty, during which new knowledge is constructed with the support of more able others - either peers or teachers (McLeod, 2019).

If the idea of struggle in skill acquisition is explained to children they will, in my opinion, be able to master their inner Stoic. If something were to go wrong in a class, rehearsal or match, this may well be the result of the necessary situational skills not being adequately secure because the child is still in the ZPD. This, at present, is out of their control. However, what is in their control is their response to the situation. Perhaps they messed up a scale: rather than throwing a tantrum and stopping their practise session, they could isolate the troublesome notes and practise them on their own. Maybe they missed the goal on a penalty: they need to rise above any disappointment and shame and make time to practise their aim.

Often, I find that struggle in skill acquisition can give rise to anger and resentment in young children. Seneca warns against anger, calling it a "short madness" often triggered by trifling causes and rendering the sufferer deaf to reason and advice. Even in wars and battles, anger serves no one, bringing its sufferers and those around them into danger (Ziccardi, 2013).

"If in doubt, zoom out!" I frequently say to children struggling with a scale or shift or tricky passage. In five years, a child won't remember this difficulty as this particular skill will hopefully be mastered. They will, however, remember giving up the instrument because they couldn't command their frustration. I say this as a reformed tantrum-thrower. Don't tell my mother this, but I once broke a bow because I threw it across the room in a fit of pique aged eight. I simply could not organise my left hand for a fast passage of playing and I thought I had done my due diligence. However, I was so incensed at the difficulty itself rather than the process of overcoming it, that I neglected to do the simplest of things: play it more slowly. Imagine for a moment that I had decided to let this passage of music get the better of me: no Royal Northern College of Music, no orchestra tours of Europe, no international teaching career... and all for the sake of some difficult semiquavers and a broken bow.

Conclusion

So, let's challenge our children to rise above struggle and see it for what it is, a stepping stone on the way to skill acquisition. Let's help them to understand how to respond to challenge with a clear mind and clear intentions. Finally, let's help them to understand that different is not necessarily easier.

Challenge them to leave the company of the comfort-driven Epicureans and step away from the hobby buffet.

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The Alleynian Review:

Information and digital literacy in 21st century learning

Junior School Teacher Librarian, Sarah Mounsey, discusses today's digital information landscape and how educational leaders must raise the bar to facilitate change and nurture the needs of 21st century students.



The current education system, conceived in the 18th century, is based on industrialisation and can be compared to how factories are run. In many schools, bells are rung, students walk in lines and subjects are taught in isolation. Many governments, leaders and educators have questioned this, and as a result, educational reform has been widespread in recent times. The term '21st century learning' is used frequently, with an emphasis on moving away from heavy curriculum instruction and instead providing opportunities for innovation, critical thinking and collaboration. There is now an emphasis on teaching information and digital literacy and using technology in meaningful ways. The priority of all schools should be to provide students with opportunities for educational success and to graduate with skills that will help in their workplaces of the future.

We entered the 21st century almost two decades ago, so the term '21st century learning' is not a new one, however, it is broadly used to cover innovative ways of education delivery. It is agreed by educators globally how important education reform is, and that it needs to address and embrace rapid technical change and access to the abundance of online information.

There is no single agreed definition for what 21st century learning is, but all literature includes moving away from heavy curriculum instruction and enabling students to use the four Cs, which are collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking. Other academics in this area also included the skill of problem-solving in this model. In contrast, Martinez and McGrath (2014) see it as deeper learning, the "capacity for learning how to learn" and also emphasise the importance of self-direction and personalised learning. Despite these differences, it is widely agreed that the education experience needs to move away from heavy instruction and memorising information to a more robust experience where students are engaged in deep learning experiences that are not necessarily subject specific.

The new information landscape has widespread implications for teaching and learning. Information is now accessible at the click of a button and it can be argued that it is not so important to teach students to memorise information, but to educate them to become information and digitally literate. There is a misconception that in this technological age where many toddlers know how to navigate an iPad screen, that children are growing up as digitally literate. As Martin and Roberts (2015) argue, being a 'digital native', someone who has grown up with technology, does not equal being digitally literate.

In 2014, The American Association of School Libraries reported that finding information online for academic purposes is overwhelming to most students and that digital technology makes it harder for them to find a range of credible sources. The Australian School Library Association (ASLA) report, Future Learning and School Libraries (2013), refers to the challenge of dealing with information overload and describes how students must be taught to be more sceptical when approaching content. In addition, there are many examples of research that has been undertaken to see how well students are evaluating information online.

One such example was by the Stanford History Education Group in 2016, and the results showed that students were unable to reason about information on the Internet; for example, they were unable to distinguish between an

advertisement and a news story, or to realise that many articles present only one side of an issue. Students need to be taught the skills to be able to access information that is credible, reliable and accurate and be able to make informed judgements on content that includes bias or fake news.

It is the role of teachers and teacher-librarians to work with educators and students to ensure they know how to locate, judge and organise online information. They need to ensure that the new generation of 'digital natives' are taught to be discerning and skilled at accessing and using information. As part of ensuring students are information literate, it is suggested that an Information Literacy framework is embedded into teaching and learning.

An Information Literacy framework should be skills-based, sequential and involve deeper learning and 21st century learning skills. It should include achievable and measurable outcomes for each year group, which can be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Many of these skills can begin to be taught to even the youngest of students. One example is the Big 6/Super 3 Information Literacy model, developed by Eisenberg and Berkowitz (2003). This and many other frameworks include teaching students to:

- Define the question they want to answer
- Research information and then locate the appropriate print and digital sources
- Build reading skills and the ability to skim and scan texts
- Make judgements on credible and reliable sources
- Use school databases, as well as search engines, to locate and interpret information
- Be ethical with the use of information including understanding plagiarism, referencing sources and understanding copyright and creative commons licences

This is why schools need future-focused libraries and qualified teacher-librarians to work in partnership with educators to develop these programs. Libraries have always been an information source and this has not changed, but they have significantly evolved to meet 21st century learning needs. They are not just about having a well-used and well-resourced collection, but they should also be the physical and virtual learning hub of the entire school, that can be accessed 24/7. The teacher-librarian is not just the keeper of books, but someone who works with teachers to promote inquiry-based pedagogy, enable digital citizenship and promote 24/7 access to information.

Despite this, there is a libraries crisis in many parts of the developed world and significantly, in the UK. Community libraries are closing, many schools do not even have libraries, and very few schools have teacher-librarians. Standardised testing and other resources can compete for funding. Fortunately, in many parts of the world, the importance of 21st century libraries and the role of the teacher-librarian is recognised as vital. It is understood that having libraries with qualified teacher-librarians in schools can have a direct correlation with student success. The library can also be a base for technology specialists in the school to support worthwhile integration of technology.

Technology brings enormous benefits, but it can also bring huge challenges to schools if students are not explicitly taught the skills to use these tools. Challenges include resistance from parents and teachers who have concerns about screen time and Bring Your Own Device programs

(BYOD). There is also the issue that some teachers have not been provided with mentoring and training to keep up with rapid technological change. Ongoing professional development and mentoring of staff is an important part of ensuring that the increase in use of digital technologies is measured, effective and supports 21st century teaching and learning.

Google's own education technology expert Jonathan Rochelle agrees that "technology can't transform education on its own" and discussed how it is up to educators to make sure students are given the skills to use technology effectively (Weller, 2016). Therefore, appropriate technology must be embedded into learning programs, while teachers need to ensure that digital technologies "enhance not automate learning". Scardamalia et al. (2013) in ASLA argue that "to enable 21st century learners to cross boundaries, educators need to provide knowledge building environments". The Horizon Education report (Johnson, et al., 2015) predicted the widespread use of technologies such as 3D printing, game development, digital badges and wearable technology as well as an increased move to personalised learning.

Most schools have increased the use and application of digital technologies, however, many have not done it in meaningful ways, where the technology could merely be replacing a book or a simple activity sheet. The challenge is to ensure the technology enhances education.

One such example is by using Bloom's Taxonomy (Sowash, 2009), a hierarchical ordering of cognitive skills that can help students learn. The six skills include: to remember, to understand, to apply, to analyse, to evaluate and to create. Digital tools can be vehicles to support cognitive learning. For example, to demonstrate understanding, instead of assigning a set of comprehension questions, students could use mind mapping software. Or, when evaluating or synthesising information, students could be encouraged to write a blog post, create a podcast or use iMovie. In addition, Bloom's can be used to create 'google-proof questions' so that teachers avoid setting tasks where students can google an answer, and cut and paste it.

In addition to information and digital literacy being embraced in the curriculum, physical learning spaces need to be flexible and provide opportunities for students to collaborate, problem-solve and create. To embrace elements of 21st century learning, many schools have moved away from traditional classrooms and libraries, and have developed learning areas that promote 21st century skills and focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). Innovation areas include maker spaces with digital and tactile resources and green screens. The idea behind these innovation areas is to transform the idea of a school away from being just an information source where content is consumed, to a place where content is created.

These innovation areas and flexible learning spaces also promote the concept of transdisciplinary approaches to curriculum delivery. For some time, primary schools in many parts of the world have been delivering a curriculum that is theme-based and integrates subjects, and now some secondary schools are following suit. STEM is taking centre stage and some schools are moving away from timetables that isolate subjects. Collaboration with curriculum leaders provides opportunities for innovation, creation and authentic and personalised learning.

Change is a constant in education, perhaps in the 21st century more than any other period in history. Our workforce is constantly evolving and the primary role of education is to prepare students for a future in which they are digitally and information literate. Therefore, it is paramount that leaders within schools act as change agents, and facilitate change in ways that support student learning. Their role is also to educate parents as to the importance of why education now looks very different to how they experienced it. Transformational educators motivate students and create a culture of innovation, collaboration, problem-solving and risk-taking. Arguably, it is these skills that will be most important for students to take beyond the walls of the schoolyard.

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The Alleynian Review:

Reconceptualising our perspective of health

DUCKS PE teacher, William Patz, discusses the arguments to view health holistically and how schools play a key part in nurturing healthy students with a lifelong love of sport and activity.



Physical inactivity is a key risk factor for non-communicable disease (e.g. cardiovascular disease), as well as poor mental health. Six of the top ten causes of death globally come from non-communicable diseases. Worryingly, more than 80% of the world's adolescent population is insufficiently physically active. Finding new ways to promote physical activity is therefore a global priority.

The school, as an institution, can be at the forefront of taking on this challenge by tackling preventable and treatable health problems in young people, impacting on young people's health, education, and family support. However, our perspective of health can often limit the focus and subsequent success of interventions and programs despite their best intentions. The purpose of schools and their methods for educating young people about health regularly spills into a public debate verging on ideological warfare. This debate on health has existed for over a century but has particularly come into focus in sport and physical education since the 1980s when health-related fitness became a dominant part of the physical education curriculum. The science is strong for the benefits of school-based environments in health and physical activity promotion. This is in part due to the majority of a young person's life being spent in school, with the access and opportunity to take part in a range of activities that comes with it.

Sport and physical education have an important role to play in guiding and encouraging young people to consider what health means to them and how they may engage in a physically active lifestyle into adulthood. Therefore, now is a good time to reconsider how we view health and how we educate young people about it with the support of exciting and innovative teaching methods.

Pathogenic versus salutogenic

If we were to consider what health is, we may refer to what many medical dictionaries state as "the human being's normal condition in absence of medical deviations or disease". Health has traditionally been regarded in this way, conceptualised in what is typically referred to as 'pathogenic'. A pathogenic conception of health assumes that humans are inherently healthy and that a disease is a symptom of ill-health. From this perspective, treatments are reactive to the disease or condition and consider health to be an idealistic goal to achieve. Without good health, we are not capable of living a good life.

In contrast, we may consider the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of health as "something ever-changing, in the process of becoming, created and lived by people within the setting of everyday life". By reconceptualising health as 'salutogenic', our assumptions about health look at the potential of the body to be proactive or generate better health. It is assumed that humans are inherently flawed, and that health is something we should go and get rather than actually reach. It is a constant quest to gain, to grow and to discover how fully life can be lived. In other words, it is about continuous improvement and being in a constant state of becoming healthy.

Mikael Quennerstedt (2018), a leading academic in health and physical education, reasons that activities, practices and rhetoric on health in Sports, Health and Physical Education (SHPE) has focused on eating habits, physical inactivity, body weight, 10,000 steps per day, and body shape; a pathogenic

perspective. A pathogenic question would involve asking 'how do we use physical activity in order to prevent obesity, future diseases and premature death?' The answer would be to increase energy expenditure and reduce risk of diseases such as coronary heart disease.

Readjusting our position to view health as salutogenic would raise different questions, such as 'how do we use physical activity in order to strengthen young people's health resources?' The answers, in contrast, would involve meaningfulness, influence, social relations, and motor development among other things. With this in mind, it is important to reflect on whether SHPE globally is currently promoting a culture of continuously improved health.

Health in SHPE curriculum

The perspective of health in the UK National Curriculum has until recently promoted 'fitness for performance' over 'fitness for life'. In their study of secondary schools in England and Wales, Harris and Leggett (2015) found that school policies and teacher rhetoric expressed a desire to implement 'fitness for life' but instead demonstrated that teacher's practice of health focused on 'fitness for performance' as per the curriculum. These performance practices specifically took the form of fitness testing, fitness training activities, body-as-machine learning outcomes, and instrumental forms of assessment which impacted significantly (sometimes negatively) on young people's engagement with physical education.

Fitness has become a byword for health which has led to health being normalised, assessments becoming generic, and young people being classified as either fit or not fit.

Research over the last 20 years has shown this can often take away the enjoyment of SHPE in school, which has also led to a decline in participating in physical activity outside of school. These experiences for young people in health and physical education are not only limited to the UK. In New Zealand, school messages have often resembled a blunt 'eat less, exercise more' stance to SHPE.

Meanwhile, in the USA, recent changes in SHPE curriculum have included wider aspects of health with two out of their five standards stating health can be addressed in physical, cognitive, affective and social domains of learning. To support this, only 13 of the 49 states determine that fitness tests are used to measure and assess health. A range of alternative methods of assessment of health are instead being designed and implemented.

Australia has also recently redeveloped its national SHPE curriculum. There has been a greater focus in Australia on how young people learn and their complex and diverse learning needs, specifically in the physical, cognitive, affective and social domains of learning. Research has suggested that these four areas of learning can have a significant impact on the future of young people's engagement in SHPE lessons, enjoyment of physical activity, and understanding about health.

Practical considerations

If we reflect on two questions:

- 1) Is alcohol good for people's health?
- 2) Is sport good for people's health?

The answer, as Quennerstedt (2018) explains, is that it depends. It depends on if we look at the issue from a salutogenic or pathogenic perspective. To say that SHPE is good for young people's health without first understanding our personal assumptions about health could alienate many young people from taking part in physical activity. One alternative would be to provide young people with their own agency, to define their own bodies and health, to engage in carefully created practices that cater for their complex and diverse learning needs. A salutogenic perspective describes health as involving physical, social, psychological and spiritual aspects of living a good life. Taking part in activities from yoga and gymnastics to orienteering could ensure young people learn in all four of these aspects. Furthermore, young people could feasibly participate in these activities and more, regardless of age, gender or ability.

Providing a diverse curriculum of activities and increased student agency could be the key to success in the reconceptualisation of health. For example, three phases of learning usually take place in a fitness components unit of work: 1. Define and understand what the fitness components are, 2. Test and measure the students, 3. Rank students according to their performance in the tests against norms to show where improvement is needed.

A salutogenic perspective would involve a different approach. It would involve students: 1. Finding out about the science behind the fitness components and how it is applicable to their lives, 2. Achieving a task or series of progressive tasks set out by the teacher rather than being tested, 3. Hypothesising who is likely to have better endurance, or flexibility, or speed.

Once hypothesised through self-directed research, they can devise ways to test each other and can figure out what sports or physical activities they may find success in based on their combined attributes. Collaboration, decision-making and reflection would be key components of the learning process. By investigating fitness components in small groups, using and having access to technology, students may find that they are more successful, engaged and empowered from the unit of work. This is a practical example of health being reconceptualised from a pathogenic perspective to a salutogenic one.

Conclusion

By reconceptualising our perspective of health from a predominantly pathogenic view (health as the opposite of disease or risk) and beginning to view it as salutogenic (health as involving physical, social, psychological and spiritual aspects of living a good life), we may be able to have a real impact on the health of young people. It is necessary that we do reconceptualise our perspective of health to one that is salutogenic as young people are becoming more creative, resistant and critical of the messages being sold to them as part of a health agenda in society. Resistance in SHPE is usually seen through the reluctance to take part in physical education lessons in school and disengagement in physical activity outside of school.

Research has consistently shown in recent years that SHPE can only promote healthy and active lifestyles by providing personally relevant, interesting and enjoyable activities that positively influence young people's motivation to participate in these activities inside and outside of school.

If the school as an institution is to achieve more success in preventing non-communicable diseases of the future, the reconceptualisation of health, wider use of technology, and increased student agency are a major first step towards providing a more engaging, enjoyable and rewarding experience for young people's health and lifelong physical activity.

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The Alleynian Review:

Positive Education and equipping students for the 21st century

Former Junior School teacher, Henrietta Beaven, asserts the significance of Positive Education's principles in placing wellbeing and intellectual growth equally at the centre of schools' guiding statements.



"Now, what I want is, facts... You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them" - *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens (1854)

Fortunately, nowadays a 'good' education is far from Mr Gradgrind's 'bucket filling' exercise. Children are no longer regarded as vessels to be 'filled up' with information. We now appreciate the value of inquiry-based learning and the benefits of cultivating skills that we hope will last a lifetime. But are these changes, from purely fact-based learning to a combination of fact plus skill-based learning, enough to sufficiently equip our students for the 21st century or could we do better? Should we do better?

Your answer to the questions above will depend partly on your philosophy of education: what do you think it is all for, what is our role as educators and what, ultimately, is the purpose of educational establishments? Do we 'educate' to help our pupils achieve the best grades that they can, to help ensure admittance to a further educational establishment, to future employment and hopefully, to a greater assurance of financial security? Do we educate to stimulate and nurture talents, not for the realisation of extrinsic goals such as numeric grades or financial gain, but for the sake of the talent itself? Perhaps, on the other hand, you see education's chief role as promoting a love of learning, or maybe even as a combination of all of the above.

For what it is worth, my belief is that a good education aims to equip a young person with the facets, skills and attitudes that will allow them to be the best possible version of themselves, not only for themselves, but for the wider community at large. For this to be achieved, a 'good education' must nurture all aspects of young people: the intellectual and the emotional. We neglect the latter at our peril.

Whatever you consider the goal of education to be, Positive Education is needed for this goal to be realised. It uses scientific research that has explored what promotes the wellbeing of individuals and communities and combines it with the best educational methods. As stated by Shankland and Rosset (2017), "Teachers and researchers in positive psychology are natural allies". Furthermore, education is "about nurturing strengths, about growth and learning".

When Martin Seligman, one of the founding fathers of Positive Psychology, polled thousands of parents asking them what they most wanted for their children, the answers they gave included the following: "happiness", "confidence", "contentment" and "fulfillment". In short, wellbeing was their top priority.

But what do schools teach? Arithmetic, literacy, critical thinking, research skills... Wellbeing is not something that would feature in most people's lists, but it should, it must, and it can. According to Seligman et al.'s 2009 paper, "Positive Education is a response to the gap between what people want for their children and what schools teach".

Although most schools would claim that wellbeing is very much at the top of their agenda, few teach it explicitly. Instead, they rely on its promotion via extra-curricular activities, assemblies, positions of responsibility, house groups and somewhat ad-hoc PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) lessons. This is not enough. We should not and cannot expect these measures to sufficiently prepare young people for the 21st century and what life will inevitably throw at them.

Some may argue that our role as educators cannot, and should not, extend to wellbeing lessons. Ensuring that young people are happy, healthy and confident is the responsibility of parents and carers. We, as educators, cater to the intellect.

Although I disagree with the above statement, for those of you who need greater convincing, you might be interested to read an article titled "Reason vs Emotion: key drivers in the history of moral progress" written by Dr Meredith Doig in 2014. Doig explains how research has illustrated the inextricable link between reason and emotion.

In her article, Doig refers to the research completed by the renowned neurobiologist Antonio Damasio. Damasio studied people with damage to parts of the brain where emotions are generated and found that impairment to this part of the brain causes damage to a patient's decision-making abilities. Although patients could describe decisions they were supposed to make, they could not articulate any basis on which to make their decisions. Therefore, the system associated with reason and decision-making was impaired by the damage that had been done to the parts of the brain associated with emotions.

In a similar way, damage to the prefrontal cortex, the area associated with higher-level cognitive processes, "not only leads to problems with intellectual functioning but also severely damages the personality". Doig goes on to explain how thousands of lobotomies were performed right up until the 1970s, often to treat severe psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia. These procedures resulted in patients not only "[losing] much of their intellectual capacity" but being "emotionally blunted".

The systems associated with reason and emotion need each other to function properly and this has very important and far-reaching implications for educators.

Thankfully, many schools are beginning to pay attention to the importance of Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are now offered by tens of thousands of schools, and the effects of their introduction have been extremely positive.

Durlak and Weissberg (2005) completed a meta-analysis of 668 evaluation studies of SEL programs spanning from pre-schoolers to high school. They found that up to 50 percent of children improved their achievement scores after having completed an SEL program. In other words, Positive Education does not mean neglecting academic achievement, but, quite the opposite. Focusing on children's mental health and wellbeing "give students the opportunity for academic achievement".

In fact, Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) even indicates that emotional support may be a prerequisite to higher-order functions, such as learning.

Furthermore, SEL programs "made schools safer: incidents of misbehaviour dropped by an average of 28 percent; suspensions by 44 percent and other disciplinary actions by 27 percent" (Durlak & Weissberg, 2005). We must wake up and appreciate emotional learning's power, not only as something that will "promote health and wellbeing", but as a "protective vehicle to prevent problematic youth behaviour".

Being self-aware and able to recognise and articulate what we are feeling, being able to self-regulate and manage our emotions, being able to empathise with others; these skills really matter and by failing to teach them to young people, we are neglecting our responsibilities as educators. But neglect them we have, and with frightening consequences. As Seligman states in his ground-breaking book *Flourish* (2011), "by some estimates, depression is about ten times more common than it was fifty years ago". Furthermore, "average national happiness has not remotely kept up with how much better the objective world has become".

It is time for all schools to wake up and engage with the research. EQ and wellbeing must be taught explicitly in schools. Teachers must be given suitable training allowing them to teach wellbeing as an "antidote to the runaway incidence of depression, a way to increase life satisfaction, and an aid to better learning and more creative thinking". For too long have these crucial aspects of education been seen as 'extras', a bonus – well done by a few, adequately by others, and not at all by many. Compassion, teamwork, resilience, goal setting, a sense of community and service can be taught. Evidence has shown that we cannot rely on children simply 'picking these things up' – many of them are failing to do so, and the results of this failure are concerning.

Whilst I am not saying that Positive Education is a magic wand, some mystical panacea that will eliminate depression and instantly send life satisfaction scores soaring, what it does provide is an array of tools and methods that combine scientific research into wellbeing along with the best educational practices - explicit guidance into how we can develop our students' emotional literacy and increase their wellbeing.

A person's IQ gets them 'in the game', through the gates of a particular university, into a particular place of work; IQ 'predicts which career rungs a person can manage'. However, IQ does not dictate where a person goes on from there. How a person handles themselves and their emotions, how they navigate relationships, and whether they know what really matters to people, this is EQ and if we are to equip our students for the 21st century, we must pay attention to it.

We must all accept our duty as educators to teach the 'whole child': the intellectual and the emotional. We neglect the latter at our peril.

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The Alleynian Review:

Starting with our students' tomorrows in mind

Assistant Head of English (IGCSE), Amy Meyrick, discusses the vision and plans to nurture worldwide English students in Senior School, by stripping back traditional assessing and encouraging them to discover who they want to be.



'Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today' – Malcolm X

Our students' tomorrows will be multi-lingual, multi-media, multi-modal, multi-purpose and multi-skilled. English, as a core subject, is indispensable in preparing our learners beyond the traditional skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. We want our students to excel at languages and literature in the real world; we want them to be masters of world Englishes and world literature. But what does this mastery look like? What do we want them to be able to do? How do we want them to think? How do we want them to feel? And, after they graduate, what memories will they have? More practically, how have we embedded this experience in our Senior School English curriculum at Dulwich College (Singapore) and how are we mapping their journey so our English students are confidently equipped for their tomorrows?

Discussions of change, especially in terms of assessment, have been at the forefront of our Senior School agenda. Students are now regularly reflecting on the International Baccalaureate's five approaches to learning: thinking skills, communication, social skills, research and self-management. Skills are prioritised over content, encouraging concepts such as transfer, metacognition,

collaboration and critical thinking. This coincides with our commitment to formative assessment – ongoing dialogue throughout students’ learning journeys – as well as a renouncement of national curriculum levels, previously used to assess students before their IGCSE years.

So, in mapping our students’ journeys towards mastery in English, where do we start? British educationalist, Dylan Wiliam, recommends starting “with the end in mind” and mapping backwards from Year 13, considering where individuals are when they join us in Year 7, then deciding on the route which needs to be taken. Fortunately for us, our colleagues in the Junior School furnish students with key literary and linguistic skills, providing regular, quality feedback and reflection time; students are already used to meticulousness at word and sentence level, as well as wider, more holistic thinking about literature and the English language.

Our decision to minimise summative feedback and the reporting of grades with our younger students removes the notion of labelling students as a number, letter or percentage. Instead, we are accentuating the value of dialogue; regular interaction; specific, real-time feedback; and day-to-day constructive advice. Nevertheless, their journey towards mastery won’t be a linear route; it entails daily endeavours, often treks and turbulence and sometimes backwards steps to choose a trustier course. Their journey needs guidance, conversation and re-direction; it doesn’t necessarily have a finish line nor the need for finite results. It’s personal, not competitive.

Constructing our nine skills in English allows us to draw from the best. We evaluated concepts and criteria from the IB Diploma Programme; IGCSE English language and world literature specifications and assessment objectives; foci from the English national curriculum; as well as a range of literature on formative assessment and skill-based learning, particularly from Dylan Wiliam and Daisy Christodoulou. After a year of consultations and drafts, our current outline (as at July 2020) looks like this:

KNOW, UNDERSTAND AND INTERPRET *	ANALYSE AND EVALUATE *	COMMUNICATE
RECOGNISE, REFERENCE AND RESPOND <i>Students can read and listen for meaning, carefully retrieving and referencing ideas and events from texts. They are respectful, engaged and perceptive, responding actively and appropriately.</i>	EXPLORE WRITERS’ USE OF LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE <i>Students can critically evaluate writers’ use of linguistic and structural features in detail and without any assistance.</i>	COMMUNICATE IMAGINATIVELY TO SUIT TASK, AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE <i>Students communicate creatively and imaginatively in speech and in writing, with a distinctive focus on task, audience and purpose in a variety of different contexts.</i>
UNDERSTAND, INTERPRET AND INFER <i>Students can indicate their understanding and make appreciative and developed interpretations and inferences of both written and spoken texts</i>	ANALYSE AND EVALUATE <i>Students can critically evaluate writers’ intentions, including the texts’ deeper implications and attitudes, and can reflect sensitively on effects on different readers</i>	CHOOSE APPROPRIATE STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY <i>Students craft their writing and speech precisely, consistently and imaginatively, making effective and purposeful choices to suit the register.</i>
AWARE OF THE WIDER WORLD AND DIFFERENT CONTEXTS <i>Students are perceptive, sensitive and empathic to different countries and cultures; they read widely and regularly for pleasure, both literary and non-literary texts, including written, spoken and visual texts.</i>	COMPARE <i>Students can explore links and connections between writers’ ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed.</i>	EDIT TECHNICAL ACCURACY INCLUDING SPELLING, PUNCTUATION AND GRAMMAR <i>Students are meticulous in their proof-reading and self-correction; they are thorough, precise and judicious in their spellings and use of grammar and punctuation, which are accurate and used for effect.</i>

Ultimately, we want our students to understand and interpret more than texts. We want them to be readers of people, situations and subtle nuances. We want our students to analyse and evaluate more than just technical features. We want them to analyse options and evaluate their choices. We want our students to write more than essays. We want them to communicate confidently and appropriately, regardless of the context, adding their own conviction, voice and flair. Optimistically, we want their ideas, personalities and sense of humanity to change the world.

Language and texts surround us in society, so every student is innately an ‘expert’ at language, even if English isn’t their mother tongue. This puts us, as a department, at an immediate advantage; humankind is a species of readers, listeners, interpreters. Between the ages of 11 and 18, we want to guide our students so, by the time they graduate, they are ‘worldwise’; they are adept at using and interpreting language and engaging empathically with literature. International mindedness takes precedence when making decisions about texts. British favourites Duffy, Golding and, of course, Shakespeare are popular selections, alongside our North American friends Steinbeck, Angelou and Atwood. However, we want our young people to meet a wider variety of world Englishes, together with the best of translated literature.

In our department, students in every year group encounter renowned international writers from Nigeria’s Adiche and Iran’s Satrapi to New Zealand’s Ihimaera and South Africa’s Fugard. Texts are set in Syria, France, Norway and the Philippines; aware of global issues and engaging with different countries and cultures, our students read outside of their own contexts and experiences.

Throughout the Senior School, our units are embedded with a focus on the IB’s global issues - specifically art, creativity and imagination; beliefs, values and education; science, technology and the environment; culture, identity and community; and power, politics and justice. These are coupled with essential questions, encouraging critical, even philosophical, thinking, such as ‘How do writers create imaginary worlds?’ and ‘How does the context of a text help us decide on how to write it?’ Again, keeping our foci free from context, students are inspired to broaden their thinking, transferring ideas and skills across the curriculum. Our ‘map’ (as at July 2020) taking English students from Years 7 to 11 can be found here:

ENGLISH SKILLS MAPPING AND ESSENTIAL LEARNING QUESTIONS

	YEAR 7 FOCUS: INTRO TO TEXTS	YEAR 8 FOCUS: ANALYSIS OF TEXTS	YEAR 9 FOCUS: ENGAGING WITH LANGUAGE & WORLD LITERATURE	YEAR 10 FOCUS: COURSEWORK	YEAR 11 FOCUS: EXAM PREPARATION
MICHAELMAS	NON-FICTION ARCTIC RECOUNT WRITING Essential question: How do writers construct non-fiction? Key skill question: How can you communicate imaginatively to suit task, audience and purpose? Global issues: Science, Technology, Nature Key ATL: Research	PROSE NOUGHTS & CROSSES / WELCOME TO NOWHERE Essential question: How do writers create imaginary worlds? Key skill question: How can you communicate imaginatively to suit task, audience and purpose? Global issues: Beliefs, Values, Education Key ATL: Social	PROSE OF MICE AND MEN / TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD Essential question: How do writers create imaginary worlds? Key skill question: How can you recognise, reference and respond? Global issues: Science, Technology, Nature Key ATL: Research	NON-FICTION THE ART OF PERSUASION Essential question: How do writers/speakers communicate persuasively? Key skill question: How can you communicate imaginatively to suit task, audience and purpose? Global issues: Power, Politics, Justice Key ATL: Social	DRAMA MASTER HAROLD AND THE BOYS Essential question: How do playwrights use dramatic techniques? Key skill question: How can you analyse and evaluate? Global issues: Power, Politics, Justice Key ATL: Communication
	PROSE TRASH Essential question: How do writers create imaginary worlds? Key skill question: How can you recognise, reference and respond? Global issues: Beliefs, Values, Education Key ATL: Thinking	POETRY POETRY & ART Essential question: How do writers use poetic devices? Key skill question: How can you compare texts? Global issues: Art, Creativity, Imagination Key ATL: Thinking	NON-FICTION DESCRIPTIVE WRITING Essential question: How does the context of a text help us to decide on how to write it? Key skill question: How can you communicate imaginatively to suit task, audience and purpose? Global issues: Art, Creativity, Imagination Key ATL: Communication	PROSE WHALE RIDER / LORD OF THE FLIES Essential question: How do writers create imaginary worlds? Key skill question: How can you demonstrate awareness of the wider world and different contexts? Global issues: Science, Technology, Nature Key ATL: Thinking (December Critical Thinking Reflection)	NON-FICTION TRAVEL TEXTS & TRANSACTIONAL WRITING Essential question: How does the context of a text help us to decide on how to write it? Key skill question: How can you explore writers' use of language and structure? Global issues: Culture, Identity, Community Key ATL: Social
LENT	POETRY SEVEN AGES OF MAN Essential question: How do writers use poetic devices? Key skill question: What can you understand, interpret and infer? Global issues: Culture, Identity, Community Key ATL: Thinking	DRAMA MACBETH / THE TEMPEST Essential question: What can we learn about the world from studying Shakespeare? Key skill question: How can you explore writers' use of Language and Structure? Global issues: Power, Politics, Justice Key ATL: Self-management (March Affective Reflection)	DRAMA ROMEO & JULIET / MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING Essential question: How do playwrights use dramatic techniques? Key skill question: How can you choose appropriate structures and vocabulary? Global issues: Beliefs, Values, Education Key ATL: Thinking (April Creative Thinking Reflection)	POETRY/PROSE EDEXCEL ANTHOLOGY Essential question: How do writers use language and structure for effect? Key skill question: How can you compare texts? Global issues: Beliefs, Values, Education Key ATL: Thinking	DRAMA YERMA / OEDIPUS Essential question: How do writers create imaginary worlds? Key skill question: How can you demonstrate awareness of the wider world and different contexts? Global issues: Art, Creativity, Imagination Key ATL: Thinking
				PROSE IMAGINATIVE WRITING Essential question: How do writers communicate imaginatively? Key skill question: How can you choose appropriate structures and vocabulary? Global issues: Art, Creativity, Imagination Key ATL: Communication	DRAMA/POETRY/NON-FICTION EXAM REVISION Essential question: How do writers use linguistic and literary techniques for effect? Key skill question: How can you communicate imaginatively to suit task, audience and purpose? Global issues: Beliefs, Values, Education Key ATL: Self-management (March Affective Reflection)
TRINITY	NON-FICTION PERSUASIVE SPEAKING Essential question: How can you prepare and deliver a speech? Key skill question: How can you choose appropriate structures and vocabulary? Global issues: Power, Politics, Justice Key ATL: Social (May Reflection)	NON-FICTION TRAVEL TEXTS Essential question: How do writers use language and structure to interest readers? Key skill question: How can you analyse and evaluate? Global issues: Science, Technology, Nature Key ATL: Research	POETRY UNSEEN AND COMPARATIVE Essential question: How do writers use linguistic and literary techniques for effect? Key skill question: What can you understand interpret and infer? Global issues: Culture, Identity, Community Key ATL: Social	NON-FICTION LANGUAGE EXAM Essential question: How do writers construct non-fiction? Key skill question: What can you understand, interpret and infer? Global issues: Art, Creativity, Imagination Key ATL: Self-management	
	PERSUASIVE WRITING Essential question: How can you write persuasively? Key skill question: How can you edit technical accuracy including spelling, punctuation and grammar? Global issues: Art, Creativity, Imagination Key ATL: Communication	NON-FICTION TRAVEL WRITING Essential question: How does the purpose of a non-fiction text help us decide on how to write it? Key skill question: How can you choose appropriate structures and vocabulary? Global issues: Culture, Identity, Community Key ATL: Communication	SPEAKING AND LISTENING DEBATE Essential question: How can you prepare and participate in a debate? Key skill question: How can you communicate imaginatively to suit task, audience and purpose? Global issues: Culture, Identity, Community Key ATL: Social	SPEAKING AND LISTENING DEBATE Essential question: What can we learn about the world from studying drama? Key skill question: How can you recognise, reference and respond? Global issues: Power, Politics, Justice Key ATL: Research	

Our relationship with our students goes beyond the academic and beyond the individuals in our classes. We endeavour to take collective responsibility for students of English, to offer them opportunities and interactions outside of curriculum time, to support them pastorally, nurturing their holistic wellbeing and not only training their brains. Considering how they speak to each other and which relationships are worth building, we want our students to ask questions, learn from others' answers and offer their opinions and thoughts. We want them to justify choices and converse with those who think, look and sound different from them. We want to surprise their expectations and challenge preconceptions.

In our English department, we hope our students' experiences are held close to their hearts. We hope they'll encounter a range of emotions through the study of literature and how language works – passion, anger, regret, sadness, grief, compassion and joy. We hope they'll make memories and remember not just what we taught them or what they can do, but how they felt.

Starting with their tomorrows in mind, our young people will be masters of words, language and texts. They'll be empathetic, creative, knowledgeable people. Their inner 'shelves' will hold more than books. Our students will be worldwide.



The Alleynian Review:

How beneficial is homework for Senior School students?

Assistant Head of Senior School, Lucy McAllister, explores arguments on why and how homework is set, as she strengthens her case regarding its benefits for our Senior School students.



I am about to embark on my 16th year in teaching and during that time, I have always set homework for my students.

The style, amount and time required for its completion has varied significantly depending on the current educational thinking, context of the school I've taught in, and the needs and age of the students whom I've had the privilege of teaching. Admittedly, what I don't think I've spent enough time considering is that the homework I set often enters the home-life of my students and inevitably impacts family-time, levels of anxiety, the many valuable co-curricular and enrichment activities, and let's not forget; time for being bored. I am a great believer in the wealth of literature that suggests that allowing yourself to be a tad bored on occasion generates imaginative and creative thinking.

So, having said that, it may be surprising that despite my concerns over the encroachment of homework into home-life, I am an advocate of setting regular homework. I am certainly not an expert in early years or primary education, so I will focus on the value of homework and the strategies teachers could use when designing tasks for Senior School students, to ensure that time devoted to learning at home is used as effectively as possible.

Sherrington (2017) provides an excellent synopsis of the current educational thinking on homework: he refers to Tim Lott's article for the Guardian 'Why do we torment kids with homework?' and suggests that despite Lott basing his article on primary school students, "too often the sweeping generalisation is applied to all homework for all students. I think this is wrong". I'm in agreement with Sherrington and I think Lott's wording is an example of the type of catchy, emotive and in my opinion, dangerous headlines seen in the media and my concern is that homework, at all stages and of all styles or types, is being tarnished with the same brush.

Wexler, writing for Forbes in 2019, opens with a similar catchy headline to Lott: "Some schools are eliminating homework citing research showing it doesn't do much to boost achievement". I was initially concerned this article would again homogenise homework, but instead, it went on to make this clear distinction which reinforces Sherrington's earlier comment: "The research relied on by those who oppose homework has actually found it has a modest positive effect at the middle and high school levels - just not in elementary school". I think Wexler's use of "modest positive effect" is interesting, as admittedly, some research isn't showing an overwhelmingly positive effect of homework on student achievement.

However, homework is just one part to the learning puzzle and I am happy to accept the "modest positive effect" of homework, knowing there will be many other things, both inside and out of the classroom, that will have higher positive effects but that homework is still offering some value and apologies for quoting the Tesco advertising slogan but "every little helps" in the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills. I don't think homework should be charged so severely, as it seems to be, that unless it is seen to be having the highest possible impact, then it should be scrapped. It's just one strategy, alongside a multitude of others, that helps with student achievement.

In further support of the value of homework for Senior School students, Sherrington (2017) paraphrases the work of Hattie and his meta-analyses, suggesting the effect of homework

on educational achievement "has the highest effects in secondary" education. Indeed, the impact of homework on student achievement in secondary education has an effect size of 0.64 and Hattie suggests anything above 0.6 as having an excellent effect.

It's imperative to acknowledge that Hattie's effect sizes have also been criticised because 'homework' is wide ranging, and the types of homework set are so different, thus, it's difficult to say that all homework set in secondary schools have the same positive effect (0.64). There also seems to be little evidence on whether homework has a larger effect size for younger or older Senior School students. Is homework as beneficial for 11 to 12-year-olds, as it is for 17 to 18-year-olds? This would be an interesting follow-up and something I would like to explore further.

Having spent time reflecting on the homework I've set over the years, I think some things have been extremely worthwhile, but others less so. Therefore, I plan to make some changes.

To do this, I've selected three improvement strategies from the work of both traditional and progressive educational protagonists.

It is worth noting that I'm unashamedly one of those people who swings back and forth within the traditional versus progressive educational debate. At times, I find myself leaning towards traditional thinking, and at other times, I feel very much affiliated with progressive educational ideas. I don't believe that selecting ideas from both dilutes either educational approach, but instead, allows teachers to hand-pick what's best for their students. Dare I say, variety is the spice of life.

Strategy 1: Ensure the majority of homework set is consolidation of what's already been taught.

I suspect this might be controversial and I absolutely see the benefit of project-based homework, investigative or flipped learning (pre-reading before a topic), but to make homework more effective, it should mostly be based on consolidation of what's already been taught and in a manner that isn't too open-ended.

Silvester, writing for The Guardian in 2017, makes a case for setting the "right kind of work" and quotes Hattie speaking to the BBC in 2014: "The worst thing you can do with homework is give kids projects; the best thing you can do is reinforce something you've already learned".

Sherrington (2017) suggests that the "more specific and precise the task is, the more likely it is to make an impact for all learners". However, he does note that "Homework that is more open, more complex, is more appropriate for able and older students". It would be extremely difficult for teachers to set a completely different homework task for every student in each class, but Sherrington's point leads me to suggest that there should be some flexibility within the overall homework task set by teachers to allow for students to make choices about the level to which they feel comfortable stretching themselves.

In practical terms, this might involve able learners being able to pick an option within the homework task which is more open-ended. Realistically the teacher may stipulate

some parameters for this, but I think that this is reasonable.

The element of choice might make students feel a greater level of ownership over the task and it may, therefore, be more appealing. For example, as a geography teacher, this might involve me outlining a series of key questions based upon a case-study, but the students having a choice of three places to base their case study on.

Mujis and Reynolds (2011) make a case for homework being accessible, i.e. not so challenging that many won't do it or won't do it properly. Silvester (2017) reaffirms this by suggesting teachers should ensure "students can complete the homework. Pitch it to a student's age and skills – anxiety will only limit their cognitive abilities in that topic. A high chance of success will increase the reward stimulation in the brain". These arguments aren't suggesting teachers should just set easy homework, instead they're arguing for students to have some choice and flexibility within the design of homework tasks to match different abilities, and a task that isn't so difficult to achieve, logistically or mentally, that it puts students off and ultimately leaves them feeling negative towards homework and learning.

Intrinsic motivation is about a love of learning and feeling satisfied and accomplished personally, without needing extrinsic motivators, such as rewards. Designing doable homework tasks that are mostly focused on consolidation is, to a great extent, making homework more worthwhile, and the feelings of success upon its completion should boost intrinsic motivation.

Christodoulou (2016) highlights that we "need to remember how easily we forget things: it's because of this, that we frequently need to repeat and restudy material we have already learnt". She also discusses the importance of "spaced-practice or distributed-practice" whereby students are tasked with remembering content not just from that day or week but also learnings from previous topics or content. For me, this supports the argument for homework to be mostly a consolidation task, and ideally it would include some recall of older material.

An opposing view comes from Wells and Claxton (2008) who argue for more open-ended or independent study opportunities that tie into students' passions. Although they aren't talking about homework specifically here, but learning opportunities as a whole, it is worth me pointing this out, as I suspect it might be the type of argument against consolidation-style homework. I am not suggesting that independent study, open-ended tasks or projects cannot or do not work as a homework task. I believe there are benefits to them and they absolutely should be set, but realistically and particularly for more content-heavy subjects, they should be set less frequently. As students get older, in my opinion between Years 10 to 13, the opportunities for more open-ended homework may also increase and may be more appropriate.

Strategy 2: Feedback and responding to homework is essential

Feedback can be controversial, as many teachers feel that a huge amount of time is dedicated to giving feedback for it then not to be read properly, acted upon or understood. It might be shocking to hear that I don't mark every single piece of homework, every single week, from every single

student, I don't think I'd ever leave my classroom if I did!

However, I know that "teacher involvement in homework is key to its success" and that "it is essential the teacher interacts with the homework". I know that students are more likely to complete the homework to a much better standard if they know I am going to mark it. However, my time might be better spent having a coaching conversation with a particular student about their progress and a genuine discussion which gets to the bottom of their thinking, ultimately helping me to support and stretch them.

Leahy and Wiliam (2015) suggest it's a good idea for teachers to give detailed feedback on one quarter of their students' work, use peer assessments for another quarter, self-assessment for the next quarter, and quickly check the final quarter. This seems sensible, yet I do feel vulnerable about my books lacking my green pen all over, this may be something I may need to give further thought to.

Adding to the topic of feedback, Mujis and Reynolds (2011) refer to the work of Cooper, from 2006, and argue that "homework should consist of instructional feedback rather than grades. This is because grading homework might lead to pupils losing intrinsic motivation to do homework and lead them to completing it out of fear of bad grades instead".

I agree, a grade doesn't need to be given, instead diagnostic written or verbal feedback, possibly with a score, is useful and this can then help me understand what to do next. A significant argument for me, which emphasises the value of homework, is that it helps me respond to what I'm seeing in the classroom. If the homework task exposes a lack of knowledge or an inability to master a skill, then it's hugely helpful for me as it suggests a student is not yet able to go away and do it on their own, so I need to support them further before we move on.

Strategy 3: Ensure students reflect on their homework

Something I would like to develop further in my own teaching is getting students to reflect metacognitively on their homework. I particularly like a reflection idea suggested by Mujis and Reynolds (2011), which involves asking students to note down how long they spent completing the homework. This would help me identify that even though a student might have got everything correct, it might have taken them two hours to complete a 20-minute homework task.

Therefore, that could lead to a coaching conversation about how they went about the task. Without information on how long it took to complete, I might just assume they had completed it in 20 minutes without any difficulties. Sharratt (2018) identifies a number of extremely useful reflective questions which students can use when setting individual goals.

There are a number I'd like to pinch for the purposes of getting students to reflect on the homework they've just completed:

- Self-assessment questions - What is still unclear? What is getting clearer?
- Self-reflection - What did I learn? How do I feel about my learning?
- Self-evaluation - How did I do? How have I improved? What are my strengths? Where are my areas for growth?

- Individually setting goals - What is my next step? How can you help me? How can I help myself?

It might not be practical to deal with all of these questions after every piece of homework but being selective and engaging in reflective conversations or activities about homework, would, in my view, raise the profile and importance of homework. Therefore, its impact on student achievement is likely to increase.

To summarise, I do believe homework is worthwhile for Senior School students to a great extent, if what is set is predominantly a consolidation of previously taught material. I also think it's very useful when homework is acknowledged and diagnostic feedback is given so students know what they need to do to improve. The teacher might not always be the one to give that feedback, and students need to be able to self and peer assess.

Finally, in order to make homework more effective, reflective questions could lead to meaningful coaching conversations between students themselves and the teacher, which raises the profile and value of homework. Open-ended tasks and project-based homework can be assigned and there are benefits, but its impact on student achievement is less than consolidation tasks, and as such, it might be completed on occasion.

I hope to be able to implement as many of these ideas into my own teaching routines this academic year.

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The Alleynian Review:

Assistant teachers and student agency: promoting independence

Junior School Head of Academic Development, Stephen Honey, discusses the important role Assistant Teachers play in a holistic approach to education.



The most effective resource in a successful organisation is its people. School facilities, enrichment and extra-curricular offerings are all incredibly important, but as Tarry and Cox note in their research (2013), the key aspect of what attracts parents to a particular school is the quality of its teaching staff.

Increasingly, the best schools in the world are recognising that alongside great teachers, they need excellent academic support staff. This was highlighted by the Federation of British Schools in Asia (FOBISIA) at their latest biennial teaching conference, held in Penang last November, where the development of Teaching Assistants was one of the central themes of focus.

Teaching Assistants are a growing part of the school workforce in many countries across the world. In just the UK,

they comprise around 34% of the nursery and primary school workforce. To avoid any confusion throughout the rest of the article, at Dulwich College (Singapore), we refer to our Teaching Assistants as Assistant Teachers (ATs for short).

The role of the Junior School AT is about much more than photocopying and sharpening pencils. As stated by Alborz et al. in 2009, if they are well trained and supported, ATs can successfully nurture the learning and involvement of all students. At Dulwich College (Singapore), the potential of our Junior School ATs to support deeper learning and academic mastery is being recognised and their role has developed into a diverse teaching and support role.

Effective ATs have an impact on classroom engagement, behaviour management, student wellbeing, peer relationships, positive approaches to learning and academic achievement.

A key message coming from the Dulwich College International education team and their Worldwide education philosophy is that it is our duty, as educators, to provide opportunities for student agency so that our students come first. In line with this vision, this article will examine the important role that our Junior School ATs must take in order to ensure we create and nurture motivated learners who foster a stronger sense of autonomy.

Creating a shared vision

In the Junior School at Dulwich College (Singapore), we have been working to create a shared vision for our ATs and teachers on what their role should entail. We have collaborated closely with Eva Cartwright, an education consultant from the TA College, on this. Our vision is clear that our ATs should not be present purely as an extra pair of hands in the classroom or for admin support. As can be seen from Figure 1 below, our ATs should be supporting learning conversations and becoming an extension of the teacher in order to ensure they are contributing to the teaching and learning.

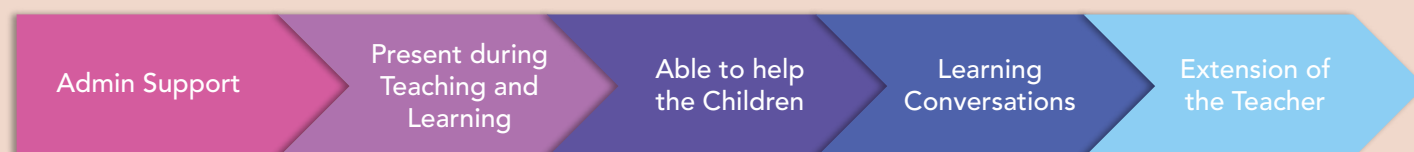


Figure 1 – Junior School Shared Vision for ATs

In order to achieve this goal, we require the 4Cs of communication, consistency, collaboration and commitment. It is important that there are good communication channels between the class teacher and AT in terms of sharing planning, lesson preparation and outcomes of learning. ATs should model consistency with the class teacher they are supporting. Examples of this could be using the same vocabulary, behaviour strategies, assessment for learning methods and expectations as the teacher so as not to confuse the students. Effective collaboration between the teacher and AT in terms of everything that is going on in the classroom ensures that the AT is not merely just involved in the preparing resources and delivering support in lessons but, alongside the class teacher, is also observing, tracking student progress, reflecting and planning for next steps to support the learning of students. By emphasising the importance of all staff being committed to this positive relationship between teacher and AT, we can maximise the impact on teaching and learning.

Supporting and nurturing autonomous learners

At Dulwich College (Singapore), we want to nurture autonomous learners who can think for themselves and it is important that all teachers who support our students are fully aligned with this vision of promoting student agency. Research carried out at Harvard University by Ferguson et al (2015) describes student agency as the capacity and inclination to take purposeful initiative. They describe the development of agency as potentially being as important an outcome of schooling as the skills we measure with standardised testing such as reading, maths, reasoning and academic knowledge. The report highlights that students who exude the features of agency express the following characteristics: punctuality, good conduct, effort, help-seeking and conscientiousness. Young people with high levels of agency do not respond passively to their circumstances; they tend to seek meaning and act with purpose to achieve the conditions they desire in their own and others' lives. Similarly, Stixrud and Johnson (2018) suggest that a strong sense of autonomy is imperative in developing the healthy self-motivation that allows children to pursue their goals with passion and to take pleasure from their achievements. This is clearly the type of student that we wish to create across the Dulwich group of schools. Alongside all of our staff, our Junior School ATs must be aligned with this shared vision and understanding of what student agency is in order for them to best support our students in their learning. One of the best ways ATs can support this is through supporting students in developing their independence skills in the classroom.

Independence skills

At Dulwich College (Singapore), we believe that our Assistant Teachers can help all students develop the essential skills underpinning their learning. In terms of preparation, it is vital that time is set aside for the teacher to brief the AT before the lesson so that they know who to support and how to support them. Once this has happened, there are several further strategies that ATs can use in order to support independent learning skills. Research shows that improving the nature and quality of AT talk to students can encourage the development of independent learning skills, which are associated with improved learning outcomes (Webster et al., 2016). One straightforward way that this can be achieved is by using more open-ended questioning and avoiding excessive use of closed-questions during learning conversations. Our Junior School ATs have copies of open-ended question stems on their desks and many carry around copies inside their lanyards in order to help with this.

Another proven strategy is for ATs to provide the right amount of support at the right time. An effective way for an AT to achieve this when supporting a student is through scaffolding. This is where the level of support is gradually reduced over time and is a good method for discouraging over-reliance on adult support from the learners who need the most help. ATs can then work towards decreasing the scaffold and withdrawing it altogether when it is no longer required. Radford et al. (2014) refer to heuristic scaffolding, which is the idea that ATs fade their support so that over time children eventually take control of their own learning. Webster et al. (2016) refer to issues with ATs focussing on student task completion instead of ensuring they have appropriate understanding. In line with this, our ATs must avoid over-prompting and spoon-feeding of answers to the students that they are supporting. Equally, they should encourage children to take risks in their learning and need to know that it is good for students to struggle, wobble and get answers wrong.

Potential to help or hinder learning

To nurture independent learners, you must have the best possible people in the room, and you have to have trained them well enough to succeed. Even with the best intentions at heart, evidence suggests that ATs have the potential to either help or hinder learning depending on their experience and the nature of the strategies they use. Ofsted (2004) cite that ineffective ATs may be less skilled in breaking tasks down and are prone to ensuring task completion rather than helping students improve their understanding and skills. Giangreco et al. (1997) put forward the view that students can potentially become reliant on adult support and subsequently become less willing to engage in independent learning tasks. Similarly, Moyles and Suschitsky (1997) highlight a risk in ATs encouraging too much student dependency by offering too much support and guidance in the classroom. With regards to questioning, Rubie-Davies, Webster, Blatchford, Koutsoubou and Bassett (2010) discovered that ATs were less likely than teachers to ask open-ended questions and more likely to rephrase the question or provide additional information to the student so as to support them when answering. Radford, Blatchford and Webster (2011) found that ATs were more likely than teachers to 'close down' talk through using closed questions, self-correct or provide the answer when students made mistakes or failed to solve problems. They found that there was an absence of prompts and hints from ATs and by prioritising the outcomes of learning activities and helping with procedural matters there is a threat that students are not able to subsequently think for themselves.

Professional development

To produce high levels of agency in our students we must ensure we train and develop them successfully enough in order to empower them to best support growth in independence in our students. As Bossidy and Charan (2011) declare, nothing is more important than hiring and developing the right people. At DCSG, we are committed to developing the best possible Junior School ATs in order to support our students in becoming independent learners. This is reflected in the job description for our Junior School ATs which states that we recognise 'exceptional and inspirational ATs are a valuable resource in providing our children with an excellent education. Our ATs are ambitious for their students' learning and put students first in everything they do'. We consider ourselves fortunate to have a highly skilled and devoted team of ATs working here, many of whom have been with us since the school opened. Our Junior School ATs are well-qualified, predominantly to degree level, possess a wide skill-set with a variety of backgrounds and credentials. Several hold teaching degrees themselves and crucially they are keen to get better at what they do.

All Junior School ATs participate in whole school staff meetings and inset training, AT specific inset training, as well as being included in strategic action groups alongside teaching staff where their thoughts and opinions are listened to in developing an area of focus on the school improvement plan. We have Junior School ATs who have recently completed the CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Supporting Teaching and Learning qualification and we also have another AT who is currently a participant on the Accelerate Middle Leadership Programme organised by Dulwich College International. In the Junior School, we want to ensure that all of our ATs are helping to support independent learning in the classroom

and as such, one of the current key strategic focusses for our Assistant Teachers is to develop their ability to support students in fostering independent learning skills.

Conclusion

Assistant Teachers play an important role in influencing and supporting independent learning habits in our students. With a close collaboration between teachers and ATs alongside effective professional development, our ATs will continue to develop a deeper understanding of strategies to support independent learning and contribute towards supporting students to become more intrinsically motivated and resilient in their attitudes.

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The Alleynian Review:

Should art be considered as an academic subject?

Former Junior School art teacher, Jennifer Ramos-Virley, explores the academic value of the subject beyond creative expression, including its role in teaching students about society and developing problem-solving skills.



Echoing the experiences of many fellow art teaching colleagues, I have often found myself in the position of having to champion and defend the importance of the role of art in schools. Commonly seen as a soft subject, art is often considered to be a mere frill, judged only on its creative merits. Art is often one of the first subjects to be marginalised in curriculum changes and frequently misunderstood.

With the current emphasis on the importance of equipping the next generation with the 21st century skills needed to thrive in today's fast-changing world I wonder if it is now time to reevaluate how art is viewed, valued and categorised alongside traditional academic subjects. Whilst I strongly believe art is, and should always remain, foremost a creative subject, to truly excel, appreciate and become enriched by and produce meaningful art, students require more than just the ability to be creative. Is it time to appreciate the value of

art as an academic subject in order to ensure the status and quality of art in schools?

During many conversations over the years with teachers, parents and students I have noticed a similar pattern regarding the perception of art. One common misconception is that the students who do not excel in traditional core subjects do well in art as it is seen simply as a practical subject. I have often pointed out that the skills successful art students are required to demonstrate, such as critical thinking, analysis, investigation, innovation and communication, are the very same skills they need to be successful across a broad range of traditional academic subjects. Students who excel in art and produce meaningful and informed artwork will be the same students who do well in the traditional core subjects.

This leads me to question why, in many school settings,

art is not given equal standing compared with what are considered core academic subjects such as English, maths, science and humanities. A common argument against raising the standing of art to equal status of core academic subjects is that students are not going to become artists, so why study art? Conversely, students who study science, English and maths are not always destined to become scientists, authors and mathematicians. I would argue that in both the core academic subjects and in art, we are equipping students with a broad range of skills and experiences to enable them to lead meaningful and productive lives.

In 2016 the UK government decided to introduce the EBacc (English Baccalaureate) system to measure progress in Secondary schools. This is an example of the separation of art from academia. The EBacc system is designed to measure a school's success based on the number of pupils who make progress in 8 GCSEs in a prescribed set of 5 core subjects. The subjects which make up this core set are English language, English literature, maths, the sciences, geography, history and languages. The government's ambition is to see 75% of pupils studying the EBacc subject combination at GCSE by 2022. The EBacc is made up of the subjects which the Russell Group says, at A-Level, open more doors to university degrees. This example of educational reform sends a powerful message about the perceived value and merits of art as an academic subject in UK schools.

If we are to successfully raise the status of art then common misconceptions need addressing, and the parallels between core subjects and art need explaining. The thinking dispositions that are key to analysing and engaging with artwork apply across a range of academic subjects.

Albert Einstein famously said, "the greatest scientists are artists as well". In many ways, science and art are inseparably linked. A variety of the core science process skills are integral to the art curriculum, most commonly observing, experimenting, and communicating. These are skills which, when mastered, are also central requirements for students to be successful in their art studies.

Art encourages students to examine and observe closely and repeatedly. When students take risks and experiment with art techniques and materials they learn valuable lessons about discovery, a key element of both art and science. In both art and science, in order for students to communicate complex ideas and meanings, they need to demonstrate an understanding of visual language to convey ideas and concepts in a variety of ways.

When analysing artwork students draw on a range of transferable thinking dispositions including questioning, investigating, reasoning with evidence, exploring viewpoints and comparing and connecting. The study of art can encourage students to stretch their independent thought and encourage research, idea development and justification. These are skills which can only enhance and support student's success in many other subjects.

The critical thinking routines built into art lessons enable students to analyse and interpret a range of artworks and equip learners with valuable skills in reasoning using evidence. Reasoning is a skill prized across a range of disciplines as well as across complex real-world scenarios. Whether students critically evaluate artwork in written forms or through discussion, they are developing a rich descriptive

vocabulary and an ability to thoughtfully express ideas, opinions and interpretations.

When viewing Pablo Picasso's 1937 masterpiece, *Guernica*, it is impossible not to make links with powerful political statements about the Spanish civil war and be transported to another time and place. Picasso's painting makes the horrors of war tangible and brings alive a tumultuous period of history. Teaching our young people about art teaches them many valuable lessons about the history of human civilisation. If art is considered as merely a soft subject then why are there so many instances of authorities who seek to ban and censor or destroy artwork? The art created by radical artists such as Ai Weiwei and Sun Mu is testament to the power and importance of art.

Appreciation and understanding of the visual codes of a range of art forms, such as ancient Aboriginal cave art, Egyptian tomb art and modern feminist art, teaches students much about man's role throughout history. It can open student's eyes to the possibilities of art as a catalyst for social change. If art and history are so intrinsically linked then how can art not be considered an academic subject?

Appreciation of art can teach students about the differing personal values of artists, their role in society as well as bringing to life key moments and events in history. If students are able to appreciate artist's differing viewpoints and the motivations and context behind the creation of art then they are opened up to new ways of perceiving the world.

The creative process in art teaches students many valuable lessons about problem-solving and divergent thinking. The process of art-making is rooted in problem-solving. Students have to make innumerable decisions and choices about materials, colours and the use of visual language to portray complex ideas. Students gain an understanding that there can be multiple solutions to a single problem through exploring and experimenting with media as well nuanced and multi-faceted choices about the type of visual language and the messages and ideas that can be conveyed through visual imagery.

Behind the pieces of fully realised artwork created by students lies a complex process. From the conception of an idea based on a given theme to the final realisation of an idea, students experience a complex journey. Development, personal research, analysis, refinement and synthesis are just a few of the skills students acquire on the journey to successfully realise an idea. For a student to fully develop an art project over a number of weeks or months in response to a given theme requires high levels of self-reflection, self-discipline and independent thought. These are vital skills which would be prized by potential employers and benefit students throughout their lives.

Whilst I do not wish to change the way art is taught, I do feel that the core subjects would only benefit if art is truly understood and is given equal status, provision and recognition. Art has the ability to equip our learners with the skills and inclination to think deeply, become innovators, problem solvers, divergent thinkers, risk-takers. Art is critical in developing a student's appreciation and understanding of the wider world. I believe that now is the time to open up a dialogue about art's place alongside the core subjects.



The Alleynian Review:

Why understanding the foundations of game design will ingrain a life-long participation in sport

Junior School PE teacher, Vivian Rodrigues, explains the role game design plays in developing student agency and the connection between physical experiences and self-esteem.



Setting the Stage: Early stumbling blocks to life-long participation

When we play games, very often the game player is not a part of the invention or the construction of the game. Players remain passive and are asked to perform at a certain level or expectation. Rarely they are involved in the developing of ideas or strategies, which is commonly the role of the teacher or coach. The players are simply taught the rules, described roles, and shown areas of responsibility. They are often not allowed an individualised approach in lessons. This one-size-fits-all approach is applied at many levels of sport, and unfortunately within the physical education classroom.

Research suggests that the greatest impact and learning benefit of games is felt when the player is involved in its design and construction. Therein lies the very definition of student agency. It also suggests that it's a concrete way to motivate a life-long participation in sports and games thereafter.

Games are considered a major learning tool, not just in physical education. There is evidence of their benefits horizontally through various subjects and age groups, and also vertically in lesson planning (Rovengo & Bandhauer, 1994). Most results suggest that games bring a renewed interest in a subject and enhanced participation in lessons.

Games, especially in physical education, encourage active engagement as time and space is given to students to explore the components of game play, skills, and strategy at their own pace with a personalised starting point. In supportive environments such as these most, if not all, students start to find multiple opportunities to learn cooperatively and to proactively solve problems in groups and social situations. When given the opportunity to think critically from their own experiences of playing games and sports, students start to reflect and construct deeper meanings as to their own failures or successes. What it means if they do indeed fail. What it takes to succeed and further improve.

The key to all this, of course, is the game design lesson/s where students would follow a sequence of scaffolding events; 1) the crafting stage, 2) the testing stage, and 3) the refining stage. When the game has gone through the sequence (sometimes having to go back a stage or two for reconsideration and review), it will be presented, explained and demonstrated before being played and then evaluated by others.

The Crafting Stage

In the crafting stage students begin to develop their game in an autonomous environment. To start the design process, shareable artifacts or objects are presented to the students to jump start invention and reflection. Objects such as a ball, rubber spot or a disc marker are examples of the pieces of equipment that students may use to construct connections between an old game and a new game, a new approach to an old game, or revise between old and new knowledge (Papert, 1993). Together with the teacher as a facilitator, students will then use past experiences to create and build a game and its associative parameters in order to move a game into trial stage. A large inventory of equipment helps inspire ingenuity and originality, but a more limited one develops creativeness, inventiveness and resourcefulness. The provision of these 'objects-to-think-with' will therefore

depend on the main lesson objective and the sportsmanship and sports for life characteristics the teacher is planning to develop and enhance.

The Testing Stage

In the following stage, students will start to work in groups to springboard off these objects to conceptualise, invent and test a game. They will present their ideas, trial the games and gain feedback from their peers as to what makes a game interesting or challenging. There should be a balance between the intensity of the task and the active engagement during the game. Should either of these lean to one side, one of two things may happen: 1) Students involved in game design will realise that the more athletic will feel disenchanted quickly if there is no avenue to showcase their talents and improve on their ability to perform. Or, 2) on the other end of the spectrum, students who are challenged at classroom level to physically perform will find themselves further disinterested in participation as it is no different from previous physical education classes. Inventiveness, thoughtfulness and forward planning skills become paramount. Such traits are beneficial in any learning environment but within sport-specific objectives, they give rise to thinking out of the box, achieving sports goals and self-satisfaction. Students will start associating those feelings of achievement with being physically active.

The Refining Stage

In the final stage, students learn to ascertain levels of engagement, levels of entry, and the emotional quality and intensity of their peers' active involvement in the activity, which is paramount to a successful design (Kendrick, 1997). Students trialling games will eventually start to understand how to pitch a game and consciously design parameters that include broad challenges whilst considering qualitatively different contests, as well as an affirmative emergent structure possibly providing more concrete feedback and a clearer performance criterion.

Another benefit of the trial and error stage is that students will start to dynamically appreciate that they can isolate parts of the game from various stimuli and either decrease or increase challenges to match skill. Unpacking of smaller components of the game and building it based on matching skill levels help with understanding how a distinctive level of success may be achieved. Questioning elements and encouraging further refinement at this stage determines the way the game develops and how small rule changes might produce a more meaningful outcome. Intervening at specific points is designed to guide the students towards constructive self-critique and allows modification upon reflection. In this way, students start to appreciate the intricacies of game design and game play. They develop a completely different lens to viewing participation by discovering there is more than meets the eye in game play, and will recognise areas in which they might influence a positive outcome through essential self-assessment in a sports for life culture. They will be less averse to risk taking and will view many different types of sports and their participation in a new way.

The Ultimate Objective

Involving students in game design puts them in control of developing their own definition of motor competence and attainment. Students will be able to self-select skill sets

according to what they deem important or desirable to increase the likelihood of success and achievement. Peer insight and empowered jurisdiction over modification of such games and making them more developmentally appropriate is an extremely good way of getting everyone involved. More to the point, it is because everyone had begun at a 'common' level, where no one was favored by past skills or experience in such original, freshly designed peer games, so students have sufficient control as to what interested them and what was too difficult. This levelling out made most student-designed games more achievable and snowballed into higher levels of participation at a more horizontal level. The more positive a practice, the greater the affirmative completion of each level, and the mastery of that skill. Students will also design a game that is within their reach and so pitch it in a friendlier manner. Simply, students from a particular year group will be in the best position to understand what their peers can or cannot do, and what they like or do not like, better than anyone (Hastie, 2010).

As a result, understanding game design and following through with games of their own allows mass appropriation of all levels and abilities. It is a prime example of inclusivity through student agency. As physical educators and advocates of life-long participation in sports and games, we see that an understanding of game design will achieve this in one fell swoop. Emotionally and cognitively, delivering such an opportunity in a multitude of game settings will provide students a sporting foundation with strong connections to concepts of considered effort and ownership for their physical learning. Applied vertically, previously disillusioned students find greater enjoyment in their own designed games and therefore greater levels of physical participation and interest.

On a much deeper level, students involved in game design come to more complete insights as to what makes a great game, what constitutes skill development, that some effective games can be about inclusion rather than elimination, and how success can be achieved by all as long as the attainment of skill and strategy is well thought out. These are insights that they would have never stumbled on if they were only involved in the superficial and, to an extent, mechanical playing of a game during a standard lesson. Perspectives as to what constitutes a good game now not only involve context and structure, but the refining of experience of the players in the game. Positive active experiences when facilitated through thoughtfully constructed student-designed games will help increase motivation, confidence and a life-long participation in sports and games (Gruber, 1996).

The key to consistent long-term participation in sports and games is this positive association and the correlation between inclusive physical experiences and self-esteem. By enabling involvement in a cooperative, creative and autonomy-supportive environment, students will start to learn on their own that there is more to achievement than the score at the end of the match. Multiple exposures will ingrain a mindset that anything is in their power to change a journey and its results. Through thoughtful and structured student agency, they will start to self-actualise inspired performances and enact highly engaged participation in sport and games that will undeniably endure.

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The Alleynian Review:

Community building when the stakes are high

Dulwich College International's Director of Senior School, Sian May, draws from the voices of our students and international research in addressing how a culture of wellbeing flourishes from the systems and pastoral relationships in a school environment.



Where now for Dulwich?

“Wellbeing” as a term has been in vogue within education and beyond for some time and has been used arbitrarily by different people and therefore with a limited shared understanding. Whilst a working definition can appear to be reductive, for the purposes of our discourse it is likely to be very helpful. For this discussion, wellbeing will be addressed as a culture in which:

- The community promotes belonging and connectedness for all its members
- Each member of the community is known and valued both collectively and individually from their own starting point (Keyes & Haidt, 2003)
- Each member of the community perceives themselves as competent and capable
- The community develops both individual and collective efficacy

Such a community must be led by both values and evidence in tandem. The whole school approach is key. For instance, the autonomy in learning which students frequently experience in Early Years must continue through to both Junior and Senior Schools. Student agency is key to wellbeing. Each student’s ability to express voice, choice, ownership and leadership within their school community builds their self-perception. Students thrive when they experience communities which acknowledge and are responsive to their needs.

Teachers’ wellbeing is integral to achieving this and we wish to create a thinking community which is reflective and progressing. Therefore, professional learning for our teaching colleagues, a supportive working environment and an engaged parent community are vital factors in achieving this. Similarly, the beliefs of our teaching colleagues regarding our students are key indicators of a proactive wellbeing environment.

For wellbeing to thrive, teachers will:

1. Have high expectations for students which in turn creates higher student achievement.
2. Demonstrate a greater locus of control and take responsibility for student learning which, in turn, has an effective impact on student achievement.

The Dulwich College school vision and ethos, therefore, must support colleagues in these two beliefs, by espousing such beliefs but also living them out contextually within the school system.

What do students think?

In 2019, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (a leading organisation in which global governments share their experiences) asked students from around the world to describe the future they would like, to articulate their hopes, dreams and the necessary actions to achieve wellbeing. Students answered in a variety of ways, referencing visions for education, health and the environment. However, one message from young people was clear regardless of their personal contexts and experiences. All young people expressed a desire for shared agency and partnerships with adults in achieving these goals.

As part of the Dulwich Education Team, we had the privilege of having similar discussions during the academic year

2018-2019 with over 5,000 of our students. Our aim was to understand authentic student experience and for young people to guide us to the next necessary steps. The results were strikingly reminiscent of the OECD’s findings and this is the backdrop in which our next steps will be formed.

Current international discussions

Contemporary wellbeing discussions can, at first glance, appear to be in contrast to popularised notions of grit and resilience in which research is misrepresented. Such misconceptions can lead to notions of “toughening students up” which does not accurately represent the findings of global research into wellbeing.

In practice, most discussions of grit are a re-branding of older notions and can represent the perpetuation of previous attempts to prepare students for life beyond education. The world our students are graduating into has altered and will continue to change beyond the recognition of previous generations. This provides an exciting opportunity as well as a need to be cognisant of this transformed environment.

For our students to fulfil our strategic mission of “developing the skills and motivation to make a positive difference in the world”, we must provide them with the broadest possible learning experiences in which they can find their purpose, meaning and agency.

It is vital that given this complexity we are guided by effective systems for our young people and therefore evidence is a useful guide and provocation in our discussions. Evidence-based practice suggests that we should focus our collective energies to building a conducive environment via a whole school (or College) coordinated approach where the institutional wellbeing identity and purpose is clearly articulated and established. This would empower our young people to thrive, develop self-respect, enjoy positive perceptions of their competency and capacity and belong to a community where they feel a sense of belonging and connectedness and perhaps most importantly of all, that they are valued from their own starting point.

Each international school faces pervasive complexities regarding global trends in adolescent mental health and the challenge of promoting community wellbeing. The evidence in this area has been building for the past 20 years at an increasingly accelerated rate (Weare, 2015). Research is telling us that a coordinated and proactive response is both favourable and necessary. For high achieving environments, such as our Dulwich communities where you can expect a “students first” priority, this requires a courageous and nuanced partnership with student, family and staff.

As a group, we are known for our “pioneering spirit” and wellbeing is a fundamental area in which we can mobilise and trail blaze to the benefit of our students and the next generation of global citizens. We are committed to developing balanced young people and therefore will aim to create a proactive and contextually supportive community. The aims of our social system should incorporate the development of key protective factors in our young people to prepare them for the challenges of their educational career but, also attempt to safeguard their future mental health. This must be a collective effort as our schools alone cannot achieve this. Parents are a key partner in any sustained and successful focus on wellbeing.

Fundamental characteristics

Each wellbeing culture must be established first by embarking on a localised needs analysis so that each strategic aim directly addresses the fundamental necessities of the community. However, there are some evidence-based characteristics of effective proactive wellbeing systems which are discussed below.

Teacher-student relationships and collective values at the heart of culture

Young people, particularly in their teenage years, wrangle with the complexity of apparent contradictions on an almost continuous basis. Little of the world that they experience is uniform. For example, the inconsistency of adult behaviour and the scientific knowledge of climate change and global leaders who deny the evidence or fail to act!

The development of 'executive function' is therefore advantageous for our young people to possess the critical thinking skills needed to navigate the world in all its imperfection. During school life, young people are developing their knowledge and understanding through thinking and, in particular, the use and development of their executive functions.

Firstly, executive functions are cognitive processes which exert top-down influence over actions, thoughts, and emotions (Zelazo & Carlson, 2012). Secondly, executive functions are involved in conscious, goal-directed behaviour and not in situations that rely on automated or intuitive behaviour (Huizinga et al., 2006; Zelazo & Carlson, 2012). Consequently, using executive functions requires considerable effort. Thirdly, executive functions refer to a set of interconnected thought processes and is considered to be a complex multi-dimensional construct (Diamond, 2013; Garon, Bryson, & Smith, 2008; Zelazo & Carlson, 2012).

The development of such cognitive processes is favourable to our students and best occurs in healthy and safe environments. Research studies are now showing that positive relationships and interactions with teachers can promote greater executive function in our young people, whereas negative relationships can hinder executive functions (Berry, 2012; de Wilde et al., 2016).

Increased executive function is also demonstrated to increase engagement in the student. Therefore, we can deduce what we have long held to be true, that teacher-student relationships are fundamental to effective learning but also developing each child's sense of self, belonging in the community and belief in their own competency. Consequently, any proactive wellbeing system must place student-teacher relationships and peer to peer relationships at its core.

Peer to peer relationships

Student friendships can be high-octane experiences of tremendous rollercoaster-like periods of closeness, friendship development and, on occasions, conflict resolution. Strong peer to peer relationships are vital in developing a student's sense of belonging within their community. Many of our students are Third Culture* which may mean they have interacted with a rich range of cultural contexts but also are likely to be living outside of their home country.

Many of our students will also have relocated a number of times and be multilingual. This incredible diversity of our students means that our community building becomes even more fundamental. Therefore, a proactive social cohesion plan which is evidence-based and age-appropriate for the students is recommended. This plan would ensure that the school actively promotes shared and diverse cultures and religions within the community, addresses gender-specific issues which may arise, and embraces linguistic aptitude whilst creating a unified identity.

Studies have shown what we have long suspected intuitively, that peer to peer influence is so vital, that these relationships may be the most important source of life satisfaction and wellbeing for our young people (Reis & Gable, 2003). This spans from the stages of early attachment in infancy, through learning to make friends as younger children and belonging to teenage groups. Further, researchers are increasingly identifying that what is effective for an individual's authentic wellbeing cannot be separated from what is best for the whole community.

As a consequence, experts in adolescent psychology believe provision for whole populations is vital in respect of positive mental health. Therefore, regular dialogue from the school with students through a variety of means such as student leadership structures, focus groups and surveys, but fundamentally through trusting relationships, will also assist in promoting and maintaining positive peer to peer relationships.

Proactive peer to peer mentoring structures where students support each other vertically within school have been shown to be particularly effective. Students can also receive training in order to promote an emotionally literate environment within the school.

Proactive pastoral care

There will always be times when our students need us to act as a guiding, but often invisible, hand to set them up for success in terms of their wellbeing and gently intervene when situations require it. Effective wellbeing cultures tend to review their processes and structures to best support relationship development within their community.

Therefore, a starting point would be the pastoral system. There is no prescriptive structure which works in every community, however, each child must be known. An effective means of achieving this is a proactive tutor or house system with a coaching model where students are able to receive mentoring from a teacher or another student in order to experience reflective conversations about their own progress. The Ancient Greek adage of "know thyself" becomes infinitely more possible if students are guided in terms of how to make sense of and analyse their learning experiences. The better we know our students, the more precise our guidance can be. This allows for seamless transitions through school, both due to the environment we have created and our knowledge of how each individual may require preparation, but also in terms of careers and university guidance. This requires highly qualified and motivated teaching colleagues who are student-centred, collaborative and provide additional robust student support services as appropriate.

Each lesson a student attends is a pastoral experience and therefore, learning which is empowering and allows them to

develop and extend their own interest and preferences is key to their ongoing wellbeing. Most educators wish to create self-directed learners who can remain lifelong learners well beyond the school gates, and environments which students are able to shape assists in developing this motivating factor in our students.

Conclusion

High achieving schools, like ours, already engage with evidence regularly, therefore the compelling evidence on the links between wellbeing, learning and school improvement is timely. We are highly motivated as we know that children with greater wellbeing, lower levels of mental health problems and greater emotional attachment to school achieve higher grade scores, better examination results, better attendance and drop out less frequently (Weare, 2015). Further, we know that social and emotional skills are a more significant determinant of academic attainment than IQ. We can be confident that a focus on wellbeing not only enables our young people to become the global citizens of tomorrow with sound character and values, but also directly supports our key mission, for our students to Live Worldwise.

* Third culture kids are people raised in a culture other than their parents' or the culture of the country named on their passport for a significant part of their early development years.

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The Alleynian Review:

Closing the circle: best practice project management in schools

Head of Junior School, Ciaran Harrington, describes the benefits of using project management methodology to more effectively achieve school improvement goals.



Is our goal for continuous improvement actually stifling it? As school leaders we should drive our schools forwards by looking to the world of business and project management practices in the 21st century for inspiration.

It is difficult to argue against continuous improvement in our schools, after all we all want to be better than we are and recognise that in a changing world we have to be consistently moving forwards. However, the process of continuous improvement may well be flawed due to the way we organise our schools, based too much on an outdated view of education that does not sit easily within 21st century practices.

Sir Ken Robinson's 'Changing Paradigms' (2010) has long been popular viewing for educators. His comments regarding school organisation struck a chord with me, having taken up a Head of School role at an International School two years previously. Free of government intervention, I found myself with both the capacity and responsibility of making real decisions about education and the impact those decisions had on students, staff and the wider community. While the term "21st Century Learning" has somewhat been driven towards references to the use of technology in our classrooms, Robinson refers to the changes in the modern working world prompting me to consider how a school should operate to meet these new demands.

"How do we educate our children to take their place in the economies of the 21st century?" (Robinson, 2010)

He goes on to outline the problems of government education systems, decrying them as "designed and conceived for a different age...in the economic circumstances of the Industrial Revolution" and "pretty much organised on factory lines". Whilst a great number of us have watched and probably agreed with his criticism, with millions of views on both TED and YouTube, the question has to be asked, as school leaders what can we do to address this?

In a talk to Dulwich Heads of DUCKS, Junior and Senior schools, I described the circumstances I have witnessed as part of curriculum review in International Schools. I described the status of teaching and learning as resembling an atom. The original planned curriculum was the nucleus with an increasing number of electrons beginning to circulate. Not willing to leave out any of the original plans, as new ideas, concepts, skills and knowledge became both available and desirable, they were added to the curriculum with a crippling effect. The more that was added without any deletion, the less time to engage at depth became available. As teachers became too busy trying to deliver an overcrowded curriculum, the focus on any skill development was eroded.

I would argue that we suffer the same circumstances as we seek continuous school improvement. With the upward spiral of plan, execute, review and back to planning, our focus remains on the undertaking in hand, while all the time new developments, priorities, circumstances and progress add to the ever increasing number of electrons. Fidler (in Harris 1997) agrees that new tasks are "tacked on" to existing structures which "provide continuity and predictability...thus cannot be changed too frequently without creating confusion and uncertainty". Our strategic development plans begin to suffer as more individuals within the hierarchy add their continuous development plans to the organisation and ultimately the leaders in the school become too busy to implement the core strategic plan.

There comes a point when a reappraisal of the organisational structure is necessary to help a school function more effectively (Fidler in Harris, 1997). However, our experiences of leadership from both professional learning and ongoing experience alongside peers are still rooted in Robinson's "system of education that is modelled on the interests of industrialism and in the image of it" (Robinson, 2010). My learning during Masters and National Professional Qualification for Headteachers reinforced this viewpoint; what little time was dedicated to actual school improvement was more concerned with the accountability the Headteacher had to self-evaluate student progress (NCSL, 2006) instead of identifying and acting on more deeply rooted changes that prepare students for a 21st century economy. We were being taught exercises in measuring rather than planning for and managing real and meaningful change.

My thinking since has prompted me to consider how a 21st century school should operate with a view to 21st century business. If schools were originally organised as a reflection of the industrialism that surrounded them, preparing their students for a life of work on the production line, then a modern school should reflect modern business. In my last two schools I have been involved in building projects, and so have come into contact with individuals and teams who work outside of the sphere of education. Those teams were project teams, with a certain task or group of tasks that worked towards the ultimate goal of a finished school facility. The key to their success was not a continuous cycle but executing a project within a life cycle, with a clear beginning but more importantly a clear end.

A project in business has factors that differentiate it from other aspects within the organisation. The major characteristics are outlined by Larson (2014):

1. An established objective
2. A defined life span with a beginning and an end
3. Usually, the involvement of several departments and professionals
4. Typically, doing something that has never been done before
5. Specific time, cost and performance requirements

Points 1, 3 and 5 may be familiar to the traditional approach to school improvement, but points 2 and 4, a clear end point and engaging in something unique or non-routine, are perhaps further from this. Larson continues,

"Projects should not be confused with everyday work... Ordinary daily work typically requires doing the same or similar work over and over, while a project is done only once; a new product or service exists when the project is completed... recognising the difference is important because too often resources can be used up on daily operations which may not contribute to longer range organisation strategies." (2014)

Let us consider the two points highlighted above in the context of an educational setting. How can the school leader reappraise in this context to create a more effective organisation? I will deal first with point 4; doing something that has never been done before.

Typically, a school will divide itself into departments, faculties or subjects for the purposes of leadership. Each of these units will have a specific responsibility for improvement. In my experience, this can often lead to everyday routine work

being carried out that use the bulk of resources as described above. The spiral of self-evaluation and continuous action is combined not just with their own new developments, but with all of the other department's continuous improvements, until the impact of change from so many different areas is confusing and energy sapping for the teachers affected. As more is added, more resource is funneled into achieving the goals that have become routine, not a project any longer, instead everyday work. I am not suggesting that this everyday work is not valuable, but it uses more and more of the resources available and has less impact in terms of creating something new.

Consider instead what happens when leadership is not structured by subject, but by a project itself. As an example, contemplate the difference in having a Head of Literacy in school versus a project leader to implement a new synthetic phonics scheme. A Head of Literacy will likely spend most of their time on routine work. They may well wish to implement a new scheme, but struggle to find focused time to do so. A project leader will have just that one objective, something that will be done only once, and Larson's characteristics above are clearly applicable.

The Junior School at Dulwich College (Singapore) has several points to achieve on our strategic plan. Five of these involve leadership of wider teams; Learning for Assistant Teachers, Curriculum Review, Community Service, Enrichment and Technology Integration. Rather than creating leadership roles for subjects, our leaders are appointed to a project within that area of focus with a clear goal to be achieved over a period of time. That leads to point 2, the life span of a project, specifically the end.

In order to keep the focus on creating a "new product or service" (Larson, 2014) each leader is given a two-year period to deliver the project goals. A project life cycle is defined as having four stages:

1. Defining stage
2. Planning stage
3. Executing stage
4. Closing stage

The defining stage has by virtue of the appointment of the leader already been completed. The individual will then work with the School Leadership Team to plan and execute the project. The vision is that after the project life span the new product will become a part of the everyday work of the school, and the resources in terms of both finance and time can be redistributed to a new project in a different area of focus, probably with a new leader.

This is an important factor in the project management approach. Rather than appointing a permanent Head of Department or Faculty, the best individual for the project in hand is appointed. When a new project begins it is likely that a different person would have the required skillset. In his work "Good to Great" (2011) Jim Collins argues that an effective leader should "put your best people on your biggest opportunities". I argue further that this should be the best person for the specific opportunity or project. Not only does this ensure that your projects are led by the most appropriately skilled people, it has clear benefits for distributing leadership through the school.

The closing stage is critical to making this a project with a life

span. At the end it is expected that the goals are achieved. This would be regarded as a "normal" project closure in business terms, but of course there are other outcomes, again outlined by Larson (2014).

Premature closure: the project may come to an end early. There are two aspects for consideration here. Firstly, the leadership role and stipend if any are contracted for the two-year period. The leader must consider what further responsibility may be then given to that individual. If the school is to have the right people for the right project this causes concerns. However, this should be an important factor to consider at the defining stage; school leaders should plan carefully and assign leadership roles to significant projects that will most likely require the two-year life span.

Perpetual: some projects may seem to never end. This is likely to be due to a poorly planned project that requires multiple add-ons as it goes through the execution stage. This is a critical aspect for consideration at the planning stage; the use of project management software (we use Smartsheet) is useful to avoid this.

Failed: some projects fail, and in this case it is important to review in detail to find the causes. There is often a stigma attached to have led a failed project, and it is important to clearly communicate reasons for the failure as often it is due to circumstances beyond the control of the team. A school leader is unlikely to inspire revolving leadership through projects if failure is associated with stepping up into the role.

Many schools are now espousing 21st century values and make claims about preparing students for a world of work as yet unknown. To truly be 21st century we must look to the modern world of work and organise our schools and colleges along the same lines. Project management in schools delivers strategic goals, focuses on creating something new, provides opportunity and support for leadership and most importantly knows when a project is closed so that resources can be diverted to the next big thing. Closing the circle is better than a continuous, overcrowded and potentially confusing cycle.

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