

PROFESSIONALLY & PERSONALLY

Teachers **Matter**

The Magazine of Spectrum Education



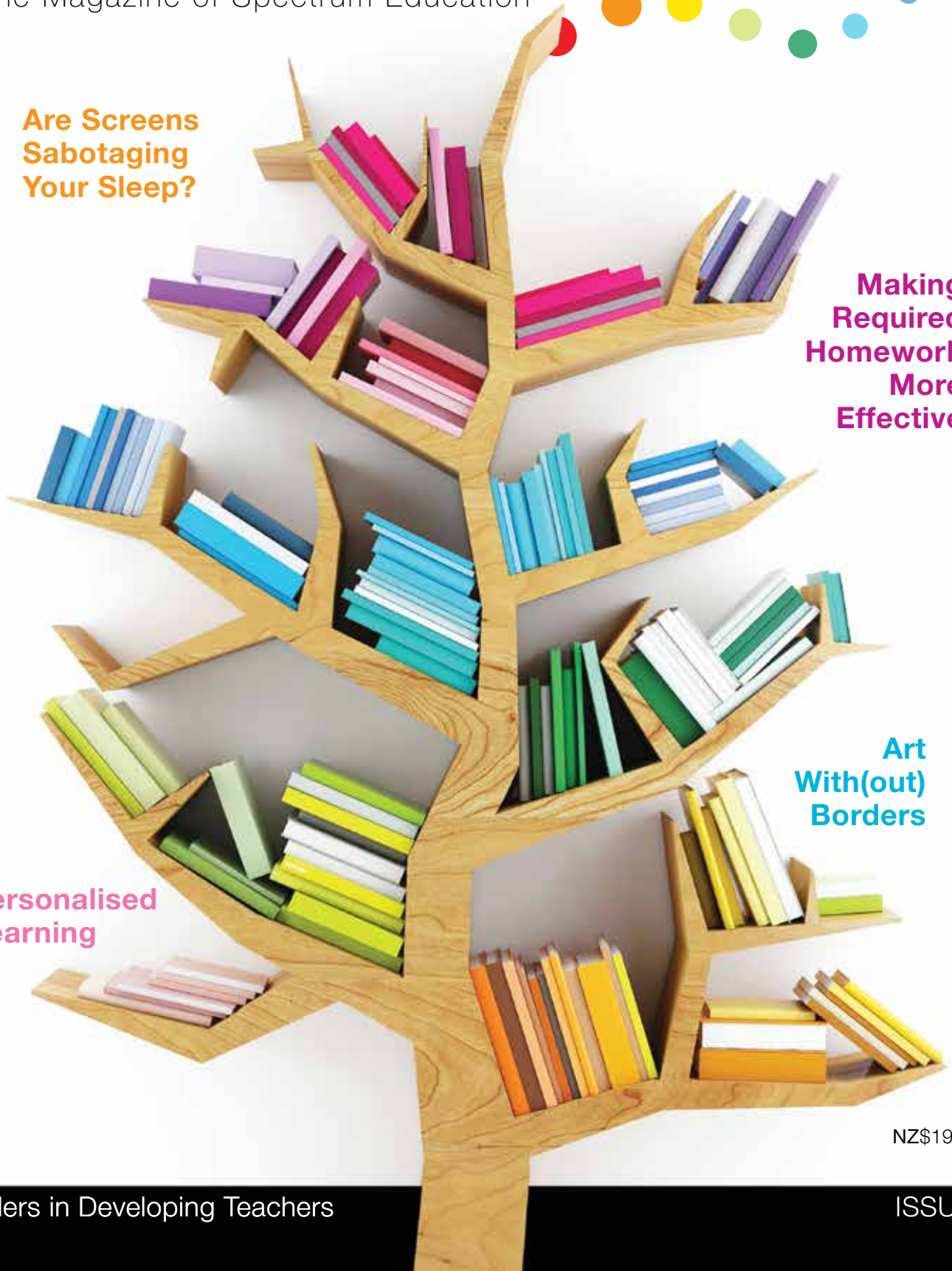
**Are Screens
Sabotaging
Your Sleep?**

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More
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With(out)
Borders**

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Boyes**
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Another school year is beginning to wind down, and yet, colleagues and I are continually brainstorming and problem solving searching for even better ways to do what we do with our students. How might we reach just one more student? How might we help them raise their score, or deepen their understanding on just one more concept? Although there could be a temptation to coast to the end of the year, we are urged to finish strong. This issue is full of tips on how to do just that.

If these are conversations you have with your fellow educators, you won't want miss a single article in this edition - it is filled cover to cover with ways to strengthen our craft of teaching, from incorporating the latest fad of fidget spinners to creating real life situations to aide in student understanding. As teachers, we are always reflecting on what is best practice: if we find ourselves needing to let something go, take a quick read through Dr. David Franklin's article, '5 Educational Concepts we Need to Eliminate.'

If you're a new teacher to the profession, perhaps Alan Cooper's Vision on Leadership may guide you toward the path of finding who you are, and what you want to be about in your classroom. When you come to a day where stress overshadows your thoughts, and you may be feeling overwhelmed, read 'When Your Batteries are Low,' by Lisa O'Neill. Make sure to take time and care for yourself: your students and coworkers need you.

Lastly, soak in new and engaging ways to pursue student mastery. A look into the Khan Lab School, brought to us by Karen Boyes, will reenergize you and spur you on to make changes for the better in your classroom structure, and the way you view student achievement and mastery.

An enormous thanks to all the teachers, writers, and contributors to this issue: it was a pleasure to read all your words. To our readers, thank you for taking the initiative to become better teachers every day. I know this issue will challenge each of you to just that. Our students are lucky to have you.

Yours in Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica".

Jessica Youmans

A Note from Karen Boyes

Welcome Jessica to the role of TM Mag editor - this has certainly been a great issue to get started on! A big THANKS to Sarah Linehan for all you have put into the magazine. The team wishes you well in your next adventure.

I also must extend an apology to Frances Mulligan and Zach Groshell for spelling your names incorrectly and the errors in your articles. We strive for accuracy and didn't quite hit the mark last issue.

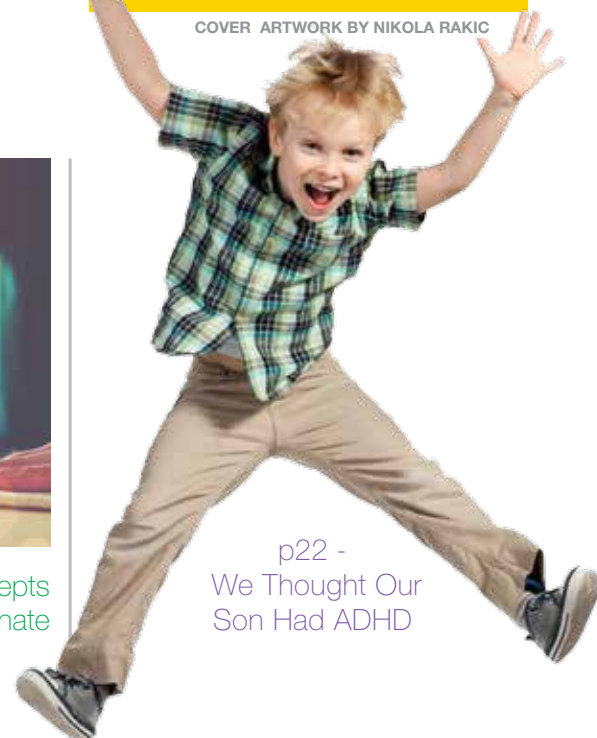


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Creativity: Tapping into Natural Curiosity to Ignite Learning

Raising creative thinkers

Educating today's brighter than ever students is challenging to the point of despair. They are highly creative and helping them channel this cleverness into educational success is a daunting task. The key is connecting to your own creativity.

We are all creative. Some of us have a creative hobby, others have a sense of humour, allowing us to view situations with new perspectives. Some of us are very good at creatively solving problems. Often the person that insists they surely don't possess even one creative bone in their body is interesting. The fact that this person is exclaiming this, means they have some curiosity driving them. This quality is the root of creativity.

From whichever point you connect with creativity, direct it to empower your educating techniques. Embrace the 5 E's – 5 core practices for raising creative thinkers.

Use the 5 E's to enrich your life:

- 1. Explore:** Take on new fields of interest. Enrich yourself reading National Geographic, for example. You'll gain respect for that from family and students.
- 2. Experience:** Look for new experiences that inspire you and fill your heart. Choose a book that lights up your eyes. Go to the theatre.
- 3. Examine:** Reflect about your days when you drive, or before sleep. Learn about yourself what drives you toward creative products. Those could be ideas and original thoughts or more tangible things.
- 4. Elevate:** Find little things that elevate your life experience, like placing a flower bouquet next to the sink full of dishes.
- 5. Express:** Become a good conversationalist by enjoying what people say. The fact that you have enriched yourself and reflected will show. You'll have interesting things to say. Write in a journal. It's great for putting order in the overwhelmed post-modernistic mind. Make it a habit at least once a week at the weekend, to bid farewell from last week and to open possibilities for the next.



The little things we creatively connect to generate a big difference.


Use the 5 E's to enhance your educating techniques, too:

- 6. Explore:** Tell children a story or show a video. Just celebrate their eagerness to learn about the world.
- 7. Experience:** Use experiential teaching methods, like enacting a play. Try simple experiments. Google is full of engaging ideas.
- 8. Examine:** When the students respond with insights and ideas, research them together. Ask something to help them clarify.
- 9. Elevate:** Converse with the children about thoughts they were intrigued by. Help them refine their ideas, taking them to the next level. Help them implement by producing creative educational products.
- 10. Express:** Help students communicate what comes up as a mess in their minds. Give them confidence to express the examined and elevated products.

Creativity needs nourishment. We need to fill our mind, heart and soul with interesting things. Then allow time so they may incubate to sprout as new ideas. Enrich yourself and your children or students. Then let creativity unfold itself. Just let it happen. It will surprise you when the time is right.

Here's a quick tip: If you're a teacher using the 5 E's for handling a school task, start in advance. At the end of a lesson, say something inspiring about next lesson's material. Ask the students a question, to begin their thought process. Invite them to jot down their insights. In the next class, examine and elevate their ideas, inserting to the conversation what you need to teach. Then ask the students to cope with the task ignited by what they learned together with the ideas they developed in their minds.

If you need to help your child with homework, ask them to read the task and material when they are just back from school, maybe even on their way back. Coming home, they'll let it incubate while eating and watching some videos or playing games. If ideas come to mind during this time-out, ask the child to jot them down. When sitting to do homework, the answers will be ripe in their mind, ready to be written. If the child still doesn't know what to write, tell them to let go and just let the pencil write by itself.

Perhaps you are wondering why this article has an ice cream painting along with it? Quite simply, I took the advice of Andy Warhol. I once heard he needed something to boost his career, and someone told him: Paint something you love. Mr. Warhol painted the dollar, a witty choice. I decided to paint ice-cream, an item so small, yet so much a part of my life. The point is that the little things we creatively connect to generate a big difference. What motivates your creativity? 

Michelle Korenfeld provides teachers with class materials for interdisciplinary teaching and creativity facilitation. Her new Raising Creative Thinkers Guidebook helps with the challenges of educating in the 21st century. Learn more about how to establish creative learning environments on her blog: Raising Creative Thinkers.

LIVE AS IF YOU WERE
TO DIE TOMORROW.

LEARN AS IF YOU WERE
TO LIVE FOREVER.



— MAHATMA GANDHI

5 Educational Concepts We Need to Eliminate

Reflecting on current practices

As we come to the close of another year, it is time once again to reflect upon the changes we need to make over the next 12 months. The world of education is changing rapidly, and there are many areas that educators need to address.

Here are five educational practices we need to say goodbye to:

1. Homework As We Know It

The debate surrounding homework is in full swing. Educators and parents are trying to figure out if we should give homework, how much is too much, how much is too little, and what should be assigned. After 15 years in education at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels, I believe that homework needs to be re-envisioned. We need to say goodbye to worksheets with 30 math problems and lined paper to copy sentences over and over again. Homework should not reduce children to tears and raise the blood pressure of parents. After spending eight hours in school, do we really need to saddle children with more work? They should spend their time playing sports, learning an instrument, and exploring the outdoors: activities that create a well-rounded person. Teachers shouldn't have to spend hours correcting these mundane exercises that tell them nothing about how a particular child is doing. Some suggestions to change homework practices would be to have students spend time reading, work on a project with peers, or investigate real world issues.

2. Surface Level EdTech

I spend a considerable amount of time on Twitter and Facebook every day connecting with educators and learning new ideas. I have come across some wonderfully rich and intriguing uses of Edtech. Unfortunately, I have also seen a fair share of Edtech being used for the sake of Edtech. Children need to use technology to further their understanding and to increase their engagement with educational concepts. We should not be

employing technology into schools that do not advance this notion. Cool new tools will be engaging to students for a short time, but will never yield the learning results that are needed. Educators must decide what the learning objectives are when using technology, not just use it because it's the newest and shiniest toy available.

3. Using Yoga / Bouncy Balls And Calling It Flexible Seating

First off, I am a proponent of flexible seating arrangements. We need to move away from having students sit in rows or "cemetery" style, as I like to call it. I believe in students sitting in pods in order to collaborate with their peers on a regular basis. I believe in having multiple areas in classrooms for learning and allowing students some choice in where they sit and learn. However, I have seen too many pictures of "flexible" seating that shows students on yoga or exercise balls. We need to remember that it is not what they are sitting on, but how seating arrangements are used to further engage students.


4. The Traditional School Newsletter

For decades, teachers and administrators churned out weekly or monthly newsletters. They were sent home in backpacks of children across the country never to be seen again. We live in a digital world. Why are we still requiring schools to produce this monthly monstrosity? Schools should be using digital formats to communicate with parents and the community. Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and Google Calendars can easily replace the traditional newsletter. Furthermore, updates can happen on a daily basis. Pictures can be sent across social media as events happen, not several days later.

5. Reading Logs

I am the proud father of a two young

children. My 7 year old can't get enough of chapter books. Part of her daily homework is 15 minutes of reading. I know that I am lucky that she chooses to read willingly and enjoys picking out new books. However, it can be torture for her to complete that dreadful reading log. I can't figure out what purpose this reading log serves. Have you every heard a child say, "I can't wait to fill out my nightly reading log?" I haven't either. Let's not spoil the magic that happens when a child learns to read competently and independently by making them fill out a glorified worksheet.

Time to say goodbye to these antiquated or ineffective school practices. 

Dr. David Franklin, CEO of The Principal's Desk, is an experienced school administrator, education professor, curriculum designer, and presenter. Dr. Franklin has presented at national and international education conferences and is available for school and district professional development sessions.



Time to say goodbye to these antiquated or ineffective school practices.

Be the Change: Cultivating High Expectations

How to Create High Expectations in Today's Society

"If you don't stand for something, you'll stand for anything." Alex Hamilton

I love this quote and while it might not be apparent why I have put it in bold at the top of this article, hopefully by the end it will. We are in the grip of what so many people are calling the 'Nanny State,' and it causes a range of emotions to bubble to the surface for me. Banning clapping at school assemblies, banning running on the playground, and not keeping a score for school sporting events. Sadly, I could write a list of ridiculous standards and decisions schools are making that would stretch the length of this page and I wouldn't even be scratching the surface of how rules are changing.

How does this connect with high expectations in our schools? Let's use the no scoring in school sports example. Parents and teachers might feel as though they are teaching students a valuable lesson about life, such as 'winning isn't everything. While I happen to agree with this life lesson, I argue that if you remove the end result of a game, then how do our students understand

the lesson of how to be a cheerful loser, and a gracious winner? This teaches our students one of the most fundamental life skills: resilience. Building resilient young people should be one of the most important outcomes schools chase with unwavering determination. If you fall down, get back up again. If you fail, keep trying.

When we set high expectations for our students and teachers, trusting they are capable of dealing with winning and losing with the appropriate supports built around these outcomes, everyone wins. This sports example has everything to do with high expectations because if we raise the bar and expect that our children can deal with winning and losing, failing and succeeding, then we send a very important message to them. The trajectory of our schools can be changed dramatically as we encourage and lead our teachers to be risk takers, even when they may fall short. This type of failure must be recognised as part of the journey toward becoming a highly successful school.

I have yet to visit a school where building leaders leave high expectations out of their

future goals conversation. So, what do we stand for as leaders? How do we make sure that our actions and words demonstrate a commitment to high expectations? Do we have an unwavering commitment to persevere toward these goals despite the challenges that arise?

How do we show our school community what we stand for? The first step is starting an honest conversation about what is happening and why change is needed. If you begin an honest conversation it can help form a powerful change coalition and reduce the number of people that will challenge the change. Not everyone needs to agree with the change but if the narrative around it is clear challengers will step back.

As the saying goes, 'talk is cheap,' so it is imperative that our words and actions match. It is these small actions across the school that make change more meaningful. How often do we see uniform changes or expectations crash and burn because only a few don't enforce them or they lose focus on the reasons behind the change? Change needs a collective commitment.

Creating a culture of high expectation is not 'rocket science' but takes determination, strong belief, patience, and sharp focus.



Uniform changes, academic policy changes, and classroom expectations can all be impacted by a greater focus on high expectations. I guarantee they will be challenged by students and parents. This is where the unwavering commitment is needed in spades. Address these concerns openly and honestly but if the expectations that you set are non-negotiable, communicate that clearly.

Creating a culture of high expectation is not 'rocket science' but takes determination, strong belief, patience, and sharp focus. How will you help bring about change for high expectation in your building?

The Cheat Sheet for Cultivating High Expectations:

1. Communicate the need for change.
2. Build a coalition of those willing to cultivate the change.
3. Communicate your expectations clearly and concisely.
4. Tackle one hurdle at a time - slow and steady wins the race.
5. Celebrate the wins along the way with all stakeholders.
6. Stay the course: patience and focus are key. 📺

Ryan Martin, recently awarded with the Northern Territory Principal of the Year, is an experienced school leader with a proven track record in behaviour management, leadership and coaching. He has a sharp focus on changing the trajectory of students from highly complex and disadvantaged backgrounds. Ryan has a passion for education but you might also find him surfing, skating or tinkering around with old cars.

Developing Likeable, Responsible and Respectful Students

Have you become a Pushover Teacher?

Keep going and don't give up. You matter, and you will be a stronger teacher for making these changes to your everyday life. Hold the line.

In today's world it is more and more difficult to hold a line and expect people to meet it.

Have you noticed the traffic lights take longer to change? People are running not only the orange but also the red lights. In order to prevent an accident, the lights take longer and longer to change – all because our society has decided to not hold the line and demand that what is right ought to be done.

Educators of all ages, along with parents, community leaders, police, nurses, and medical staff have long been held up as the back bone of our society and supporters of the limits in which we as a society thrive. Now, however, more and more frequently these stalwarts are being challenged in their day to day jobs, in the media and in the courts.

We know the impact of not maintaining rules and boundaries. Specific research has looked at the impact of overindulgence on children. When a child has been allowed to overindulge, look for these signs:

They have trouble learning delayed gratification and giving up being the centre of attention, trouble being competent in every day skills, self-care skills and skills relating to others, trouble taking personal responsibility and developing a sense of personal identity, as well as trouble knowing what is enough and what is “normal” for others.

We all know adults, children and teens who meet this description. We may even recognise this in ourselves.

Why does it happen?

It comes from a good heart, it is all around us and it is unintentional.

We are all wanting to do the best for our children, we are living in a culture of overindulgence and so it is hard to change. No one gets up in the morning and plans to hurt their children or other people. Yet the impact is all around us in the unintended messages children hear, such as:

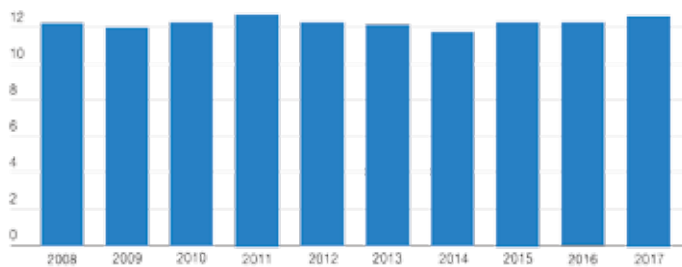
- Don't grow up!
- Don't be who you are.
- Don't be capable - let someone else help you.
- Don't think for yourself.
- It is not okay to say no.
- You can break any boundaries.
- You can't say what you need.

The societal impacts that come to mind are our poverty gap, the high suicide and anxiety rates, the obesity epidemic, the alcohol/drug problems in New Zealand, and children “needing” the latest of everything and then not being satisfied when more and more is provided.





Provisional suicide deaths per 100,000 people - years to June



Source: Ministry of Justice

almost one in three adults (aged 15 years and over) were obese (32%) a further 35% of adults were overweight but not obese. ...the adult obesity rate increased from 27% in 2006/07 to 32% in 2015/16.

Obesity statistics | Ministry of Health NZ

www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data.../obesity-statistics

Through training in organisational development, I came across the work of a Minneapolis woman, Jean Illsley Clarke, who has researched this matter with two colleagues over a number of years. They have written the book, "How Much is too Much?" After studying with Jean, and returning to NZ in 2013, I have noted the patterns seen as many of these problems mentioned above connect to one another. I submit that they are all connected to overindulgence as well.

I think of the old adage – "The personal is the political." Because we are up against a tsunami of expectations to overindulge you may find it harder and harder to hold the line as a teacher.

You can be powerful and ask for help at the same time.

Consider this mash up of quotes recently from a reporter:

"You have never been told no because I want to be your friend...let me give you a trophy because you signed up to play soccer even though you never come to practice, only games...I'm not going to give you a grade on this test because I don't want you to think you're a failure, even though you don't study...I cannot tell you what you cannot post on social media because you have freedom of speech...you won't be held accountable at school because your parents will come and yell at the teacher, I won't push you to perform because that will make you anxious."

So, if you are thinking that you have been caught in the trap, firstly well done for noticing and secondly there is something you can do to be different.

If you have been a pushover teacher, there are four questions to ask yourself that will help you know if you may have been overindulging:

1. Does the situation hinder the child from learning the task that supports his or her development and learning at this age?
2. Does the situation give a disproportionate amount of classroom resources to one or more of the children – including money, space, time, energy, attention and psychic input?
3. Does this situation exist to benefit the teacher more than the child?
4. Does the child's behaviour potentially harm others, society, or the planet in some way?


If you say yes to any of the questions the suggestion is that you may have been overindulging. So what to do?

1. Ideas for changing old behaviours and attitudes.

- a) Pick one attitude or behaviour to change at a time. Only one. Stay underwhelmed.
- b) List all the ways life would be better for this child, and for you, if you were to change that single attitude or behaviour.
- c) List the disadvantages to changing. Everything from "This child will throw more tantrums" to "This child may not like me" to "I've not a clue what to do instead."
- d) Make a decision to change.
- e) Describe your new attitude or behaviour by turning around the old one in words that make sense to you. "I allow my student to get away with things" might become "I do not allow my student to get away with things." Or, "I hold my student responsible for their behaviour." Say it aloud five times morning and night. Post it on the mirror, on the dashboard of the car, or in your wallet.
- f) In the morning think of one little way to act on your new attitude or one small way to behave in a new way that day and do it.
- g) When you are ready, choose one big way to act on it each week and do it. Get help if you need it.
- h) If you fall back, congratulate yourself for being on the journey. No beating yourself up.
- i) When you notice a positive shift in your own attitude and behaviour, celebrate. When you notice a positive shift in a child's behaviour or attitude, celebrate, but don't overindulge.
- j) Go back over the list and notice how many other ways things have changed in a positive way. Celebrate.

2. Keep a list of things to say when your students try to push you back into the old ways. Here is a starter list:

- I'm the teacher and ultimately I make the decisions.
- Why do you have to do that? I'm your teacher and having you do that is my job.
- I'm the teacher and I said no.
- Teaching is not a popularity contest. I'm not here to be your friend. I'm here to educate you.
- Adversity and frustration are an inevitable part of life. You'll get used to it: just make sure you keep trying.
- This is a classroom and we all need to pitch in.
- Classroom members help other.

Keep going and don't give up. You matter, and you will be a stronger teacher for making these changes to your everyday life. Hold the line. 

Madeleine Taylor is a parent of three grown sons and works as a People Skills Consultant. Madeleine is an accomplished workshop facilitator and long-time trainer of negotiation, influencing skills and managing difficult conversations. Madeleine is a parent educator exploring how to grow resilient children in this complex world. More information can be found at www.peopleskillsconsulting.co.nz

The Fruit That Grows in the Valley

Building character one valley at a time: persevering through the hard times make us stronger learners

In late 2015, after completing a speaking engagement in Singapore, my husband and I took some time out to explore that country and neighbouring Malaysia, places neither of us had visited before. Part of our trip took us into the Cameron Highlands, a temperate region, which we found a huge relief after the heat of coastal Malaysia. We were fascinated by the Highlands as we drove through valley after valley, full of vegetable crops and fruit trees. What we learnt was that this area grows all the fruit and vegetables for Malaysia and Singapore, whereas the fruit grows in the valley.

Great schools that I have visited spend time talking with their students about the learning pit - that valley of confusion and struggle, that valley that if you can get through it will leave you a better person.

Likewise, and the subject of this post, the fruit also grows in the valleys of our lives. As I look back over my life I realise that my most character forming experiences have occurred in those periods of my life that I would describe as valleys. Probably the deepest valley I have ever been in was when my 32 year old brother died of leukemia. I certainly developed character during those times as we sought to live a life that was better - not bitter - as a result of this experience. As a teacher and a principal I went through many valley experiences but I know these shaped me into the educator that I am today.

None of us like going through valley experiences, those times when you have to bite your lip, or bite your tongue and hold back your tears. Those times when you are asked to put aside the things you know, maybe the things you believe in, and try a new approach, or work with someone or on something that doesn't fit well with your notion of who you are. We've all been there and I've yet to meet anyone who likes it.

Which brings me to the learning pit...

Great schools that I have visited spend time talking with their students about the learning pit - that valley of confusion and struggle, that valley that if you can get through it will leave you a better person.

My wondering, though, is whether or not we as adults are as embracing and encouraging of the 'opportunity' of the learning pit for ourselves as we are in supporting our students as they go through the pit. How comfortable are with being uncomfortable? As we struggle with new ways of working do we remind ourselves that the 'learning pit' is part of the change process or do we grumble and moan, consoling ourselves with chocolate, whilst complaining to those around us about how unfair life has become?

But it is not only fruit that we find in valleys. At the bottom of most valleys we find rivers or streams - in fact, valleys are formed by the water that flows through them. Water is a critical element to the fruit. Without it nothing grows. What is the water in your life? Is it your colleagues who support you through your growing pains, is it the books you read, the PLD you receive, the Facebook groups you belong to, or your loved ones at home? Whatever it is, take time to drink from this refreshing stream, as it will ensure that the fruit you are growing are luscious and can be enjoyed by many.

Just as in Malaysia and the Cameron Highlands, where strawberries grew all year round, cultivate the conditions so perfect so that there are no seasons: just lots and lots of fruit.

This article is reproduced with permission from Carolyn's blog Mindspin. Carolyn blogs about learning, technology, exponential change and leadership. You can read more of her posts at: mindspinnz.blogspot.co.nz or follow her on twitter @carolynstuart

Carolyn Stuart is a passionate educator who has held many different positions within New Zealand's education sector, from student to teacher to principal and now the Deputy Chief Executive, Education at N4L. Carolyn holds a Master of Education specialising in leadership, and regularly commentates her views on education via her blog (www.mindspinnz.blogspot.com), Facebook and Twitter (@carolynstuart). She is frequently asked to speak at events across New Zealand.



Leadership Vision

Sharing your organisation's vision and goals

Successful leaders are a combination of continuous learners and visionaries intent on being better than before. It is the vision they establish and maintain that is the driving force, the catalyst, not just for themselves but also for all they lead.

Paradoxically, such a vision must be complex enough to encompass not just the present but the future and it must maintain the flexibility to encompass any surprises that may appear. At the same time, it must be straight forward enough for all



those associated within the enterprise - not just the managers - but the foot soldiers too, to understand its general application, and their opportunity to play a part: to be actively involved. This is a necessary prerequisite for becoming a dynamic learning organisation.

In developing an outstanding school in the 80's and 90's our vision was: To be a leading edge school. Such a vision fulfilled the criteria above of being complex enough to allow for continual improvement, yet simple enough for all in the organization to have a collective understanding of what was required.


However, that alone is insufficient. The vision must be a living one: it must provide the opportunity for both collective and individual action, at every level of the enterprise, so that it is practiced and given practical meaning. To quote Professor Dumbledore from Harry Potter, "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." The right vision becomes first a catalyst to encourage choices, and second, a flexible mould within which choices are kept on track, on message, and the enterprise as a whole united, thus set to become a learning organisation.

Where a vision is nothing more than a heading on the enterprise's website or notepaper and not lived, is at best, a dead weight and at worst, a distraction.

A vision needs a motivational pull which has the ability to inspire all people in the enterprise into choosing actions in support of that vision. On the one hand this requires an emotional appeal including at least a hint of excitement. On the leading edge, it

equates to going into the unknown, or the discovering of new areas.

On the other hand, the vision must also have within it a logical judgmental measure against which the decision of why do this rather than that, can be decided. How does doing this rather than that place us on the leading edge, then becomes the organising question for all. The answer to that question is what the look and feel of the future will be, which brings in elements of courage, risk taking, and commitment. This too has the air of excitement.

Perhaps the crux is to have the vision embraced at every level of the enterprise as an inspirational aspect of the enterprise's culture. All need to understand why and how the vision affects them personally, and that they too can have input. This elevates all members above individual, unthinking or unimportant minions. Instead they are enabled to put purpose and meaning into individual tasks and roles, to analyse what they do and to think laterally. When this happens a learning organisation develops with added energy and focus distilled from the personal practical knowledge that comes from what the person is actually doing regardless of the hierarchical level of that person in the enterprise. 

"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."

DMITRY SHIRONOSOV

Alan Cooper is an educational consultant based in New Zealand. As a principal, he was known for his leadership role in thinking skills, including Habits of Mind, learning styles and multiple intelligences, information technology, and the development of the school as a learning community.

AMANDA CASSIDY



VLADIMIR MELNIKOY

We Thought our Son had ADHD - What we Were Told Blew our Minds

Children who have retained reflexes from infancy are often misdiagnosed with ADHD. Do your students have these signs?

We brought our son to be tested for ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) this summer. He was fidgety, found it hard to sit still in school, had low concentration and was very impulsive. In other words, all completely typical symptoms of a five-year-old boy.

But I wanted to be sure so that I could give the best and most appropriate response to support him in being his best self. Also, by nature, I overreact.

To my surprise, the therapist explained that in fact, he did not have ADHD, but that he had retained some of his primitive reflexes: a common issue that is often misdiagnosed as ADHD. These retained reflexes could be responsible for many of the areas that were getting him in trouble at school and at home. Wait, what?

Reflexes are muscle movements that happen unconsciously to certain stimuli. For example, you pull away your hand if it gets burnt on the hair-straightener. Babies are born with a set of these reflexes and they are called 'primitive reflexes' because they originate from the most primitive part of the brain.

They are hard-wired into our system to protect us from harm in infancy and to prepare us for later development changes like sitting and crawling. In fact, that's why such steps are so important in a baby's development.

Primitive reflexes should disappear within the first year of life and are replaced by higher-level conscious reflexes, but when they are retained instead, these pathways in the brain can result in symptoms that are linked to immaturities such as clumsiness, lack of concentration, squirming, over sensitivity, poor coordination, and much more.

Like anything, there are different levels of severity depending on how much of a reflex is retained. Luckily, my son had only retained two reflexes and they were extremely mild. The therapist was sure that with some repetitive exercises, we should notice a big difference.

The Moro reflex develops in a baby while in the womb and is fully noticeable at birth. It is the way your little one 'startles' suddenly in their sleep. It is part of the fight or flight survival response. It is completely involuntary and is activated at brainstem level.

The brain is extremely plastic. By taking the body through the physical motions of the developmental stage which was skipped, the brain is encouraged to develop the connections, which should have been formed during infancy.

If this reflex is retained, your child will have an exaggerated startle reaction - they will constantly be 'on alert' and ready to react very quickly to anything that can be perceived as 'danger' (including school yard fights!)

This over-activation can also impact other parts of your child's body - high cortisol levels released will result in an inability to balance blood sugar levels and can affect energy and mood throughout the day.

What struck me is that often, a child is labeled as having behavioural problems or being disruptive in school when in fact, they are unable to control this reaction in themselves.

Our therapist explained that my son involuntarily might kick his feet under the desk, while sitting in school. It seems like he is being 'difficult' or 'disruptive,' but the reality is that he simply doesn't even realise what he's doing - it is involuntary.


In the school line, he might look around, and slightly lose balance because of another reflex called the Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (ATNR). It looks to the teacher like he is pushing in the line when, in fact, he has just fallen forward. The more it was explained to me, the more I realised how this was impacting every part of my son's life.

Another reflex is the Spinal Galant Reflex. This is where your baby curves their back when you stroke a finger down their spine. Its purpose is to encourage movement for walking and crawling. Those who retain this reflex can often have problems such as bed-wetting, fidgeting, the inability to sit still and an inability to concentrate.

This is why ADHD is often, and wrongly, diagnosed. It is vital to your child's well-being that you consider all avenues of possibility before a diagnosis. If your child has retained reflexes, the good news is that these reflexes can often be overcome through movement re-education or re-patterning of the brain.

The brain is extremely plastic. By taking the body through the physical motions of the developmental stage which was skipped, the brain is encouraged to develop the connections, which should have been formed during infancy.

We have exercises to do at home each evening with my son. The idea is that repetition should help the brain to reform these connections. We have already noticed some changes after 6 weeks - a calmer child who is less impulsive.

Of course, my son's personality also plays a large part. He is like his dad - energetic and mischievous, and I wouldn't want to change that for the world. But the part I feel I CAN guide him through, I will focus on now and hopefully it will help him navigate the world a little more smoothly. 



VLADIMIR MELNIKOV

Amanda Cassidy is the Features Editor for Irish and UK parenting site, MummyPages. She lives in Dublin, Ireland, with her husband and three children - aged 3, 5 and 6 and enjoys sharing her parenting journey through her mummyblog, The Mouthy Mum.

You can find more information on ADHD and other parenting resources on www.mummypages.ie

When one
teaches,
TWO learn.

- Robert Heinlein

Making Required Homework More Effective

An experiment in my class

Homework is one of those contentious topics that divide teachers as well as parents. John Hattie's research leads to the conclusion that homework in primary school has an effect of nearly zero. But the reality is that many schools have policies that require homework to be assigned to students on a daily or weekly basis.

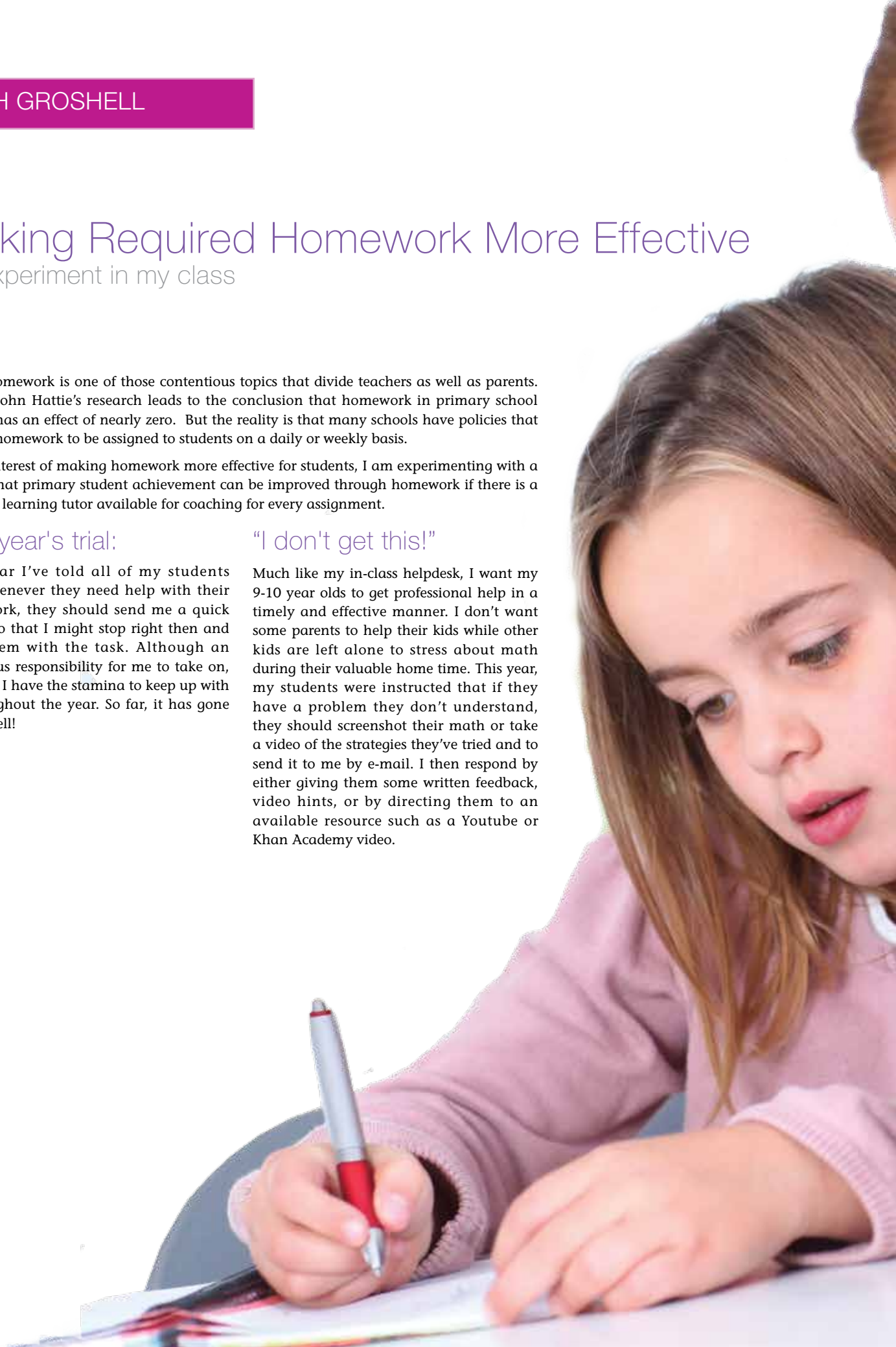
In the interest of making homework more effective for students, I am experimenting with a theory that primary student achievement can be improved through homework if there is a distance learning tutor available for coaching for every assignment.

This year's trial:

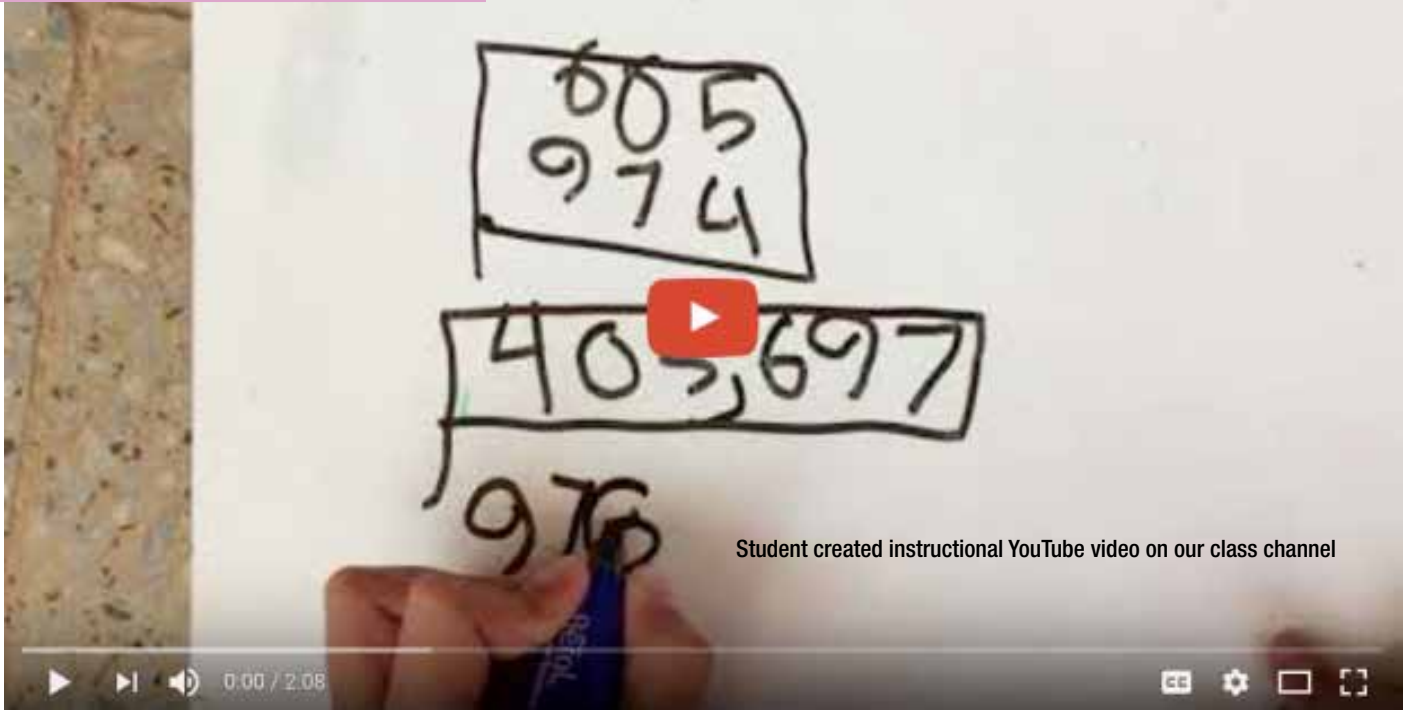
This year I've told all of my students that whenever they need help with their homework, they should send me a quick email, so that I might stop right then and help them with the task. Although an enormous responsibility for me to take on, I'll see if I have the stamina to keep up with it throughout the year. So far, it has gone really well!

"I don't get this!"

Much like my in-class helpdesk, I want my 9-10 year olds to get professional help in a timely and effective manner. I don't want some parents to help their kids while other kids are left alone to stress about math during their valuable home time. This year, my students were instructed that if they have a problem they don't understand, they should screenshot their math or take a video of the strategies they've tried and to send it to me by e-mail. I then respond by either giving them some written feedback, video hints, or by directing them to an available resource such as a Youtube or Khan Academy video.







Student created instructional YouTube video on our class channel


How's it going so far?

This type of student support has been a very positive experience to begin the year. I have been able to provide a large amount of support with this model for homework. One thing I have noticed, though, is that the students tend to ask very simple questions without really showing their work or the strategies they tried. I am going to work with students on how to ask for help, and how to get the students helping each other much more often. I am also learning how to give just enough help so as to get the students to figure out the rest of the problems on their own.

I am also incorporating a YouTube channel with student-created instructional videos so that students can refer to a growing library of flipped lessons from their peers. This is in the process of getting put together, but the students seem very excited about the prospect of sharing their knowledge with each other and with students around the world.

It's not that much extra work... so far.

I am a fan of living a balanced life as a teacher, so taking on a "distance tutoring model" by having kids e-mail me all night long (their limit is 8:00 PM) might sound like a recipe for disaster. But the truth is that I only get a couple of emails per night, and it usually only takes me a few seconds to send back a response with Mark-Up or my laptop's webcam. Usually just copying and pasting the link to a YouTube video can help them solve their problems. As students become more familiar with this system, and increasingly independent, I hope to teach them to search for their own answers online and to take it upon themselves to offer peer tutoring during the homework hours.

What do you think? Will this strategy help improve achievement, or is it simply homework in sheep's clothing? Is this plan sustainable, or do you think it will be too overwhelming and a student request will fall through the cracks? We all know that, at the end of the day, homework forms such a small part of a student's day. Still, if we can improve outcomes without wasting students' precious time at home, won't everyone be happy? 

Will this strategy help improve achievement, or is it simply homework in sheep's clothing?

Bio: Zach Grosell has taught in the US and Vietnam before moving into an instructional edtech coaching position in Khartoum, Sudan. He is a passionate advocate for developing student mindfulness and independence in the classroom. Check out his blog at educationrickshaw.com.

GLENN CAPELLI'S VOCABULARY



TIMEZEN

simply put, it means to have
wisdom with time

LEARN FROM THE PAST

KEEP A PRESENT PERSPECTIVE

EXPLORE THE FUTURE

ACTIONS &

CONSEQUENCES

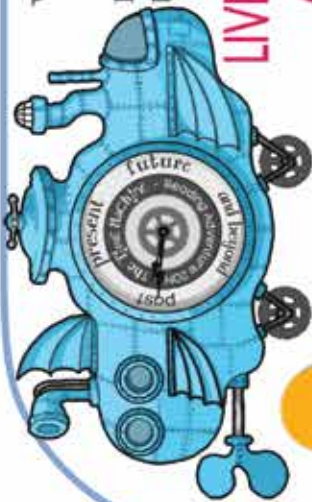
Scenario Planning

"WHAT IF?" thinking



Zen Stone

We need to see our life progressing:
moving from a meaningful past
towards a viable future



LIVE NOW

learn from history
your own and world

skim rocks into the future
consider potential scenarios

The journey back helps us go forward.

what time zone
do you live in?

Know your History
Know your Direction

The forward flight of the arrow pulls the string
on how far back the archer depends

WORKOUT

How many rock throws?

How far each rock throw?

Too many can lead to anxiety
or analysis paralysis

Too few can lead to trouble!!



CAP

Wisdom lies at the intersection of
evaluation and choice. It is not simply
a matter of knowing the best answer
to a problem or dilemma; it is
knowing the best approach
to finding the best answer.

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Fidget Spinners: A Passing Craze, or a Teacher's Tool?

Teachers should find creative ways to incorporate fidget spinners into the classroom to help kinesthetic learners master the curriculum

Fidget spinners are currently all the rage in most households, schools and preschools in New Zealand. With some schools banning them and others embracing them, what is the impact of these toys on children's learning and development? Do our children benefit from such a thing, or are these novelties just too hard to manage in a classroom?

Many schools have now banned fidget spinners, and some like Palmerston North's Roslyn School, are using them as teaching tools. So how do we know if they are beneficial or if they are a bust? Taking a look at how children learn helps us understand if the spinners have a role in the classroom.

We all learn through different ways. These learning styles are separated into the broad groups of: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Visual means we learn through seeing, auditory means we learn mostly through listening, and kinesthetic means we learn mostly through moving.

In fact, some argue that all learning is based in movement from the time we are in utero until the time we die. To see, our eyes move and focus, our ear drums move when we hear and our body is in constant movement as we take information through all of our other senses. This is the one aspect of learning that does not alter as we age we just become more sophisticated at doing it.

As individuals, we will each be more dominant in one of these styles of learning. Visual and kinesthetic are the more prominent learning styles with auditory being the least. (Are you now questioning why so much of our educational system is based around listening? You are right to wonder, but that is another topic!)

Fidget spinners are the latest craze but they are not new in terms of teaching aids in the classroom. For decades teachers have allowed highly tactile, kinesthetic children

to utilize small toys and manipulatives to hold quietly, which in turn, helped increase their listening capacity and focus on tasks. These have mostly been used for children with special educational needs, particularly Autism and ADHD.

Yet, even now, big companies are utilising methods such as stress balls, walking meetings and a range of workspaces to benefit business productivity through movement! Even as adults, we are learning that movement helps us focus and provide equal learning.


As a mum of four, three of which are boys, I fully understand the need for children to move when learning - do boys ever sit still? However, also, as a teacher I completely understand how distracting it can be to other children when some children are fidgeting in the classroom! So how do we best meet each child's needs, and also use their learning styles to shape learning experiences?

So do fidget spinners need to be banned? I don't think so. I think that clever teachers can maximise them for benefits to both children and teachers. Does this take time and effort? Absolutely! However if children are showing such an interest in something, it only makes sense to use that interest to teach the curriculum. If we are trying to raise children to love learning, the question we need to ask is: Why do we continually take away the things that they most love, such as fields, sports, arts, a range of games, and now fidget spinners?

If schools are open to finding ways to use this interest, the inquiry learning method has the potential to do just that. It takes real life problems and interests and researches, teaches and creates methods of learning for that interest. Using inquiry in the classroom is one way fidget spinners can move out of the 'toy craze' category and into the teaching tool category.

If we are trying to raise children to love learning, the question we need to ask is: Why do we continually take away the things that they most love?

This is what we see in the example of Roslyn School. Suggestions for schools could be to: adopt an "if you make your own you can have one" policy, make them as part of the curriculum, or set boundaries around their use, such as only in particular lessons, or at particular times in the classroom.

Like any other item in a classroom fidget spinners must be used within the rules of the classroom and teachers can maximise their use to reward and change behaviour. This creates a win-win for both students and teachers. Children are born to move and through movement all learning happens. Fidgeting is just one way that children can expel pent up energy so that they have the control to focus on learning. 

Leanne Seniloli is a neuro-developmental therapist and early childhood educator. For more information and other ways to help children learn, check out www.withoutlimitslearning.com.

A to Z of effective teaching

A by-the-letter guide

Water

An essential substance for the body and brain, from a learning perspective, water has at least two main functions. The first is for healthy kidneys to flush toxins and waste from the body. The second reason water is vital is because the electrical impulses in the brain, which is what occurs when the brain is learning and thinking, travel between brain cells through water. The better hydrated the brain, the more the electrical impulses travel faster and the more efficient the thinking and learning can be.

Wait- time

Budd Rowe's research demonstrated that the average teacher waits one second after asking a question before they do one of three things; call upon a student to answer, ask a new question or answer the question themselves. One second is not enough time, in most circumstances, for the brain to think about options, analyse the question, make connections to the learning or give a thoughtful response. Her research showed that teachers who waited at least 7-10 seconds after asking a question, elicited a higher quality of answers and received more thoughtful responses. Silence can be challenging in the classroom yet it provides students time to process and think. Next time you ask a question wait, and wait some more, and notice the quality of the responses.

Why

Having a reason to learn the information creates increased higher order thinking and engagement from students. Rather than simply telling them what they are learning, give them the 'why.' Link what you are teaching to real life, give an authentic context and provide a reason for students to engage and learn in the information. Dr Rich Allen states, "doing something, or learning something, simply because we are told to is two-dimensional, flat learning. Understanding why the same information might be relevant, how it might connect to things we already know, creates a far more powerful, multi-dimensional, and memorable learning experience."




X-Ray Vision

The brain can see-through words to find the meaning. For example, don't think of a purple tree and don't think of a pink cat in the purple tree. What did you think of? The brain is designed to focus on the key words and ignore others. The word 'don't' is a word the brain sees through or in other words doesn't recognise it straight away. The brain focuses on the words purple tree and pink cat and then has to think: "Oh I'm not supposed to think of those." With this thought in mind, be aware of your instructions to students. Replace "don't forget to..." with "remember." Instead of "don't touch," use "leave it." Focus on what you want students to do rather than what you don't want them to do.

Y-chart

A Y-chart is a great visible thinking tool for students to organise their thinking. Typically a Y-chart is used to unpack what something looks like, sounds like and feels like. The 3 ideas are written in each section of the Y shape and students record their ideas in each section.

Z – Zest & Zeal

Having a passion for teaching and learning is arguably one of the most essential skills of an effective teacher. That zest and zeal for growing young minds, empowering students and developing thinkers is necessary in such a full on job as teaching. Show students you love your career. Be excited by their successes no matter how small and give them the love of learning by modelling your desire to grow and develop. 

Karen is an expert in effective teaching and learning, study skills, motivation and positive thinking. She was recognised with the NSANZ Educator of the Year award in 2014 and 2017, and works in schools throughout Australasia teaching students how to Study Smart and teachers how to raise achievement.
www.karentuiboyes.com

Pruning: Letting the Light In

Deciding when too much is too much,
and easing back into simplicity

Although I am no great gardener, but as I was pruning back my grapes earlier this afternoon (I can now feel some of you are nodding ‘yes, you are no great gardener, way too late!’) I was struck with a small epiphany that I needed to put into words and share.

You see I didn’t just wantonly run out to the glasshouse with my clippers and start hacking willy-nilly, not at all. I know enough to check (and already had an inkling that the best time to give the vine a good hacking was in the middle of winter dormancy) so I did what I often do in these circumstances: search the net until I find someone else who has done things not quite at the right time and got away with it. Invariably, I always find some obscure chatroom that provides me with the green light, and often a little sage advice to go with it. Today, I found my green light (obviously, although I was fairly committed to the course of action anyway) and also a possible answer to a problem that had vexed me with my grapes last season.

Last season I had a bumper crop of grapes on the vine, there were bunches upon bunches upon bunches, a sea of little greenish-purple orbs dripping along the roof of the glasshouse and I eagerly awaited the time they would reach full, juicy, delicious ripeness.

Oh, the anticipation.

Oh, the disappointment.

Yes, some ripened and were delicious as anticipated, but most just didn’t get there. I thought it was the dodgy weather we’d had, and I know I hadn’t been very attentive to the needs of my garden as I was toiling in the fertile soil of masters research writing instead. But in my search for a green light to prune back I happened upon a little statement that suggested if the vine was overladen with bunches that selective pruning of some bunches could help as it allowed the light to reach the others so they would ripen better. As I said earlier, and some of you will possibly be nodding vigorously in agreement now, I am not a great gardener and I don’t know if this is true or not but it sounded feasible and herein lies the reason why I am writing.

As I was hacking away, and trying to, not altogether successfully, avoid the cobwebs and dead leaves falling into my hair or worse still, down my top, it occurred to me that letting the light in to help things reach their juicy, delicious, full potential is what I have started to appreciate in my classroom teaching. We are advised to accelerate our learners, to choose target students and provide specific interventions to ensure they meet a required standard. Please know, I am committed to all my learners achieving their potential and reaching for greatness in their own way, I want the best for my kids. But I wonder if sometimes we crowd them so they struggle to reach the light and therefore miss the opportunity to fully reach their potential.



ISANTILLI

MEGAN GALLAGHER




We don't have standardised brains, we don't learn in standardised ways (oh, how easy, and how dreadfully dull teaching would be if this were true) so teaching our students with an expectation that they will achieve, or flourish, in a standardised time frame seems counter-intuitive.

Now I am not suggesting we prune out learners, heavens no! Although a class size and adequate support to be able to engage meaningfully with the learners in our care would seem sensible to me, I do think we need to prune back some of what is happening in classrooms to allow our learners to ripen and bloom when the time is right for them. Our job as teachers is to provide the conditions to do so. Since returning to classroom teaching three years ago, I have noticed that cutting back some of what I was doing is leading to positive outcomes for my learners. I used to try to see all my reading and math groups at least every second day and have set activities for them to follow up independently from the learning session we had the days prior. I also tried to make sure I conferenced with every child for writing at least once a week. I ensured my special needs students and target students were getting time with teacher aides for revision and additional practice, while I saw them more often for guided sessions on top of all this. My poor students were probably exhausted with all this extra support! What I was doing in actuality was setting myself and my learners up for failure. My group sessions were often rushed if they happened at all, as more often than not, I couldn't actually see everyone I had planned to and so I was rewriting planning or planning day by day to cater for my lack of ability to push everyone through. If I did see everyone as initially planned then I didn't engage in thoughtful or meaningful conversations because I was distracted by time and monitoring what others were doing around the classroom in the various 'meaningful' follow up activities I had assigned for them. All in all, it wasn't a complete disaster and there was progress made, but it was stressful and I realise now that much of the stress was unnecessary.

As with my gardening, I am no expert teacher but I am a committed learner and this is what I have learned: I have shifted my focus, and I now do less, but I feel I do it better. I see some groups more often and some groups less often depending on what they need and what we are learning. Some groups of learners are undertaking

set assignments within our classroom programme where it makes sense. My students have a lot of choice about how they respond to a text or a math lesson. Sometimes there will be little follow up, other times a lot may happen.

Recently I had two learners who made a frozen confectionary after they created a recipe, were given the ingredients and told that the most important thing about baking is cleaning up. They were then left to their task. This came in response to a novel we had been reading, and came because I spend time talking with, and most importantly listening to, and observing my learners so I feel like I know them better. I see my writers at varying times, sometimes with self selected teacher groupings after a specific inspiration for writing but other times because they are at a stage they want feedback from the teacher or when I am roving around the classroom between group sessions. I trust my learners to move forward with what they need to work on, and we are building a culture where this is creating success. Yes, just in case you were wondering, I still have interventions for my target students only now they don't get paranoid that I am going to leap out and teach at them when they are look like they might be relaxing.

The systems in my classroom are far from perfect and I feel like I have a long way to go but I can appreciate that what I am aiming for is creating space so that the light can come in and juicy, delicious, flourishing can occur naturally. We don't have standardised brains, we don't learn in standardised ways (oh, how easy, and how dreadfully dull teaching would be if this were true) so teaching our students with an expectation that they will achieve, or flourish, in a standardised time frame seems counter-intuitive. By letting the light in, and noticing when I am not, I feel like I am giving my learners a better deal than I was and am seeing the growth in confidence, self management and personal drive to learn. It's a start and it all came from pruning back a little, even if I was a little late! 

IF "PLAN A"
DIDN'T WORK
THE ALPHABET
HAS 25 MORE
LETTERS!

Are Screens Sabotaging Your Sleep?

Exhausted teachers need to reevaluate their bedtime routines and sleeping habits

Many educators are aware of how digital devices are derailing students' sleep: you're experiencing the consequences in your classrooms. The research conclusively tells us that tired students cannot learn, regardless of their cognitive abilities. Sleep is vital for optimal health, learning and wellbeing, for students and teachers alike. However, many teachers have overlooked how their digital habits may be compromising their sleep and subsequent health, wellbeing and productivity.

Thanks to mobile technologies teachers can now spend their evenings sitting on the lounge, catching up on emails, or perhaps writing school reports on the laptop or marking student work on a tablet device. You can be asleep and receive a text message from a sick staff member informing you that they'll require a substitute teacher the next day. You can be woken up throughout the night because of email alerts and social media notifications on your phone.

Anecdotally, many educators are reporting feeling constantly tired. There are a host of factors that may contribute to tiredness, such as increased administration, demands from parents, professional development requirements to name just a few. However, the chief culprit for teacher tiredness is likely to be inadequate and/or poor quality sleep. Unhealthy technology habits are impacting teachers' sleep and subsequently hampering their wellbeing and productivity.


How are screens impacting our sleep?

The use of technology, whether it's a laptop, desktop computer, tablet or smartphone, or even watching TV can impact the quantity and quality of sleep.

Research has shown that the use of mobile devices in the 90-minutes before we sleep has been shown to delay the onset of sleep. Mobile, backlit devices emit blue light which suppresses the body's production of melatonin (the hormone our body secretes to help us fall asleep quickly and easily). Insufficient melatonin production can delay the onset of sleep and over time, these sleep delays can accumulate into a sleep deficit. Many teachers are simply not clocking enough hours of sleep each night.

The use of screens before sleep can also have an arousal effect on the brain. If teachers are dealing with an upsetting email from a parent, or writing up an incident report before bed it can delay sleep, as your brain starts to release the stress-hormone cortisol. This isn't conducive to sleep! Your brain becomes wired and tired all at once!

Many teachers are surprised to learn that the quality of their sleep may also be impacted if they have digital devices in their bedroom. Alerts and notifications can interfere with our sleep cycles. Instead of having approximately 4-5 completed sleep cycles each night, email pings, text alerts, or social media



notifications can result in an insufficient number of completed sleep cycles which contributes to feelings of tiredness.

Three healthy screen habits to protect your sleep

- **Have a bedtime for devices:** Ideally, we should switch off digital devices 90-minutes before sleep. This allows your body to make melatonin to induce sleep and gives your brain (and nervous and sensory systems) a much-needed rest from the constant onslaught of information they're subject to during a day. Even 30-60 minutes of screen-free time before sleep will help if 90 minutes isn't tenable.

Unhealthy technology habits are impacting teachers' sleep and subsequently hampering their wellbeing and productivity.

NINANN

- **Keep devices out of bedrooms-** Devices in bedrooms compromise the quality of our sleep, especially if the alerts and notifications aren't silenced. The presence of a device in our bedroom means that we're also likely to succumb to the temptation, to have a quick peak at our inbox or social media if it's within reach, when we wake throughout the night. A 2016 study by consultancy firm Deloitte found that approximately 33% of adults checked their phones overnight. I know many teachers, responsible for sourcing substitute teachers, believe that they need to have their phones on until late in the night, or on overnight. However, I challenge this idea. Even if you receive the text at midnight, are you really going to call or

send a message to a casual teacher at that time? Things can wait.

- **Take preventative measures-** If you really must be on your laptop or phone just before you go to sleep (and sometimes there's no escaping it like during report-writing time), use blue-light blocking glasses, or use Night Shift mode on iOS devices or blue-light apps on Android devices. Both of these reduce the blue light emissions.

As teachers, we need to develop healthy nocturnal technology habits, as digital devices are here to stay. We need to manage our media and not be a slave to the screen... especially if this is what we're suggesting to our students! 📺

Dr Kristy Goodwin is a digital wellness researcher, speaker and author who helps parents, educators and health professionals navigate the digital world with children aged 0-16 years. Kristy delivers seminars and workshops that translate the latest research, into practical and digestible information for parents and professionals so that they can help students thrive online and offline.

Catastrophic Thinking: It's the Absolute Worst!

Helping students who thinking catastrophically rank their emotions and move past such negative thoughts

Have you got one of 'those' children in your classroom whose responses to events are... exhausting, over-the-top and catastrophic? You know this child: where a paper cut is worse than an amputation? Nodding your head? Yes, we all know someone prone to exaggerated responses, whether it be a child in class, a parent (sigh – there's a whole other topic) or perhaps someone who crops up on your social media and you find yourself struggling to restrain an eye roll as you read about their next (and next and next) life catastrophe!

Understanding Thinking Styles

'Thinking' in psychological terms, is often used to reference our internal dialogue. It happens every minute of every day, driving our patterns of motivation, procrastination, ability to cope, successes, goals and ultimately, our accomplishments. Powerful!

At BEST Programs 4 Kids, we talk about 'Supa Thinkin': positive and helpful internal dialogue that motivates action and achievement and assists with coping with life's expected and unexpected bumps. Its polar opposite is 'Stinkin Thinkin': an internal dialogue that predicts the worst outcome; failure already writ large when there's not even a smidgeon of it on the horizon.

When Thinking Becomes Catastrophic

Catastrophising. Expecting disaster to strike. Blowing little situations into big happenings. Turning the insignificant into the insurmountable. Making molehills into mountains. This is usually typified by "What if" thinking:

- "What if I get there late?"
- "What if they don't include me?"
- "What if I don't get the job?"

And usually the question has already been answered in predictably catastrophic style of the very worst case scenario. It's a definite precedent to feelings of anxiety and overwhelm.

Catastrophic thinking is often accompanied by:

- Rumination – chewing things over mentally and thinking about them repeatedly
- Magnification – blowing something out of proportion and finding evidence to validate it.
- Helplessness – perceiving that the situation is completely unsolvable.

It makes sense therefore, that catastrophising and intense emotions – particularly anxiety and anger - go hand in hand – and that can make for an emotional, exhausting roller coaster of a life.

De-catastrophise Thinking – Scaling

Both children and adults use a scale of experiences against which new happenings are plotted. "It's not that bad – it was much worst last time," is an example. Teaching children how to decatastrophise their thinking is a useful – very essential – life skill. Here are the steps to teaching this skill:

Step 1: Display numbers 1 to 10 along a wall, across the floor or vertically up a door, with 1 representing a minor emotional reactivity and 10 the maximum.

Step 2: Ask each child to think of an at school situation that they have found upsetting and to write it in brief on a post-it note. (Two essential rules – only at school situations – nothing from home and no use of another child's name, eg. Sally bullied me at lunch time.) Each child plots their happening on the scale of 1 to 10 according to their emotional response and reactivity to it.

Step 3: Ask different children in the group the solution-focused question: "What would be happening differently if it was a 6 out of 10?" Choose a number that is only one or two numbers different from their ranking of their happening. The solution they suggest could be finding an alternative playmate; identifying someone who might help, like a parent or a teacher or perhaps it could be managing their own emotional arousal through a calming down activity, such as breathing and changing their "Stinkin Thinkin."

It makes sense therefore, that catastrophising and intense emotions – particularly anxiety and anger - go hand in hand – and that can make for an emotional, exhausting roller coaster of a life.




PAUL HASAS

A catastrophe scale in a classroom can build up a history and a story that children can use to change how they think about the happenings in their world. Going back to the scale 3 or 4 days after and asking the children if they would still rank their particular happening the same way has its own learning. Time always gives emotional distance from an event. So, when the next catastrophe occurs (and it will) it can be rated and ranked against other previous catastrophes, which in itself helps a child identify thinking that's helpful towards decatastrophising like:

- "It's not that bad."
- "That happened before and I got better."
- "The last time I argued with her, we made up the next day."

Teach Decatastrophising Early and Often

Classroom and playground happenings are a rich way to learn the skills of emotional self-management and regulation. Every moment of every day there are unlimited opportunities to teach children the many skills required to be socially, emotionally and learning resilient – and the skill of decatastrophising thinking is most certainly one of these. 

Claire is the mum of 4 boys, a Speech Pathologist, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Therapist and Director of BEST Programs 4 Kids. With 25 years of experience in health and education, Claire is passionate about every child, parent and school community being empowered, educated and engaged in the journey towards glowing mental health, resilience and a lifetime of flourishing.

The Crow Effect

Using a pneumonic phrase to help students commit expectations to memory

Todd, who teaches at Waitara High School, has been using my maths material. It has changed his thinking and transformed his teaching. Concrete Concepts make it easy for his students to learn maths and they love the challenge that Thinking Person and Everyday Genius Questions provide.

During a phone conversation in August, I told Todd, who teaches at Waitara High School, about the Crow Effect. He had a junior class of crows and rats, so he decided to try that, too, and it decimated his rat population.

Anyone who wasn't cooperative, responsible, organised or working was acting like a rat.

In my last year of teaching I had a year 9 class of boys. The recommended procedure we teachers were supposed to follow was to acquaint our new class with the school rules and actively encourage our students to follow them.

I told my class a story about the invasion of Australia by poisonous cane toads instead. Animals died when they chewed cane toads. Only the crows were smart enough to kill them. They turned cane toads on their backs, ripped open their bellies and ate them inside out.

Crows were the heroes. My students identified with the crows because they wanted to be heroes too. Then I told them that in my class they had a choice, they could be crows or rats and used a RAT pneumonic phrase to explain what a rat was.

A rat is a **R**eally **A**wful **I**twit.

Here is the crow pneumonic.

COOPERATIVE
RESPONSIBLE
ORGANISED
WORK

They understood what being cooperative and responsible meant, but I had to explain about being organised:

ORGANISED

Get to class on time.

Be ready to work when the teacher arrives.

Make sure you have all your equipment; books, pens, rulers.

Work meant getting the work done, which included homework. This didn't take long and was much more effective than talking about all the school rules. Then the class drew a picture of a crow on the first page of their maths book and added the crow pneumonic.

They were a delightful class to teach because they loved the idea of being crows and I had a lot of positive feedback from parents. At the beginning of each lesson I greeted my class positively and always asked them how my crows were. Classroom problem were always minor and easily corrected. I only had to say to a student that he was acting like a rat to get him back on track. Anyone who wasn't cooperative, responsible, organised or working was acting like a rat. Luckily, they were all motivated to be crows! 🐦

Craig is a retired math teacher with an interest in improving maths education. Fishing, writing, playing bridge and travelling in his caravan are his hobbies. He is currently writing a book entitled, 'How to Become a Special Forces Maths Teacher and Leave No One Behind.'

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COOPERATIVE

RESPONSIBLE

ORGANISED

WORK



NATALIE CATLETT

LUIS LOURO



Art With(out) Borders

Teaching students to reflect on peaceful problem solving vs declaring war on another due to seeking a sense of entitlement

My year 5 grade students declared a war against each other. What began as an art project about immigration and identity quickly escalated into a frightful dispute over land and borders. It led to conflict. It led to disunity. Marks, lines, stamps became weapons and students used them with all their might. If it weren't for two 10-year-old peacemakers the entire experience would have resulted in true paint shed.

How it all began

At the time, my fifth-grade students were learning about immigration. The topic was not only familiar to them, but deeply connected to their families' personal histories. Most students, with very few exceptions, were great-grandchildren of immigrants who fled to Brazil during WWII. Belonging to a tight-knit community, they grew up hearing stories passed down from generation to generation about the daunting hardships their families faced upon leaving their countries of origin.

In Visual Arts, I planned a printmaking project that would allow them to experience immigration through art-making, while exploring several related concepts, such as identity, adaptation, trajectories, borders and boundaries.

To put it simply, here's how the project began:

Stamp-by-stamp

1. Students began the project creating a symbol to represent themselves and then created a stamp of their symbol.
 2. Students were then introduced to a large sheet of paper that would be used collectively by all year 5 classes. The sheet of paper was approximately 15 feet long and 3 feet wide.
 3. The large sheet of paper was divided into 22 equal spaces and each student selected one space to work on.
- * Since all four year 5 classes would be using the same large sheet, each space would be shared by 4 different students, 1 from each class.
4. Using their stamps, students began to occupy their spaces, stamping their symbols.

There was just one rule for our first class: they could only stamp their symbol in the space they selected as theirs.

The birth of a border

The following week students arrived and found the large sheet almost entirely covered with symbols. Their eyes wandered back and forth in fascination. Varying in size, shape, intensity, and level of detail the symbols were pleasing to the eye. Each one was unique in its own way, carrying a piece of its creator's identity.

However, during this initial moment of observation one student noticed the same symbol inhabiting two different spaces. She immediately demanded everyone's attention. "Look! Look everyone! Someone's symbol is in two different spaces!" Students quickly gathered around her as she pointed at the same symbol on opposite sides of the large sheet.

"How dare he or she occupy two different spaces," she added.

The other students in the class agreed with explicit discontent.

"I know!" One student said. "I have an idea! Let's determine a space just for our class and create a border surrounding it." And so they did.

The following class to arrive immediately questioned what the bold yellow outline was. "A Border" I told them, followed by a quick explanation of what led the previous class to create it. Perhaps not surprisingly, this class decided to follow their footsteps and created a border of their own. Theirs, occupied nearly half of project and completely annulled the pre-existing border.

When questioned whether their action was fair, or how they thought the other class would react, students seemed careless. "Now is the time to take-over!" one student said.

Declaration of war

From this point on there was no consensus amongst the classes. Every class became a threat to another class for weeks on end. Even border guards were created using cork stoppers to defend one classes' land. "Stamps aren't enough! We need to build upwards," was the insight that led to the creation of the border guards.

There was no desire to coexist amongst the four fifth-grade classes. They were determined to protect what they considered to be their land, while continually trying to

conquer the lands of others. In addition to this, there was a recurring pattern where one student would voice his idea and all others would embrace it without questioning or exposing their thoughts.

In the midst of uncalculated thought followed by uncalculated action, one student raised his fist up in the air and said, "Let's declare WAR against all other classes!" A handful of students began to nod in agreement, followed by "Yeah!" Others, remained silent. I encouraged students to share their thoughts. "Does anyone have another idea? Or, disagree with initiating a war? Are there other ways to approach this ongoing land dispute?" They were ready to go to the battlefield. The idea of a war was too exciting to contest.

They began creating war symbol stamps. These symbols included images of knives, bombs, guns, skulls and the word "WAR." While inking and preparing the symbols students engaged in chanting. Every stamp was accompanied by a war cry. Their gestures, words, and actions thrived with excitement.

As I observed them I kept wondering whether or not to intervene. I did not want a valuable teaching moment to go by, but I also did not want to interfere with the intense student-led experience that was taking place. I chose to continue as an observer, knowing that no matter what happened we already had a powerful reflection ahead.

Peacemakers

Students arrived the following week curious to see all the changes. Their individual stamps faded in the distant background amongst layers and layers of war symbols. The most eye-catching change being that the project was no longer flat.

Bothered at the sight of the border guards, two students walked over to the project and swung their arms out and back; knocking

over nearly all of the border guards onto the floor and at this exact moment a student approached me with a request.

"Miss Catlett, I no longer want to take part in the project."

"Why?" I asked.

"Everyone is fighting. They do not know what war really is. War is something horrible, they need to stop. I have tried sharing my thoughts, but no one listens."

Feeling unheard she removed herself from the group dynamic and watched her classmates plan the next step from a distance. I encouraged her to find a way to give voice to her thoughts. At the end of the class she approached me, this time with a classmate.

"Can we come to the art room during recess? We would like to make an intervention on the project."

They told me what their idea was and I granted them permission to come outside of class hours. They had only one request: "Please keep our identity anonymous." "Our classmates will make fun of us if they know we are trying to stop the war."

I assured both of them that I would respect their request for anonymity.

Later that evening, I came back to find them working in the dark. The lights were off and the curtains were pulled. The tables: filled with paint trays and a variety of stamps they had prepared.

The project was covered with peace symbols, which included: doves, V signs, broken rifles and the word peace itself. The two students were radiating with a sense of accomplishment. I was also proud of them while secretly hoping that neither a conflict or war would re-emerge.

Finding peace

Classes arrived the following week surprised with the peaceful intervention. Their reaction? For the most part, relief. Although the ongoing dispute for land and war excited them, their relief was an acknowledgement that they had gone too far. Luckily, two voices of reason granted all of them peace. The two students decided to come forward and their classmates did not make fun of them as they had imagined. Actually, the reaction was much to the contrary.

It was now time for us to reflect. To make meaning of everything that had taken place. As once said by the educator John Dewey, “We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.” Surprisingly, most students could not remember why or how the war had begun. Once reminded, I asked them: “Do you think that maybe the symbol inhabiting two different spaces may have been stamped accidentally? Or that possibly, this student misunderstood initial instructions?”

They looked at one another startled. No one had considered this possibility.

One of the many advantages we have as teachers’ today is how easily we can document processes, whether through video, or photographs. I then invited students to watch a video with some of the most significant moments throughout the project, which included: the creation of the first border; students war strategizing; the inking and stamping of war symbols and the endless moments of chanting followed by war cries. Seeing themselves from a distance, as spectators, offered an entirely new perspective. Some students were astonished. Others, openly admitted to being ashamed of acting repeatedly on impulse. A handful of students assured everyone that they would not have done anything differently.

“The entire world has fought for land. Some countries continue to fight for land. That’s

just how it is. It’s our nature,” one of the students said.


Borders and boundaries are all around us. There’s a border between our class and the hallway. There’s a boundary when two people speak. They’re part of our everyday lives. There are natural limitations that exist between everything and everyone. The difference is that once these boundaries are imposed out of fear (or control), they lead to separation. I then asked them, “How were the boundaries and borders in this project any different?”

*For so long borders
have determined
where something
begins and ends,
as opposed to
where something
meets, transitions,
or transforms.*

Their responses: “It was visible.” “It was unequal.”

Together they came to the realization that they placed their interests above all else. They also recognized how easily they were influenced by their classmates during all stages of the project, even when they disagreed. Visible or invisible, equal or unequal borders, their ongoing dispute was driven by a need for entitlement. Their fear of being at a loss took away nearly all opportunities for them to negotiate, problem-solve, and coexist.

Takeaway

Borders and boundaries can be imagined and experienced in different ways, if only we allow ourselves. For so long borders have determined where something begins and ends, as opposed to where something meets, transitions, or transforms. In a world where building walls is acceptable (sometimes even praised), my students made visible the deep-rooted relationship between entitlement vs. coexistence and how threatening a line can be: whether real or imaginary. Art allowed them to find themselves, lose themselves and find themselves all over again. 

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Summer Skipping: Rekindling Children's Love for Old and New Games

Skipping has multiple positive benefits for children

Skippping is one of those activities that is inclusive of everyone: young, old, athletic and those who are not so. It seems to bring joy to all involved and is of minimal financial cost to schools.

Sadly, during my years of running 'Positive Playtime' Training courses in schools, a frequent cry from teachers and lunchtime supervisors has been that children don't know how to play with a skipping rope or the traditional skipping rhymes and games from the past. With many children playing less outside due to the appeal of computer games, coupled with fears of stranger danger and busy roads, what was once a familiar sight in most neighbourhoods and schools across the country seems to have diminished.

In fact I frequently see ropes in schools wrapped around children's waists and used to play ponies — not what they created for. I believe there is a role for us in reigniting children's love of skipping and in teaching the traditional games and rhymes which can then be passed down to the next generation, not to be forgotten.

Traditional Skipping Rhymes

There are hundreds of rhymes with new ones or new variations being added all the time, but the really old traditional ones still continue to be used. Some rhymes are obviously products of an older tradition, recited with little understanding but with enthusiastic actions.

'I am a Girl Guide dressed in blue, These are the actions I must do: Salute to the King and bow to the Queen, And turn my back on the washing-machine.'

Still surprisingly popular considering that the last king of England died in 1952! The rhyme is recited to the rhythm of the skipping and actions performed for each line — salute, bow and turn round completely.

I also encourage teachers to teach skipping skills and games once a term in their PE lessons. Initially I suggest they teach children how to skip solo as this gets them warmed up, learning some basic skills. The good thing about skipping is that it can be taught simultaneously to people with a range of abilities and allows different abilities to shine because of its non-competitive nature.

Once children have learnt basic skills they can then learn more complex moves that require greater agility and skill. Children also love long rope games and many of these can be taught in groups in the playground.

In some schools, they invite a trainer like myself or a professional skipper to run skipping workshops. He/she trains a few students during the afternoon, teaching them skills and tricks, and then the whole school is invited to see a performance. After school, many students take up the opportunity to join in further skipping. Schools find these days are such a success that skipping fever hits their playgrounds for months afterwards.





In addition to the physical benefits of skipping, the participation in skipping as a group or individually alongside others aids inclusion for all children.

Benefits

There are many benefits to children skipping, most notably the physical activity it offers. Child obesity levels are rising with current statistics showing that, of children attending reception class (aged 4-5 years) during 2011 — 12, 9.5% were obese. It is therefore imperative that schools encourage exercise. Skipping is the ideal activity to suit all capabilities, and help fight the obesity rates.

The British Heart Foundation's 'Jump Rope For Heart' campaign is aimed at highlighting health and have had over 25,000 schools and youth groups sign up. Hazel Mackie, an event organiser, says: 'As well as being a great deal of fun, I believe that skipping improves fitness and acts as an antidote to playground problems such as bullying.'


The British Skipping Association also points out that it is an activity not only suited for recreation, but also for a cardiovascular workout. This combination of an aerobic workout and coordination-building footwork has made skipping a popular form of exercise for many athletes.

Peter L. Lindsay and Denise Palmer's research further highlights that in many respects, traditional games are more beneficial to children's health than formal syllabus games. In addition to the physical benefits of skipping, the participation in skipping as a group or individually alongside others aids inclusion for all children, encourages a purposeful playtime and helps combat bullying.

Other findings suggest that a physically active lifestyle is associated with improved self-esteem and self-concept (Gruber 1986).

The Curriculum

With there now being a requirement for schools to provide for the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development of pupils, creating happier playtimes has become increasingly more important. Schools have seen huge benefits in adopting a range of structured and unstructured playground games, such as skipping.

So sing, have fun and get that heart pumping — here's to a happy summer of skipping! 

Therese is the bestselling author of 101 Playground Games and 101 Wet Playtime Games and Activities. She runs Positive Playtime and whole school social, emotional and behavioural skills programmes nationally and internationally. If you wish to develop her ideas further please read her books, available from Edventure, or contact her directly for in depth advice on designing and developing your playground.
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A Teacher's Guide to Making Returning to School Easier for Students

Simple solutions to help ease the beginning of the year nerves

“Challenging” is a mild word to use when describing the first weeks of going back to school. While there are pupils who might be excited by the prospect of once again attending class, many students may feel anxious about going back to the classroom. Certainly, parents and guardians have a responsibility to support their kids so that the start of classes won't be a nerve-racking experience. However, teachers also have a role in easing their students' jitters, especially since they may be on the receiving end of their anxiety. With that in mind, this article provides tips on how educators can help their students shake off their back to school blues.

Get your students involved in decorating the classroom

If you have the freedom to decorate your classroom, it might be a good idea to get your pupils involved in the process. Not only will this help you connect with them, it will also help them make them feel comfortable in the classroom. Edutopia suggests providing them snacks as an incentive to help with the job of giving their classroom a new look.

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Use students' names from the first day


NEA Today advises teachers to use their students' names from the first day of classes. This will help create a sense of familiarity, which will make your students more comfortable. It is suggested that letting students write their names on 5 x 7 note cards using a marker, so they will be the ones to introduce themselves to you and to their peers. For younger kids who are yet to learn how to write, you can prepare their name cards for them.

Be positive and enthusiastic when teaching

In an interview with Tootsa, James Ross, a primary school teacher, advised fellow educators to be positive and enthusiastic at all times, because children will mirror your actions. This is applicable especially for those who teach reading, writing, and maths. By demonstrating to children that you are enthusiastic about the task, you can encourage your pupils to look at the experience positively as well.

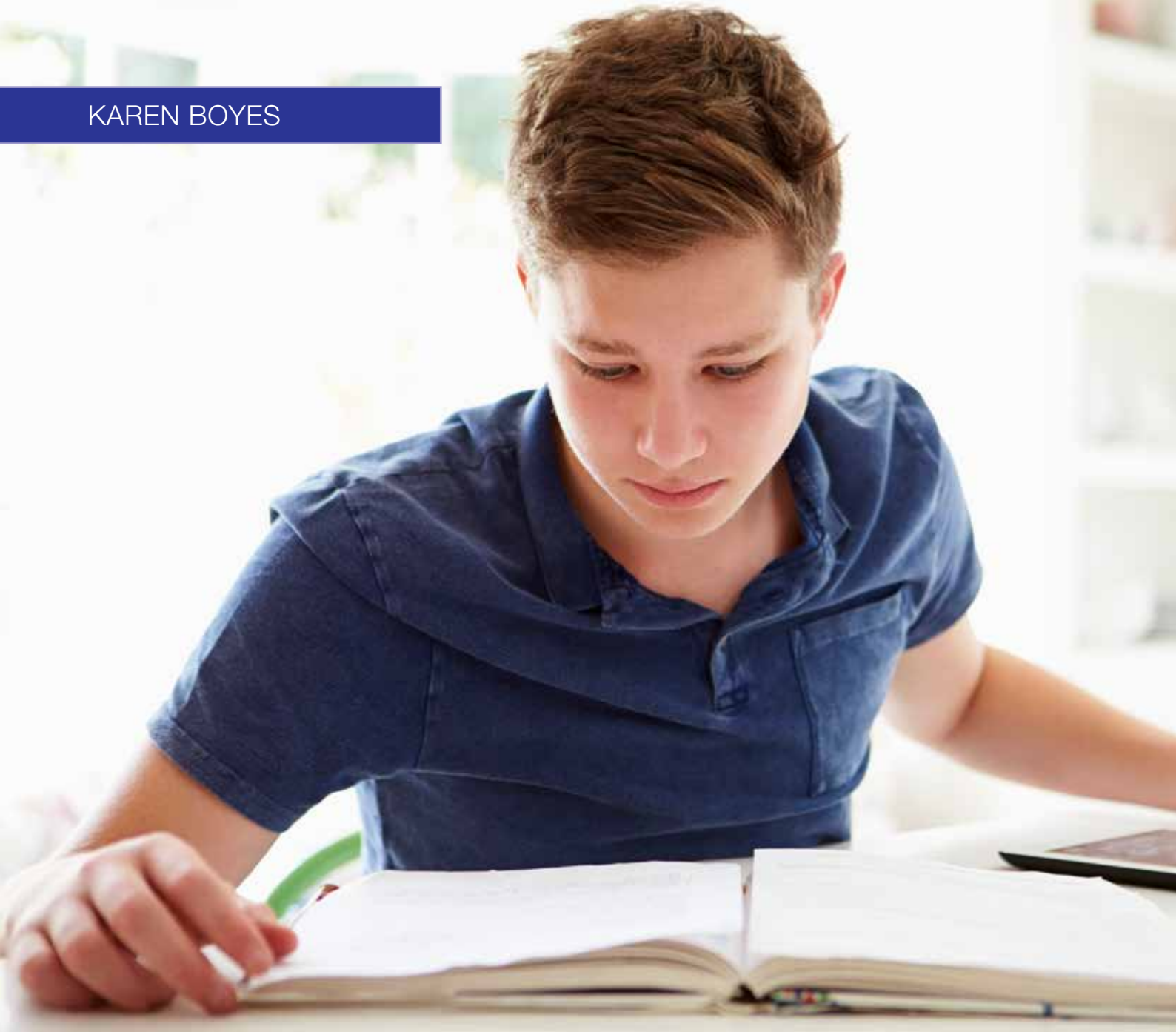
Of course, being positive does not mean that you have to buddy up to them. ThoughtCo. suggests that the first few days should be used as the time for the teacher to establish his/her role as an authority figure, or else he/she may end up not getting the respect from their students. Make sure to maintain the careful balance of being a classroom disciplinarian and being approachable enough to encourage your students to come to you in case of any problems they encounter.

Prepare an information pack for parents

One reason students tend to be nervous about returning to the classroom is because their parents are anxious, too. Help ease their minds about having their kids in school by preparing an information pack containing details about what their children can expect from their classes. This is particularly helpful for parents with young children, especially those who are letting their kids attend school for the first time. 

Jennifer Birch is a part-time blogger and a full-time auntie - and loving every minute of it. She likes writing articles on raising children based on her experiences in taking care of her nieces and nephews.

SVITLANA BEZUHLOVA



Study Skills - Maximizing the Last Few Weeks Before Exams

Five simple ways to improve retention of information while studying before final exams

With only a few weeks before exams, this is an important time to focus and minimise distractions to ensure you get the results you desire. Here are some key tips for the weeks leading up to your exams.

1. Plan your time

Take time each week and each day to plan your calendar. First, add all the regular events such as sports, music practice, cultural and church commitments plus meal times. Now, plan around these to ensure you have a spread of all subjects over a week. Focus on one subject at least an hour per day, and at least 3-4 times a week.

3. Start with what you don't know

If you have completed your practice exams, start learning the questions you got wrong or did not get full marks for. Of all the tips, this is paramount. Revising what you know just makes you feel good, and does not increase your knowledge and understanding. Alternatively, learning what you don't know is exactly what studying is all about. Get out your notes and go over what the teacher taught. Use the internet to search for videos, tutorials and study notes to assist you. Ask questions of your teachers and check in with friends who might be able to explain anything you are confused by. The more you go over and over these challenging parts, the easier they will get. Start each study session with the topics you find challenging and spend 10-20 minutes on these each day. Over time, you will find that your understanding will improve.

Revising what you know just makes you feel good, and does not increase your knowledge and understanding. Alternatively, learning what you don't know is exactly what studying is all about.


4. Look after your wellbeing

Firstly, water is great for hydrating your brain and making thinking and learning easier. Ensure you have a glass of water or your water bottle handy while you are studying. A filtered source or straight out of the tap is great. Avoid adding anything into the water such as tea, coffee, sugar, colouring, flavouring, etc as this causes your body to use treat the drink as a food and does not directly hydrate your brain.

Secondly, great nutrition is also essential. Just like a car, the quality of fuel equates to the quality of performance. Recommended foods for top brain functioning include blueberries, brazil and walnuts, banana, broccoli, wholegrain bread, spinach and tomatoes.

Thirdly, take frequent breaks. Researchers suggest to study for 20 minutes then a 5 minute break. In your break, go for a brisk walk, jump of the trampoline or skip with a skipping rope. These activities assist with blood flow, increasing oxygen to the brain and will release endorphins, the feel-good brain chemicals. These can help to reduce stress and ease anxiety and depression. These activities can also leave you feeling invigorated.

5. Use flow charts and diagrams

Draw flow charts and make up diagrams to assist in learning information. A picture is worth a thousand words and this is very true for the brain. Visual images are more likely to be recalled in an exam and also help with understanding when drawn. Once you have drawn and understood a concept, cover it and see if you can redraw from your memory, and repeat until you can. 

For more study tips, check out the Study Smart Board Game at www.spectrumeducation.com – with 90 study & exam tips, the game will show you the importance of how each tip affects your results.

2. Minimise distractions

Let people know you are unavailable for the time you are studying. Ensure your family knows you are focusing and maybe more importantly, turn off your social media feed to be able to focus. You can check your social media feed in your 5 minute breaks. Turn off the TV, and any music with words as the brain tends to listen to lyrics and then is not able to focus clearly on what you are learning.

Approaching Parent Defensiveness and Denial

How to structure courageous conversations with parents in regard to behaviour or academics

“My child would never do that!”

As most teachers and school leaders know, sharing negative news with parents about their child’s behaviour is one of the most unpleasant parts of their role. It can be confronting for a parent to hear that his or her child speaks or acts in hurtful ways; doesn’t stick to school rules; constantly misbehaves in class or is simply self-centred or anti-social. Bad news needs to be delivered sensitively and skilfully, particularly if you want to ensure parents take on board what you have to say, and join you in searching for solutions to any problems presented.

One of the most challenging situations for teachers is when parents deny that their child could possibly behave in ways that you are suggesting. “My child would never do that!” is the type of statement that increasingly teachers and school leaders hear. This type of flat-out denial can defeat your best intentions, and also damage the relationship that you have with a parent.

How You Say it Matters

Delivering news that parents don’t want to hear takes considerable sensitivity, skill and expertise. In many ways, your success will depend more on how you deliver your message rather than in the message itself. Here are some ideas to help you successfully have difficult conversations with parents so you stay solution-focused and avoid parent denial and defensiveness:

1. Attend to the person first.

One of the simplest ways ensure that you successfully work with parents is to attend to their immediate needs at the start of a meeting. Thank them for coming along and showing their willingness to work with you in the best interests of their child. Make sure there is water on hand; that they

are comfortably seated and that they are relaxed and ready for a conversation.

2. Find out what parents know.

Before proceeding with your take on the situation ask the parent or carer to tell you what they know about the issue that you’ll be discussing. It can be a specific lead in such as, “Thanks for coming to this meeting. We’re here to discuss some problems that we’ve encountered with your daughter in the playground recently. What do you know about it? What has she told you?”

Delivering news that parents don't want to hear takes considerable sensitivity, skill and expertise.

Alternatively, it can be a more general question such as “We’ve some concerns about your son’s classroom behaviour. What have you noticed at home about his behaviour?”

Discovering what parents know and think about a situation or issue should guide how you proceed. You may find that a parent knows very little or, in fact, their child has mixed the facts up when telling his mother a story. There’s a great deal to discover when you give parents a chance to tell you what they know.

3. Let the proof do the work.

Prior to the meeting gather proof: in the form of a written report, an oral example or a work sample. This will reinforce what you will be talking about. Produce the

proof rather than make accusations. Avoid using generalisations such as “Your child is always late,” or “He never hands in work in on time,” as they are easily dismissed. Instead talk about specific times when he has been late or refer to occasions when a child hasn’t handed work in on time. A parent may counter these examples with an excuse but you are in a position to counter one excuse at a time rather than manage a blanket denial.

Replace value-laden words such as ‘cheating’ and ‘lying’ with neutral alternatives such as ‘copying’ and ‘misleading.’ Similarly, avoid attaching a label to a child such as ‘lazy’ or ‘difficult.’ Instead discuss specific, observable behaviours such as an ‘unwillingness to work hard’ or ‘interruptions you when you speak.’


4. Allow parents to discover news for themselves.

Avoid speaking straight to a parent’s face when you are delivering the news they don’t want to hear as this can cause them to shut down or be argumentative. Instead push the proof to the side, either literally: that is, hold a report to the side while you both refer to it, or figuratively: that is, point to the side when you talk about a child’s poor behaviour so that it exists externally to the parent. You need to look to the side where the report or poor behaviour lay so the parent can discover the difficult news for themselves. Make eye contact with the parent or parents only when they are ready to discuss ways to resolve or improve outcomes. If they continue to deny the problem then keep pointing to and looking at the proof while saying something like, “There’s the proof. That’s what we’ve discovered.”

5. Point to the future.

Your non-verbals are important. Having established a place where past poor behaviour or academic performance lay, point to a different place to indicate the future. Then lead the discussion about plans

for better behaviour or academic behaviour in the future. Use your hands and eyes to point toward a better future, which helps to release parents from being stuck in the past. The use of non-verbals in this way is highly sophisticated, takes practice but can mean the difference between becoming bogged down by parent defensiveness and getting your point across, and importantly holding a joint discussion about achieving better outcomes for the student.

This is an extract from a video learning handout available to teachers in Parenting Ideas Schools membership. Our Professional Learning section contains videos and handouts to help teachers in a variety of challenging parent situations including working with angry, bullying, and anxious parents. Find out how your school can become a member at Parentingideas.com.au/schools. 

Author, columnist and presenter Michael Grose currently supports over 1,100 schools in Australia, New Zealand and England in engaging and supporting their parent communities. He is also the director of Parentingideas, Australia's leader in parenting education resources and support for schools. In 2010 Michael spoke at the prestigious Headmaster's Conference in England, the British International Schools Conference in Madrid, and the Heads of Independent Schools Conference in Australia, showing school leadership teams how to move beyond partnership-building to create real parent-school communities. For bookings, parenting resources for schools and Michael's famous Free Chores & Responsibilities Guide for Kids, go to www.parentingideas.com.au

Travel Light and You'll Save Time

Tips for traveling light are easier than you might think

Have you ever cursed as you struggle with heavy and cumbersome luggage on holidays? I certainly have. By the end of my first big international trip, only 17 years ago, I felt and looked like a camel. I still remember the difficulty of getting a heavy suitcase up and down London tube steps while hundreds of people rushed heedlessly by. And the quiet irritation with myself when I got home, taking items out of the suitcase that hadn't even been used – those 'just in case' things I thought would be useful.

Since then, with international travel a regular part of my life now, I've been on a mission to retrain myself to pack less. I'm now a total convert to minimalist packing.

I've just returned from a month of family time and research (for my first historical novel), starting in Canada and with the bulk of the time in the US. Only on the homeward leg did I have to check in a bag, doing a favour for two of my grandsons. The little darlings turned me into a gun-runner, totting three large Nerf guns of a particular style that they'd been unable to buy in New Zealand.

Until the last two days (when Toys 'R Us in Kentucky provided the requested loot) my luggage consisted only of a carry-on bag, my small backpack (with laptop, iPad and travel essentials) and a very small shoulder purse about the size of a paperback book.

Every day I reveled in the luxury of minimalist packing. You can so easily walk up steps with a light bag, you take up a small footprint in your bedroom, you can find your clothes quickly, and it only takes a few minutes to pack when you're preparing to move on to the next destination. And

I love not having to stand at luggage carousels waiting, and waiting, for my luggage to show up.

Many people asked how I could manage with so little 'stuff.' Here are some of the tips I've learnt along the way. (A few are gender-specific.) It's easier if you're traveling in summer, although you can still be very economical with garment choices in other seasons. And the tips below don't just apply to plane travel: they relate to all travel and packing.


1. Choose a soft bag (with wheels) – it's lighter, more flexible, and easier to fit into the cabin locker in the plane.
2. Have a bag with an expandable section but leave home without that section zipped open. Then, should you make the odd purchase, you've still got capacity to fill.
3. My bag also has a separate top section that opens individually, in which I keep an emergency soft cloth bag and the occasional bit of laundry. It's also a useful short-term overflow option. If you use any of the European budget lines like Ryanair, most are very inflexible about only one bag (no matter what size) in the cabin. Last year I had to use that spare cloth bag for my purse and backpack and checked my main bag into the hold.
4. If you find yourself putting something in 'just in case', take it out again. 'Just in case' is a sure waste of space and almost always you won't use it.



*Forget fashion.
Don't worry
about dressing
to impress
others. They're
not carrying
your bag.*



5. Forget fashion. Wear your walking or running shoes on planes. They're usually the bulkiest and heaviest items. Keep other shoes to a bare minimum as well. On this trip, the only other shoes I had were jandals and a dressy pair of sandals for evening events.
6. Ladies, what can you use instead of a coat? Obviously this depends on where and when you're traveling, but for summer, I find that a warm shawl deals with cold planes and is a classy wrap on chilly days.
7. You can only wear one outfit at a time. You don't need a different one every day. If you're moving from place to place no-one except you will know that you have only two or three options.
8. Choose mainly dark clothes that will last more than one day; you won't always have laundry facilities available.
9. Pack clothes you can wear in multiple situations. For instance, a filmy top jazzed up ordinary day clothes can turn into something good enough for evening. With a black tank top it also doubled as a summer top on hot days.
10. Wash your smalls in the shower at night and hang up to dry. If they're made of light-weight fabrics they'll easily dry overnight.
11. Pack items into the toes of shoes if you've got that kind of shoe in your bag.
12. Get a small mesh bag to contain 'like with like' items – e.g. underwear. It's far easier to find your knickers if they'll all fit in a colourful bag. I got my mesh bag from a Kathmandu sports shop: hikers use them.
13. Roll clothes rather than pack them flat. They fit into less space.
14. Where possible take light-weight garments. For instance, if you need a jacket, try a puffer jacket. They pack down to a tiny size.
15. Don't worry about dressing to impress others. They're not carrying your bag. I even went to the theatre in Chicago on the last Saturday in my shorts and track shoes, although not deliberately, I have to say. I'd been at the open air Jazz Festival in Millennium Park just along the road that afternoon and forgot to put my light trousers and dressy sandals into my back pack. (It doubles as a day bag.) Enjoying the jazz for as long as possible was more important (to me) than worrying about strangers' opinions of my dress code!
16. I'm a voracious reader, but I took no books. That need was sorted out with the iPad and Overdrive. If you've not discovered Overdrive yet, check out your local library. Sure I could have downloaded Kindle books, but free is good!
17. For more ideas, check out <https://www.planepack.com.au>. I've just discovered them.

In the interest of full disclosure, if I have to schlep training materials and books for seminars and speeches, successful light packing is not always as achievable but I'm getting close. Since returning from the States I've done a trip to the South Island with only one small bag, but with work materials it was just a bit too heavy to go in the cabin. 



Robyn Pearce is known around the world as the Time Queen, helping people discover new angles on time. Check the resources on her website www.gettingagrip.com, including a free report for you: *How to Master Time in Only 90 Seconds*. She is a CSP, a Certified Speaking Professional. This is the top speaking accreditation in the profession of speaking and held by only about 800 people around the world. www.gettingagrip.com



*If you want to be sad, live in the past.
If you want to be anxious, live in the future.*

*If you want to be peaceful,
live in the now.*

When Your Batteries are Low

Recognising the warning signs of depletion and learning to care for yourself

I woke up this morning depleted. My body, my mind & my heart are depleted.

Depletion comes from not having sufficient amounts of something. We often think about being depleted in a nutritional way, such as lacking in a particular vitamin or mineral.

But what if our lives are depleted: lacking in fun, lacking in friends, lacking in passion? On a scale of 1-10, my life is pretty amazing. I have four wonderful children, an incredible husband, healthy parents, fabulous friends and do work that I love.

So why am I so depleted?

In the busyness of building my speaking practice, writing books, juggling the financial realities of being self employed and the emotional needs of four children, I woke up depleted.

My body is depleted of sleep and good food, my mind is depleted of down time and inspiration, my heart is depleted from not spending enough time with the people I love the most. My schedule over the past three months has limited my time with friends and family, my 'heart fillers.'

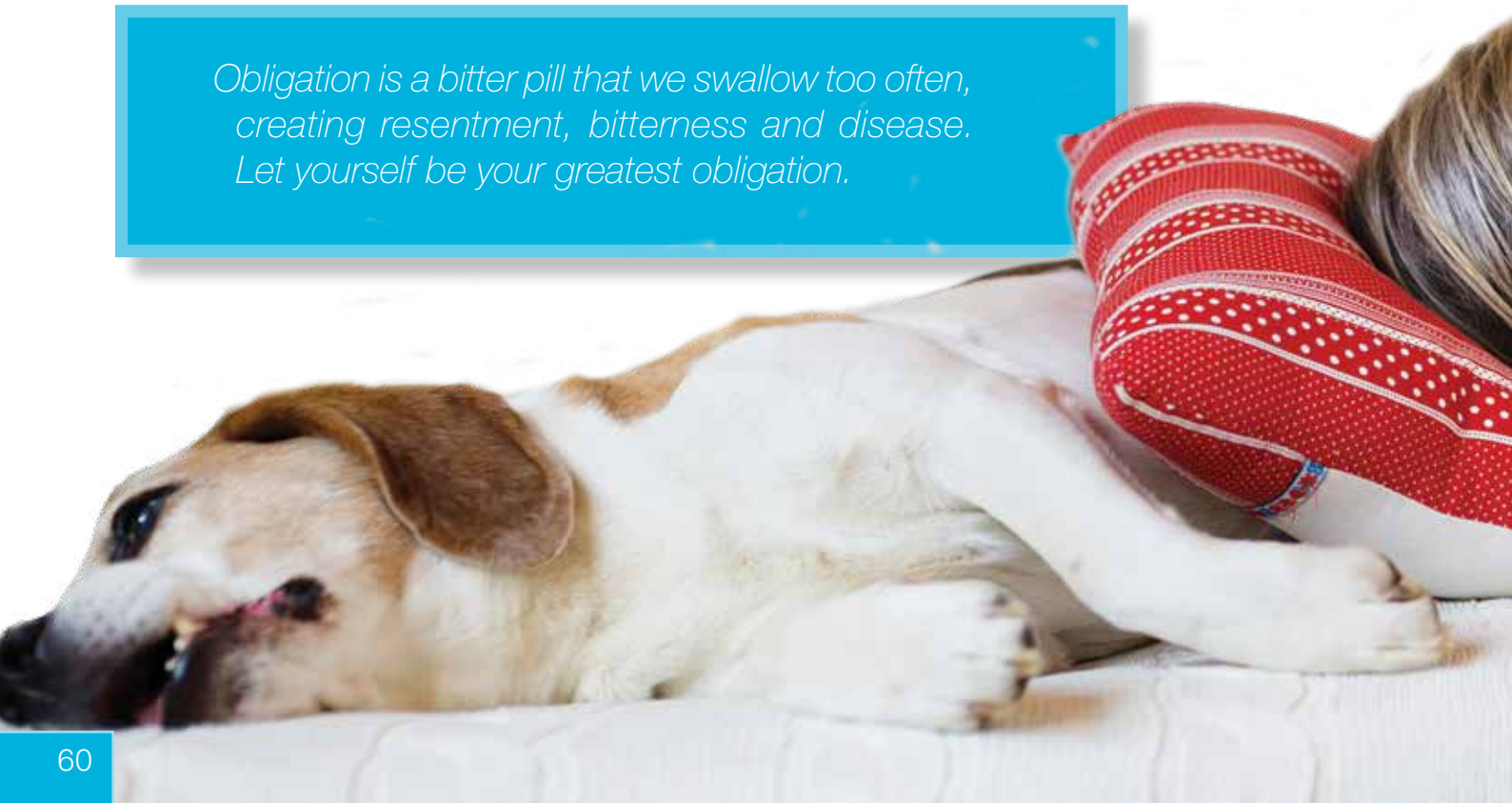
The greatest part of this is that I recognised it. I knew I was depleted. I knew my tank was nearly empty. Like a cell phone that was low in battery power, I was about to turn off.

Once we turn off, it's often hard to turn back on. I see women at my events that literally 'turned off' years ago and are now merely going through the motions of life. No joy, no interest: just existing. They are the living dead. This is a state that I am very motivated to avoid and so I am constantly checking in with myself to work out where things are at... so what does one do when one finds themselves in a state of depletion?

1. Give yourself permission to restore

It is not lazy or self indulgent to rest, switch off or cancel some plans in order to support yourself. Do what you need to do. My favourite line in the poem *The Invitation*, by Oriah Mountain Dreamer states, 'I want to know if you can disappoint another in order to be true to yourself.' In an effort to please everyone else, we so often forget how to please ourselves. Give yourself permission to let someone else down in order to restore yourself.

Obligation is a bitter pill that we swallow too often, creating resentment, bitterness and disease. Let yourself be your greatest obligation.



2. Stop & listen

What are your body & mind telling you? What does your body need most right now? A nap, to lie down, some exercise, some fresh air? We get very good at 'carrying on' and 'keeping up appearances.' Taking time to stop and honour how we actually feel can be difficult. We are programmed from an early age to 'carry on,' such as to get up and get on with the day, to disregard the messages that our body is sending us, to ignore our own needs and to put others first. It takes conscious effort to tap back into our body's wisdom and to listen hard enough to hear our own messages over the noise of modern life. Be still and ask your body what it needs from you right now: you might be surprised!


3. Nurture Yourself

Grab a blanket, make some soup, or go to your favourite place. What do you want right now? Do you want to be with friends? Do you want to be alone? What do you really want to do? Do that. Do it without judgment. Do it without thinking of what others will say. Just do what you want, even if it's only for an hour. The power to do what we want is one of the greatest gifts we own. The power to be free to choose how we spend our time, what we do with our lives and who we spend our time with. Obligation is a bitter pill that we swallow too often, creating resentment, bitterness and disease. Let yourself be your greatest obligation.

4. Make a plan

Plan something wonderful to look forward to, plan some down time in your schedule, plan some space in your calendar, plan time with your important people. Prioritise the needs of your body: sleep, food, exercise. Let your diary reflect your priorities.

Wonderful advice from the Dalai Lama - "Man sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he's never doing to die and then he dies having never really lived."

I have listened after receiving the message of depletion loud and clear. So this weekend I will restore, nurture & plan. Blankets, movies, soup and cuddles are my plan! 



Lisa is an author, speaker & mentor who is obsessed with people living BIG happy interesting lives. For more information on her keynotes & workshops www.lisaoneill.co.nz



What's in a Name?

Encouraging students to name a company will provide a multitude of learning opportunity

137,000 businesses start up every day. Is one starting in your classroom?

Thomas Suarez was eleven when he named his company Carrot Corp. He used alliteration to grab people's attention, just as Coca Cola did in 1885. Inspired by Apple's Steve Jobs, this app making, 3D printer inventing wunderkind, named his company after produce. This is a 'disrupt' naming technique.

Ashley Qualls started WhateverLife.com at 14. Her site is famous for online teen content. She's making millions. Her business name? Ashley used the 'declare' technique. Her name uses what people, teens in particular, say: 'whatever...life'. Yahoo! would approve.

Young Kiwi Sam Lucas lived rough in a hut in Madagascar for a year. He was teaching young Africans the English language as well as coding to help lift them out of poverty. His business name? Onja. It means waves in the Malagasy language. Sam used the 'dialogue' technique. He used a foreign word to name his social enterprise. Uber thinks like Sam.

Behind every brand name is a story a teacher can tell. It might be about language: Wikipedia is a mix of Hawaiian 'wiki wiki', which means fast, and the Greek suffix 'media'. Or, it might be about history: Coca Cola exists because of prohibition. Airbnb teaches the power of a brilliant business models. On the other hand, Uber may mean the "best of the best" but there is a place for a discussion about leadership, since CEO Travis Kalanick had to step down due to poor behavior on camera and in public. Oh the lessons you can teach!

Like many of these, you might have a budding entrepreneur in your class. Many schools are teaching entrepreneurship to students as young as 11 or 12. That's good! Futurists say 40% of five year olds starting school this year will start a company in their lifetime.

To help your emerging businesses mavericks, it's wise to know the 7 naming categories.

Disrupt: Stand out by being unexpected. For example, Apple is a fabulously unexpected name for a tech company.

Declare: Make a statement like Doctors without Borders or Forever 21.

Dialogue: Play with words and language such as the blended Microsoft or the often searched, but rarely cited, Wikipedia.

Design: Make up a name like Haagen Dasz and Rolex.

Designate: Reference the singular, plural or even a place such as iMac, YouTube, Google or United Nations.

Doodle: Play with letters like Coca Cola did with alliteration, IKEA did with acronyms or Swatch did by adding an 's' for second watch.

Delight: Name things so people smile, like Silly Putty.

Naming is fun. It also builds skills. It requires creativity and teamwork because naming is a volume game. You need hundreds of names to find the right one. To help your students name successfully, have them first generate ideas on their own. This is called brainwriting. Research at SMU's Cox School of Business found more quality ideas were generated when people worked on their own before brainstorming in small or large groups.

Naming improves literacy. Admittedly, Tumblr is not a good example of spelling, but it does show what brands do to grab our eyeballs in an attention deficit world. This gives you an opportunity to deepen students' critical thinking about marketing.


Naming also teaches storytelling. All brands are stories. The story of how they were founded and how they behave. For example, Google's name comes from the mathematical term "googol," the number

Futurists say 40% of five year olds starting school this year will start a company in their lifetime.

one followed by one hundred zeros. Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Stanford students at the time, wanted a name that encompassed vastness.

Brands grow because of the stories people tell. The stories of how they treat their customers, staff, suppliers, their community and the planet.

This topic gives you an opportunity to talk about leadership, ethics and even the United Nations Sustainability Goals. What can we do that's good for people, prosperity and the planet?

What's in a name? Many ways to engage your students! 

Louise Karch, M.Ed, altMBA wrote NAMEfluence: How to Name Your Business For Success. She is a recovering comic and ad agency muse with a Masters in Education. Known for her engaging style, Louise has edu-tained learners from Auckland to the Arctic.



Our Food Bag Project: Connecting Food Technology and English in a Powerful Way

Students combine literacy skills and food technology to meet the needs of community members

Students looked through a critical lens: just like a food technologist would in the real world.

It was a new semester and a new idea connecting Food Technology and English was being taught at Rototuna Junior High School. Module teachers Irma Cooke, Jo Brooks and Ginny Taylor introduced the 'Fusion' year 7 and 8 module to students by providing them with opportunities to 'fuse' some of their own food combinations. Making their own berry and chocolate brioche, pizza and pasta were some of their first encounters of the concept of 'fusion' foods in an Umu (earth oven).

The brief for students was inspired by the food delivery company 'My Food Bag.' Students investigated common issues for people in our community and how they could support those people (the stakeholders) by providing a prepared meal. Students looked through a critical lens: just like a food technologist would in the real world.

Sam Cane popped into school one afternoon to introduce the 'My Food Bag'





Pesto Gnocchi with Roasted Vegetables and Kumara Chips

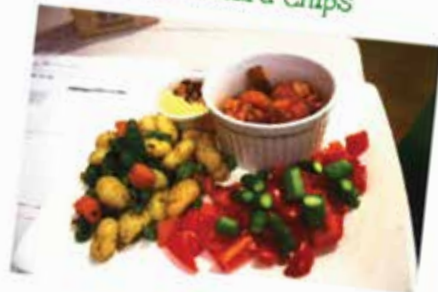
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Pesto gnocchi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 500 g gnocchi ❑ 1 ½ cups frozen peas, defrosted ❑ 2 medium sized carrots diced 1 cm ❑ ¼ cup of basil or rocket pesto | <p>Roast vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 2 large capsicums core and seeds removed and diced 2 cm ❑ 1 bunch of asparagus diced 2 cm | <p>Kumara chips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ .400g kumara <p>To serve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ ¼ cup parmesan ❑ ¼ cup basil ❑ ¼ cup toasted pine nuts |
|---|---|---|

Method:

Preheat oven to 220 degrees celsius. Line two oven trays with baking paper. Bring a large pot of water to the boil.

1. start by preparing the pesto (if making your own).
2. Toss capsicums with a drizzle of olive oil on prepared tray, season with salt and roast with salt and roast for 10 minutes, until almost tender. Add asparagus to tray toss through and roast for a further 5 minutes, until vegetables are just tender.
3. Dice kumara into wedges and place on prepared tray
4. Cut up the carrots into 1cm chunks
5. Place kumara chips in oven alongside roasting vegetables cook for 5mins
6. Cook gnocchi in pot of boiling water boiling water according to packet instructions. Reserve a ¼ cup of cooking water, then drain. Add a drizzle of oil. Add cooked and drained gnocchi and toss until golden. Add a drizzle of oil to prevent sticking.
7. Once kumara chips have had 5 mins flip over and cook for a further 5mins
8. Add frozen peas and carrots cook for a further 5 mins
9. Take out roasted vegetables
10. Take out kumara chips and season with salt

Pesto Gnocchi with Roasted Vegetables and Kumara Chips



Tip

- ❑ Toast pine nuts in a small dry fry-pan on medium heat for 1-2 minutes until golden shake pan regularly to prevent burning
- ❑ Add a drizzle of oil to the pot of water to prevent sticking and a pinch of salt this will bring out the flavour
- ❑ Serve with a sprinkle of parmesan some toasted pine nuts and a final garnish of basil



HERB-CRUSTED CHICKEN AND SPICED CHIPS



= 25 min

= 30 min

serves 4-5

suitable for families

Energy	2269kj
protein	43.1g
carbohydrate	53.0g
Fat	17.4g

INGREDIENTS

SPICED CHIPS

- 800g potatoes
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp ground cumin

SALAD

- 1/2 iceberg lettuce
- 2 tomatoes
- 1/2 telegraph cucumber

YOGHURT MAYO

- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup yoghurt
- 1/2 tsp honey
- 2 tsp oil

CRUSTED CHICKEN BITES

- 600g chicken breast
- 2 tsp dried coriander
- zest of 1 lemon
- 1 cup breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 tsp salt

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 230°C. Line two oven trays with baking paper.
2. Toss all spiced chip ingredients with a drizzle of olive oil on first prepared tray and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 25-30 minutes, until golden and cooked through. Turn once during cooking.
3. Cut up chicken breast into bite size pieces and put aside
4. Put flour in a bowl and season with salt in a separate bowl whisk egg and milk together. in a large bowl mix together breadcrumbs, oregano and lemon zest together.
5. Coat cut chicken breast with the flour then dip into egg and finally, the breadcrumb mixture repeat this until all chicken pieces are coated evenly.
6. Heat half of the oil, in a non-stick frypan on low-medium heat. Cook chicken, in batches, for 2-3 minutes each side, until golden. Wipe out the pan between batches, adding more oil as needed. Place on the second tray and bake for 4-5 minutes, until cooked through.
7. While chicken is cooking, prepare the salad. Thinly slice lettuce, tomatoes and cucumber. Toss together with spinach in a bowl.
8. In a small bowl, combine all yoghurt mayo ingredients. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve:

Divide spiced chips and salad among plates. Serve with herb-crusted chicken bites a dollop of yoghurt mayo and a lemon wedge to squeeze over just before eating.




company to students and to take part in a mystery bag cook off with Fraser Hill (RJHS principal) and two students. This was a great opportunity for students to develop their knowledge around the concept of delivered food bags that suit people's needs.

In particular, students focused on existing food concepts that support people who are "time poor," including those whose lives are busy with sports and long work hours as well as common food issues such as eating gluten free or dairy free. One group even delved into the growing need for people who require halal food.

Over three trials students worked in groups to perfect their prototype. They were researching new skills, altering flavours, testing and trialling recipes (from Nadia Lim's cookbook 'Dinnertime Goodness') and tweaking meals to suit their particular stakeholder needs. Feedback from teachers and peers supported these students along the way.

Part of the literacy focus for students was to create static images. Students created their own RJHS Food Bag logos, bag design and recipe cards.

Another literacy focus was for students to research and then justify why their particular concept suited the stakeholders' need. This project proved that this depth of knowledge in collaboration with literacy allowed for the students' prototypes to be a higher standard than she has seen from this age previously in technology. 

Irma, a former Chef who now puts to good use her skills and passion for food as a Specialist Food Technology leader. When she isn't judging Waikato's restaurants, she is busy collaborating with the team of teachers at Hamilton's newest school, Rototuna Junior High School.

Torty and the Soldier

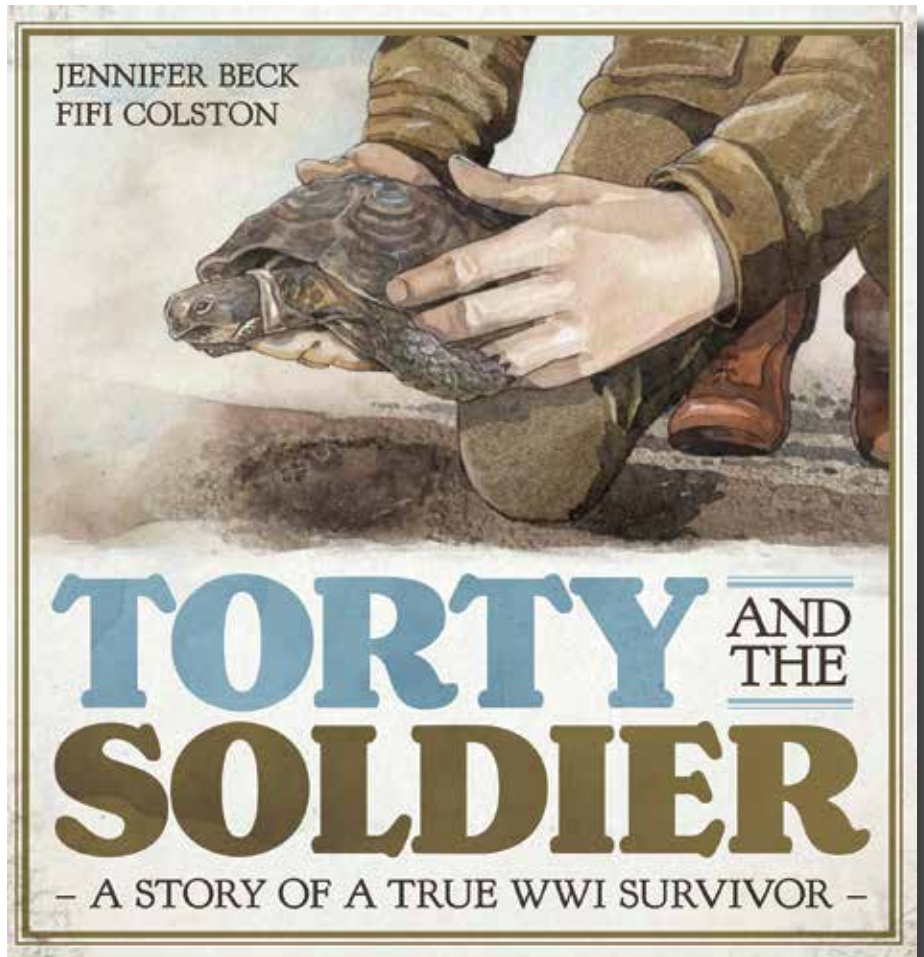
Author Jennifer Beck
 Illustrator Fifi Coulston
 Publisher Scholastic
 ISBN 978-1-77543-365-1

Kiwi soldiers returning from World War 1 brought home many souvenirs but none so inspiring and different as Torty the tortoise, who was thought, at that point, to be approximately 100 years old.

Torty's story begins when Stewart Little, a Kiwi orderly on board the hospital ship, Marama, was bound for Egypt and Greece. He rescued the tortoise after she was run over by a gun wagon in Salonika and then brought her back to health. She travelled with Stewart on board the ship and became a firm favourite with the bed ridden soldiers.

On his return to New Zealand, Stewart asked his family to care for Torty and he went back to the war zone for several more years.

Stewart cared for Torty until his own death 60 years later and then his family continued to look after her. 100 years have passed since she arrived in New Zealand and she is now being looked after by Stewart's grandsons. It is estimated that she is over 200 years old.



1. Timeline of key events and places.

	Before the war	During the war	After the war	Today
Stewart	Assuming a rural NZ life from illustration		Accountant in Dunedin	Deceased
Torty	Lived in woods near Salonika Chased by eagles		Slept in hot water cupboard	

2. Mapping the voyage.

Using the end covers, a world map and the storyline, plot the voyage of the Marama from New Zealand, and its return.

We suggest you visit the following website for further information on the hospital ships, Maheno and Marama.

<http://navymuseum.co.nz/worldwar1/ships/hospital-ships-maheno-and-marama/>

3. Letter to home.

Write a letter, from Stewart Little to his parents, to tell them that he is bringing an unusual visitor back home to New Zealand.

4. Vocabulary

Topic: War words

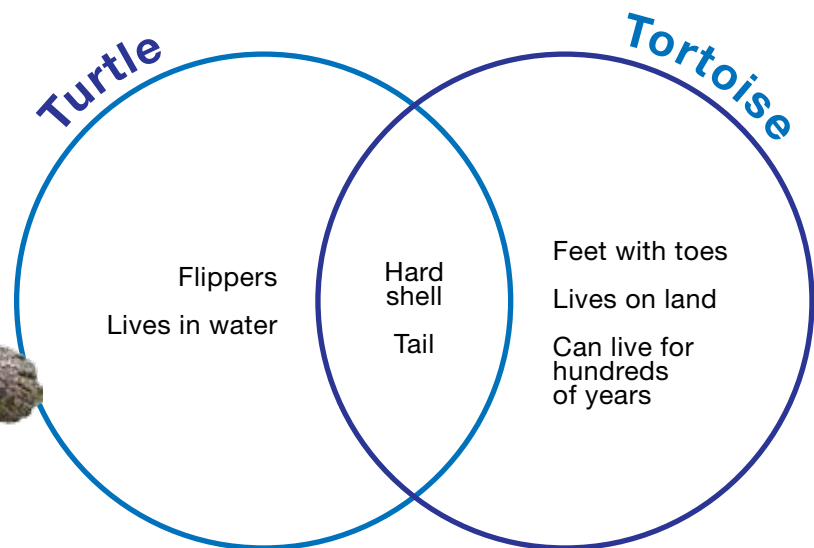
How many words can you find, specific to war, in the book and offer definitions, and then research further if required?

Eg. Torpedoed, battle fields, field hospital etc.

Kiwi soldiers returning from World War 1 brought home many souvenirs but none so inspiring and different as Tarty the tortoise.

5. Explore the differences between tortoises and turtles.

This will require some research.



6. Discuss Tarty's Disasters

Identify and illustrate four different times when her life was in danger but she survived.

7. Things to ponder.

- What does it mean** to 'volunteer' for a war?
- Since the Little brothers** did not want to use guns, what options were available for them?
If you were in that position, what would you have done?
- During wartime**, what did it mean to be a 'shirker'?
What does this expression mean today?
- Quarantine**
Wartime: Why do you think soldiers were not allowed to bring pets ashore in New Zealand?
Today: Investigate the current rules for a quarantine.
Look for specific examples, such as bringing pets to New Zealand.

8. Interesting websites for further information

<http://fificolston.blogspot.co.nz/2017/07/tarty-and-soldier-illustrators-journey.html>

<http://www.times.co.nz/news/jennifers-tortoise-tale-true-story/>

BARBARA has been a primary school teacher for 36 years. She has specialised in the teaching of literacy for more than 20 years and recently retired a position as a Resource Teacher: Literacy, which she held for the last 16 years.

TRICIA has been involved in the field of literacy for 17 years, firstly as a Resource Teacher: Reading, then as a Resource Teacher: Literacy. She is passionate about books and reading and feels privileged to be in a position where she can share that passion with students, their parents, and fellow teachers.

Personalised & Mastery Learning in Action

Reexamining current educational models

Recently I was privileged to visit Khan Lab School in San Francisco*. The school is the brainchild of Salman (Sal) Khan who started Khan Academy: a non-profit educational organisation with the goal of creating a set of online tools that help educate students. The school is innovative, learner centred, and is pioneering new models. The school brings into question traditional teaching practices, including the long USA summer holidays and the length of a school day. Khan Lab School is open from 8.30 am to 6 pm with compulsory attendance from 9-4 pm.

The school vision is to design student-centred global learning experiences, accessible to the world. This is achieved through a four-part learning design.

“Students should be encouraged, at every stage of the learning process, to adopt an active stance toward their education. They shouldn’t just take things in; they should figure things out.”

1. Approach to Learning

Of all the innovation I believe the most noteworthy is the idea of mastery over coverage.

In most schools, students study or learn a topic for 2-3 weeks and sit an end of topic test. They are given a score on the test and start the next topic. The challenge with this, says Sal Khan, is if a student gets 75% on the test, traditionally that is a ‘B’ pass, which is celebrated. However, what the teacher and student seem to fail to take into account is that 25% or one quarter of the curriculum knowledge or application is missing. The following term or year, when the topic is revisited and more complexity is added, the foundations are shaky. Sal Khan, in his book, *The One World Schoolhouse* refers to this as the Swiss cheese effect. Each year, more and more gaps can appear in the learning and students’ grades go down, oftentimes, along with their self-esteem.

Mastery learning, on the other hand, requires students to keep working on a concept, topic or learning until they have mastered the ideas and application. Students must be able to show evidence of mastery to a teacher before they move onto the next level. ‘Student speak’ progressions strongly underpin this: with students having a clear picture of what they are learning and their next steps.

These progressions, alongside the mastery learning philosophy mean each students’ learning journey is personalised. Clear weekly goal setting takes place and students know exactly what is expected of them. They join workshop groups and even request 1-1 tutoring if they feel they are really not sure on a subject.

Subsequently, teachers are also clear where each student is ‘at’ and can design learning experiences and inquiries to assist students to both deepen their knowledge and understanding, as well as demonstrate their mastery of the learning.

No grades or marks are given and students are expected to demonstrate deep understanding of their learnings. This understanding is often demonstrated in project based learning when students use their knowledge and understanding to explore real-life, augmented, and virtual contexts. Students spend half their school day learning through projects and all projects are interdisciplinary.

The day is split into two with foundational fluencies: reading, writing, maths, digital literacy and foreign language taught in the morning followed by project based, genius hour and studio time in the afternoons. This includes wellness, integrated arts, integrated science, civics, physics, chemistry, biology, finance, global societies, economics, and statistics.

2. Architecture of Learning

While most schools group students in age groups, at Khan Lab School, students are grouped according to an independence level. Students are given as much structure and support as they require to be successful in their academic and character growth.

The independence levels are set up in a scaffolded matrix which focuses on such factors as time management, goal mastery, resource usage, communication & comprehension, self-knowledge, motivation, focus and collaboration. Students have an opportunity twice a year to provide evidence to support their mastery at their current level and move up a level. This is student initiated, and allows for mixed aged groupings and students supporting each other from all levels.


Academic grouping is also used for the foundational fluencies.



My takeaways

One of my key impressions was how actively involved students were engaged in their learning, their ability to articulate their learning pathway and the sense of responsibility and independence they exhibited. I left feeling exhilarated and excited about future possibilities for developing a meaningful, comprehensive, global education, which truly creates life-long learners, thinkers and well-rounded human beings.

In his book, *The One World Schoolhouse*, Sal Khan states, “Students should be encouraged, at every stage of the learning process, to adopt an active stance toward their education. They shouldn’t just take things in; they should figure things out.”

He goes on to say, “The one thing we cannot afford to do is leave things as they are. The cost of inaction is unconsciously high, and it is not counted in dollars, euros or rupees but in human destinies.” 

**My trip to San Francisco was as part of my contract at Westmount School and OneSchool Global, as their Teacher Academy Director. My task is to help embed innovative educational practices in the classrooms by providing high quality and effective professional development for teachers.*

Karen is an expert in effective teaching and learning, study skills, motivation and positive thinking. She was recognised with the NSANZ Educator of the Year award in 2014 and 2017, and works in schools throughout Australasia teaching students how to Study Smart and teachers how to raise achievement.
www.karentuiboyes.com



3. The Art of Teaching

Khan Lab School has two types of teachers: advisors and learning specialists. Teachers’ work hours are staggered to suit the timetable.

Advisor teachers spend 30 mins each week 1-1 with each student from their class. This is a goal setting meeting in which both the student and teacher discuss progress and look at the next steps for that student. The key to this meeting is having clear progressions so students know where they are at, where they are going and how to get there. Goal setting such as this provides a personalised learning journey for each student.

These teachers also design the afternoon project based learning for contextualised learning. This is done in collaboration with colleagues and students.

Content specialist teachers lead seminars and 1-1 tutoring sessions. Students can ‘opt in’ to seminars and book 1-1 time with a teacher throughout the day. Students may be grouped according to the results of a pre-test or by interest levels.

4. Academic Character and Outcomes

A clear graduate profile has been developed to ensure students are well rounded and this plays an important part of both the weekly goal setting and the development of projects. The profile contains character strengths, cognitive skills, global citizenship, creation, purpose, independence, the foundational fluencies and deeper learning concepts.

Students build a portfolio of work to show mastery in academic and non-academic domains, from the core skills to global citizenship and more.

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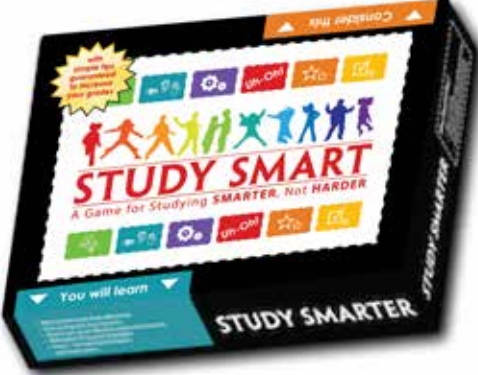
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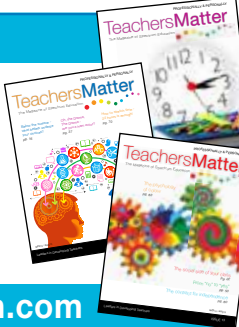


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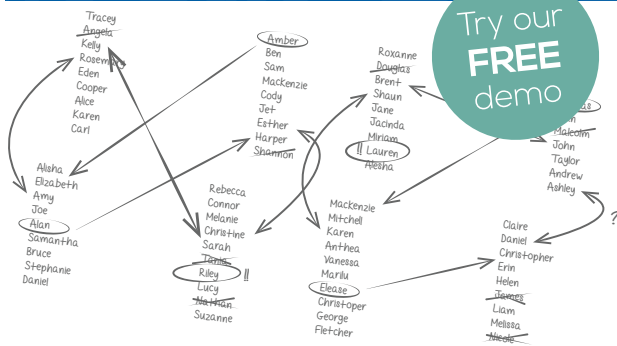
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