



NOTRE DAME
CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Volume 1

Learning & Teaching



This document contains ideas to develop Learning & Teaching methods within our classrooms. They originally appeared in the Staff Weekly Bulletin.

The document brings together techniques and ideas developed by professionals and contributions from staff at Notre Dame

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Volume 1

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Deeper Learning

There are two areas of our work that will really make a difference to the way students think and learn.

Developing thinking can be defined as developing patterns of thinking that help learners acquire deeper understanding and enable them to explore and make sense of their world. It refers to processes of thinking that we define as *plan, develop and reflect*. These processes enable learners to plan their work, to think creatively and critically and to reflect on their learning making links within and outside college. Although we are born with a capability to think there is ample evidence that we can learn to think more effectively.

Assessment for learning simply means finding out where learners are in their understanding of a topic, where they need to go and **how** best to get there. Assessment for learning is also known as formative assessment.

Why focus on developing thinking and assessment for learning?

Both the 'thinking skills' and assessment for learning movements are well established. There is well-documented and substantial qualitative and quantitative evidence to show that the use of associated strategies and methodology with learners in the classroom raises their motivation and performance.

The characterising features of both initiatives overlap considerably so that each actively supports and reinforces the other. Some essential features of overlapping pedagogy are:

- focus more on **how** to learn, i.e. the *process* of learning, than on what to learn, i.e. the subject knowledge and skills
- learners are frequently required to verbalise and to articulate their thinking/learning so that the processes are made more *explicit and visible* in the classroom
- learners and teachers have a common language of learning
- focus on group collaboration and co-operation, with teachers facilitating learning
- learners support each others' efforts to learn and jointly construct their learning
- learners take responsibility for their own learning and make informed decisions
- learners reflect, monitor and self-evaluate their own progress
- learners are encouraged to transfer their learning across contexts and to make connections
- the environment is sensitive and constructive so that learners feel safe to make mistakes
- the classroom is a reflective environment where a community of learning can be established.

Last year we, as teachers, discussed these two important issues and gained an understanding of their impact on learning. In this new academic year our aim will be to further embed thinking skills and assessment for learning so that they become common practice in all lessons.

Deep Thinking: First steps

Something to try as a starter activity next week.

Take a very simple concept, piece of knowledge or skill in your subject area and find out how the students know that piece information/how they developed the skill/how did they gain that knowledge. i.e.

Maths: Teacher asks – “What is $8 + 8$ ”? Teacher then asks, “**How do you know**”? and encourages the student to go through their thought process and explain *in detail* how they arrived at their answer. Teacher asks class if there are other ways to arrive at the same answer.

The technique works with all age groups and can be used to focus on popular misconceptions in your subject, as well as ‘taken for granted’ skills and knowledge, though do keep the idea simple so that students are able to engage. The Kagan Pair/Share technique could be used to start off the process with the students explaining to each other how they have learned something in the past. Without interrupting the flow of your lessons, you could occasionally question students at this level as a way of securing their understanding.

Teachers’ Checklists

for group work

How?

- be explicit with learners about the quality of group work you want to achieve
- develop a checklist with learners; display it, large, in the classroom
- make spot checks, or stop the lesson and ask learners to carry out spot checks on the quality of group work
- every now and again spend a few minutes before the end of a lesson asking how much group working progress has been made
- set new targets.

When a group is working well ...

- the group sits so that each group member can see and hear all the others easily
- one person at a time speaks during discussion
- everyone turns to face the person who is speaking
- individual group members remind others if they break agreed ground rules
- any member at any time is able to explain:
 - what she is doing
 - how this contributes to the group task
 - what other group members are doing and why
 - what the next step will be
- the group always works to agreed and explicit deadlines. Each member should be able to answer the question “When will this be finished?”
- a group member who finishes a task early offers to help others, or negotiates the next step with the group manager
- everyone contributes equally to looking after resources, to clearing up and to moving furniture.

Clipbank

An excellent resource on the college i-Drive just waiting to be used

Art, D&T, Business, PSD, English, ICT, Maths, Music, MFL, PE, RE, Science

All of the subjects listed above can access short (2-5 minute) video clips to enhance lessons. The clips can be used as starter activities or part of the lesson development. Teachers can have the clips showing on the whiteboards or allow small groups to look at clips using computers in the classroom. Where Clipbank has been used, staff have said that it really is quick and easy to use and really engaged students.

If you teach in any of the subject areas listed and you have not yet looked at Clipbank, have a look next week and plan to use a clip in one of your lessons.

iPads

We are currently looking into how technology such as the Apple iTouch and iPad could be used to enhance learning and the use of handheld ICT products in lessons. In order to judge how well the Apple applications might benefit lessons, staff are asked to have a look at the apps available for different subjects.

Would you please have a look at the two links below (especially the second one) and e-mail Patrick Kearney with any feed back regarding how you feel that Apple apps could benefit the subject you teach, whether that be for individual students to use or whole class groups.

The Apple educational site for iTouch/iphone/iPad is below:

<http://www.apple.com/education/ipodtouch-iphone/#apps>

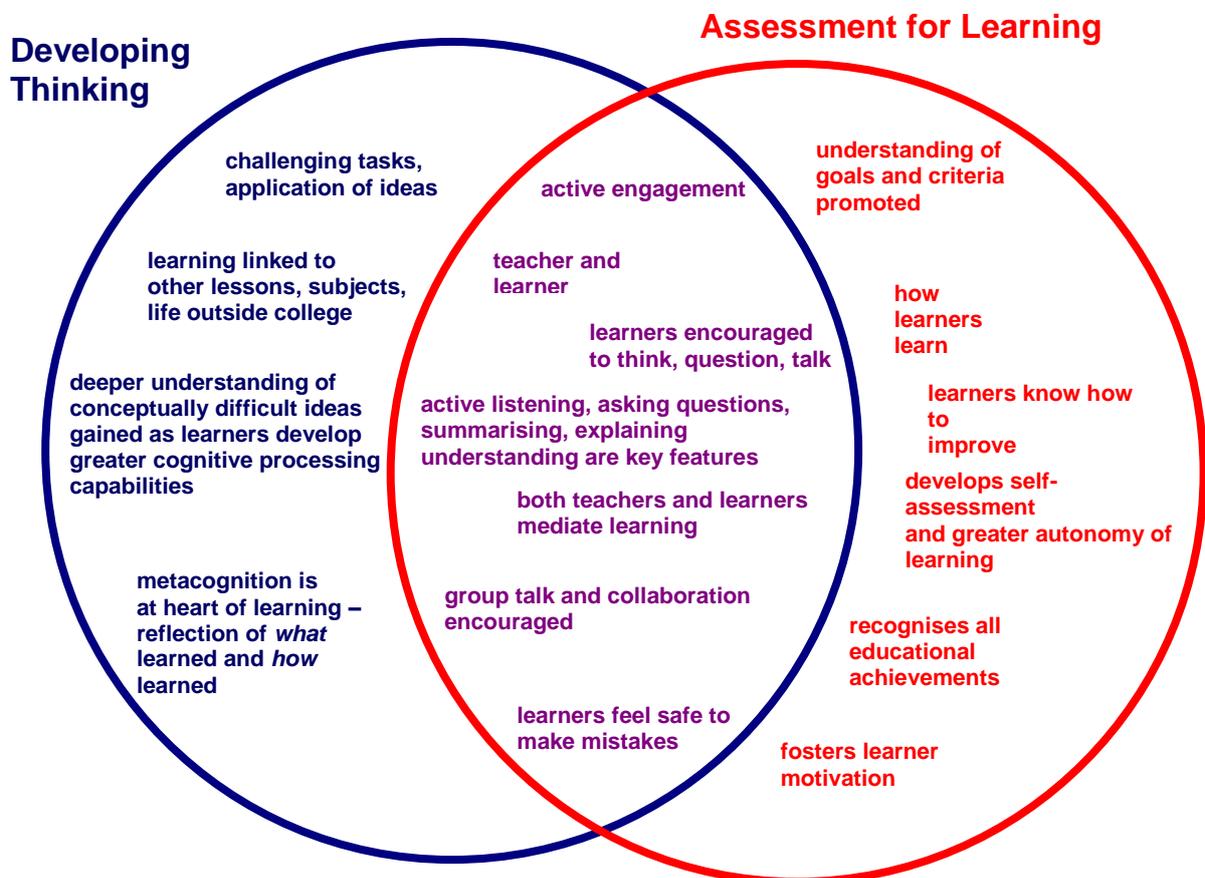
The actual site for looking for educational apps is below:

<http://www.apple.com/education/apps/>

Developing Thinking & AfL

Characteristics of lessons that develop thinking and assessment for learning

The following Venn diagram summarises the characteristics of developing thinking and assessment for learning lessons. It clearly shows that the two initiatives are inextricably linked so that development of one should influence the other. This also means that similar strategies may be employed to promote the quality of thinking and learning.



Make the Students Think!

Last term, a number of visitors to the college commented on the fact that many students were challenged to start thinking from the moment that they walked into a room. Early challenge is so important to getting the students into the right frame of mind at the start of a lesson. Recapping on a previous lesson to ascertain what the students remember and understood is very important, but often this is simply a memory recall activity that depends on fairly low level thinking. Putting a controversial statement on the screen, or setting an open ended question related to the topic they are about to study, are just two simple but effective ways of getting the students to think individually or to discuss in pairs. Research has shown that, on average, students across the country are not really challenged to *think* until about 15 minutes into a lesson. Excellent examples of early challenge were observed last year, let's make sure we keep this up throughout this year.

What has most Impact?

Professor John Hattie points out that in education most things work, more or less. The question is which work best and are therefore worth investing more time in?

Rank the following activities according to which you think has the greatest impact on student learning.

1 = greatest impact to 10 = least impact from the list.

- A. Homework
- B. Acceleration for MAT students
- C. Computer assisted instruction
- D. Ability grouping
- E. Large group lecturing
- F. Reducing disruptive behaviour in class
- G. Class size
- H. Teaching Thinking Skills
- I. Small group learning
- J. Feedback

Answers follow:

Which of the following has the greatest and the least impact on learning?

1 = greatest impact to 10 = least impact from the list.

1. Feedback
2. Teaching Thinking Skills
3. Small group learning
4. Reducing disruptive behaviour in class
5. Acceleration for MAT students
6. Computer assisted instruction
7. Large group lecturing
8. Class size
9. Ability grouping
10. Homework

In this instance, Feedback includes teacher to student, student to student **and** student to teacher. Homework was still seen having an impact on learning providing that it was relevant, challenging and not just for the sake of giving homework.

Lesson Observations

As the number of observations increases many staff are becoming more comfortable with what is expected of them in observations. Obviously there are no tick lists as each subject and lesson is different. Staff do, however, continue to ask me for those 'tweaks' that will take their Good lesson to Outstanding. Though there is no generic answer to this there are a number of features you could consider:-

Quality of teaching and Assessment for Learning:

- Students are challenged and stretched, resulting in *exceptional* progress (well beyond what is expected),
- Teacher/other adults plans very effectively to build on students' capabilities and prior learning,
- Marking and dialogue between teacher/other adults and students are consistently of a very high quality,
- Teacher systematically and effectively checks students understanding throughout the lesson,
- Resources and *precisely targeted support* make a marked contribution to the quality of learning.

Learner progress:

- Students' keenness and commitment to succeed and improve their learning is exceptional,
- Students demonstrate excellent concentration and are *rarely off task*, even during extended periods without adult supervision,
- Students have developed resilience, creativity and critical thinking in tackling challenging activities (all students should demonstrate these qualities to some degree – MAT students show greater proficiency owing to previous opportunities/encouragement in lessons).

Feedback

- Following on from the list of effective teaching methods in which ‘feedback’ was seen as having the greatest impact on learning, here are some further thoughts.
- One crucial aspect of feedback through questioning is how the teacher interprets the thinking and motivation that led the student to give a particular answer. It helps if the teacher first asks the student to explain how she arrived at that answer, then accepts any explanation without comment and asks others what they think about the answer. This gives value to the first answer, and draws the class into a shared exploration of the issue. In doing this, the teacher changes role from being an interviewer of students, on a one-to-one basis, to being a conductor of dialogue in which all may be involved.

Look No Hands!

Asking students to put their hands up before answering questions is commonplace but ends to result in the same students offering answers (good for their confidence, but not so for the others). 'No hands' is a technique intended to make the questioning process more inclusive, with the teacher randomly selecting students to respond. The aim is to encourage the whole class to participate and become more engaged in the lesson.

Strategies

Recent research has revealed that many teachers still reduce or even avoid fostering student talk as an activity because they feel it can lead to too much off-task chatter and classroom management problems.

Lesson observations here in the college have shown that when the task is clearly structured by the teacher so that the students know **exactly what is expected of them** (how long they have to speak, the key points they must discuss, etc), and they are motivated by an interesting/controversial lead-in, they do respond positively and this leads to lively, yet focused discussions whether in small groups or with the whole class.

A very good starting point is the Kagan Structures - Timed, Pair, Share and Round Robin.

Timed, Pair, Share -

1. The teacher poses a question/problem to which there are multiple responses or solutions and states how long each student will have to share.
2. Teacher provides think time.
3. In pairs, Partner A shares; Partner B listens. Students then change over.
4. Selected students can then feedback to the class.

Round Robin -

1. This extends the Think, Pair Share, by getting the students to first of all work in twos (as above) and then team up in fours.

Both structures are simple to use and could feature in many lessons as a way of structuring that all important 'talk'.

MAT Focus

The MAT cohorts in the college are quite fluid and flexible to allow for new (emerging) students to be added to the lists. If you feel that a student should be in a particular year cohort, please let the Departmental Link Teacher know or contact Patrick directly.

Questions we need to ask ourselves as teacher are:

- Am I meeting the different learning needs of MAT students in my classes?
- Have I spoken to the MAT students that I teach to find out more about them and their learning needs?
- Am I organising groups within my lessons to best effect so that MAT students have the opportunity to interact with each other on occasions?
- Do I use higher level questioning to develop thinking with more able students?
- What do I actually do to motivate and inspire, challenge and stretch MAT learners in my lessons?

Take away the term MAT from each of the points above and these are questions that we should obviously ask ourselves about all students, but let's take stock of what we do for the students who are, in relation to the rest of their peers, more able and talented. By pitching our lessons towards the more able and providing guidance and support for the other students, research has shown that standards begin to rise for everyone – 'a rising tide lifts all boats'.

Educational Blogs

Just like our students, teachers never stop learning. As practitioners we are constantly looking for new methods and techniques that we can use in the classroom. There are some very good blogs that we can link into that are hosted by experienced teachers who share ideas, lesson planning and delivery, schemes of learning, PSD, daily routine and so on. Reading about someone else's experiences can certainly add to our 'teaching toolkit'.

At present, out on the blogosphere writers such as Ollie Bray (Emerging Technologies), Dave Rogers and Alan Parkinson (Curriculum Design and Geography) give some very good insights into education. All can easily be Googled.

Independent Learners Part I

'I have finished the first question, Miss. Can you check it?'

'Do you want me to underline the date?'

'I learned all the words off by heart.'

'Tell me what I have to do for the test.'

'Why didn't I get an A?'

Students who frequently ask such questions are often extremely dependent on their teachers and expect constant instructions, feedback and reassurance from them. We obviously want to change this pattern and help students to think more for themselves and to be more self-reliant.

One accepted understanding of learner independence is that it ranges across a continuum. At one end there are dependent learners who have had little opportunity to develop independent learning skills, and at the other end of the continuum there are learners who are self-directed, self-motivated and capable of learning without a teacher. Good learners will move gradually along the continuum.

The key word here is 'opportunity'. Do we give students the opportunity to experience independent learning in lessons or over a series of lessons? The question is, how much do the students rely on us and how much do we allow and even encourage them to rely on us?

Dependent learners	Independent learners
rely heavily on the teacher	are self-reliant
cannot make decisions about their learning	can make informed decisions about their learning
do not know their own strengths and weaknesses	are aware of their strengths and weaknesses
do not connect classroom learning with the real world	connect classroom learning with the real world
think that the teacher is wholly responsible for their learning	take responsibility for their own learning- know about different strategies for learning
do not know the best way to learn something	plan their learning and set goals
do not set learning goals- will only work when extrinsic motivators such as grades or rewards are offered	are intrinsically motivated by making progress in learning
do not reflect on how well they are learning and the reasons	often reflect on the learning process and their own progress

Independent Learners Part II

Here are three ideas that help lead students to becoming more independent learners. Point number 3 could be very revealing!

Why not try one or two?

1. Give choices

Giving students regular opportunities to make choices will encourage them to reflect on their own interests and preferences. It will also make them start to take responsibility for learning. Examples of choices could be 'Choose activity A or B for homework' or 'Choose someone to work with' or 'Answer 3 out of the 5 questions' or 'Choose one of these two essay topics.' The teacher could take the opportunity to reflect with the students on why the choices are there and why students made certain choices.

2. Encourage learners to predict how well they did on tests /homework marks

Before teachers return a test paper/marked work to their students, they could encourage the students to consider how well they did. One example could be to give a blank copy of the test paper to students to review in groups. This will start them reflecting about their strengths and weaknesses and the progress they are making. The reflective aspects of this process could help the students make an appropriate learning plan. It will also help learners see that they are responsible for their learning.

3. Involve learners in lesson planning

Teachers could invite their students to help plan the lesson from time to time. This will ensure that the lesson is interesting and relevant for them. In addition, it involves the students in the learning process gives them the opportunity to reflect on their needs.

Independent Learners Part III

If you haven't already, try to encourage independent learning by providing students with an 'editing table/checklist' to use before they hand in a piece of work (or get them to draw up an agreed example for the whole class). The table is of value during peer assessment exercises and can obviously be used many times throughout the year. The editing criteria will change depending on the assignment and it is important that the students see the table before they begin their work so they know what standard to aim for. Here is an example:

Criteria	Yes/No
1. Did you check your spelling carefully and use a dictionary for words you are not sure about.	Y/N
2. Did you use a capital letter at the beginning of each sentence?	Y/N
3. Did you put a full stop at the end of each sentence?	Y/N
4. Are your sentences clear and easy to read? Perhaps you need to make them shorter and less complex.	Y/N
5. Do you have the heading, date and your name on the work?	Y/N
6. Is your handwriting neat? Perhaps you should re-write it.	Y/N
7. Did you answer the questions fully, giving named examples and details?	Y/N
8. Did you use your own words? (If you copied something, re-write it your own way).	Y/N
9. Did you finish everything you were asked to do?	Y/N

10. Is your work organised so that your teacher will be able to correct your work easily?

Y/N

Now do something about the points where you answered no.

Inclusive Quality First Teaching

The main focus is to create the right opportunities within the classroom, to help students to develop the desire to learn and to adopt positive learning behaviours, such as resourcefulness, independence and resilience. This will be achieved by planning activities that challenge and excite students on a daily basis, in an environment that celebrates success and recognises and rewards perseverance.

The key characteristics of Quality First teaching can be summarised as:

- highly-focused, sharp lesson objectives
- high demands of student involvement and engagement with their learning
- high levels of interaction for all students
- appropriate use of teacher questioning, modelling and explanation
- an emphasis on learning through dialogue, with regular opportunities for students to talk both individually and in groups
- providing the opportunities for students to accept responsibility for their own learning and work independently
- regular use of encouragement and authentic praise to engage and motivate students.

It is so easy to gloss over yet another list telling us what we should do in the classroom to improve learning.

Quality First Teaching simply looks at what good teachers do to get the best out of students (and remember that in almost 90% of our observed lessons, teaching was judged to be good or outstanding).

This said, it is still worth looking at the seven points above and measuring ourselves against them in terms of what we do well and what we could do even better.

Take a Closer Look

All Curriculum Leaders have been asked to start compiling 'subject-specific' MAT lists for each year group. In reality, this will probably involve a very small number of students, in each year but they will be highlighted as 'more able' within lessons and will need to be provided for accordingly by subject staff. Work for these students will obviously need to be differentiated so that it challenges them and helps them to reach their full potential.

I have taken an extract from the college MAT policy which lists some of the attributes that may help to identify a potential MAT student. The list is a guide for staff to use; each department may want to add something more subject specific to the identification criteria.

Potential MAT students may:

- have a very strong passion for the subject (within lessons and out of college)
- be very articulate or verbally fluent for their age and want to talk about subject related issues
- give quick verbal responses (which can appear cheeky)
- have a wide general knowledge and in particular specialised knowledge about the subject
- learn quickly about the particular subject
- be interested in topics which one might associate with an older child
- communicate well with adults - often better than with their peer group
- have a range of interests, some of which are almost obsessions
- show unusual and original responses to problem-solving activities
- prefer verbal to written activities
- be logical
- be self-taught in their own interest areas
- have an ability to work things out in their head very quickly
- have a good memory that they can access easily
- be artistic
- be musical
- excel at sport
- have strong views and opinions
- have a lively and original imagination / sense of humour
- be very sensitive and aware
- be easily bored by what they perceive as routine tasks
- show a strong sense of leadership
- not necessarily be well-behaved or well-liked by others
- focus on their own interests rather than on what is being taught

There is now a 'MAT subject space' on the i-drive where subject based MAT student names can be placed, as and when identified. Students can be put on the lists and also removed from the lists based upon their progress, development and your judgment as a subject teacher.

The process is yet another step towards providing personalised learning pathways for all of our students.

Let the Students In

How can we model learning?

It is essential that we help students to understand different ways of learning (metacognition). As a teacher, thinking out loud about your thought processes and how you go about dealing with new challenges is a valuable experience for any student.

During at least one lesson this week let the students see and hear you ‘thinking out loud’: I’m going to try it this way..., No that didn’t work, so ..., What I’m thinking is ...

Take the students through your thinking process. Say out loud what you find helpful/unhelpful when you are trying to get to grips with something new. Demonstrate the importance of making a mistake, learning from it and moving on. Our students need to see us doing this occasionally as it presents them with an excellent role model and a very meaningful experience of what independent learning and tenacity actually looks like.

In addition, give the students at least one opportunity to explain their thinking out loud for others to hear and respond to. They can do this in pairs (very Kagan!) to begin with and then see if one or two more confident students will share their thoughts in front of the whole class for supportive analysis.

The way we think about issues and deal with problems and challenges is a very high level process and has got us to where we are today, so as *the* most valuable resource in the classroom, open up your mind and let the students in.

Lesson Objectives

In many ways it seems like common sense to let students in on the secret of knowing what they are going to be learning during the lesson. The teacher also needs to decide when they are actually going to share the objectives; is it going to be at the very start or could that get in the way of the exciting starter that has been prepared? In the interests of ‘dramatic effect’ could the objectives be revealed at certain points during the lesson or even discussed and presented by the students themselves (what is it they want to learn about a topic)? The key point is that the students know what they will be learning and of course why they need to learn it. The common trap which is easy to fall into is to view the learning objectives as activities rather than learning ie what the students are going to do or produce, rather than what they are going to learn.

You may remember WALT and WILF (a number of staff do use this in lessons)

Objectives: We Are Learning To... WALT

- tends to describe specific, discrete units of knowledge and skills - (What do I want the students learn in this lesson?)
- can be accomplished within a short time frame - relevant for a class period
- tends to be statements of intent; not a comment on how the objectives will be achieved or how this will look like in terms of the activities that the students will undertake or the work that they will produce
- remember to refer back to the objectives to let the students see for themselves that they have been achieved

Outcomes: What I’m Looking For... WILF

- refer to **demonstrations of performance** – what will it look like? How will students demonstrate that they understand the key points of the lesson? Will they use oral responses, written work, diagrams, presentations, power points etc? How will students demonstrate their understanding as the lesson progresses

Learning Muscles

Do you consider the students you teach to be creative, independent learners or risk takers? If not, the question we should ask is how many opportunities do I give them to be creative or independent or to take risks during my lessons? Like any muscle, these areas need to be targeted, strengthened and developed.

Are students offered a choice as to how a piece of work might be presented or which resources they can use? Are there opportunities for the students themselves to decide what they would like to study in relation to a particular topic? How often are students left to go about things their own way and then have a follow-up session where they can openly and constructively discuss the mistakes they made and how they went about putting things right? How often are students given an open-ended scenario to consider or problem to solve?

Of course examination classes may not have the luxury of time to spend 'exploring and discovering' new ways of learning (although there probably are more occasions than we sometimes might think there are), but by introducing small steps towards independence, creativity and risk taking, especially in the lower years, we will certainly help our students to flex those learning muscles and strengthen them for the future.

Learning Questions

By no means is this a definitive list, but the examples below offer ideas about questions designed to make students think and reveal their level of understanding:

- What if ... (this were to change / this part was taken out / these variables were different / that never happened etc)?
- What similarities can you spot between the two?
- Can you tell me something that you have learnt today (not what have you been doing)?
- How will you set about trying to remember what you have learnt?
- Which of these four sources might be most reliable in helping us to ...?

Following up these questions with 'why do you think that?' really does help the teacher to get an idea of how much a student understands.

MAT Enrichment in Lessons

Enrichment can be considered as a form of differentiation. This does not always require additional worksheets or extension tasks (and certainly not 'more of the same' simply to fill a time gap while other student in the class finish their work). Planning for classroom enrichment does not have to be time consuming, but it does need prior consideration.

You or the department could build up a bank of 'ideas' that can be used as part of the teacher toolkit when working with MAT students.

Some suggestions:

- Have a challenge box in your room which contains a number of challenge questions related to the topic in general that students could tackle if time allows (make them fun as well as challenging and relevant).
- Task the MAT students with planning or contributing to the plenary for that lesson.
- Structure a half term self-directed project that allows the students to explore one aspect of the topic in greater depth.
- Ask the MAT students to devise a quiz or competition for other students to complete at home.
- At the beginning of the lesson ask each student to write a question that they would like to know the answer to; the MAT students could work on finding the answers and feedback to the relevant students.

OFSTED Criteria

With the college aiming for consistency in all lessons, here is a reminder of the Ofsted criteria for outstanding lessons (nothing of which is beyond any teacher in this school).

Ofsted Criteria

Outstanding Lessons

- Teaching is at least good and much is outstanding.
- Students are making exceptional progress.
- Teaching is highly effective in inspiring students and ensuring that they learn extremely well.
- Excellent subject knowledge is applied consistently to challenge and inspire students.
- Resources, including new technology, make a marked contribution to the quality of learning.
- Precisely targeted support is provided and makes a marked contribution to the quality of learning.
- The teacher is acutely aware of their students' capabilities and of their prior learning and understanding, and has planned very effectively to build on these.
- Marking and dialogue between the teacher and the students are consistently of a very high quality.
- Students understand in detail how to improve their work and are consistently supported in doing so.
- The teachers systematically and effectively check students' understanding throughout the lesson anticipating where they may need to intervene and doing so with striking impact on the quality of learning.

Tips and pointers

- Be very obvious in your actions – mini- plenaries help show progress as the lesson moves along – ask questions about **how** students are learning & share good practice around the class. Remember to always do this when an observer walks into the classroom.
- **Continually check understanding** – deal with misconceptions before allowing students to move on to next stage – then check again for understanding.
- Remember that the lesson plan is your guide to what would you want to do with the class if all goes well. Do not stick rigidly to the plan and move on regardless without making sure that students understand what they have to do and why they are doing it.
- **Abandon** or reshape your lesson plan if students do not understand something (how will they make progress otherwise?) – still factor in time for a plenary
- **All students** make exceptional progress, not just MAT or EAL. Be blatant when referring to progress – ‘So what progress have you made this lesson’?, ‘How do you know you have made progress’?, ‘What have you learnt that you didn’t know before you came in to the lesson’? Get into the habit of doing this with your students now (don’t wait until the week Ofsted arrive).
- ICT – use it to enhance learning not as an end in itself i.e. first drafts, projected images, internet

	<p>searches such as Clusty & Kartoo, using specific subject software, referencing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dialogue in the students' head is of paramount importance – what are they thinking – make sure you get to the root of this through questioning, discussion and written work. • Avoid fairly meaningless statements such as 'Put in more detail', 'Find more information on ...', 'Check your work for mistakes'. Be as specific as possible – what must they actually do in order to improve? • Continually check understanding throughout the lesson and react to the students' needs. Be proactive with support (anticipating when to intervene and do so with 'striking impact') in other words, go to the student who you know may have difficulty with a particular task/concept and give support, maybe with a writing frame, a word definition, rather than let them struggle unnecessarily, though do keep in mind that this does not mean spoon feeding or doing it for the student. • If you are not crystal clear about the lesson objectives, the lesson may seem woolly, vague and maybe even pointless to the students. Check the progress against the objectives as you go along. • Inject some fun into the learning – look for the smiles!
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Sharing Learning Objectives & Outcomes

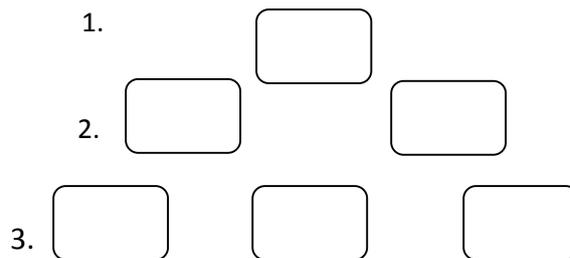
Securing knowledge is crucial in lessons. Students must understand what they are learning, why they are learning it and how best to go about learning it. Simple learning questions or activities, such as those below can help the process. Next week, try these two ideas (if you haven't already) with three or four classes and reflect on their effectiveness in terms of helping students to secure their understanding of the lesson.

- Rather than asking 'Does everyone understand?', choose individual students to explain again to the class the objectives and the intended outcomes so you can see at once where any misunderstandings lie.
- Another way to find out whether your instructions are clear is to ask questions of students whilst they are working: 'Can you remind me of what we are trying to do?' or 'Why are we doing this?' or 'What do you have to do to get top marks?'

Progress Blocks

Taking risks in lessons (by this we often mean trying out a new technique for the first time) is obviously important if we are to continually engage and motivate our students. Here are four suggestions that you could try out, refine and establish with your classes without having the pressure of an observer in the room.

Progress blocks (very similar to the 'diamond' progress chart that was introduced last year):-



1. One thing I already know about the topic (written at the start of the lesson or at the end of the proceeding lesson in order to give the teacher time to respond to the students comments/ideas even misconceptions).
2. Two questions I want to ask (can be filled in as the lesson progresses).
3. The three most important things I have learnt this lesson/topic.

The teacher could have a quantity of these outlines already prepared for classes or even let the students themselves quickly draw the blocks on a piece of paper that could be inserted into their books.

The Art Gallery (starting off a new topic)

Use at the beginning of a topic. The teacher has set up an 'art gallery' of A3 images and/or statements about a new topic to be studied. On entry, classical music is played and students are invited to wander round the gallery in pairs. They are told that in five minutes they must choose an image or statement that makes a connection with them and when the music stops they must go and stand next to it and be prepared to justify their decision.

Assembly Technique (Building up knowledge)

Students work in pairs or in small groups of 4s/6s to assemble material that has been photocopied onto A4 paper and cut up into separate parts by the teacher; materials may include keywords, images, facts, text, symbols or a combination of all.

What do I know? (Recalling information from the previous lesson)

Write down one thing remembered from last week, then swap your thing with someone else and see if you can agree three things, now at the table – agree five, then as a class see if we can agree seven.

Engaging Students

Below is a simple to use and easy to produce way of engaging students in a task that requires them to answer a number of questions about a topic.

CARD RACING / QUICK ON THE DRAW

DETAILS:

A series of questions are placed on numbered cards and students are organised into teams. Each team comes and collects their first card (best if the cards are mixed up) takes it back to their table, reads out the question and the team puts together the best answer. When they have the answer they write it on a mini whiteboard (or sheet of paper) and come up to have it checked (the numbers help with checking). If they have it correct then they collect the next card – if they do not, then they are sent back to get it correct (with a tip or hint from the teacher). The winning team is the one who answers all their cards correctly first.

It is easier to check if the question cards and answers are numbered but makes it more interesting when the cards are given to students randomly.

Why not have a go!

Increase the Level of Challenge

Over the past year, a number of people, including Ofsted Inspectors, the National Challenge Advisor and Local Authority Officers have commented on how quickly our students are challenged once they arrive at lessons. More encouraging is the fact that many of the students actually say that they feel they are challenged in lessons. Not being a place where we rest on our laurels, we need to practise ways in which we can raise the 'challenge bar' even further. Here are some ideas, but obviously they stay as just ideas unless we try them out in lessons and reflect on how they have impacted on the students.

- Build in an opportunity for the students to learn independently of you – let them make one or two choices in your lesson or even decide sensibly what they will do for themselves while you facilitate. Keep it simple, small steps by everyone will have a great impact over a relatively short period of time, but do remember to talk to the students about how they feel they have benefited from the experience.
- Simply increase the pace of your lesson.
- Demand greater precision in both written and oral answers.
- Ensure students always get the chance to apply new ideas.

- Increase the proportion of higher order questions – write them out first and stick to the script.
- Look at your ‘Learning Wall’ (remember them?) and ask yourself if you are getting the students to evaluate, analyse, create (whether that be in the starter, through the main activities or through questioning) rather than just remembering or regurgitating information.

If we get into the habit of planning to do these things, the students will also get into good learning habits.

Key Points

Key points from the Liverpool Learning and Teaching Forum, New Ofsted Inspections – Pilot Schools’ Report.

- The key focus will be on teaching and how it impacts on learning.
- There will be a far greater number of lesson observations than in previous inspections
- Inspectors will focus on – student progress, good use of AfL, differentiation (now called ‘**meeting the needs of all learners**’) Independent Learning and Challenge throughout the lesson
- There will most likely be some part-lesson observations. Judgements will not be given on lessons observed for less than 20 minutes but these may be used to inform other issues (*Remember to show progress through a mini-plenary when an observer walks in!*)
- There will be a greater emphasis on behaviour in lessons – reference will be made to ‘weaker learners / weaker learning’ which is a result of poor/satisfactory behaviour. Students will be asked if poor behaviour affects their lessons.
- Inspectors will comment upon opportunities for ‘deep thinking’ – are students given time to think? Are open ended questions used effectively? Are superficial answers accepted by the teacher or are further questions used to probe for understanding.
- Lesson plans may well be scrutinised.
- Inspectors will look closely at feedback and marking.
- Teachers may well be observed more than once in a day.
- Inspectors will look at attainment gaps between subjects (in-school variations) and may discuss these with Curriculum Leaders.
- Some Curriculum Leaders will be asked to accompany inspectors on Departmental Learning Walks during which they will be questioned on the strengths and weaknesses of the department and what they *have done* to address these issues.

A more detailed summary of the whole New Ofsted Framework Key Judgments will be presented to staff.

Comparing & Contrasting

Comparing and contrasting has been found to improve students understanding of the topics by more than one grade. It is a preferred method for helping students to clarify concepts that are often confused, or poorly understood.

Students are put in pairs or small groups, and are given two columns on a piece of A3 paper. They work in groups to make bullet pointed lists of important similarities and differences between the two concepts. They can work from previously unseen materials, from work they have already completed or from scratch if you want to find out how much students know about a topic, either at the end of a series of lessons or the start of the new topic. Clearly this could be used in any subject to help understanding of almost any pair of similar concepts.

For example:

- Plant and animal cells
- Natural and Human Hazards
- Tudors and Stuarts
- Two fashion styles
- Tourist and Leisure activities
- Realism and Abstract Art
- Lindy Hop and Ballet
- Commerce and e-Commerce
- Agnosticism and Polytheism

This simple activity can help students when analysing and evaluating - two higher order skills.