

Context and Transfer

In a chapter in their book 'What Every Teacher Needs To Know About... Psychology', David Didau and Nick Rose discuss the need for students to be able to transfer learning to new contexts, including: different subject domains, specific tasks/problems, social interactions, and situational/physical settings.

Students do not automatically transfer knowledge to new contexts and evidence shows that it is easier to remember information in the context it was originally learned. Memory is context dependant and we rely on cues, including environmental cues to prompt retrieval.

Didau and Rose suggest ways in which we can facilitate transfer between contexts in the classroom. We can prepare students by explicitly telling them that they will need to apply knowledge and skills to a new context. These contexts include both between-subjects and environmentally - to an exam situation. Transferring knowledge is difficult and we rely on cues for retrieval. Flexible learning needs multiple contexts (both location and time). Changing rooms and timetables frequently is impracticable but they suggest varying seating plans regularly to harness the variation effect. It is easier for experts to transfer knowledge but more difficult for novices as they don't have to bank of information available to make connections. Teachers can use narrative to create flexible knowledge that is more durable and transferable to different contexts.



Texting Parents

The Parent Engagement Project (PEP), published in August 2016, was a school-level intervention funded by the Education Endowment Foundation and developed by research teams from the University of Bristol and Harvard University. It was designed to improve pupil outcomes by engaging parents in their children's learning.

The intervention that was trialled involved schools sending text messages to inform parents of dates of upcoming tests, whether homework was submitted on time, and what their children were learning at school. Over the course of the trial involving 15,697 students in years 7, 9 and 11 across 36 schools, and average of 30 text messages were sent to each parent over a school year.

The results found there were small positive impacts on maths and English, and a reduction in absenteeism. An average of one month of additional progress was found in the experimental group in maths and English however the results for English may have been affected by bias.

Children who had the intervention had reduced absenteeism and the intervention was more effective in reducing absenteeism in the KS4 cohort compared to KS3. Which is of particular note given that absenteeism increases as pupils progress through school.

Parents and teachers were enthusiastic about PEP and liked its immediacy and low cost. However schools felt there would need to be someone responsible for coordinating and monitoring the programme.

Edited by Beth Greville-Giddings

INSIDE



Context and Transfer:

How can we help students transfer learning to new contexts?



Edu-blog Spotlight:

Daisy Christodoulou on comparative marking



Texting Parents:

Findings from the EEF



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The Grammar Debate

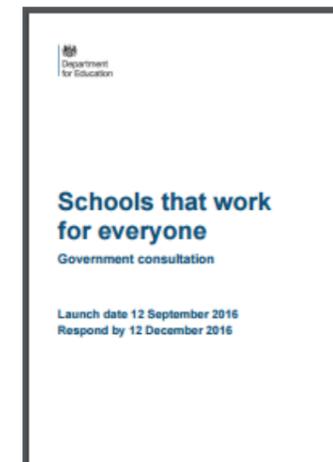
The release of the government's schools green paper 'Schools that work for everyone' revealed plans to expand selective schools and has kicked off the debate over grammar schools with new vigour.

Included in the proposals are the expansion of existing grammar schools, allowing new selective schools to be set up, and existing non-selective schools to become selective. The green paper sets out the proposed conditions and criteria that should be met by these schools - focussing on supporting non-selective schools and quality of education in an aim to answer some of the proposal's critics. The response to the proposals has seemed overwhelmingly negative with a wide cross-section of voices speaking out against the plans.

Many have been surprised by the shift in direction following years of education policy directed at an academic education for all children, from policies such as the EBacc and qualification reforms, to one based on a child's ability.

The Prime Minister argues that selective schools at 11 would 'enhance social mobility' and that there is currently 'selection by house price' rather than ability as wealthier parents flock to the right catchment areas. The government have stressed that their proposals would not result in a return to the 'binary' education to the 1950s however for many this seems unavoidable.

(Continued inside)



The Consultation

Whether you are pro- or anti- the idea of expanding selective education. You can respond to the consultation online, by email or by post. Details are at:

<https://goo.gl/96Hmpa>

The consultation runs until

12th December 2016

Include information about:

- Who you are
- Why you are qualified to respond
- What is the evidence for your opinion

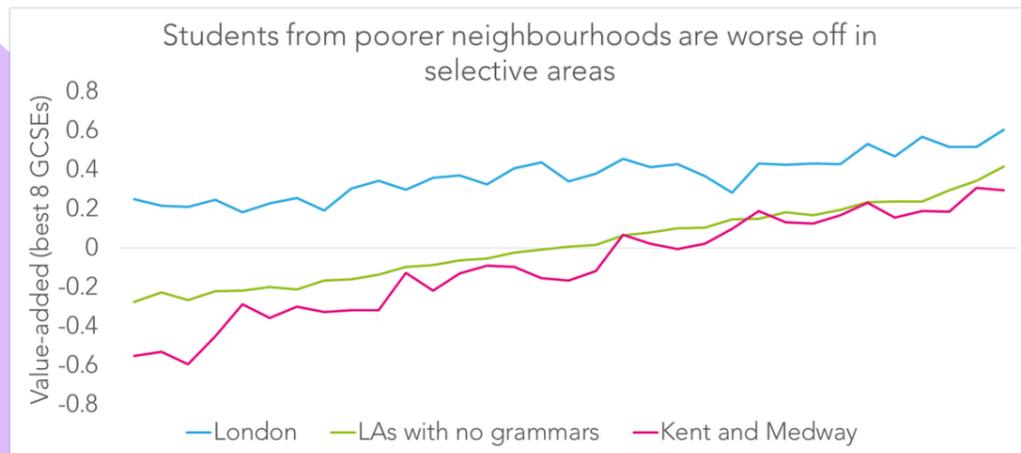
The Grammar Debate: The Evidence

In the first days following the announcement, many people and organisations came out against the return of grammar schools including the OECD, the IFS, Education Datalab, ASCL, NAHT, Multi Academy trusts such as Ark and Harris, Teach First, HMCI of Ofsted Sir Michael Wilshaw and Former Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan. A common thread in their arguments against the proposals is not only the lack of evidence to support grammar schools, but the amount of evidence against them.

Education Datalab have published data that show the negative impact of grammar schools. They show whilst the children who attend grammar schools do make more progress than they otherwise would, children who attend non-selective schools in selective areas (secondary moderns) make less progress than they otherwise would. As in any selective area a minority of children will attend grammar schools so the overall impact is negative. They also show that grammar schools suck staff resources from surrounding schools as they are more likely to have experienced, well-qualified teachers.

Currently the proportion of children eligible for free school meals who attend grammar schools is well below that of children who are not eligible for free school meals. One factor in this is that FSM-eligible children are less likely to attend grammar schools than non-FSM-eligible children with comparable KS2 scores, however poorer children are less likely to have comparable scores in the first place. In order to address these figures, Datalab believe entry requirements would have to be loosened to the point where a school is no longer likely to seem selective.

The result of all these factors is that academic selection increases inequalities in outcomes. There is a greater disparity in education performance between children from poor neighbourhoods, and children from wealthier neighbourhoods in selective areas.



Education Datalab: <http://educationdatalab.org.uk/>

Proponents of the plans suggest that expansion of selective education will help stop private-school dominance of certain professions, however, research by the Education Policy Institute reported in *Schools Week* found that grammar schools have no 'overall impact' on attainment or social mobility and that poorer pupils, and those with SEN and a first language other than English, are all under-represented at grammar schools, as are white British and black Caribbean pupils. They also report that 'attending a grammar school has "no benefit" for high-attaining pupils' 'best 8' grades'.

The government has announced that it will make up to £50 million a year available to support the expansion of good or outstanding existing grammars and that they will be encouraged to work with primary schools to improve access for poorer pupils. There has been no mention of provision for SEND. They say grammars should be more flexible about admissions, allowing children to join or leave at 14 or 16, and the government has hit back at critics of the 11+ process, announcing that future tests will be 'untutorable'. An attempt to achieve this in Buckinghamshire for 2014 admissions was unsuccessful and it has not yet been announced how this would be made possible.

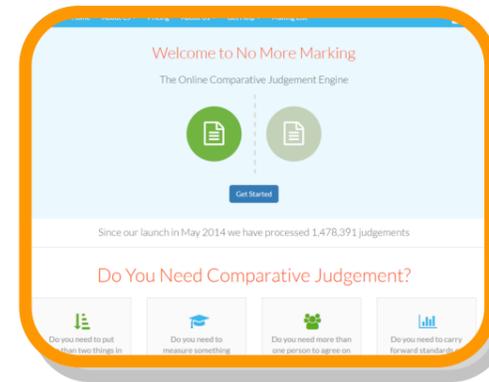
Some opponents of the plans have been criticised for entering their own children for the 11+. In areas with selection, grammar schools do provide the best opportunities for children that pass the 11+. The majority of children however will not pass the 11+ and the available evidence points to this majority being at a disadvantage in a selective system. As Sam Freedman, Executive Director at TeachFirst, commented, 'Parents will naturally act in the interests of their children. Politicians should act in the interests of all children'.

(Education Datalab: <https://goo.gl/A5ptH9> Schools Week: <https://goo.gl/8wgKYn>)

Edu-Blog Spotlight

Daisy Christodoulou trained as an English teacher through the Teach First programme and is currently the Head of Assessment at Ark Schools. She blogs at thewingtoheaven.wordpress.com and tweets as [@daisychristo](https://twitter.com/daisychristo).

In a recent post about Comparative Judgement (CJ) as a response to flaws in traditional teacher assessment, Daisy Christodoulou discusses practical tips for in-school use, from Key Stages 1-4.



CJ is a way of assessing tasks such as essays and projects where there is no clear 'right' answer. The method requires a marker to compare two pieces of work and decide which is better - then they look at another pair and continue until work is ranked. Daisy writes that it works because it 'takes advantage of the fact that amongst most experts in a subject, there is agreement on what quality looks like', even if it is not possible to define such quality in words.

In her post Daisy suggests using CJ to assess writing at Primary level. Where there are no interim frameworks, she suggests comparing pupils work at different points in the year either with purposely written text or making use of current portfolios of pupil work.

With KS3, her work has found that CJ seems easier when judging writing assessments than literature essays and has had some high reliability scores with Year 8 work. Daisy says that it is possible to use CJ for KS4 tasks - either for individual questions or entire exams.

NoMoreMarking.com is a website that allows you to use CJ for free. Teachers can set up an account and upload pupil scripts in either jpg or pdf form. Alternatively the website also provides coded answer sheets. You can select how many judgements you want per script - the more judgements, the more reliable the scores. It is possible to include exemplar work in with the scripts but Daisy warns that you must be certain of the standard of writing.

The website allows you to choose to make judgements as a group or send a link out for others to help. Daisy suggests that it is worth having a group follow up meeting regardless of which you opt for.

Daisy is currently working with the No More Marking team on a national experiment to moderate Key Stage 2 writing assessments using comparative judgement. She has a detailed list of practical tips and instructions for using No More Marking in her blog post.

Full post with comments at: <https://goo.gl/5EtPel>

You've been asked for some information or a pupil report for a meeting, but what do all those letters mean?

Decoding the Diary Sheet

TSC

The Teaching Schools Council was set up in 2011 to coordinate teaching schools and their alliances.

The TSC aims to "support coherence" across the schools system, supporting collaboration between schools, focussing intervention in areas of greatest need, and helping to shape future policy.

The TSC is made up of teaching school Headteachers and Directors, and it represents all sectors and regions. Members support decisions on who should become a teaching school, and provide advice to the National College of Teaching and Leadership and the Department for Education on teaching schools.

The work of the Teaching Schools Council is around 4 key themes:

- Professional development and leadership
- Initial teacher training and supply
- School improvement
- Research and impact

These incorporate the "Big Six" core areas of responsibility for all teaching schools.