

Assessment without Levels update...

The Commission on Assessment Without Levels final report, mentioned in Relay #3, was finally published in September, despite being promised before the end of the 2014/5 school year. Here are a few highlights:

Some of the areas covered by the report include: guidance for assessment policies; data collection and reporting; evaluating external assessment systems; accountability and inspection; and teacher education.

The report does not endorse any particular method of assessment without levels, but makes several recommendations including that schools should work to ensure their 'curriculum and approach to assessment are aligned', and that new systems should not add to teacher workload.

The Commission has recommended the establishment of a national item bank of assessment questions to be used both for formative and summative assessment, however details of this are not provided, and warns of buying-in products that don't fully meet the needs of a school's curriculum and assessment policy, or reinvents levels.

The report repeats the message from Ofsted that they will not 'expect any particular data outputs from a school's assessment system'. Ofsted does not have a preferred assessment system against which they will judge schools and 'will not expect to see any particular type of assessment system in a school'. 'Inspectors recognise that schools are at different stages in the development of assessment without levels, and will take this into account when considering how schools are monitoring the progress of pupils'.

The full report can be downloaded here: <https://goo.gl/JiP3zD> (pdf)

Tried and Tested

These ideas are taken from Gemma Whitelock's recent teachmeet presentation of her 'top tips for engaging literacy strategies'.

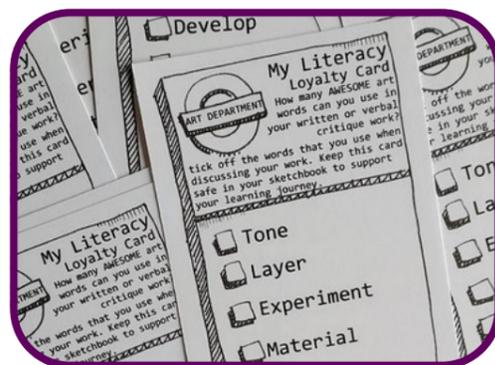
Literacy Jenga



This can be used to support students in learning new words/ definitions or to encourage a wider vocabulary within written work.

Use keywords or phrases on the Jenga bricks. Play the game as normal - students just write down the word or phrase on each brick that they move. This creates their own list of words/phrases for the lesson.

Literacy Loyalty Cards



List of 10 keywords for the subject - to encourage students to use more subject specific vocabulary within their written work.

Can be used to support spelling assignments in class or as a homework task e.g.. getting students to define words.

These can fit in with rewards systems as students show their 'literacy loyalty'.

Full post with more tips found here:

<http://staffrm.io/@mrsartytextiles/KHSr8Telxn>

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Literacy Top Tips:

Some tried and tested ways to engage students



Blog Spotlight:

Martin Robinson - Author and Educationalist



Westbury School Learning and Development Bulletin

Relay

Issue 4,
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Do we need a VAK-cine against Learning Styles?

Many people are familiar with the theory of Learning Styles, that 'Different students have different modes of learning, and their learning could be improved by matching one's teaching with their preferred learning mode'.

Most commonly we hear about visual, auditory and kinaesthetic, or VAK; and whilst it is true that many people will have differences in the way they learn and show preferences for subjects, there is no evidence to support the theory that adjusting the way we teach will lead to better results.

Daniel Willingham, Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia, states that the difference between 'style' and 'ability' is that 'Ability' is *that* you do something. 'Style' is *how* you do it'.

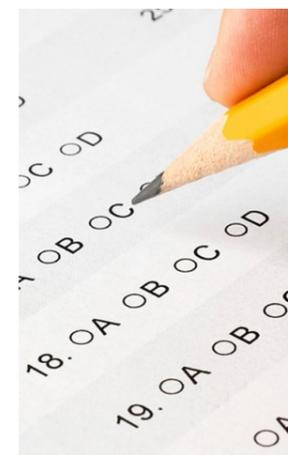
There is some evidence that when given the opportunity, people who say they think in words will do so, and people who think in pictures will do that. However, they don't perform better when using their preferred style than when they don't.

(continued inside)

"Good teaching is good teaching, and teachers don't need to adjust their teaching to individual students' learning styles"

"We should find the modality best suited to the content – not the student."

Daniel Willingham



VAK continued...

Despite the lack of evidence to support learning styles, the Wellcome Trust reported in 2013 that 74% of teachers had used learning styles and a quarter said it had positively impacted on pupils. Indeed, the phenomenon of VAK seems to have spread purely on word-of-mouth.

A quick search on the internet shows that there are still a high number of resources and tests claiming to help identify pupil learning styles in order to improve teaching. These are the tests that often ask questions such as 'I tend to say: a) I see what you mean b) I hear what you are saying c) I know how you feel'.

Sharp et al (2008) go as far to say that VAK is 'shrouded in pseudoscience, psychobabble and neurononsense' and add that 'The labelling of children in schools as visual,

auditory or kinaesthetic learners is not only unforgivable, it is potentially damaging'.

Willingham (2005) writes that 'teachers should use their pedagogical experience and judgement when presenting ideas to students', for example, 'There is no benefit to students in teachers' attempting to find auditory presentations of the Mayan pyramids for the students who have good auditory memory. Everyone should see the picture.'

However, he notes that whilst specifically changing the way you teach to accommodate different learning styles is a waste of time, using a variety of different ways to teach the same idea may be worth doing. Professor Dylan William adds to this suggestion by recommending that although the idea that pupils should be taught only in their preferred learning style has been 'discredited', teachers need to be cautious that they "examine whether they are only teaching in the way they [the teacher] like to learn".

Further information, including video explanations and an FAQ section, can be found on Daniel Willingham's website - www.danielwillingham.com

Introducing... NatCen

Social Research that works for society

If you read statistics claiming that 'the average take-up of school lunches was 42.6 per cent.' or 'negative school experiences deterred young people from continuing in post-16 education', the chances are NatCen have carried out the research.

They are commissioned by government and charities to uncover the real views of people in Britain. The information they find out is used to inform policy and make a difference to the lives of people across the nation. As a charity they aim to share the important things they find out, so their research does not just help their clients, it's used by other organisations trying to improve life in the UK.

Areas they research include: Health & wellbeing; Schools, education & training; Income & work; Children & young people; Families; Crime & justice; Social & political attitudes; Equality & diversity; and Communities.

NatCen choose to contact people at random from the Post Office's list of addresses, which is publicly available. Using this technique means that everyone has an equal chance of taking part in a survey, and they get a truly representative picture of everyone in the country. When conducting research around schools they may contact any school for information.

One of the barriers they face is public knowledge of what they do as they are easily dismissed as a company fishing for information for profit. If you are asked to take part, it might involve filling in information or having a conversation on the phone or in person. All their interviewers are trained and any information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence under the Data Protection Act 1998. The results collected are used for research purposes only.

NatCen is Britain's largest independent social research agency with 40 years of experience of carrying out high quality social research. They are a non-profit organisation, independent of all government departments and political parties.

Edu-Blog Spotlight

Martin Robinson is the Author of 'Trivium 21c' and an Educationalist with an interest in culture, politics, creativity, and the Liberal Arts (especially grammar, dialectic and rhetoric). He was shortlisted for teacher blogger of the year 2015 by the TES. You can find his blog at www.martinrobborobinson.wordpress.com and he tweets as @SurrealAnarchy

In a recent post, Martin Robinson asks 'Key Stage Three: What is the Point?'



Increasingly aware that schools are using KS3 to prepare students for GCSEs and other end of KS4 qualifications, perhaps by studying English texts from Year 7 or following a three-year GCSE course, Robinson wonders what the point in KS3 is and why don't we just go straight into GCSEs? Some might of course argue that 'pupils aren't ready' or that 'there's a national curriculum' to follow - however many schools have the freedom to 'ignore' the national curriculum and teach as they see fit. Why not just teach the stuff that the school is mainly accountable for?

Robinson determines that there is a valuable place for KS3 and argues that by expanding the work of KS4, we risk limiting our pupils' education - something Ofsted are aware of.

KS3 is an opportunity 'to introduce pupils to a wide range of subjects, disciplines, arts, voices, experiences all for their own sake and without the dreaded need to assess them to within an inch (a centimetre?) of their free thinking lives'. He says we should 'release key stage three from being the poor relation of key stage four and don't even dream of a three year GCSE'. Teach Art, Economics, Dance, IT, Latin, Climbing, Grammar, Caving, Athletics, Music, Maths, Brick Laying, Physics, Logic, Astronomy, Lacrosse, Horticulture, Rhetoric, and more, with an 'all must pass test' between 11 and 14 of basic skills and knowledge.

He concludes that KS3 should be an adventure, not GCSE Groundhog years and not three years of biding your time before the real stuff starts...

Full post with comments: <https://goo.gl/ned0p>

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

YOT

Youth offending teams work with young people that get into trouble with the law.

They look into the background of a young person and try to help them stay away from crime.

They also:

- run local crime prevention programmes
- help young people at the police station if they're arrested
- help young people and their families at court
- supervise young people serving a community sentence
- stay in touch with a young person if they're sentenced to custody

Youth offending team gets involved if a young person:

- gets into trouble with the police or is arrested
- is charged with a crime and has to go to court
- is convicted of a crime and given a sentence