

# SSAT's National Conference 2014 explored

Real stories from real learners





# **SSAT National Conference 2014:** The Learner



4-5 December, Manchester Central

## **CONFERENCE PROGRAMME**

Day 1 - Thursday 4 December		Day 2 - Friday 5 December	
08.30-09.30 09.35-10.00	Registration, refreshments and exhibition  Conference welcome  Sue Williamson and students from the  SSAT network	08.15-09.00	'What if'workshops Eric Mazur, Sugata Mitra, Richard Partington, Martin Robinson, Future Leaders, David Weston, Vision 2040 and Dawn Haywood
10.00-10.45	Creating innovators: The making of young people who will change the world Tony Wagner, expert in residence at Harvard University Innovation Lab	09.00-09.30 09.30-10.35	
10.45-11.15	Refreshments and exhibition		
11.20-11.50	Employability Sherry Coutu, entrepreneur, Angel Investor and founder, SVC2UK and Founders4Schools	10.45-11.30	Eleven 'How to'workshops School leaders and students
11.50-12.20	Lead from the centre	11.30-12.00	Refreshments and exhibition
12.20-12.45	David McQueen, founder of Magnificent Generation  Student outcomes panel discussion	12.05-12.40	School in the Cloud Sugata Mitra, Professor of Educational Technology, Newcastle University with Greenfield School and George Stephenson High School
12.45-13.45	Lunch and exhibition		
13.50-14.20	The intelligent hand Lord Baker of Dorking, former education secretary, founder of the Baker Dearing Educational Trust and advocate of vocational education	12.40-12.50	Increasing social mobility by transforming the prospects of young people at school and university Sharla Duncan, CEO and founder, Team Up
14.20-15.35	The intelligent hand in practice: Examples from England and beyond David Harbourne, director of policy and research, The Edge Foundation with Archbishop Holgate's School, Liverpool Life Sciences UTC and	13.00-13.45	Eleven 'How to'workshops School leaders and students
		13.45-14.45	Lunch and exhibition
	Huddersfield Studio School	14.45-15.30	Speed learning session Practical ideas and tips from schools in
15.35-16.05	Refreshments and exhibition		fast-paced rondevals
16.10-16.40	Student performance		
	The global education reform movement and its effect on the learner Pasi Sahlberg, visiting Professor of Practice at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education		
16.40-17.30	Mind the gap forum A panel of leading figures in business and education considers the importance of developing learners' non-cognitive skills in order to improve outcomes and life chances		
19.30-22.30	Conference dinner with Gervase Phinn (Dinner package delegates only)		

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What does it mean to educate the

whole child? **Sue Williamson** reflects
on the themes of
this year's SSAT
National Conference

Pelcome to the annual SecEd supplement to the SSAT National Conference. This year's conference is for all school leaders and teachers who believe that student outcomes are more than just exam results. This is not to say that exams aren't important – clearly they are – but they are not the full picture.

As any teacher will tell you, a grade alone is a poor simulacrum for the whole child. When I was a headteacher in Lincolnshire, I was proud of raising our GCSE results from 15 to 56 per cent. But the thing that got me up in the morning was seeing the hundreds of students who went on to realise their dreams and ambitions. The sum of a student's experiences and outcomes at school needs to be considered and valued in its entirety. It is for this reason that the theme of this year's conference is simply: "the learner".

So what exactly is it that we mean by the whole child? A lot of people talk about 21st century skills. Professor Dylan Wiliam has called these a distraction of the last 15 years. I would go further and say they don't really exist.

The type of skills that people identify as being 21st century (creativity, resilience, problemsolving etc) have always been important. Furthermore, these skills don't usually exist in isolation.

At SSAT, we believe these skills should be embedded within the rigorous discipline of subjects. What does it mean to be creative in history? What does it mean to be resilient in maths? We know these skills are important, but they need to be grounded in disciplinary



# Educating the whole child

knowledge. A brilliant school needs leaders and teachers who are pragmatic and visionary, short-term and long-term, delivering on what they are accountable for but enabled to innovate too. This year's conference will focus on how schools can raise achievement, increase subject knowledge and develop our learners to become happy and fulfilled individuals.

At the conference, we will be joined by Professor Pasi Sahlberg who will bring an international perspective by exploring global reform movements and their effects. If we are serious about developing a world-class system for each of our learners we need to look beyond Britain.

This broadening of horizons will make us reflect on the roles of both teacher and learner; we will also be joined by Professor Sugata Mitra whose Hole in the Wall and School in the Cloud projects have inspired debate and interest across the globe. Whatever your view of Prof Mitra's work he highlights the immense capacity and potential of young people.

Professor Tony Wagner will also pick up on this theme by advocating the need to develop young people who are innovators. He suggests that it is only by fostering innovation within our students that they will go on to change the world and be successful.

Yet we know a lot of students do not achieve success later on, despite having excellent exam records, which is why Professor Eric Mazur will question why students can pass tests but fail at life. With many schools in the process of designing new assessment frameworks after the removal of levels, Prof Mazur's keynote will be very timely.

At the conference, we will take a broader view of what achievement means. Lord Baker, the former secretary of state for education, will make an impassioned call to value learning by doing, exploring the notion of the "intelligent hand" – which will be followed by schools from across the network, showcasing this in action. David McQueen, of *Apprentice* fame, and Sherry Coutu, businesswoman and philanthropist, will share lessons

from the world of work that our students will soon be entering.

Keynotes will be complemented by workshops sessions. "What if" workshops from leading thinkers, including David Weston (Teacher Development Trust), Martin Robinson (author of *Trivium 21c*), and Dawn Haywood (Student Engagement Trust), will help you rethink the possible.

"How to" workshops, led by school leaders and students, will take you through how outstanding schools have raised achievement without sacrificing their belief that student outcomes are more than just exam results.

We will take this work forward by launching Mind the Gap – an exciting new cross-sector project. This open forum will seek to define and codify what we mean by noncognitive skills in order to provide a common language for schools, employers and policy-makers to take the dialogue on education to a more meaningful level. Schools at the conference will have the opportunity to get involved with this important work.

At the heart of the conference will be a celebration of the learner, with performances, panel debates and main stage speeches from inspiring young people.

The next four articles reflect this, highlighting some of the outstanding and innovative practice from across the SSAT network that is having a real and sustainable impact on learners.

The stories demonstrate how every school can – and must – find its own path to developing the whole child, in a way that suits the school's context and vision.

Just as learners will be central over the two days of the conference, central to these narratives are the perspectives of the students themselves. I hope you enjoy reading about these four exciting projects as much as I did.

Many of the schools and students featured in this supplement will be joining us on December 4 and 5 in Manchester at the SSAT National Conference. I hope you will too.

• Sue Williamson is the chief executive of SSAT.

# SSAT NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2014 STUDENT VIDEO COMPETITION

A chance for your learners to create a video to showcase the best of your school and have it played from the National Conference main stage.

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SecEd

# The learners... on developing technical skills

By building an aeroplane, students at **North East Wolverhampton Academy** have
developed much more than just STEM skills

here aren't many schools in the country where students get the chance to build a real plane – but North East Wolverhampton Academy is one of them. A mixed secondary school with just over 1,000 students, the academy faces many challenges, mainly linked to the poverty in the area – more than 50 per cent of their students are on free school meals.

The academy sees one of its core purposes as raising the self-esteem and confidence of students, as well as providing them with the skills and exam grades they will need after school life. That is why they are always looking for innovative ways to engage their students inside and outside of the classroom.

When the opportunity came in 2011 to submit a bid to the Schools Build a Plane Challenge, an educational initiative launched by Boeing and the Royal Aeronautical Society, they knew it was a chance they had to take.

#### Stuart Blakemore Director of science

Stuart Blakemore, the school's director of science and the man in charge of the project, explained how the programme aims to inspire young people to take STEM subjects by giving them the chance to build a real light aircraft – a RANS Coyote S-6ES.

When lessons finish every Wednesday afternoon, a group of six or seven students assemble at a converted garage on the school site and work on everything from the plane's wings and fuselage to its engine and electrical systems. New students are continually being introduced to the project.

Mr Blakemore is clear that there are many benefits. It develops their understanding of the scientific and engineering principles behind flight and enhances their project-management, problem-solving,

team-working and communication skills.

He is delighted at the impact that the project has had and is quick to point out that it has helped students in the classroom – bringing their learning to life. But he is also clear that "education is about much more than just exam results", and this project, he believes, shows just what schools can do.

It has made a huge difference to some students' lives. Two year 11 students, for example, used the skills they had learned to get Apprenticeships when they left school this summer. Other students have given presentations at the Farnborough and the Cosford air shows, visited the Houses of Parliament, and talked to staff at the Royal Aeronautical Society and Boeing.

Mr Blakemore continued: "(Education) is all about preparing people for life, making them useful members of society and giving them the wherewithal to make judgements, earn a living and bring up their own kids. We can see that this project is helping to do this."

#### John and Roshnee, year 13

Year 13 student John Phillips has been involved since the start as project manager and has seen the plane gradually take shape over the last three years.

As well as developing his technical knowledge and boosting his confidence, the opportunity has inspired him to aim for an engineering Apprenticeship when he leaves school. He also hopes that when the plane is completed next summer he might get the chance to study for his pilot's licence and actually fly it.

"I have learned so much from doing this project – skills like riveting, that I didn't even know existed before," said John, who is doing A levels in physics and IT and a BTEC in engineering.





"People at school come up to me and say 'I've heard you are building a plane. Is it a real plane?!' – I say 'yes. Why wouldn't it be?".

"So far we have done the whole fuselage, installed the cables, done all the riveting to the fuselage, added the flaps and the ailerons and put the engine on the front. We have still got the wings, dashboard and electrics to finish.

"It's not just about building a plane," John explained. "It's everything behind it – gaining confidence, giving presentations, developing project-management skills. I wasn't confident when I was younger, but now I can speak in front of a large audience, manage a team of students, meet deadlines and organise events. This project has prepared me for what to expect in the engineering industry. It has been a great opportunity to gain experience and skills that you can't usually learn at school."

Year 13 student Roshnee Verma, another member of the team, has also grown in self-confidence. Roshnee, who is taking art A level and BTECs in media and sports studies, initially offered to take photographs of the project as part of the school's enrichment programme.

But within a few weeks she hit on the idea of advertising the project in school to get more students involved. She started putting on events and using Facebook, Twitter Flying high: Inside the school's workshop (top); John and Roshnee with the aeroplane at the Farnborough Air Show

and Instagram to promote the work. She organised leaflets for the Farnborough Air Show, got art students to design a logo and come up with ideas for planes of the future, and asked catering students to make food for a promotional event. She and John also write a blog – newabuildaplane.blogspot.co.uk – detailing the plane's progress.

"When I started all this I was a very shy student, always standing behind everyone else," said Roshnee, who wants to be a primary teacher. "But now I'm out there giving speeches and advertising the project.

"This has made me really confident and independent. I mentor some year 7 girls and have done activities like flying paper planes with them. I'm always telling them that they should get involved in the Build a Plane team."

She firmly believes that learners grow in confidence when they get the chance to teach their peers: "My advice to teachers would be to give students a topic to research and ask them to independently teach each other by presenting it in front of the other class members," she said. "That way every individual learns – you learn and your peers learn."

SSAT inquire inspire innovate impact

# The creation of communication leaders at **Jack Hunt School** has led to remarkable outcomes – both in language study and in wider school life

anguages are a major part of life at Jack Hunt School in Peterborough. The school is a specialist language and sports college and the 1,750 students speak 66 different languages between them. This presents teachers and students at the school with some unique challenges.

Ten years ago, keen to understand the needs of its bilingual and multilingual learners and determined to support them in the best way possible, the school created a team of student communication leaders. They didn't know then what an impact they would have on the life of the school.

### Kate Simpson-Holley Deputy headteacher

"We did some student voice work with students who were relatively new to the country and relatively new to English," explained deputy headteacher Kate Simpson-Holley.

"They told us that they felt like fish out of water and that their selfesteem was challenged by being bilingual. It really worried us so we decided to get a group of them together, place them at the centre of training and development and make them real experts in their field."

The school created a new student role – communication leaders. Today there are 80, all of whom wear a distinctive purple badge with the words: "Hello – talk, listen, take part."

They work closely with staff, observing lessons, co-planning, team-teaching and even delivering literacy training to teachers – all with the aim of supporting bilingual and multi-lingual students, while at the same time benefiting everyone.

They have conducted research projects on how the school could change to help all learners, suggesting for example that rectangular tables in the canteen should be replaced by round tables to encourage broader discussion and the mixing of different groups.

Ms Simpson-Holley points out that they "wanted to make sure they knew about learning and teaching and pedagogy and had a

# The learners... on developing as communicators

voice in how we developed teachers across the school – so that when a new student walks in speaking a language teachers might not have come across before they can support them and help them to feel really good about themselves".

Ms Simpson-Holley continued: "Communication leaders have had a huge impact at the school. Our bilingual students feel that they have a skill that is not only valued here but will be valued throughout their lives – by universities and by employers."

The communication leaders include advanced bilingual learners who speak a number of languages, Pupil Premium students and challenging pupils.

"Putting challenging pupils in a situation where they plan a lesson with a member of staff and then go and watch it has been hugely successful," Ms Simpson-Holley added.

"It really changes their relationship with teachers because they can see how much effort goes into a lesson."

#### Safwan, year 9 Eman, year 11

Safwan Rija, a highly motivated year 9 student, has been a communication leader since year 7. His first language is Bengali but his English was already excellent by the time he started at Jack Hunt.

He jumped at the chance to help other learners and has done everything from lesson observations and pupil interviews to presentations to school governors and to headteachers at the SSAT's 2013 National Conference in Manchester. He is also helping Jack Hunt teacher Lucie Swannell conduct interviews with students for her EdD (doctor of education) research on bilingual learners.

While he has undoubtedly helped and supported other students, Safwan has gained from the experience too.

"When I first started it was really scary giving presentations, but now I can stand up in front



of a big crowd very easily," said Safwan, 13, who would like to study aeronautical engineering at university and eventually become a pilot.

"Working as part of a team improves your collaboration skills and means that we can work out new ways of improving school and making things better for other people.

"You understand how other people feel when they arrive with their own language and don't understand what is going on. You really feel what they are going through and want to help them out. I try to give as much help as I can."

Year 11 student Eman Aly said that when she arrived at Jack Hunt from Egypt two years ago it helped to know that she could ask for help from the communication leaders.

Arabic is her first language and although her English was good when she joined the school

### Language lovers: (I-r) Safwan Rija and Eman Aly

to people speaking so quickly: "It felt strange," said 15-year-old Eman, whose favourite subjects are maths, science and French.

"Everything was new and when I spoke I had to think of the words first and then translate them in my head. I'd just say a word and then stop and have to think about the next. Now it is easy and I feel confident."

Like Safwan she believes her language skills will help her in the future.

"It means you can speak and communicate with people from all over the world," she said. "You can translate and you have an idea of their traditions, culture, ideas and how they treat each other. Language skills are very beneficial in life."





# Creativity is a key skill that is relevant to all disciplines, as the students of **Heathfield Community School** understand very well

t a time when the artistic disciplines that can support the development of creative thought are being squeezed from the curriculum, we visited Heathfield Community School in Taunton to hear about the cross-curricular benefits of a broad, integrated curriculum. From studying the First World War poets to playing rugby, creativity is right at the heart of students' learning.

Heathfield, a 1,200-student 11 to 16 school has been a vocal advocate for the arts and creativity for many years. They also achieve highly – something they partly attribute to their emphasis on creativity – and are a member of Leading Edge, a network of high-performing schools.

#### Mike Bettles, deputy head

So why does Heathfield think it is so important to embed creativity across the curriculum? Mike Bettles, deputy head and a member of the SSAT Vision 2040 group, sees the recent changes to the national curriculum as an opportunity for innovation.

He explained: "When we consider what we mean by curriculum, we certainly don't mean the national curriculum – or at least just that. We believe the curriculum encompasses a student's total experience at the school."

Mr Bettles argues that Heathfield's academic success is not in spite of the emphasis they place on the arts, but because of it. "Why is creativity in the curriculum so vital? "First, it contributes massively to our exam performance. Second, it develops qualities of discipline and determination and a love of higher standards that spills over into other areas of the curriculum. And third, it allows more students to invest in the idea of school, education and personal growth.

"There is no doubt that creativity exists in different spheres," said Mr Bettles. "We feel that creativity is very important, both for teachers and students. The more creative we can be, the better."

#### Charlotte and Luke, year 11

Mr Bettles' views are reiterated by year 11 students Charlotte Newman and Luke Warman, who see creativity as a vital part of their learning.

Charlotte, who hopes to become a classical actor, said that her favourite subjects – English and drama – enhance one another. The creative skills she uses in English, for instance, help when it comes to annotating scripts and developing characters in drama.

"English gives you a breadth of knowledge and develops analytical thinking, both of which are also essential in acting," she explained.

"You need to be able to analyse a character or a script and then draw on your knowledge, interpretation and imagination to bring it to life.

"Acting can also enable you to develop your ability to analyse emotions and be more in tune with people around you. This skill is incredibly helpful in all walks of life."

Luke, a keen rugby player, prefers maths and science but believes that creativity is vital in other subjects too.

"Creativity is something you can develop and it's easy to see within sport," said Luke, who plays centre for the school's under-16 rugby team. "In rugby it's all about knowing what the other team are going to do before they do it and then being able to expose the weak points in their game.

"You learn from what you see the opposition doing and you put the right skills in place to be able to counter it."

During their time at Heathfield, Charlotte and Luke have worked out how they learn best. They each have an excellent understanding of the skills and qualities they have developed through their learning and the pedagogies and experiences they have found the most powerful. The two students agreed that developing transferable skills that they can use across the curriculum is helpful. They are both student lesson observers and have picked up a wealth of revision ideas and learning techniques by watching teachers plan and teach lessons.

"It opens up different ideas that you might not have thought of," said Charlotte.

"I watched a year 8 English class where the teacher asked the group to write a descriptive piece. They started off with a simple sentence, with each word written on a sticky note.

"Then they added new, more descriptive words in between the notes, so a sentence like 'the sky was grey' might become 'the looming sky was grey'. When they transferred the idea to their own writing the students carried on using the technique, using a wider vocabulary and more complex words."

As well as expanding their creativity, knowledge and criticalthinking skills, Heathfield pupils encourages to entrepreneurial too. Charlotte is managing director (marketing) of Café Paramo, a student-run business that imports and sells coffee from the Dominican Republic. Proceeds from every packet of coffee sold go directly to the coffee growers and their children's schools.

Both students have had the chance to do work experience too. Luke worked in the legal department of a fashion business while Charlotte worked with a theatre director. She also played Bianca in an RSC Open Stages production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Taunton this summer.

#### Creative minds: (I-r) Charlotte and Luke





# The learners... on developing as learners

A professional development project at **Kingsford Community School** has had a huge impact on teachers and has helped students to realise what it is to be a learner

ingsford Community School is a mixed secondary school of 1,500 students in Newham, east London – the most ethnically diverse district in England. Seventy per cent of students speak English as an additional language, a high proportion have SEN and many are eligible for free school meals.

Since it opened in 2000, the school has aimed to be at the forefront of developments in teaching and learning, using its language specialism, Confucius classroom status and Leading Edge partnership to help students contribute to the wider life of the school and the local and international community. A year ago, they decided to take an in-depth look at how they could further improve teaching and learning.

### Joanne Mackreth-Aylett, Director of learning & teaching

Leading this work has been director of learning and teaching Joanne Mackreth-Aylett. To develop more effective teacher practice, emphasis has been placed on elements such as cross-curricular planning, sharing of good practice, dialogic marking, and helping students to develop transferable skills. But to realise true transformation, the school understood they would have to find new ways to help students understand how best to learn.

They did this through establishing a common framework and language for learning across the school. Now, virtually all 1,500 students are aware of collaborative learning, effective use of ICT, thinking skills, assessment for learning, and accelerated learning. But more than that, students say that the school's new approach is having "a major influence" on them as learners. They are not only acquiring the skills they need for life in the 21st century, but are also being enabled to take ownership of their learning. Similarly, the teachers at Kingsford

are "buzzing" about the difference in the school's learning ethos.

"It's not about giving teachers a toolkit," explained Ms Mackreth-Aylett. "It's about drilling down and getting them to think about the most effective teacher and learner behaviours. A lot of teachers who have been teaching for a long time say 'I know that I'm a good teacher but I have realised that I'm taking shortcuts'. Now we think about the learning cycle and what we need to do to ensure that all our pupils are making progress."

### Haseeb, Nichola and Sena, year 11

We spoke to three year 11 students about Kingsford's approach. The trio of 15-year-olds are learning ambassadors at the school and gave a presentation at SSAT's Achievement Show 2014.

Haseeb Akhtar, who plans to study maths, chemistry and biology at A level, and then medicine at university, said he liked the crosscurricular links that have been made, the emphasis on transferable skills, and the fact there is "a common language for learning". For example, students have been given glossaries outlining the meaning of terms like "recall", "describe" and "evaluate" - terms used across subjects and in exams. "There is more collaboration too," he added. "The teachers always share their success criteria and encourage higher level thinking using Anderson's taxonomy.

"I enjoy the balance between independence and collaboration. When we work independently we always have a vision or a focus. It means that we are taking our learning into our own hands and making our own goals. We have the right mindset and focus and we create a goal at the end of each lesson using the success criteria.

"The collaborative element makes lessons more fun. We are encouraged to enjoy our learning and to focus on why we are learning as well as on what we are learning."

Nichola Chakma said that her motivation has increased. The Kingsford teachers have introduced dialogic marking via the school's VLE so students are given regular feedback and are asked to respond to the feedback themselves.

"The feedback is really helpful because we can look at how we can move on to the next level in order to improve our grades," said Nichola, who wants to study geography, maths, chemistry and biology at A level and then medicine.

"Teachers post a comment next to your work and if you have understood and taken their advice then you can highlight what you have done next to their comment. It shows that the teachers have taken the time to find ways to help us improve and it creates a good bond between pupils and teachers."

Nichola is enthusiastic about pupil-led lessons: "In science I had to talk about rocks, teach the topic to my peers and set an activity," she said. "It boosted my confidence and I feel much more comfortable about communicating my ideas now."

Sena Torsutse, meanwhile, says she has become a more independent, organised learner: "I have learned a lot from learning collaboratively with other students," said Sena, who aims to study biology, chemistry, psychology and English literature at A level. "It prepares us for 6th form and university, when we won't be able to rely on teachers as much. The pupil-led enquiries have made me more empowered, curious and interested in my learning."

The three students have some tips for teachers of the future:

- Give regular feedback about the level students are working at and what they need to do to improve.
- Link past and present learning to keep it fresh in students' minds.
- Give students the confidence to ask questions.
- Memorable lessons and celebrating success create a positive learning environment in which students want to learn.

#### **Further information**

Kingsford used SSAT's Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme to support its work. Visit www.ssatuk.co.uk/teep

The learners: Sena (left), Haseeb and Nicola (right)







Join us at the

## **SSAT National Conference 2014:** The Learner

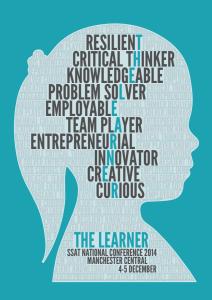
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'A brilliant school needs leaders and teachers who are pragmatic and visionary, short term and long term, delivering on what they are accountable for but enabled to innovate too.'

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North East Wolverhampton Academy, p4



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Jack Hunt School, p5

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Heathfield Community School, p6

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Kingsford Community College, p7

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