



SSAT Journal 12

Summer 2018

ssat the schools, students
and teachers network

Contents

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 1 | Welcome
<i>Sue Williamson, SSAT</i> | 24 | Changing lives through learning
<i>Abby Deeks, West Lakes Academy</i> |
| 2 | Restructuring lessons for rapid pace and metacognitive practice
<i>Claire Bishop,
Sir Christopher Hatton Academy</i> | 27 | Under staffed: reflections on how best to integrate non-specialists into a department
<i>Russell Coombes, Haydon School</i> |
| 5 | Why we haven't all got a growth mindset... yet
<i>Chris Hildrew,
Churchill Academy & Sixth Form</i> | 31 | Addressing teacher recruitment at academy level
<i>Thomas Bayston,
The Priory Academy LSST</i> |
| 8 | How we embedded formative assessment
<i>Annabelle Taylor,
Ricards Lodge High School</i> | 36 | LGBT inclusivity in schools: teaching children there are 'no outsiders'
<i>Andrew Moffat,
Parkfield Community School</i> |
| 11 | Teaching and learning: it's about knowing the young people
<i>Daniella McManamon,
Elthorne Park High School</i> | 38 | Preparing for life after school – especially relevant to young people with special needs
<i>Peter Chambers, SSAT</i> |
| 15 | Desirable difficulties: creating the conditions to stretch and challenge the most able learners
<i>Lucy Greenwood and Jodie Goulding,
Skipton Girls' High School</i> | 42 | Why is visible leadership so important in schools?
<i>Laura Clash, Cambourne Village College</i> |
| 18 | Progress based on collaborative learning, innovative engagement – and challenge
<i>Senior Team, Pendle Vale College</i> | 45 | Consider your 'why' to build and develop the school's culture
<i>Dr Patricia Thompson,
Sir Jonathan North Community College</i> |
| 21 | Engaging teacher stakeholders in their own professional learning
<i>Neil Feist, Sackville School</i> | 48 | Where students are empowered to improve teaching and learning
<i>Chris Stephens, The Romsey School</i> |



Welcome

*Sue Williamson,
Chief Executive, SSAT*

Welcome to the last journal of the 2017/18 academic year. This term we have been celebrating the success of member schools at our three Educational Outcomes events in Manchester, Birmingham and London. It is very special to present the awards to the headteachers and senior leaders of primary and secondary schools. I was also able to present certificates for schools that had successfully completed sections of the SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education. It is great to see the celebrations in the media and on Twitter.

For the first time, we used the Educational Outcomes events to present the graduation certificates and lapel badges to our Leadership Legacy Project participants. We had 125 teachers in their first four years of teaching and gave them a variety of leadership experiences: a launch event with Baroness Sue Campbell and with Bill Rankin of Apple; a day at the SSAT National Conference; regional meetings with a leadership expert; and work shadowing with a senior leadership team. The feedback is extremely positive and we were impressed by the energy, vision and creativity of the participants, who completed their year by submitting a think piece. You can read articles by four of the Leadership Legacy Fellows in this edition of the journal.

We will be running the project again in the next academic year and there will be a letter sent to you before the summer break. This opportunity is open to all member schools and we are not restricting numbers. To paraphrase Arsene Wenger, 'We have taken a group of people and acted as a guide. We are showing them the way.' This is SSAT's contribution to the school-led system – supporting and developing the next generation of school leaders.

Also in this edition, you can read about the learning that emerged from the Apple study tour to Texas and California. Apple is one of our partners and has committed to running another tour in 2019, as well as supporting a number of events in England. At their HQ in London, we recently held the Primary Headteachers Conference, which included stimulating sessions on the management of change and reducing workload.

I love my visits to schools, as I am always introduced to innovative work designed to improve the life chances of young people. I had an amazing visit to Catcote Academy in Hartlepool and visited their industrial unit, shop and café. This is captured in Peter Chambers' article. SSAT will be working closely with colleagues in special schools to give their youngsters the opportunity to engage in meaningful work and lead independent lives.

I am sure that you are looking forward to the summer holidays and I hope you have a great break. We look forward to hearing the news about your examination results and the destinations of your students. Thank you to you and all the staff at your school for their hard work. Teachers do make lives; they are hugely important in the futures of the young people they teach. I am a judge of the Teaching Awards' Lifetime Achievement Award, and the best testimony we receive is always from the students, past and present. They truly value all that you do for them.

We look forward to working with you in the new academic year.

**Sue Williamson,
SSAT**



Restructuring lessons for rapid pace and metacognitive practice

*Claire Bishop,
Sir Christopher Hatton Academy*

Claire Bishop, Assistant Principal Humanities and Research at Sir Christopher Hatton Academy, gives a frank account of her new approach to teaching, its challenges and the benefits to teaching and learning.

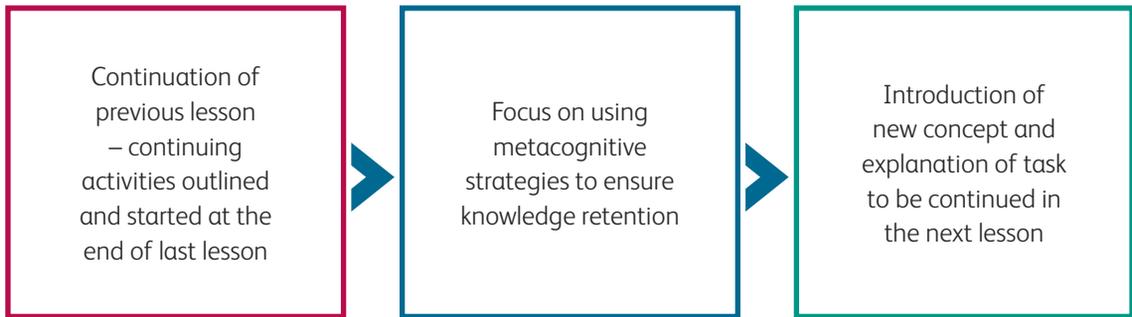
As a trainee teacher I was taught there was a formula to what makes a good lesson:

1. A 'settler': get them in, get them engaged and ready for the topic
2. A 'starter' activity that introduces the topic
3. An activity, e.g. gathering information into a table
4. Mini-plenary
5. An activity
6. Plenary to determine knowledge gained in the lesson.

Later, I began to hear that the special lessons were the ones that ignored this structure and thought 'outside the box'. But this does not deal with the issue of the 'normal lesson'. What does a well-structured lesson plan look like? How can lessons be structured to ensure progress and engage learners? Is there a way to ensure that my pupils feel secure and have a good structure to their learning that also challenges them?

Although I make no claims that the action research project described here will revolutionise the classroom, changing the structure of lessons and applying some metacognitive strategies for knowledge retention have made my classroom a more experimental and productive place.





Aims of restructuring lessons

This restructuring of lessons had three key goals. First, to ensure that as little time is wasted in lessons as possible, as the new GCSE history has so much to cover in such a short space of time. Second, to keep pupils engaged in their history learning through a range of activities. And third, to ensure that knowledge retention is high.

With these aims in mind, I critically analysed my lesson structures. My classes and I have a good relationship so while I liked to ‘hook them’ as soon as they got in, this was not an essential behaviour management tool at the moment. I decided to have three basic sections in each lesson – see diagram above.

The second phase of the lesson, focusing on metacognitive processes, includes:

- Quick-fire subject knowledge quizzes to determine the level of knowledge pupils have about the topic we are learning.
- Modelling answers, demonstrating my thought process as I go.
- Self-evaluation conversations about *how* we are revising the topics at home, dispelling some myths about the ‘best’ ways to revise.
- Peer and self-assessment.
- The ‘big’ questions. For example, rather than just focusing on whether Oliver Cromwell was a hero or a villain, we discussed whether it was the role of a historian to judge the past or merely relay it to their audience.
- Updating our personal learning checklists (PLCs – a red, amber, green system that pupils use to judge their knowledge against the scheme of work or exam board specification).

I decided to undertake this new structure with both year 7 and year 11 classes. The reason for the year 11

choice was sheer necessity: I had inherited a class of lovely, hard-working pupils who had not completed two key topics of the course, so we simply had an enormous amount to get through. As for the year 7 class, I chose to compare the impact with this class as they were so different. The year 11 class is a ‘top set’ whereas the year 7s are mixed ability. Also, the year 11 class is very small, only 17 pupils, compared to the class of 31 lower down the school. The final reason was the different foci for the two years; the aim with year 11 is clearly to prepare them for their upcoming exams, whereas with year 7 I have the joy of instilling a love of history in the young people I teach. It would be interesting to see whether the proposed structure would have differing levels of impact on these very different classes.

Impact on learning

In both classes, the pace at which we worked through the scheme of work was slightly faster, finishing on average three lessons earlier than the original scheme of work had allowed. Although this did not really affect my year 7 class, the comfort of knowing that we could now spend more time revising content was a relief to both me and my year 11s.

I cannot say how this could affect the pace at which we could complete the GCSE course based on this small-scale research; that is something I’m planning to explore in the future.

The key change, however, was the level of depth pupils were prepared to dive into, shown through their questioning and their written answers. I have been a history teacher for five years and have an arsenal of resources passed on by veteran teachers covering the classic topics such as the Magna Carta and the English Civil War – but my resources were now not challenging enough, and I have had to remedy that! I also felt that we had covered



the topics at GCSE in the same depth as with the previous specification, which had less content.

The key change was the level of depth pupils (both Y7 and Y11) were prepared to dive into, shown through their questioning and written answers; I have had to find more challenging resources!

When asked about how they viewed their experiences, year 7 felt more comfortable with the changes than the year 11s. One pupil from Y11 commented that they saw what I was trying to do, but they were ‘used to the old structure and [didn’t] like change’ whereas a year 7 pupil commented that they ‘enjoyed working on [their] own at the start of the lesson as it gave [them] the space to remember last lesson.’

I found this particularly interesting, as it links to the importance of reviving learned information before teaching new aspects of the topic, as outlined by the EEF’s guidance on metacognition.

Impact on my teaching

I love moving around the classroom and found that now this was more purposeful than just ensuring that my presence was felt. As pupils were straight in and working, I had more time to spend with pupils who have been away and missed key parts of the topic. Although my school’s attendance figures are consistently at or above the national expectations, I have issues of persistent absence with a couple of pupils in both classes. This time at the beginning of the lesson allowed me to focus on pupils who had missed key concepts and make sure that they ‘get it’.

On a more practical level, starting the lesson half-way through a task meant that I had the sheets ready to go for these pupils. With the more traditional lesson structure, I had the bad habit of forgetting resources we had used previously, meaning that the pupils didn’t get them until I had a chance to email them later in the day – this also meant I couldn’t support them with the trickier aspects of the work while they looked through things at home. Now, I had everything ready to go.

My planning was more focused. Rather than thinking ‘how can I create a hook that allows my pupils to engage with the topic?’ it was now ‘how can I link this to the real world, and what can I do to explain the fundamental historical concepts?’ This makes my lessons feel more focused on the bigger principles in history and I have broached ideas with my year 7s that I would previously have saved until A-level. The process has opened my eyes to the younger pupils’ potential, and has removed the barriers that I had subconsciously been creating.

Overall, I feel this simple restructuring of lessons has enabled me to utilise metacognitive strategies and rethink how I want time to be used in the classroom. It has also broken the barriers I was unconsciously creating as a teacher, and enabled my pupils to take charge of their learning.

References

These actions were based on the original *Education Endowment Foundation* information available on their website: [bit.ly/2yKNTRS](https://www.eef.org.uk/what-we-do/our-research/2yKNTRS)

The EEF have since published a really useful guidance booklet and poster to explain how metacognition can be applied to the classroom: [bit.ly/2HDv4Ak](https://www.eef.org.uk/what-we-do/our-research/2HDv4Ak)



Why we haven't all got a growth mindset... yet

Chris Hildrew,
Churchill Academy & Sixth Form

And how we can help develop it in our students, and ourselves. By Chris Hildrew, headteacher, Churchill Academy & Sixth Form .

In SSAT Journal 1 (Winter 2014/15), I wrote an article entitled *Becoming a growth mindset school* about my work as a deputy headteacher at Chew Valley School as we tried to scale up Professor Carol Dweck's work on mindset into a whole-school culture. Now, three and a half years later, I'm headteacher at Churchill Academy & Sixth Form, still just as committed to using mindset as a vehicle for school improvement, and the journal article has expanded into a book with the same title.

A growth mindset culture seeks to tackle motivation by instilling a school-wide ethos that we can all improve through the careful, consistent and deliberate application of appropriate strategies. We have sought to provide all our learners with strategies to overcome difficulty by celebrating behaviours such



as persistence, struggle and taking on difficult challenges.

Getting growth mindset back to front

While the ideas behind growth mindset have become more widespread and popular, they have also become more widely critiqued. In our work, we have come to the conclusion that many people understand mindset effects back to front. The way that many of Dweck's initial experiments have been presented led us initially to believe that developing a growth mindset in our students would lead them to increased motivation and greater academic

success. This meant that our first attempts at developing a growth mindset culture saw us working on mindsets in isolation, through assemblies, displays, and specialised lessons designed to introduce the concepts and approaches. While these approaches did no harm, and perhaps helped students to understand what a growth mindset was and what we expected, they were not habit-forming and did not, in many cases, change student attitudes.

What we now understand is that, in fact, it is the other way around: greater academic success and progress, when it



is the result of determined and consistent effort, develops a growth mindset in our students. When students apply effort and carefully chosen learning strategies in school, and then see the progress they make as a result, they begin to equate effort and strategy with academic success and achievement, and they are then more likely to apply that approach in future. To be effective, those effort-leading-to-achievement experiences need to be happening multiple times every day the child is in school, to reinforce that connection and develop the learning behaviour. At Churchill, we try to engineer those experiences through our curriculum and our extracurricular offer.

Greater academic success and progress, when it is the result of determined and consistent effort, develops a growth mindset in our students (it's not the other way round)

If the level of challenge is too low, students will achieve easily without too much effort and without encountering difficulty or struggle. Then, they will start to equate 'achievement' with 'easy,' which is the beginning of a fixed mindset. Alternatively, if the level of challenge is too high and students are not appropriately supported to reach that high expectation, they will start to see effort as fruitless and be inclined to give up – again, the seeds of a fixed mindset.



The key is to find that Goldilocks pitch where the level of challenge is such that students have to struggle, try different strategies, and really apply themselves – but then they achieve. This needs skilful teachers who know their students really well and can plan their curriculum and pitch their lessons so they are 'just right'.

Working on student motivation

In order to focus students on their approach to learning and the strategies they are using, rather than just the outcomes, we rethought our whole school culture. This started with us considering the academy's core values, to align them to our approach to character education and developing a growth mindset. This process included teaching and support staff, and a wide-ranging group of students, researching the attributes and characteristics that would lead to effective learning.

In the end, we settled on the research of Angela Duckworth and colleagues at CharacterLab, which found that character strengths fell into three broad categories: strengths of the

heart, strengths of the mind, and strengths of the will. From this framework, we settled on our three academy values: kindness (heart), curiosity (mind), and determination (will).

Within this framework, we then laid out the approaches and attitudes we value in learning, based in the research of Dweck and Duckworth, and also Walter Mischel, whose Marshmallow Test experiments showed the power of self-regulation. The framework we have established is that at Churchill, we believe in the value of:

- determined and consistent effort
- a hunger to learn new things
- challenging ourselves to go beyond our comfort zone
- viewing setbacks and mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow
- seeking and responding to feedback
- encouraging others to succeed.

This set of value statements informs our attitude to learning reports for families. And they are used as the basis for conversations between teachers,



tutors and students in order to coach learners to ever more effective study habits and approaches to their lessons.

Developing metacognition and leadership of learning

The missing piece of the jigsaw was getting the students themselves to understand that self-regulation and adopting specific approaches and strategies were the keys to unlocking learning and progress. To do this, our director of English, Dave Grimmett, ran a project with students who had been identified by staff as having made exceptional progress over the course of the academic year. Dave gathered them together to get them to reflect self-consciously on what they had done to make this progress, culminating in an 'exhibition of progress' where the approaches and their outcomes were celebrated by the students and with their families. In completing this research, we hoped to make explicit what was otherwise implicit, so that the students could reuse the same strategies in future.

In the next year, we hope to use these students' experiences as the basis for a learning ambassadors programme, where the approaches can be shared across the student body by their peers as methods for achieving greater success.

The students themselves identified the following as having the highest impact:

- effort in classwork
- personal determination to get better
- positive relationship with teacher
- effort in homework
- personal understanding of the work and how to improve
- enjoying the subject.

Working closely with the students, Dave Grimmett was then able to identify three key approaches:

- 1. Break out of your comfort zone:** pushing yourself to do something difficult, or different, is the best

way of making progress. Often this was prompted by something – feedback from a teacher, a good or bad result in an assessment, or a personal realisation and decision to change.

- 2. Be self-disciplined:** avoiding distractions, staying focused, concentrating so that the job gets done well – these are keys that unlock progress.
- 3. Reflect and think about learning:** the power of metacognition – knowing how to improve, responding positively to feedback, and developing a bank of strategies and approaches which work – allowed these students to apply themselves more purposefully to learning.

These findings provide a road map and a template for any student who wants to thrive and make exceptional progress. Our message now is simple: if these students did it – you can too.

Chris Hildrew's book, *Becoming a growth mindset school* (Routledge) is out now.