



# SSAT Journal 13

Winter 2018

**ssat** the schools, students  
and teachers network

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# Welcome

*Sue Williamson,  
Chief Executive, SSAT*

**Welcome to the winter edition of the SSAT Journal. All school terms are busy, but this one seems busier than usual. It has also been a mixture of celebration and anger. The anger has been over school funding, and I was pleased that Tom Middlehurst and I were able to join the headteachers' march to Downing Street in September to deliver a letter to the Chancellor urgently requesting sufficient and fair funding for schools. The response was the promise of £400 million for 'little extras.' As Tom writes in his blog (<http://bit.ly/2StRpGh>) this shows a complete contempt for school leaders and a wilful ignorance of the real challenge schools are facing. SSAT will continue to campaign on this critical issue.**

I never cease to be amazed about the quality and creativity of the work that goes on in schools. The 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1 gave schools the licence to be creative with the commemorative activities in schools and their communities. Across the country students gave voice to the impact of the war in their locality and the national and international implications. Performances, artwork, poetry, textiles, pottery and film were all used to thank the fallen for their sacrifice. Nationally we saw the realisation of Danny Boyle's vision for beach art, and the awesome Peter Jackson film on the life of the soldier before, during and after the war. 'They Shall Not Grow Old' is an invaluable resource for teachers.

I will never forget meeting Weston Favell's 'War Horse' – a magnificent replica that inspired a cross-curricular project. The arts are integral to individual students' flourishing and development. At SSAT we believe that schools should think imaginatively about their curriculum and do what is right for the young people and communities they serve. That is why we made it a core theme of this year's National Conference – Pure Imagination where BBC arts editor Will Gompertz spoke of being an imaginative leader and Charlotte Church, educational campaigner and singer, invited us to imagine if... we were truly creative about the curriculum.

The conference gives schools and teachers the opportunity to showcase their work, and I am very proud of the quality of the profession they display. The quality of work going on in the vast majority of schools is outstanding and we have to keep telling this to politicians and stakeholders. We know the education secretary keeps a copy of this journal in his office – the articles always show the breadth of work going on in schools.

Enjoy the journal, and if you would like to contribute please email your Relationship Manager on [rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk](mailto:rmteam@ssatuk.co.uk).

**Sue Williamson,  
SSAT**



# How peer visits foster a collaborative professional learning culture

Abi King,

City of London Academy Islington



**Abi King, assistant principal, City of London Academy Islington, explains how peer drop-ins to lessons give staff greater ownership of their professional development.**

As a school, we have a total commitment to the development of our staff as outstanding practitioners to provide a world-class education for all of young people. Our executive principal, Clare Verga, believes in the importance of developing every single member of staff – ensuring that everyone has the opportunities to progress and has

a sense of worth. Staff are supported in achieving their career goals, even if that means moving to promotion elsewhere.

Senior leaders rotate roles and responsibilities to allow them all to build expertise within a variety of remits and develop a wide skillset. This has contributed to five members of staff gaining headships in the last few years. CPD provision is carefully mapped for all staff including support staff and governors, and is linked to career stage to ensure all needs are met.

Expert teaching requires...	<b>Challenge</b> <i>So that...</i> Students have high expectations of what they can achieve	<b>Explanation</b> <i>So that...</i> Students acquire new knowledge and skills	<b>Modelling</b> <i>So that...</i> Students know how to apply the knowledge and skills
<b>What does this mean to us?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenge is understood by teachers as providing relative challenge to all, and not challenging the most able. Teachers consider individual students' starting points when planning and pitch their lessons appropriately.</li> <li>Teachers do not give 'easy work' and incremental challenge is a hallmark of all lessons. Some lessons will engage students in deliberate practice, during which the level of challenge will, and should, fall.</li> <li>Teachers facilitate 'deep thinking' and resist 'content coverage' over depth.</li> <li>Students are not in left in their 'comfort zone', nor are they left to panic, instead, students are required to struggle. Their brains should hurt during the lesson because they are required to think, engage with challenging material and concepts, and do something differently. Students are left just long enough to struggle before teachers intervene.</li> <li>Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and up-to-date. Teachers inspire students through the passion in their subject and excellent resources and stimuli.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers anchor new concepts to ones that their students already know.</li> <li>Teachers provide just enough explanation before students are left to practise something new. Teachers avoid explaining too much, so as to avoid confusing and overwhelming students.</li> <li>Teachers make complex and often abstract ideas clear and simple, without losing their complexity.</li> <li>Teachers carefully anticipate likely misconceptions that might arise, and plan their explanation carefully to address these as, or before, they arise.</li> <li>Teachers' explanations of new concepts are reinforced with wide-ranging and challenging stimuli that get students thinking.</li> <li>Explanation leads to modelling, so that students know what they are expected to be able to do with newly acquired knowledge.</li> <li>By the end of a lesson, students are able to explain a new concept themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers use modelling in all lessons to inspire, support and assess students on their deliberate practice of new skills and content.</li> <li>Teachers study worked examples and models with their students, often before deliberate practice, to help break down models and build criteria for what good looks like.</li> <li>Teachers create models of differing quality, including a model of excellence, which reinforces the challenge set in the lesson.</li> <li>Teachers might create models in advance, but are also able to build models in class with their students, so that they can demonstrate the steps required to achieve excellence.</li> <li>Teachers build models that are informed by assessment objectives, subject specifications and curricula.</li> <li>Models enable students to practise with confidence, without limiting their creativity.</li> </ul>

**Link to T&L**

This year, we have given even greater focus to providing more personalised development and giving staff greater ownership over their development. The teaching and learning team work with teaching staff to ensure the quality of professional learning is high, so as to drive the standards of teaching and learning. Pedagogical principles of teaching and learning have been co-constructed with staff and underpin the CPD of teaching staff and teaching assistants. Feedback from lesson observations is linked to a teaching principle, and staff receive personalised CPD based around that target – but they decide what activity would be best for the development of their practice. This could be joint planning, in-lesson coaching, an enquiry focus visit’ (peer drop-in), etc.

All staff complete a CPD audit which gives them the opportunity to identify a particular principle they feel they need to focus on, based on previous feedback and their self-review of their practice. The CPD audits, feedback targets from observations, and other self-evaluation work around the teaching principles inform the careful mapping of CPD opportunities to ensure all staff have a wide range of personalised and collaborative opportunities.

*What is particularly useful is the feedback, which can often inform you of something you had not previously noticed in the class you are teaching. A second pair of eyes can be very enlightening*

There is a strong emphasis on learning from each other and sharing good practice. The comprehensive whole-academy internal CPD programme includes half-termly CPD groups, twilights, middle leadership development, an academic reading group and weekly TeachMeet briefings. The TeachMeets foster the collaborative culture, as they involve staff at all levels disseminating excellent practice linked to the teaching principles, encouraging them to feel confident about recognising and sharing their expertise. Although each briefing is only 10 minutes, these sessions are highly valued by staff as a great opportunity to encourage reflection, creativity and innovation. The teaching principles keep everything focused on effective teaching and learning.



Scaffolding			
Students engage in deliberate practice	Questioning <i>So that...</i> Students are made to think hard with breadth, depth and accuracy	Feedback <i>So that...</i> Students think about and further develop their knowledge and skills	Conditions for learning <i>So that...</i> All students are effective learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are given time to practise new skills and newly acquired knowledge.</li> <li>• Teachers and students are prepared, and willing, for mistakes to happen.</li> <li>• Teachers know when, and how, to support students, and can move from providing heavy guidance to some, to providing autonomy to others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers use questioning throughout the lesson, from start to finish, to help students think harder, with greater depth and accuracy.</li> <li>• Students regularly ask questions in order to find out more or to seek further explanation. Questions form part of the culture of learning within the classroom.</li> <li>• Questions are rarely isolated and are part of a series of questions that dig deeper. Students give several responses to increasingly challenging questions that form a 'chain of questions'.</li> <li>• Teachers often ask 'why...?' and 'how do you know...?' to encourage deeper thinking and developed responses.</li> <li>• While teachers might plan challenging questions, teachers seek to pose questions that are responsive to the learning taking place in the moment.</li> <li>• Teachers give students time to consider a question and to provide an answer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers use feedback to highlight success and how to achieve excellence for students.</li> <li>• Feedback is timely and takes many forms: written, verbal, teacher-led, self-led and peer-led.</li> <li>• Feedback is clear and based on success criteria and the modelling that has already taken place.</li> <li>• Teachers design DIRT (dedicated improvement and reflection time) tasks for students to use to improve their work.</li> <li>• Because of feedback, students are able to articulate what they need to do to get better.</li> <li>• Teachers use feedback and assessment to inform future planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers have clear routines and these are understood and followed by their students.</li> <li>• The behaviour policy is followed accurately and effectively to maintain standards of behaviour in lesson.</li> <li>• Teachers ensure that equipment is out on tables and that students engage in a Do Now as soon as they enter the classroom.</li> <li>• Students stand behind chairs at the end of lesson and are dismissed in small groups on the instruction of the teacher.</li> <li>• The classroom environment, including presentation and displays, screams excellence.</li> <li>• Expectations of literacy, oracy and numeracy are high and modelled excellently. Support is given to aid this.</li> <li>• Teachers and students adopt a growth mindset and negative self-perceptions are challenged.</li> </ul>



**Peer drop-ins**

Our enquiry focus visits have been fundamental in creating this culture of collaboration and sharing. These are short, targeted visits to other colleagues' classes, sharing a particular area of practice to stimulate professional dialogue about teaching and learning. This was introduced as an optional professional learning opportunity, but it has developed organically as staff have recognised the value of seeing colleagues' work. Although it is still voluntary, every member of teaching staff has been involved over the last two years. Staff are proud to be recognised for their expertise in applying particular teaching principles and providing formative feedback after their visits. As one teacher put it, "What is particularly useful is the feedback, which can often inform you of something you had not previously noticed in the class you are teaching. A second pair of eyes can be very enlightening."

The clear message is that these visits are not observations, but a study of practice, and an opportunity to provide and receive feedback. The feedback form, co-constructed with staff, continues to develop based on an ongoing dialogue on how it helps reflect upon and improve practice. It was beginner teachers who suggested adding the examples of our teaching principles to enable them to focus on what they look like in practice; but this has been embraced by all staff, and helps

to maintain that focused dialogue around effective teaching and learning.

These visits are not just about feedback: they provide regular opportunities for staff to work collaboratively such as sharing challenges, joint planning, and coaching and mentoring – but on an informal basis. Visits are mutually arranged at specific times and last for approximately 10 minutes; we have found that even in this short time they provide powerful images of teaching and learning. The weekly visits take place both within a teacher's own curriculum areas, to develop their own subject specific pedagogy, and across departments to share practice of our teaching principles.

*There is a culture of mutual respect among staff, in which everyone feels honest about their areas for development as they know they will also be recognised for their areas of expertise*

Beginner teachers and NQTs are building their experiences from visiting other staff, as enquiry focus visits form part of their CPD induction. They are encouraged to visit other staff each week to support their development. The first 10 minutes of CPD induction sessions is always a reflection of their enquiry focus visits from the week, what they have seen and tried and the impact it has had on student learning.

Feedback from staff has shown that the professional learning opportunities provided here are greatly valued. There is a culture of mutual respect among staff, in which everyone feels honest about their areas for development as they know they will also be recognised for their areas of expertise. The school leaders are genuinely committed to staff development and to enabling every staff member to work at their best. Dylan Wiliam was one of the sources of valuable expertise that led to the school being accredited by the SSAT Framework for Exceptional Education in Professional Learning. As he put it, we strive to create a culture where we believe all teachers need to improve, not because they aren't good enough, but because they can be even better.

City of London Academy Islington | Enquiry Focus Visit

Walker(s):		Focus:	
Teacher	Class	Subject	Date & time
<b>Conditions for learning</b> Entry and exit routines	Do How actively (promotes 'every minute of learning counts')	Students answer in full sentences, both verbal and written	Growth mindset is encouraged
Resources and stimuli organised to support learning	Students answer on full sentences, both verbal and written	Efficient use of learning time	Students taking an active role in their own learning
Student equipment on desks	Efficient use of learning time	Focus is appropriate for learning	
<b>Challenge</b> Challenge is incremental	Students are made to think deeply	Students are left just long enough to struggle	Support for those who need it to access tasks
Teacher subject knowledge is excellent and is used to challenge students	Students are left just long enough to struggle	Challenge is personalised to the needs of individual students and groups of students (differentiated) such as high achievers	Students have the opportunity to discuss and make mistakes
AFL techniques to identify the appropriate level of challenge (pitch)	Students have high expectations of what they can achieve		
<b>Teacher input</b> New concepts are anchored to ones students already know	Tasks are clearly explained so students know what they have to do	Misconceptions identified and addressed	Wide-ranging and challenging stimuli used to get students thinking
Abstract ideas are made clear and simple, without losing their complexity	Misconceptions identified and addressed		Students are able to explain a new concept themselves
<b>Modelling</b> Success criteria or exemplar shared so students know what success looks like	Scaffolding / demonstration (live modelling)		Models enable students to practise with confidence
<b>Deliberate practice</b> Students have time to practise new skills	Students demonstrate resilience		Teacher identifies when to move students on to more challenging work or support them
<b>Questioning</b> 'Why' and 'how' encourage deeper thinking	Series of questions to dig deeper	Students are asked if they agree / disagree with responses	Students ask their own questions
Students are asked to extend their answers	Students are asked if they agree / disagree with responses		Targeted so all students are expected to respond
<b>Feedback</b> Success and how to achieve excellence are highlighted	Evidence of DfE 'practices' which are used to improve students' work	Staff peer development	Students are able to articulate what they need to do to improve
Based on success criteria and modelling	Evidence of DfE 'practices' which are used to improve students' work	Staff peer development	Feedback on literacy
<b>Conversations with students, students' work, learning environment, student-teacher interaction</b>			
I saw...			
I heard...			
I noticed...			
From this visit, something I would like to try is...			
<b>Feedback</b>			
What went well...			
Have you considered...?			
Staff reflection...			

4 Respect – Responsibility – Integrity