

I am delighted to welcome you our first issue of *The Journal*. In these pages colleagues from across the school share their recent professional learning work, not only to allow others to benefit from their experience and expertise, but also to celebrate success. Over recent months, we have worked together to embed a culture of evidence-based professional development and this certainly resonates throughout these pages.



In this issue, Hannah Buckley considers how we can **foster creativity** in our students, and finds that by giving them more ownership over their own work even the least motivated students focused better and produced better quality work.

Despite recent changes towards a more knowledge-based curriculum, teachers have been keen to explore ways we can continue to educate the whole child, both pastorally and in subject teaching. Hayley Garrison considers **the impact of peer mentoring** in PiXL Edge, whilst Jim Roberts considers how we can draw on cutting edge **science in the news** to generate a greater awareness of the world around us.

Both at Sackville and nationally, achievement by boys remains stubbornly lower than that of girls. To tackle this, Liam Byrne considers how **online learning platforms** can engage boys and increase their cognitive ability.

There are many other opportunities for us to develop our expertise, for example our **Professional Learning Library** held in the LRC, and *The Journal* includes signposts for these too.

Our recent **Ofsted letter** comments that 'teachers go above and beyond' and that they 'value the professional development received'; it is not difficult to see why when reading these pages.

Steve Bush

Leader of Professional Learning

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Fostering Students' Creativity in Year 10

Hannah Buckley

Keywords: *Motivation*
Independence
Problem-solving
Creativity



Student motivation in my Y9 art class was low by the end of the summer term. After a full academic year of teacher led activities, they palpably wanted to have more independence. As I am part of the Motivation CPD group, this posed an opportunity for a new approach.

The AQA GCSE art syllabus puts high value on individual creativity. Assessment objectives stress 'development of ideas' and the production of 'a personal and meaningful response'. For all subjects, Bloom's taxonomy states that 'creating' is evidence of high order thinking. As Gude (2010) asks, 'Why is it sometimes difficult for teachers to create conditions that support the emergence of creative behaviour?'

Allowing students to find their own way towards a solution, possibly making a range of mistakes, feels high risk for any teacher. How could we ensure high grades if, rather than following our guidance, students were leading themselves down their own path of discovery? Despite these fears, it was clear that we needed to make a change. It is hard to assess ideas if the teacher devises and delivers every aspect of a project. We made the decision to rethink our year 10 programme.

In 'On Becoming a Person', Rogers (1961) argues that in order to be creative and open to experience, both psychological safety and psychological freedom are necessary. This atmosphere might be difficult to achieve in a school setting, but mid-way through a three year

GCSE course is good timing for such an experiment. If Y9 was about giving our students concrete skills in our subject, then Y10 should be about learning to apply these creatively. My visit to the art department at Hurstpierpoint College in 2016, where Y10 were following individualised programmes of study, gave me the confidence that this could work.

'Control over learning in the classroom does not mean sitting back and letting the students do whatever they want to. It means working with them so that they think they have control.'

The new Y10 Sackville School GCSE art autumn project was designed to accommodate 20+ individualised projects running simultaneously in the same classroom. It encouraged personal choice, whilst providing a week-by-week scheme that kept pace and moved each student through a specific pathway of activities. For example, everyone in the room was doing a series of timed drawings, but each student drew a very different object. As Gilbert (2002) says 'Control over learning in the classroom does not mean sitting back and letting the students do whatever they want to. It means working with them so that they think they have control.'



Fostering students' creativity is not easy. For this reason, it was important that the initial grades achieved were not the main indicator of success. More important was student morale, motivation and the effect on their overall performance by Y11.

Students were initially excited about the new style of project. Armed with 'inspirational' images they chose for themselves, they talked enthusiastically about their ideas. In a large class, opportunities for one-to-one teacher and student interaction are scarce, which had an impact in the early weeks. Many students used peer-to-peer conversations to help progress at this stage.

A week or two into the project, many students experienced difficulty, particularly those with lower minimum expected grades (MEGs). 'How should I start?' 'What am I doing?' and 'I don't know what to do next' were common statements. Students sometimes changed their ideas from week to week, rather than focusing on one aspect. This period proved very intensive for the teacher! The project booklet we produced for students provided the backbone of the project. 'Look at your booklet' 'What should you be doing now?' and 'Have you seen the checklist?' were useful teacher responses.

'The atmosphere really changed, with almost all students aiming high.'

After individual coaching and technical trials, the students were ready to complete a ten hour final piece. This they took very seriously. The atmosphere really changed, with almost all students aiming high. Even the least motivated in the group were well focused and in most cases the work they produced is above their MEG, despite increased grades not being the main goal of the project.

The most able students appeared to benefit most from this student centred project, whilst those with

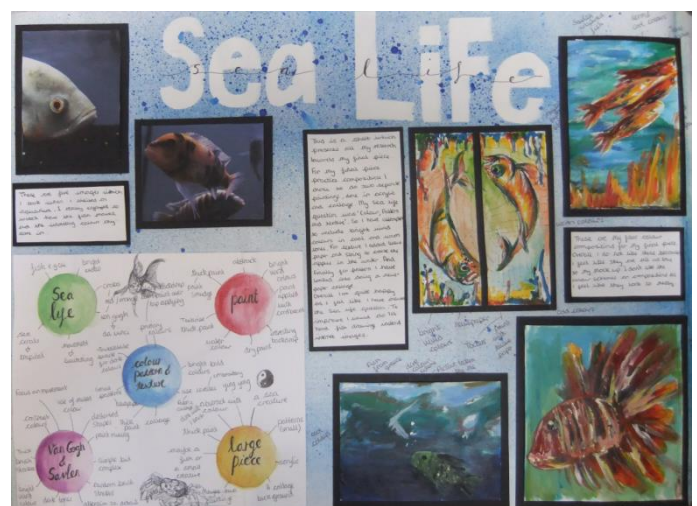
lower MEGs found it challenging at times, as their usual framework had disappeared. In order to overcome some of these shortfalls, we will plug the gaps with some very structured activities in the spring term.

So how might this be of interest to teachers outside the art department? I hope there is always merit in giving students space for individual creativity, whether in the production of a short presentation or a piece of personal research. Many of us deliver our GCSEs over three years; Y10 is a good time to embrace new challenges beyond exam preparation. Allowing a prescribed period where a more open ended project is adopted may reap real benefits in the longer term. For this to happen, both teacher and student must trust the process and the student's ability to find their own solution.

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Below: Finished artwork from Molly Putner



Supporting boys' achievement and engagement through developing cognitive ability via the use of online platforms

Liam Byrne

Keywords: cognitive
working memory
Seneca
competition



With the current media frenzy over a company's decision to question the idea of 'boys will be boys', it feels apropos that the educational world continues to grapple with that exact concept. Boys being boys too often results in a lack of engagement, an inability to work independently, and poor exam performance. Though the linear new GCSE exams have led to some closing of the gap – particularly in English Language – the performance of male students leads to this consistent conundrum: how can we get them to achieve?

Like any problem that is so pervasive, there isn't one clear solution. In order to work towards closing the gap, we initially needed to consider what the barriers to boys' achievement were. Outside of the reductive idea of 'boys being boys', or stereotypical asides like 'boys are better at maths than English' which are still peddled all too frequently, areas of potential conflict often centred around motivation and work ethic.

Whilst teaching and resourcing were also considered potential barriers, many schemes of work and modules within curricula were chosen with the reluctant boy in mind. This therefore led to different questions that required an answer: do boys feel motivated to do better, whether that is extrinsic or intrinsic motivation? What does 'good' revision look like, both in terms of time spent and quality?

Through luck rather than design, my current Year 11 English class are predominantly boys (ten

boys, one girl) and historically weak in most subjects and especially in language and literature. With an increasing amount of content in the new GCSE that required knowledge of two books, one Shakespeare play and fifteen poems – notwithstanding the skills for the language exam – my focus became on supporting all of my students to best undertake the challenges of the GCSE course.

A year ago, a random download on my Kindle Unlimited membership, a book since lost to the swathes of time, recommended that to help support student independence at KS5, a form of monitored revision was useful. It allowed you to set specific goals in terms of where students should be in terms of notes or glossaries, leaving your students in the best possible position when it came to exam times and the need for revision. This became a strategy I sought to use in my class as I felt that tighter, more focused revision tasks allowed students to build a bank of notes that provided some support at the crucial mock and exam times. However, the lack of engagement with the weekly tasks meant it effectively became a non-starter. A change was needed.



My initial foray into using Seneca, an online platform for revising GCSE subjects, was primarily about monitoring revision. Having been introduced to the platform by a fellow member of staff who had found it useful for their son in terms of engagement with revision, I signed all of my students up to the service, taking a lesson to

explain how the systems worked and my expectations for them in terms of use.

With points and scoreboards available, there was a window for competitiveness that many believe works as a way to engage boys. It was also an idea that I felt I had witnessed with my own eyes more often than not. However, Jackson (2006) was concerned that a focus on competition amongst boys led to issues with self-defense mechanisms which saw male students choose to 'opt out' rather than be seen to fail. With this in mind, I actively chose not to draw my students' attention to this explicitly. All found it; most engaged with it; it wasn't a focal point of their learning.



How has Seneca helped to support the factual knowledge of my students? As Willingham (2009) explored the links between the cognitive and the educational, he reasoned that the more factual knowledge we have, the more your memory is improved. Also, that the more you store in your long term memory, the more space is left in your working memory to do other things.

A computer programme isn't going to allow a student to be judged on their ability to analyse the presentation of ambition in Macbeth, but it can support them in knowing who Macbeth is and where he is ambitious throughout the play. Through admittedly repetitive quizzing, though with no stakes as they go until they get it right, my students are hopefully building a stronger understanding of the factual elements of the

literature and language. By proxy, this should theoretically build a base of long term memory knowledge that can then allow their working memory to focus on more complex ideas.

'What has definitely improved has been the engagement time, with some students spending twice as long on homework'

What's important in the short term is confidence and engagement, especially with low achieving and disengaged boys. The students will be given a questionnaire to fill in nearer the end of the course, which can be compared with a previous set of answers from the same students about their confidence with the texts. I believe this will see a marked improvement. What has definitely improved has been the engagement time, with some students spending twice as long on homework as I have originally suggested.

Finally, whilst suggestions of competition amongst boys being more of a hindrance than a benefit may be true, it was pleasing to see John, an often disenfranchised young boy, comparing favourably his time spent revising with Robert one day as they left my lesson. Revision being seen as something to talk about, discuss and compare, rather than a non-entity in their studies, can only be a good thing at this point.

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Educating the whole-child: PiXL Edge and a peer-mentoring programme

Hayley Garrison

Keywords: *whole child*
peer mentoring
confidence
maturity



Current government policy states that all schools must provide a balanced curriculum which:

'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life', (Department for Education, 2014).

Yet the reality is teachers often comment on an emerging tension and have expressed feelings of distress over the dichotomy of working within the current academic climate of raising attainment, league tables and academic targets whilst trying to ensure that education does more by also having a moral agenda and prepares pupils for a life after education (Ball, 2003). As educational institutions struggle to deliver the content needed for pupils to be successful in examinations, head teachers are adopting a multitude of initiatives to try to implement the more 'holistic' requirement of the National Curriculum with varying degrees of success. PiXL Edge is one such initiative as it is designed to focus on 'character' education. PiXL describe The Edge as 'a systematic framework to enable schools to develop and capture the student attitudes, attributes and skills which are

so important for employment and life beyond school,' (The PiXL Club, 2017).

In January 2017 I was asked by SLT to complete an audit into the extent that PiXL Edge was being used by pupils across the school. This data suggested that a significant minority of pupils were not engaging with the programme and had yet to complete any, or had completed very few tasks. I wanted to explore the reasons for this further and determine what pupil perceptions were of it.

Currently each year 7 tutor group is assigned two Edge ambassadors from Year 8 to act as 'Edge experts', assisting the younger pupils. Many educationalists and psychologists have highlighted the benefits of pupils supporting other pupils through peer support or mentoring programmes as young people can often 'reach where the teacher cannot be or cannot go,' (Topping, K. 1996, p.23).

'young people can often "reach where the teacher cannot be or cannot go"'

Literature suggests that cross-age mentoring programmes can encompass many benefits for pupils, both mentees and mentors, although there has been less research conducted on the benefits to the mentors themselves. James, Smith and Radford (2014) concluded that pupil mentors expressed feelings of growing maturity, while the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (2011) found that mentees experienced increased self-esteem and general life satisfaction after their involvement in mentoring schemes. I therefore

The **PiXL** Edge

decided to intervene and adopt an Action Research approach where two Edge ambassadors would act as mentors to three younger pupils who had been identified as not engaging with the PiXL Edge programme. The study consisted of a 6 week intervention, with two year 8 Ambassadors mentoring a small group of 3 year 7 students. Students were interviewed before, and after the mentoring intervention.

Findings

Overall this study appears to reflect the existing research which suggests the reasons why peer mentoring programmes are generally thought to be effective. The benefits identified in this study support previous findings that peer mentoring may produce meaningful outcomes for multiple groups of young people simultaneously, both mentees and mentors.



In this study, mentors benefitted from increased interpersonal skills and a growing maturity which resonates with much of the existing research in this field (James et al, 2014; Karcher, 2007; Thompson and Smith, 2011). Mentors found the role challenging, but in this study, mentors benefitted because of the way they overcame the challenges involved, strengthening the transition into maturity and adulthood. Mirroring with existing research (James et al, 2014; Hansen, 2006) it was suggested that the behaviour and inter-personal skills of mentors had improved at Sackville.

In this instance, mentors developed supportive and nurturing relationships with mentees; however other studies have reported negative results when mentors who had negative attitudes

towards children were paired with academically connected mentees (Karcher et al., 2010).

In this study, mentors had not been specifically matched with mentees. Although no detrimental effects had been reported in this study and incidentally, mentor and mentee partnerships had worked well, this would need further consideration in future practice.

‘Mentees in this study reported feelings of satisfaction and increased engagement with PiXL Edge following their involvement in the mentoring programme.’

Data suggested that mentees experienced improved mental well-being after becoming more involved in the school communities due to the support of the mentors. Mentees enjoyed the experience and all recalled how they would like to continue working with the mentors if given the chance. Mentees in this study reported feelings of satisfaction and increased engagement with PiXL Edge following their involvement in the mentoring programme.

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Staff value the professional development received



A tangible sense of purpose and commitment to every student

Sharing our evidence-led professional learning:

INSPIRE Them Conference

January 2019



We were delighted to welcome twenty trainee teachers from across our Inspire Teaching Alliance to Sackville in January. A busy day of evidence-led sessions was delivered by colleagues from across the school, including:

- Stretch and challenge for the most able students
- Effective use of assessment
- Supporting the progress of SEND students
- Fostering independent learning
- Building relationships

We were thrilled with the feedback we received (see right) and are grateful to Jake Endersby, Neil Feist, Julie Fleming, Esme Godden, Sylvia Hawken, Katie Offler, Gill Sands, Radha Stuart and Holly Warran for their enthusiastic input.

Very informative! The evidence and theory shared was very helpful. Thank you!

Thank you, I felt really looked after.

Very well presented, good pace, loved it!

Fascinating information on dyslexia. A really welcoming day - thank you all!

Thank you everyone. Each session was helpful and informative.

I feel inspired by the professional relationships talk.



I really enjoyed the resilience presentation – thanks Jake!

A very useful day and lots of ideas to take and adapt to primary teaching.

Generating a greater awareness of the world around our students

Jim Roberts

Keywords: *whole child
topicality
awareness
SMSCD*



In Summer 2017, whilst preparing an A Level law lesson for an appraisal observation, it became apparent that a number of items in the news had an immediate impact on the area of law under consideration. Reference was duly made to those topical matters in lesson and the appraiser commented positively on the incorporation of such SMSC references and the beneficial effect for the students. This encouraging view engendered the idea of seeking to introduce topicality and currency into my teaching practice on a regular basis. This coincided with the initiation of the new teaching and learning groups and opting to join the SMSCD group was a simple and logical choice.

The nature of the law of our land means change and development occurs on a daily basis and it is inevitable that issues constantly arise which affect the subject matter of the syllabus. An example is the spate of prosecutions of high-profile celebrities on charges of historic sex abuse and the concomitant rise of movements such as #MeToo seeking to extirpate the objectivisation and physical harassment of women. It is not



difficult to introduce some of these ideas into lessons. Part of our professional development has been the opportunity to observe colleagues and I have been fortunate in seeing the similar topicality and overt SMSCD content within the teaching of health and social care at A level.

Context

It is my view, and one commonly held by others, that we are in the business of educating the whole child. Sometimes, perhaps more often than we would like, we are bound to teach material for which it is difficult to see an obvious link with the preparation of our students for life beyond school. How often have we groaned inwardly, or occasionally outwardly, that no-one in the class knows about what is going on in the world around them?

Jonathan Roberts (2000, p.49) includes, inter alia, under moral development: 'personal values – what do I think is right? What does the law say? What do other people say is right?' and under social development: 'discover about living in society - who is in my community? What are the structures I deal with? Students need to know about the world they live in and they should be actively enquiring into it.

'What is this life, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?'

When Julian Grant first addressed us as a staff body (Grant 2013), he recited the poem of William Henry Davies which begins 'What is this life, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?' and the lines go on to consider natural beauty in the world around us. Could there be a clearer signpost that we need (to make time) to develop a sense of spirituality in both ourselves and our students? I contend that increasing awareness of

that world, human and natural, is vital in educating our students.

Bringing Topicality into Practice

In 2017 – 2018 in law lessons numerous references were made to items in the news and of immediate relevance to topics in hand. This increased engagement especially where celebrity was involved, for example in the case brought by Sir Cliff Richard against the BBC. In the current year many insightful relevant discussions have arisen e.g. whilst teaching statutory interpretation, on the topic of gender fluidity and the concept of being 'non-binary'. The maturity of argument and scope of understanding of the students has been impressive. Most importantly, these syllabus-related issues have created additional interest in a subject none of the students has previously studied.

The challenge, therefore, was to create a similar environment in my major subject area of science. In the first year (2017-2018) I chose a year 7 class focusing on what was happening in the vast field of science, using news broadcasts as a source. This was fairly frequent albeit irregular and a number of issues were raised, not least the death of Stephen Hawking in March of 2018. The teaching and learning group were encouraging and supportive of the idea but suggested that workload would be reduced if the scheme was more student-led; this was eagerly accepted!

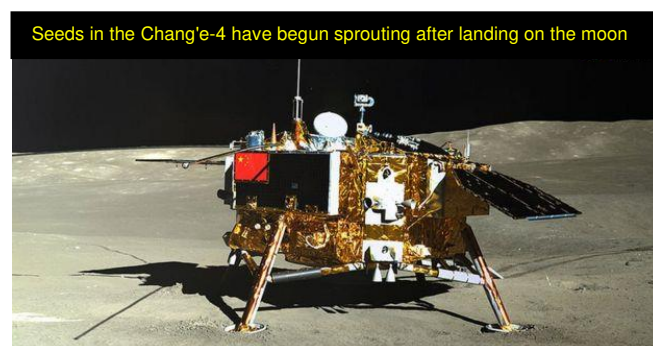
Thus, in the current academic year (2018-19) a special homework has been set, once a term so far, for a year 7 and for a year 8 class. The students are tasked with finding something of science in the news. Their brief is wide-ranging as is the potential form of presentation.

Outcomes

To date the only evidence is anecdotal but there have been some very interesting pieces on a wide range of issues. In October 2018, students from both years reported on climate change and the earthquake and tsunami on 28th September in Palu, Indonesia. Again quite a number looked

at a new moon from outside our solar system. More random but no less fascinating were stories on 'hugging after an argument', The Goblin (a new dwarf planet), a new DNA tool to predict predisposal to diseases and 'How your brain is like a film editor'.

The early January 2019 offerings from year 8 are from all around the world, and include new fungi found in Canada, China landing a robot and growing seeds on the far side of the Moon and canines with Red Wolf DNA being found on America's Gulf Coast.



Seeds in the Chang'e-4 have begun sprouting after landing on the moon

It is too early to even begin to assess any impact as yet from this project. But it has been shared within the science faculty and may be developed further by others within the department.

Students who have been involved will be asked to feedback towards the end of the year with a view to obtaining data that can be used to determine enjoyment at least and, just possibly, some measure of effectiveness. In the meantime, it is encouraging that one student ended his article on 'growing seeds on the Moon' with a final thought: 'I found this article very interesting.'

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Professional learning resources

There is a range of resources to support teachers available in the Learning Resources Centre. Tracy Rose and Jane Wogan will be happy to direct you to them so please pay them a visit!

