

10 Elements of Great Teaching

Create a positive climate focused on learning

This is exemplified by:

- Having high expectations of all students.
- Developing students' independence, motivation and the desire to improve as a learner.
- Having and maintaining established classroom routines.
- Sharing the narrative for the lesson and explaining the reasoning around the lesson activities.
- Engaging with student feedback (eg. dialogue with students, 'exit tickets') and shaping teaching accordingly.

Diagnose and act upon student starting points

In the moment when shaping the direction of lessons and through:

- Highly effective questioning and inclusive classroom discussion.
- Interactive and inclusive whole class teaching.
- Reviewing student work (including marking) from previous lessons and assessments.
- Low stakes testing in the classroom – 'welcome work' (retrieval practice starters), multiple choice quizzes and tests, finding the common misconceptions hidden in a 'misconceptions grid,' diagnostic questions (see diagnosticquestions.com).
- Having prior, existing knowledge of students.

Explain new material clearly and precisely in small steps

- Focus on the key components of knowledge that the students need to retain.
- Spend time exploring your own understanding of the knowledge and common misconceptions.
- Put yourself into the shoes of a novice rather than an expert.
- Plan your explanations and how you will break down the learning into small, manageable steps. Remove distracting and superfluous material and focus on the key components of knowledge.

Share what success will look like through clear modelling

Examples:

- Modelled solutions;
- Shared writing;
- Annotated solutions;
- Exemplar student work;
- Improving student work using a visualiser;
- Detailed success criteria;
- Diagrams, photographs, video;
- Work in progress.

Plan and teach for retention

This can be achieved by:

- Creating opportunities for regular, deliberate practice of skills and techniques.
- Low stakes, regular testing eg. a multiple-choice quiz. Students need to understand the purpose of this is to help them to retain knowledge, not to form part of a summative assessment grade.
- Providing opportunities for spaced practice, eg. in lesson starters, homework & quizzes. Try '3 question' starters – one from a month ago, a week ago, last lesson.
- Building opportunities for retrieval practice into the curriculum but ensuring that there is a lag between teaching and retrieval. Aim for the longest delay possible where students still have a chance of retrieving the knowledge.

Regulate cognitive load

Learning new things places significant burden on the working memory. In regulating cognitive load, we are aiming to address the limitations of working memory by:

- Establishing precisely where students are in their learning and therefore not pitching-in at a level that is too challenging and where they do not have the retained foundation knowledge to tackle the new learning.
- Planning your explanations and how you will break down the learning into small, manageable steps.
- Removing redundant and distracting information from explanations, written material and IT presentations. Abandon the clipart!
- Carefully presenting information to avoid split-attention e.g. don't present written information and then talk over it. Conversely, talking alongside a diagram can double the amount of information being processed.
- Avoid unnecessary complexity – eg. only embed questions in a real-life context if it helps students to understand the material better or is part of the outcome, avoid using a real-life context to engage. Similarly, embedding learning in a game for fun can distract students from the key learning.
- Listening to speech requires students to hold information in their heads whilst trying to understand what is being said. Written and text and diagrams can be processed by the learner at their own pace. Furthermore, labelled diagrams are helpful for illustrating how components fit together.

Develop disciplinary literacy

This refers to subject-specific literacy and how it may be developed by:

- Explicit teaching of subject-specific vocabulary.
- Identification and teaching of *academic vocabulary* (that which only tends to be used in an academic or exam context).
- Modelling writing related to the subject eg. scientific conclusions.
- Teaching students to recognise the features, aims and conventions of good, subject-related writing.
- Re-emphasising the strategies needed for decoding text, commonly used in English teaching but less frequent in other curriculum areas.

Activate students' metacognitive skills

Metacognition is about "pupils' ability to monitor, direct and review their learning." (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018)

We can support students to develop metacognition in many ways, for example by:

- Teacher modelling, thereby sharing the thought processes of an expert.
- Verbalising metacognitive thinking when working through a task – eg. *What do I know about problems like this? When have I tackled something similar before? Which strategies did I use?*
- Scaffolding tasks.
- Guided practice with support gradually withdrawn as students develop competency.
- Modelling concepts such as '*plan, monitor and evaluate*' in a specific context, rather than simply expecting students to be able to do this independently.

It is important to note that metacognition is not a general skill that can be separated from subject knowledge. Metacognition is task-specific and requires a good grounding in subject knowledge.

Check understanding through high quality evidence

By way of:

- Classroom discourse between teachers and students.
- Highly effective questioning that elicits understanding and highlights misconceptions.
- Quizzes and low stakes testing in the classroom.
- Marking of students' work in accordance with the school and departmental policy.

Feed back to move learners forward

Against the success criteria established in every lesson and by:

- Assigning TLF* tasks (that are more work for the recipient than the provider).
- Giving explicit, detailed and constructive advice in lessons.
- Making time in lessons for learners to respond to TLF tasks.

*The purpose of TLF is 'improve the learner' and not to 'improve the task.' TLF tasks should be meaningful, manageable and should help the student to correct, consolidate or further their understanding of a topic.