RESEARCH ED CHESHIRE
Cheshire Vale TSA Hosts First National Education Conference

ENTER TARPORLEY’S TWITTERSPHERE

GOLD!
Tina McMillan shares Tarporley Teachers’ Golden Nuggets!

SIXTH FORM SPECIAL
TEACHING AND LEARNING EXCELLENCE AT A LEVEL
On Saturday 18th March 2017, over 130 delegates and speakers diligently set their alarms and came to school. Yes, on a Saturday. What lay in store was in fact an inspirational day of talks and discussions and there was a tangible ‘buzz’ in the air. From ‘Memory for Learning’ to ‘Growth Mindset’ colleagues from across the country had a choice out of 17 sessions meaning there was something for everyone on a day focused all around the question ‘what works?’ With the collective spirit of the day very much centred around how students learn best, the venue – Queen’s Park High School – was soon awash with ideas, questions and discussions.

A session that inspired many was that of HOW2 creator, Oliver Caviglioli, who shared how visual infographics aid learning. Not only did we leave the conference excited to create our own (this year’s Y11 and Y13 subsequently received an ‘infographic guide’ for both their English Language GCSE and A Level exams) but for every session Oliver attended thereafter, he drew on his artistic magic by converting the salient points into an infographic guide of their own. So what better way to share some of the high-lights from the conference than by sharing Oliver’s illustrated summaries. And here they are…

Ffion Eaton
The academic and super-curricular enrichment programme offered to our Sixth Form students aims to enhance the already excellent teaching and learning our students enjoy. Combine this with the vast array of opportunities for volunteering with organisations such as the National Citizen Service, the Duke of Edinburgh’s Gold Award, local schools, hospitals, care homes and assisting KS3/4 class teachers, and students’ commitment to our school and the wider community is clear. We are passionate about encouraging our Sixth Formers to step out of their comfort zones, to start developing the core competencies that allow them to actively engage with our world; helping to make it a more just and sustainable place. To become global citizens if you like.

The importance of learning outside the classroom is valued within the academic enrichment programme with Faculty trips adding vibrancy and relevance to the A-level curriculum and encompasses such visits as:

* Art & Design Residentials in Italy and Conway / Delamere Forest / Art Museums
* Business Studies and Economics trips to Salford Quays lectures
* English Language – David Crystal Lecture / Term Magazine / Shine Awards, London
* Technology—Lab trip to Altrincham and visiting speakers from Bentley, Armitage Shanks and Trunky

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Media / Photography – Shine Awards and Term Magazine / Photographers using their skills for promotional publications
* English Literature – Globe Theatre Trip
* Chemistry – Keele University visits to their Labs / The Olympiad Challenge
* History – Holocaust Memorial Day, Berlin Trip
* MFL – Berlin, Paris, Barcelona trips
* Drama – whole school Productions / Theatre trips
* Music – whole school Productions / Piano recitals / Choir and Theatre trips
* Religious Studies – Chester Crown Court Trip
* Geography – Holyhead Field Trip over 4/5 days related to coursework

In addition to such important trips, there are many opportunities to gain valuable insights into curricular activities which link or lead to future learning, forming a key part of the College’s commitment to prepare students for progression to higher education, further training or employment:

* Subject specific university taster days—‘So you Want to be a Doctor’ at Keele University/Leighton and Countess of Chester Hospitals
* UCAS and Oxbridge Conventions
* Oxford Experience Residential
* Bespoke campus day at the University of Nottingham
* University of Law, Chester
* The Skills Show at NEC Birmingham
* Airbus trip for Apprenticeships / employment guidance
* Careers speed-dating event
* News Associates Journalism workshops, Manchester
* Physiotherapy Awareness days at Countess of Chester Hospital
* STEM Leaders Award
* Extended Project Qualification

The STEM Leaders Award, requires in-depth research into global chemical engineering company, INEOS, followed by an academic report which is graded and certified externally, adding gravitas to our potential engineers and scientists’ personal profiles. Additionally, a top grade achieved for an EPQ can offset a conditional offer and requires students to produce an academic essay or an artefact, (the EPQ is equivalent to an AS-level yet marked at A2-level).

This year, we have introduced the ‘Tarporley Sixth Form College Baccalaureate’ which is offered to G&T Y12 students and involves them embarking on:

* 3 or 4 facilitating A-level subjects
* Academic enrichment, such as an EPQ or STEM Leaders Award
* A prominent volunteering choice such as DofE Gold, hospital or care home volunteering etc

When students fully engage in the opportunities presented to them, it is fair to say that the resulting UCAS personal statements are of an extremely high calibre. This is due to the level of importance attached to ensuring that each statement is the best it can possibly be, with students encouraged to reference and reflect upon the super-curricular, academic enrichment and volunteering opportunities they have undertaken.

The Sixth Form has earned a reputation for providing an enriched education for everyone, and these programmes are merely an extension of that. Without doubt, the enrichment possibilities, coupled with good quality careers advice and guidance, provide our students with a chance to broaden their experiences, to develop new interests and to prepare them to take an active part in life in modern Britain.
SIXTH FORMERS
GETTING GRITTY!

The ‘Teaching and Learning’ HUBS allow us, as staff, to learn from each other to develop our practice. Last term, we had a team of (brave) and willing Sixth Formers who agreed to plan, run and deliver a session on how to encourage ‘Grit, Resilience and Independence’ in our A Level students.

Clearly, these skills are more critical than ever with so many exams being Linear—with two years’ worth of academic content examined at the end of each course. We chose a team of students to be involved in this challenging task and asked them to plan a session which would give their perspectives, but also give teachers an honest insight into how big a jump it is, moving from GCSE to A Level. Sixth Form study means students have potentially more freedom, fewer subjects, greater academic challenges and this can be difficult for some students to manage.

Our team of students consisted of Joe Clark and Evan Roberts (potential lawyers) Anna Meredith, Abbie Whelan and Charlotte Williams (potential teachers) and Angus Cranston, George Gregory and Lizzie Simpson who all have separate goals for their futures but are superbly confident communicators.

The aim of the session was to encourage greater resilience and independence in our students, giving teachers insights and ideas for them to use or adapt in their classrooms, via student voice.

Together the group planned an hour long session, utilising many skills:

- Excellent communication: small group planning and collaboration with peers and members of staff; formal and independent delivery of lesson content.
- Interpreting data and conducting independent research to present strong arguments.
- Solving problems and finding resolutions – conveying and communicating challenging subject matter in an engaging, entertaining way.
- Teamwork – establishing trust and collaboration within the group as every person had a different role to play.
- Finally teaching and delivering constructive advice / teaching tips to teachers, including members of the Senior Leadership Team.

We were so proud of these students who led, managed and controlled (!) their own teachers so competently. Many teachers commented that they ‘could not have done that at their age’ and the experience will look superb on next year’s UCAS Applications. Well done to them.

Interesting Further reading in this area:

A Grit Scale Test and TED talk by Angela Lee Duckworth entitled ‘Grit, the power of passion and perseverance’ Angela Lee Duckworth: Grit: The power of passion and perseverance | TED Talk | TED.com

‘A Level Mindset Student Workbook’ by Steve Oakes and Martin Griffin. ISBN: 9781785830792

Sixth Form T and L Review 2016-17

Chris Nuttall

The focus of the review this year was to examine the progress of Y13 students across the curriculum, to explore and assess the effectiveness of strategies that support and challenge students to achieve and develop their understanding and engagement with specific assessment objectives.

During the review there were many examples of excellent and inspiring teaching and learning. These included prioritising exam criteria in a wide range of imaginative and engaging ways – for example ‘Thinking like an examiner’ Metacognitive strategies were in increasing evidence across subject areas and this was a real area of strength and progression.

The best lessons had great pace, were well structured and students were not allowed to be passive. Activities were varied and questioning was highly effective. We saw opportunities for purposeful silence in a number of subject areas, encouraging students to be reflective and independent learners.

Different strategies were used to assist ‘Memory for Learning’ - another focus of this year’s HUBs - and to help students cope with the demands of the new linear specifications – for example visual flow charts - and there were many examples of students learning from each other through purposeful discussion and collaborative work.

Language for Learning was clearly prominent in some subjects and we saw a highly effective ‘live glossary’ of key terms to embed academic vocabulary and sophisticated terminology.

Superb relationships between staff and students were evident across many subject areas and, as always, we were impressed by the excellent subject knowledge displayed by teachers and students!

It was also positive to see the impact of the Hub workshops in action – for example students interpreting and de-coding mark schemes was seen in several lessons across a variety of subjects, increasing their understanding and grasp of the skills required for success.

A summary of effective strategies, based on our work in the Teaching and Learning HUB sessions and our observations during the review has been produced to support teachers in their A-level lessons. The booklet containing Teaching ‘Golden Nuggets’ is detailed in the next article—a reflection of the good practice in evidence in our Sixth Form.
Following the Sixth Form Teaching and Learning Review, Chris Nuttall and I were asked to run a HUB session on effective teaching methods which were used at Key Stage 5. Having seen so much good practice across a range of subjects, we decided to share and showcase the teaching ‘Nuggets of Gold’ which we had seen first-hand.

Observing teachers is a great way to see new approaches, consider new ideas and witness your colleagues (in and outside of your subject area) working so skilfully in their domains. I certainly left many lessons with the view that we can learn so much from each other, yet in the tightly scheduled school day, it is often not possible to observe our fellow teachers as much as we’d like — if at all!

The HUB session became a celebration of teaching excellence which we had observed and also broadened into a collection of teaching ideas, tips, suggestions from over thirty staff. These ‘Nuggets of Gold’ were put into booklet form and uploaded to the TLG for future reference. We wanted teachers who opted into our HUB session to leave with a practical tried-and-tested ‘Toolkit of Strategies’ to experiment with in their own classrooms and recognise our teaching strengths. Here is a sprinkling of gold dust ….

1. Jen Condell Biology – Gloss and Go!

Give students a table of key words at the start of the lesson – really sophisticated and specialist terms they need to know for the exam. Don’t define the terms immediately but use them in the lesson – encourage them to listen out and fill in the definitions as they hear and understand the meaning. By the end of the lesson, they should have all definitions, a working glossary and it’s a perfect plenary / starter next lesson.

2. Claire Toase / Sarah Mulholland Eng Lang – Cue Cards

Set the making of cue cards as a homework for each element of the exam. Encourage students to self-test. (Leitner system)

Then issue a table or quiz and see if they can remember key terms without their cards. Encourage students to have blank cue cards and add to their pile every time a new term is introduced in the lesson – ‘live’ cue card production and use! This is a really useful way for students to take control of their learning and be active in their approach—in class and at home independently.

3. Bill Joyce Technology – Familiar Formats

Where possible when setting an essay or task, produce it in an exam style format. This prepares students for the exam, familiarises them with the layout, makes it easier to mark, and encourages them to address the objectives directly.


Recap how to answer a precise exam question / revise criteria / concepts then get students to answer there and then with clear timing and timers. A short task can be prepped, done, reflected on in the lesson so it’s immediate and really effective. Encourage reflection and evaluation after completion.

5. Clare Blackhurst Maths – Student Models

If a student answers a question really well, showcase their work by demonstrating their workings on the board or copying / photographing their work. Then get them to model / explain to the class HOW they arrived at that answer. It’s really powerful for the student to teach the class – if different students answered different questions well then showcase a number of students.

Leading by example!

6. Claire Jones MFL – Order of Importance

Scatter key words from the marking / assessment criteria and get students to prioritise them in order of importance. Can they remember the subtle layering of skills when the words are taken out of context? Leads to great discussions about skills and sophistication / difficulty. Validate their ideas with specific exam board guidance.
7. Paul Gildea English Literature – Boundless Enthusiasm!

Don’t treat Sixth Form lessons as an ‘easy lesson’ a time to ‘relax’ without the same need for rigour or discipline. Be a stickler for deadlines. Greet the class with a smile and make them feel like that lesson is the highlight of your day. Teaching a subject you love at A Level and which they have opted for is a real privilege – make it feel that way!

8. Steve Chappell Geography – Question Chains

Get students to consider a key concept and produce an answer. Ask students to provide the answer. The teacher then becomes the facilitator – asking students:

- Is that the right answer?
- What could we add?
- How could we make it better?
- Is there anything missing?
- Have we answered the question fully etc

This prevents the teacher simply giving the answer and forces students to think for themselves. You can layer skills / tie to AOs and key skills with nuanced questioning.

9. Liam Martin Economics - The Power of the Post-it

Recall- Write key terms on post-it notes, always more than in the class, students are given a post-it and are asked to define the term, they can exchange with their peers or swap with spares at the front. Students read out their term, brief comments from peers. The spares left at the front are used to discuss why no one selected them and I define them. The same activity works with economic diagrams but you need A4 paper.

Analysis- In Economics we try to build chains of reasons, where concepts and theory support a point you are trying to make in a piece of extended writing, post-its can be used to build the chains. Students are asked to identify the theory on post-its and then you build the chain.

Evaluation- Very quick way to consider relative importance of arguments. Produce sets of factors that support an economic decision on post-its (E.g. Economic arguments to leave the E.U) ask students to place in order from most to least important factor. Then ask to justify students to justify the order they placed the post-its. Ask students to develop concluding sentences that explain their selection.

There are also a number of opportunities where students can stick their post-it on the board so their answer/views are shared with the class. It is easy to draw structures on the board to sort answers (tables, Venn diagrams, continuums)

10. John Stone Physics - Building an Extension

Allow for purposeful silence as students work independently in class. Share outcomes. Have extension materials instantly ready for the most able.

(Please see Tina McMillan if you would like a copy of the Booklet with many more 'Golden' Teaching Tips)

11. Vicky Rutter Biology – Synoptic Model

Model examiner thinking for the Biology synoptic essay. This explains exactly how the synoptic essay is marked by the examiner and then students follow the process to mark an exemplar essay: engaging with the mark scheme. / clear examiner advice.


I am writing my own model answer for the new A Level specification – as there are so few exemplars available. The focus has changed in the exam from content based answers to more evaluative skills; modelling the answer as a teacher allows the teacher to appreciate the difficulty of the task, the strategies required when doing the task, the skills to prioritise and the necessary elements to explicitly teach for exam success. With a small class it’s possible to write collaboratively WITH the class and overcome difficulties / challenges as we encounter them / as we write.

13. Nicola Cook History – File Organisation

Include File Dividers to organise students’ notes. On these dividers include topics, suggested reading, independent study ideas.

14. James Bowland Art- Time Sheet and Accountability

Each student has a string of squares next to their name. Each square is divided into half: Every extra hour the student does, independently and outside of class, they shade in one triangle. This gives students a sense of pride and is evidence of their hard work – or not!

15. Louisa Lobina – Science – Think like an Examiner!

With more able Sixth Form students - ask them to design exam questions and mark schemes for other students. Also think about the little tricks that examiners put into questions e.g. language etc to specifically use in their questions.

16. Jody Pryor PE – Memory Palaces

Create visual mindmaps around key concepts – use images which will trigger memories: vivid / related / humorous pictures or which use wordplay. Encourage students to learn the visual maps, then test that knowledge in real exam contexts:
Many subjects are using social media to engage students in their A Level subjects. Tarporley has many active and subject-specific Twitter accounts which keep students informed, encouraging them to be pro-active. Scrolling through a phone doesn’t feel like work, but clearly knowledge is being consolidated and deepened as students are doing independent reading ‘on the go.’

Twitter can also be a useful resource for teachers and a means to obtain resources and gain access to contemporary, cutting-edge research articles. Many groups exist where teachers share ideas, concerns and solutions online. This can be time-saving as we are all dealing with new Specifications and exam content. Ffion Eaton’s Twitter HUB session resulted in:

**MFL using Twitter to**

- Signpost students to interesting people to follow (French/German/Spanish celebrities/politicians who regularly tweet and share their views)
- Retweet interesting newspaper articles that link to the topics we are studying
- Give messages to students

**English Language using Twitter to:**

- Follow linguists and academics whose ideas are studied as part of the course (David Crystal, Steven Pinker and Deborah Cameron) to hear views on current language issues
- Share lively, well written articles which students can use as style models / inspiration for their own creative writing.
- Direct relevant articles to students which link to their coursework topics.
- Swap resources with other specialists.

Twitter is undoubtedly a useful tool at A Level. If you haven’t given it a go, then do—delve into the Twittersphere and you’ll be amazed at what’s out there!
Did you know, between the age of two and six, a child’s vocabulary is somewhere around 5,000 words, meaning they average ten new words a day! That’s almost one for every waking hour, often after hearing it just once or twice! If that’s not impressive enough, between the years of seven and twelve, they progress even faster, learning as many as twenty new words per day! As a secondary school teacher, you may not be surprised to hear, that this fast pace of language acquisition is significantly reduced by the time a child enters high school! Therefore it can be strongly argued that it is even more important for secondary teachers to help children to consider the language they use with their students in order to help further bolster student vocabulary.

I think we can all agree that language and communication skills are imperative to any child’s development. In all walks of life, good communication makes us better able to engage with others and to learn. It can be further argued that it is imperative for Sixth Form Students to acquire a plethora of sophisticated vocabulary to ensure they meet the snowballing literacy demands of new specifications.

When we talk generally about communication, we are referring to both speech and language: the verbal means of communication and the shared rules we use to put words together to express thoughts and feelings. Consequently, one of the most important responsibilities of every teacher is to help students develop a strong and rich vocabulary. According to the 2000 report of ‘The National Reading Panel’, the “growth in reading power relies on continuous growth in word knowledge.”

Strategies for fostering vocabulary development fall into two broad categories: teaching strategies for vocabulary directly and learning new words indirectly. Generally, school-age children learn about 3,000 new words a year, but only about 10 percent of these words come from direct vocabulary instruction and this reduces further as they move into Sixth Form. The rest come from their everyday experiences with oral communication, listening to text read aloud, and reading a wide variety of texts in dependently. Therefore as Secondary and Sixth Form school teachers, in order to help students develop their vocabulary, as often as possible, we should aim to broaden our own verbal communication, and use unfamiliar words regularly to enhance a curiosity about their meaning and use.

In addition to teachers making conscious decisions about verbal word choices, there are various strategies we may all use regularly, to help students to find the meaning of unfamiliar words which further increases students’ confidence. In future Teaching Hubs we hope to share various strategies and research linking to the concept of developing and enhancing student ‘Word Consciousness’.

Research has shown that teachers can have a principal impact on Secondary and Sixth Form student vocabulary development. By increasing the amount of incidental word learning through ‘Indirect Vocabulary Instruction’ and providing opportunities for ‘Direct Vocabulary Instruction: Learning New Words,’ students can make significant progress and build their vocabulary to new heights. Let’s spread the word ....
Visual Culture of Alumni Achievement

By Tina McMillan

Inspired by the ‘Alumni Wall; in the Main Hall, we wanted to create that same sense of achievement and aspiration in Sixth Form, using students from the past to share their Post-16 experiences. Mrs Everton and I contacted previous students and asked them to describe their ‘journey’ after leaving Tarporley.

Many students were keen to get involved and explain in depth how their lives and experiences had evolved since Sixth Form. Many also spoke very warmly and emotionally about their time at Sixth Form which had allowed them to grow and set personal goals. We had students who were now working as Doctors and teachers; students who had travelled extensively around the world and also students who had opted to enter the world of work immediately after A Levels, beginning careers which have now flourished.

As the emails and pictures began arriving, Mrs Everton and myself were struck by how varied, ambitious and inspiring the lives of our alumni students really are! Determined to showcase these amazing achievements and experiences, each student who replied had their message and image printed and laminated to make a permanent and ever-evolving display in the Sixth Form work room.

We also welcome students to come and visit Sixth Form once they have left and many do so. This year, Rhiannon Price currently at Lancaster University studying English Literature, came in to work with English and Media students, proving to be a great help as they worked on coursework. Ex student Stuart Smith who currently teaches English at Neston High School, joined us at our Key Stage 5 Awards Evening and spoke with real warmth and inspiration to our students and parents, urging them to make the most of school and college life and never give up. Seb Ziman, currently studying Mathematics at Oxford University, is also going to advise this year’s potential Oxbridge students on University life, the application process and the realities of studying at such a high calibre institution.

Previous student, Jenny Brereton, is now the poster girl for Loughborough University, and Tarporley’s Media Faculty couldn’t be more proud of their Grade A, A Level Student!

We also value and never forget ex-students who are no longer with us. Students are keen to keep memories alive during Charity weeks, raising money for the ‘George Heath Foundation’ and also for related Charities in Richard Pover and Nick Morrison’s name.

We hope that Sixth Form is a place where academic sights are set high, friends for life are made and memories are formed which will last forever.