Ten Principles for Outstanding Learning
explained

Connect Learning

1. **Utilising prior knowledge and prediction** helps establish what is already known and understood and what may need to be known and understood. A significant % of what is formally taught contains elements which are already known. In some instances this knowledge is incomplete or erroneous with assumptions which need addressing. Utilising prior knowledge allows a teacher to prime learning through student recognition of previous experiences. This also creates emotional engagement and prompts pattern recognition. An ability to categorise information is fundamental to ‘deep’ learning. Prediction activities have high effect sizes when successfully integrated into student learning. Curiosity is an exceptionally strong driver for learning.

2. **Securing relevance** allows students to quickly relate their own life experience to classroom learning. It allows for further development of the essential core skills. An expert teacher provides instantly recognisable examples, case studies and anecdotes. This is an exceptionally high motivational driver. Additionally, when students locate and internalise a personal learning challenge and turn this into a target or goal it is considerably more powerful than an externally set or short-term pragmatic target. The ability to draw down student experience and thereafter skilfully scaffold learning challenges within the context of a student’s personal aspiration is one of the signature characteristics of an expert teacher. Goal setting, properly done, is central to long-term learning.

3. **Learning outcomes** are a recognised feature of successful classroom practice. Their use helps create a timeline of progress. Much learning occurs informally and without structured outcomes, success criteria or declared intentions but in formal settings the skilful use of learning outcomes is a characteristic of the expert teacher. Such teachers share the learning outcomes for the lesson with pupils and encourage them to review and evaluate against these outcomes during the learning process. Learning outcomes should not be “mechanistically used” but flexibly shared at the appropriate time. Teachers should encourage
pupils to be involved in developing and understanding the outcomes and success criteria for learning tasks. We recommend three dimensional criteria: *what we will learn, how we will learn and why we will learn*.

**Activate Learning**

4. **Differentiating Challenge** is a recognition that each learner is unique and brings different cognitive, emotional, behavioural and cultural experiences to learning. In lessons where each individual undertakes exactly the same task in the same context, with the same outcomes and for the same duration learning may be ineffective at best and demotivating at worst. The purpose of differentiation is to make formal learning more effective for all participants. Typically differentiation involves the re-design of learning challenges along any or all of the following dimensions: outcomes; tasks (challenges); duration of tasks; level (demand on learners); support; nature, source and frequency of feedback and degree of autonomy. Differentiation ought to be removed from the realms of guess-work and subjectivity. Schools which use diagnosis and data – such as reading ages - to great effect considerably advantage both teachers and students.

5. **Developing enquiry and questioning** is fundamental to becoming adept at learning. Classrooms where students ask, and are asked, a range of appropriate questions become vibrant. In the very best, students exhibit an ability to select extending questions. Such questions then direct the depth and pace of their learning. Effective questions provide a valuable flow of feedback which informs learning and teaching. Expert teachers develop higher order thinking by creating enquiry based approaches and by posing and prompting appropriate questions.

6. **Problem-solving and Independent Learning** builds transferrable skills and attributes which are useful in school and beyond. It allows the student to test and demonstrate their capacity to learn in contexts which are more challenging than teacher-led or prescriptive activity. It gives students a central role in improving their own learning, decision-making and persistence. Many problem solving scenarios will require students to collaborate purposefully. Developing Problem-solving and Independent Learning requires the teacher to show genuine expertise in the planning of relevant differentiated challenges. It also requires the teacher to shift towards a more facilitative, less directive role.

**Demonstrate Learning**

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7. **Modelling Understanding** provides a means of students showing what they know, understand and can do. Teachers create a succession of structured opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their progress against learning outcomes. In the best this is achieved through a variety of formats and audiences - with students having a high level of choice in both. Modelling understanding helps build confidence and improve communication skills in addition to being a dynamic way of giving and receiving feedback in order to improve. It allows for trial and error and also for drafting and re-drafting; experiences which are fundamental to learning. Modelling understanding provides shared opportunities to celebrate progress and gives a class a model or models of how to improve.

8. **Measuring Progress**, or the ability to track improvement, is a skill which is intuitive in expert teachers. Formalised through deliberate and easily understood interventions, measuring progress becomes an integral and on-going part of the classroom learning experience for all students. Teachers use a range of time-effective review and evaluation strategies including high quality marking and feedback to help pupils assess their progress. Self and peer assessment is used regularly to motivate, to help students improve, fine-tune and direct future learning. Measuring progress informs classroom management and sharpens teaching.

9. **Purposeful Assessment** allows teachers and others to measure the impact of teaching and helps benchmark against similar or dissimilar cohorts. It provides data for grouping students and generates useful data for reporting and evaluation. Assessment becomes ‘purposeful’ when it allows students to understand what success looks like and what they need to do to improve. It provides objective information to inform a dialogue for improvement. Teachers explicitly link assessment with learning outcomes and share success criteria for assessment tasks with students. Assessment is also linked to target levels and grades and is a means of sharing this information with students. It guides – and may predict - future performance, subject choice and exam entry.

**Consolidate Learning**

10. **Consolidation and Transfer** is on-going within any learning experience. It allows a teacher to check for understanding whilst at the same time testing the depth of learning. During a lesson a range of review strategies are used and students are given the chance to reflect on and connect to previous and future learning. At the end of a lesson...
it provides an exit marker for the conclusion of a lesson and an entry marker for a subsequent lesson. The next learning experience – possibly home learning - can be previewed and unresolved questions answered. A key question may be - how will we use what we have learned? Transfer signposts the worth of transferring skills and knowledge into contexts beyond the classroom whilst inspiring a sense of the utility and real worth of learning.