Department for Education

Powerful Pedagogy: Effective Practice

Insights from the sector

- **Students in Further Education tell us about the impact of their teachers' approaches**
- **Teachers tell us about their pedagogy**
- **Leaders tell us about their leadership of pedagogy**

March 2025

Contents

Summary – aims and intentions

To conduct a focused and in-depth exploration of teaching and learning within further education, examining the ways in which students experience learning that positively influences their progress, achievement and personal growth.

To explore the ways in which Further Education providers are using learning science to inform approaches to pedagogy.

To engage with our stakeholders in producing the guide, and to align our work with the Government funded research by the EEF, who have expressed support for the guide and an interest in future partnership work on post-16 learner voice.

To engage with a targeted yet representative sample of post-16 providers, including those using pedagogy to bring about improvement and strengthen a learning culture.

To explore the leadership of pedagogy at both middle and senior organisational levels.

To capture the narratives and perspectives of students and teachers and examine them in the context of learning science.

To share insights into and facilitate dissemination, adaptation and development of impactful pedagogy across the sector.

To support providers in drawing a distinction between evidence-based pedagogy and "custom and practice" approaches and in so doing, encouraging the development of methods which will have the best possible impact on their students.

To inform a developing evidence base for what works through wider sector involvement.

Audiences and readers

We believe this study will be of interest to the following groups and individuals, including but not limited to, and in no priority order:

- Government organisations such as Ofsted
- Sector stakeholders such as the Education and Training Foundation
- Charitable foundations such as The Gatsby Foundation and the Education Endowment Foundation
- Those responsible for policy and practice in initial teacher training and early career development
- Senior leaders in Further Education with responsibility for quality, teaching and learning, Continuing Professional Development and Human Resources

- Curriculum leaders and teachers in Further Education
- Pastoral staff
- Leaders of learning, skills and education in custodial settings

Stakeholder endorsements

Stakeholders joined several visits to providers and observed interviews with students, teachers and leaders. Some of their comments are here and others can be found throughout the text.

"Powerful Pedagogy' illustrates the importance of high expectations, well-planned curricula, and the use of evidence-based pedagogical techniques that enable learners to make good progress and move towards successful futures. It is a testament to the life-transforming power of effective further education and a celebration of the great teachers and leaders and dedicated learners in the sector."

(Dr Rebecca Clare, His Majesty's Inspector, Further Education and Skills.)

"ETF applauds this call for a further education pedagogy. We are pleased to see our T level development programme used to adapt pedagogy to the specific needs of technical qualifications."

(Dr Vikki Smith, Executive Director of Education and Standards, Education and Training Foundation.)

"This important, informative and thought-provoking work offers an opportunity to learn from practice in other colleges across the country in the constant effort to make the most of developments in pedagogy. This publication will make a significant contribution to the fertile environment for sharing good practice and raising standards to which we all aspire."

(Bill Watkin CBE, CEO Sixth Form Colleges Association.)

"This study makes very interesting reading. It is good to hear practitioners mentioning the EEF in the case studies and noting that they are adopting the materials we produce for secondary schools."

(Kathryn Davies, Post-16 Lead, Education Endowment Foundation.)

Powerful pedagogy authors

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Methodology

We sampled 16 providers based on our existing knowledge of them through one or more of the following:

- An existing relationship with the Further Education Commissioner and her team, which brought the benefits of situated knowledge and mutual understanding.

- Information from inspection reports: two colleges in the study were using pedagogy to galvanise recovery from an inspection judgement of Requires Improvement. Good and outstanding colleges were often using pedagogy to build deep and powerful knowledge for their students' future lives and careers.

- Breadth of provision: Our partner providers are broadly representative of the sector, with involvement of providers covering General Further Education, Tertiary, Land-Based, Sixth Form College and Local Authority. This enabled a variety of curriculum areas to contribute. We are conscious that some types of further education provision are not included because of the size of the study.

- Diversity: the sample represents the diversity of the sector regarding socio-economic and ethnic profiles, qualification levels, provision types and age groups.

- Levels of engagement with evidence-based pedagogy. The case studies include providers who are implementing evidence-based approaches and those who are at the start of the journey.

- The information gathered from semi-structured Interviews with students, teachers, CEO/Principals and in some cases curriculum leaders were re-presented in single case studies.

- The case studies were used to shape a thematic analysis of recurring themes and where possible, to present these within the framework of evidence-based learning science.

- The case studies are presented to lend a degree of variety in the reading experience, and a consistency of authorial voice across a group.

- The content of the study uses a simple system of footnotes. As this is an effective practice guide and not a research project, the footnotes reference and direct readers to practical blogs, government data, books and texts. We hope this approach will help the reader to navigate their way towards existing evidence and useful practical sources of help.

- All students have been given pseudonyms, but all others interviewed are identified by name.

Introduction

The further education (FE) sector is a key part of our national education structure. For most people, it builds on experiences and achievements across education phases from early years, primary and secondary phases. When students arrive in FE, whether they are young learners or adult learners, they bring with them their lived previous experience of education, of schools, teachers, and teaching. Some will have experience of specialist, custodial, or non-UK provision. Many, though not all, come to FE with qualifications achieved in schools or elsewhere.

College and local authority providers' student populations reflect this rich diversity. Between them they deliver education and training to significant and rising numbers of students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Almost 20% were recorded as having a learning difficulty in the academic year 2023 to 2024.[1] Research by the Sutton Trust finds that young learners in receipt of free school meals at age 15 are more likely to study in FE and that 43% of them attend study in a FE college.[2] Further Education leaders have long celebrated and embraced the challenges and joys in this diversity, planning and delivering curriculums which respond to the needs of their communities, their learners, and to current and future skills needs.

The curriculum offer and the quality of its delivery are critical to accommodating this diversity of students' needs and goals, both in work and life. Accordingly, providers train apprentices, deliver A-levels, T-levels, HTQs and degrees, technical and employer-led skills courses, skills for students with high needs and the essential cross-cutting mathematics, English, ESOL and digital skills. The comprehensive nature of provision and the strong link between employers, jobs and skills means that Further Education providers have a strong local and community identity. Further Education Colleges, for instance are seen and described as "anchors" in their local communities.

There is another metaphor used by some providers to describe and explain the nature of their curriculum. This is based around the concept of the "learning journey" and describes the progress of the FE student, the transition to college, then from level to level, course to course, provider to provider, and provider to employment.

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[1] Department for Education. (November 28 2024). *explore education statistics*. [Online]. Gov.uk. Last updated: November 28 2024. Available at: explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and [Accessed 3 December 2024].

[2] The Sutton Trust. (22 October 2021). *going further*. [Online]. The Sutton Trust. Last updated: 22 october 2021. Available at: www.suttontrust.com/our-research/going-further-education-disadvantage/ [Accessed 3 December 2024].

This is important because it infers the capacity of students to move, progress and change, words with a clear association with education and learning. The metaphor could well be applied to the function of teaching and learning. Teachers are part of the student journey because they guide, direct, instruct, facilitate, demonstrate and model. Through their agency, students learn and change. The metaphor is useful in underscoring the major role further education plays in the life journeys of individuals; in the transmission of knowledge, in the development of skills and qualities which equip students for their onward journey, and enabling them to live fulfilled lives economically, socially and personally.

Teachers in FE are significant people in the lives and "journeys" of their students. They are role models, subject experts, influencers, challengers and supporters. What they do, and what they say day in and day out, matters- for students, employers, communities, for the economic health of the nation and the future of our world. Teachers' dual talents in subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy are crucial to our future and to jobs that will exist in that future. Their pedagogical expertise is central to their professional duties. Teachers tell us that they develop their pedagogy from a range of intelligence around their students, the context of their provision, from their own experience of effective and impactful education and from their reading and research. They tell us how valuable it would be to them and their students to have access to strategies based on evidence and tested in FE settings. Several teachers we spoke to in the course of this work explained that they turn to the Education Endowment Foundation adapting material tested in the secondary phase wherever they can.[3] This works well, as the case studies show. However, a robust evidence base, with approaches tested and developed in the diversity of FE settings would be of significant value to teachers and leaders.

The EEF toolkit, used widely by school teachers and leaders, came about in the first quarter of the 21st century. The introduction of City Academies, and Free Schools, the emergence of Multi Academy Trusts, and the development of a self-improving school system reflected a commitment to addressing gaps in attainment linked to disadvantage. In 2011, the same year that the Pupil Premium was introduced, The Sutton Trust founded the Education Endowment Foundation, an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. This was endowed by a founding grant of £125m from Government. The EEF

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[3] The Education Endowment Foundation. (2011). *The Education Endowment Foundation*. [Online]. educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk.

teaching and learning Toolkit[4] and extensive resources are designed to support teachers and leaders to improve learning outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children. They are evidence-informed, robustly tested in real school settings and used by 70% of school leaders. One significant element in the toolkit is the evaluation of a wide range of established practices in terms of their impact measured in months of progress. The methods based on metacognition have the most impact. There is no real equivalent toolkit in Further Education, despite the large number of disadvantaged students in the sector. However, in 2023, the Education Endowment Foundation received funding by the Government to build an evidence base and support effective practice in Further Education.

Against this backdrop, The Education Inspection Framework took effect in 2019. It was described at the time as "the most evidence-based, research-informed and tested framework in Ofsted's 26-year history".[5] The text of the EIF embodies references to pedagogical concepts and learning science. The same thread can be traced through The Further Education and Skills iteration of the framework where there are frequent references to knowledge: the embedding of knowledge in the long-term memory; sequencing learning to enable new knowledge to be built on existing knowledge, enabling knowledge transfer and connections between different types of knowledge and the significance of teacher expertise both in the subject and in its pedagogy. A few months after the framework was implemented the country went into the first lockdown. In 2025 the "long Covid" of education is still working its way through the system.

The impact of both lockdowns will be felt for some time to come as schools and colleges continue to teach students of all ages who have missed learning to varying degrees. The consequences of lost learning on children and young people are well-evidenced. The Education Policy Institute reports annually on the disadvantage gap. The 2020 report noted that the narrowing of the disadvantage gap had stalled pre-pandemic.[6] This suggests that while the pandemic alone cannot be responsible for increases in inequality, it accelerated an emerging trend. Further, it identified the

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[4] The Education Endowment Foundation. (2011). *Teaching and learning toolkit*. [Online]. educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk. Last Updated: 2023. Available at: educationendowmentfoundation.or.uk [Accessed 16 December 2024].

[5] The Times Educational Supplement. (13 Feb 2019). *Ofsted defends use of cognitive load theory in inspection overhaul*. [Online]. tes. Last Updated: 13 feb 2019. Available at: tes.co.uk [Accessed 16 December 2024].

[6] The Education Policy Institute. (10 February 2022). *Covid 19 and disadvantage gaps in England 2020*. [Online]. Education Policy Institute. Last updated: 10 February 2022. Available at: epi.org.uk.

disproportionate over-representation of disadvantaged students in further education. The EPI report in 2024[7] noted that the gap widened between 2019 and 2023, and at the end of secondary was at its widest since 2011.

At the end of secondary school, disadvantaged students are 19.2 months behind their peers. Given the evidence that disadvantaged students are more likely to progress to FE than other education routes, this makes the case for an evidence base for teachers in further education imperative. There is evidence, also, of what might be termed "cultural shifts" which may be partly a consequence of the pandemic. Education leaders see these shifts in patterns of absence, emotional immaturity and increased levels of anxiety linked with mental health. A report "The pandemic, pupil attendance and achievement "published by the Centre of Economic Performance in the London School of Economics[8] found that the higher levels of student absence seen since Covid can be linked to a shift in family attitudes towards attendance which is persisting post-pandemic. Research by Ofsted across a sample of FE provider types identified the impact of disruption in apprenticeships and vocational learning and of "more disruptive and juvenile behaviours" associated with a decline in confidence, independence, and social skills. This research identifies increased levels of anxiety about taking external exams and notes the increased levels of mental wellbeing issues.[9] For many adult learners, lockdown brought to bear the challenges of poverty, digital isolation and stress on continuing participation in learning, with adults in lower socio-economic groups significantly less likely to continue in learning.[10]

Even now, with the pandemic in the past, its long-term repercussions are a significant challenge for teachers and leaders in FE. But there is another group of risks on a rising trajectory, and very much in the present. These are risks which are apparent in society and public life and which are inevitably made manifest in that microcosm of society, the college or place of learning, and the classroom. College leaders identify a rise in anti-social behaviours which present challenges for teachers

[7] The Education Policy Institute. (2024). *Annual Report 2024*. [Online]. epi.0rg.uk. Last updated: 2024. Available at: educationpolicyinstitute.org.uk [Accessed 16 December 2024].

[8] London School of Economics. (September 2024). *The pandemic, pupil attendance and achievement*. [Online]. cep.lse.ac.uk. Last Updated: September 2024. Available at: cep.lse.org.uk [Accessed 16 December 2024].

[9] Ofsted. (April 2022). *Education recovery in FES providers*. [Online]. gov.uk. Last updated: April 2022. Available at: gov.uk

[10] Learning and Work Institute. (2020). *2020 Adult participation in learning survey*. [Online]. Available at learningandwork.org.uk. Last Updated: 2024.

at all career stages.[11] And while the root causes are very complex, disinformation, hate crime, identity-based violence, social tensions and polarisation across the social and political divide are being reflected in some senses in places of learning. Written evidence submitted to the Education Select Committee on the impact of Covid sets out some of these risks.[12] Leaders in FE fulfil their legal responsibilities in these areas through both policy and practice, and across every element of the learning journey- the curriculum, pastoral work, interventions, collaboration with external agencies and in work to strengthen college cohesion through values, mission and culture. And of course, through pedagogy which seeks to build self-regulation, emotional resilience and positive social behaviours.

Now is an opportune moment to review what works effectively in post-16 education. Teachers need to deploy resources and approaches which are credible and impactful, and which work in busy classrooms, workshops, studios and laboratories. Students, crucially, need the knowledge and skills which will in turn build their character and help them to live and work well.

Students need to learn from experts and role models, who can give them rich and lasting knowledge which applies far beyond the qualification and into their future. And they need skills which can be developed in safe learning spaces and subsequently in employment. And interwoven with knowledge and skills, students need to be taught the "third dimension" of learning; the behaviours, habits and attributes which will help them to be confident, critical, curious and kind. Our guide presents many rich examples of powerful change in students brought about through the expertise, skills and human qualities of their teachers. What we have seen and heard throughout the study indicates that there is a passion and an appetite for developing, evaluating and sharing strategies on a sector-wide scale.

The publication of this effective practice guide comes at an opportune time, with a renewed focus from Government on teaching quality in Further Education and the links between this and the Opportunity Mission to break down barriers. In addition, the proposed new inspection framework for Further Education and Skills and for Initial Teacher Education also present a compelling framework.

What follows is not an evidence base in further education pedagogy. The work of others will achieve this. But we want this effective practice guide to be the starting point for teachers and leaders to share their most impactful strategies, testing them

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[11] FE Week. (December 16 2024). *What's behind the rise in bad student behaviour in colleges?*. [Online]. feweek.co.uk. Last updated: December 16 2024. Available at: feweek.co.uk

[12] Protection Approaches. (June2020). *Evidence submission to the Public Accounts Committee COVID-19: education*. [Online]. committees.parliament.uk. Last updated: June 2020. Available at: committees.parliament.uk [Accessed 16 December 2024].

and identifying what can be transferred and adapted. We hope it will encourage providers to look at current approaches to teaching and learning and implement evidence-based approaches which will have the most impact. And in doing this, we want the voices of FE students to be heard, so that we have a richer understanding of what works in educating those who will inherit the world of the future.

Case Studies

1. Barnsley College

Conditional knowledge development through industry adaptation in T level

- **T level Digital Design, Development and Production**

Teacher: Oran

Student: Luke

Developing rich cultural knowledge in A level English

- **A level English**

Teacher: Helen

Student: George

Luke's teacher, Oran, has a distinctive approach to planning the T level Design, Development and Production curriculum. "In my teaching I emphasize knowledge and skills beyond programming… towards critical evaluation of digital content…they must understand the wider impact of digital tech in today's world. And they will navigate the industry better if they can work collectively".

Oran believes that his own experience as a learner has shaped his craft. "My history teacher taught me to be curious and critical and he never used PowerPoint".

Oran uses cognitive theory to plan learning. "I draw on Vygotsky…when I scaffold and model problem solving…this builds resilience which they need…because in programming you fail and then fail again… there are so many bugs and errors… you have to be determined to correct errors and run codes".

Also linked to Vygotsky[13] is Oran's commitment to collaborative learning when students have the knowledge to do this effectively. "Social interaction is important to the students as they progress to employment." Collaborative working nudges students out of their comfort zones. "Working alone is often their default… but they need to be versatile and learn how powerful collective eyes and ears are in a fast-moving industry". Oran adapts a strategy associated with Spotify which he uses largely in year 2. "One key thing I learned in my PGCE was the importance of

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[13] Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) Mind in Society: *The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge,MA: Harvard University Press.

establishing knowledge before using "leader free" methods." He references Rosenshine. "The Spotify approach and the peer programming follow on from depth of knowledge and understanding". In this learning model "students work in groups, squads and clans…on micro projects, self- organizing to achieve a "mission" …it emphasizes group culture, and the importance of agility. "They go beyond programming skills into documentation, problem-solving, analysis and collective expertise". The impact is seen "in the way their work improves over time and their confidence. They strive to exceed their target grades."

Oran's pedagogy is also informed by the college's purpose and context. "Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds…and some talk about the negative connotations of Barnsley…so we are ambitious…we are all working to get success for our students through the ways we teach." Oran says the college uses "Sherrington's work on Rosenshine as the foundation for teaching and learning" and that pedagogy in college is led by a cross-college team and a senior leader with the word "pedagogy" in his job title.[14] The Digital team have also drawn on materials produced by the ETF in adapting pedagogy to the specific needs of the qualification.

Luke describes Oran's micro project learning. "We don't just get to do what we like…we are given a job, and we have to work together to succeed in the mission." Luke explains that there is no down time. "He will suddenly change the brief or throw something unexpected in…and we have to pull in knowledge from way back and apply it in real time, like in industry". Luke likes the points when Oran stops to hold scrum meetings and error calls "I think this is a good experience of industry…we come together to solve the problem". Here, Luke is articulating what Durkheim called "collective effervescence"- the uplifting sensation of being in a group sharing goals and ideas.[15]

Luke recognizes the benefits of this. "Other people can sometimes see the solution in a coding error where you've been trying for ages," and thinks his ability to work well with others might be why he has been exposed to so many aspects of the company in his placement, attending web development client meetings and working on game development.

He likes the work-study structure of the course (2 consecutive placement days, 3 college days) "I can start and complete things at work and bring what I have learned back into college". This combination of work with learning has shaped his

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[14] Tom Sherrington. (2019). Rosenshine's Principles in Action. John Catt Educational Limited.

[15] Durkheim. Emile Durkheim. (1915). The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. London: Allen and Unwin.

progression plans. "I want to apply for an apprenticeship so I can continue this pattern of work and learning".

Over in the sixth form college, the same commitment to pedagogy is evident in A level English. George tells us about the knowledge he is gaining beyond the topics and texts that he is studying. "English is like the tip of an iceberg…underneath it there is this huge amount …I feel like I am learning something bigger than the text".

George explains this "You think you are studying a book or play but as well as this you are learning about history, society… inequality…". At school George studied "An Inspector Calls", and this made a deep impression "there's always an underclass and abuse and suffering. In Helen's lessons, it is the same. She teaches us context knowledge." He gives the example of "A Streetcar named Desire". Stella's background… a southern belle and plantation context means it is hard for her to shake off what she has inherited… and this inability makes her life tragic…". George says that this learning "has made me think about racism in the context of my own world… issues like Black Lives Matter…and abuse of women…the case in France in the news". A explains that he looks at life and society in different ways through his study of English "and I can see that things do not really change much…my understanding is much deeper. And one thing I have learned leads to another". Here, George is describing schema, the process of connecting and organizing aspects of knowledge to create bigger, richer knowledge structures.[16]

George describes the impact of Helen's teaching "Helen picked up early that I struggle with essay writing". She used modelling templates to support George in practice and repetition in structuring his answers. "She used I do; we do; you do…and taught me how much better it is to start an essay as soon as it has been set…and to keep working on it in small chunks, spacing it out so you use the whole time you have before handing in".

"My target grade is C. But I want a B for my UCAS and career… (in journalism) so when I saw the first B on my feedback, I was so happy".

George identifies one of Helen's methods- "the big question". "Helen gives us the big question at the start of each week….and then in every lesson, she keeps bringing us back to it, working on it, asking questions, so we develop a whole map of things that would answer this question. Then we write the answer to the question as an essay".

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[16] Hydeh Fayaz. (September 2021). *Working with schemas and why it matters to teachers.* [Online]. Education Endowment Foundation. Last Updated: September 2021. Available at: educationfoundation.org.uk

George likes the routines and expectations set by Helen. "She made it clear from the start how we were expected to work and behave….and talk in class…we know when work is due, and we know exactly when she will mark and return it."

George says that Helen's practice of individualized audio feedback on essays is "Literally the best type of feedback I have ever had, ever".

Helen says that her pedagogy is influenced by her own experience of inspirational teachers "I want students to feel they can't wait to get into my lessons because they are learning things wider than what's on the spec which will stay with them".

Helen talks extensively about the "connections" which she wants her students to make between Literature, history, languages and across the arts and humanities. "Because I think making these connections helps them understand the course content better and deepens their knowledge of their own lives and the world they live in". This reference to Schema reflects A's observations.

Helen describes the Big Question as "spaced practice…by returning to the question through the week, students are activating what is in their memory and what they have learned".

Helen's impact on George's achievement reflects her belief in growth mindset. "I teach a lot of students with target grades of C and D who exceed their targets through sheer effort and perseverance...Geroge is a case in point. He was overjoyed when he got a B. But he did it though his own determination". Helen uses initial assessment but sets this within a matrix of information on each student. "Where they live, where they went to school, what support they may have had, how they present themselves in lessons so that the target is one factor among many in predicting achievement.

Helen describes her environment in the sixth form college as "buzzing with pedagogy". "It is the driving force", and Helen compares this to a previous job where this sense of purpose around pedagogy was lacking. The sixth form Principal and curriculum leaders show interest and involvement. "Toby, our curriculum leader, teaches and also leads on pedagogy," and Helen thinks his dual role is significant in the culture of professional practice. "We are all teachers" and there is a generosity around sharing ideas, challenges, resources and talking "all the time" about students' learning and their own teaching.

2. The Education and Training Collective (ETC)

Exclusion to inclusion: role models, routines, and the impact of ambition

- **Level 3 Diploma in Engineering- BP Scholarship Scheme**

Teacher Richard

Student Tom

"I visit on placement and see them in a real environment… Just getting on with it… from youngsters straight from school like Tom to highly skilled engineers.… that makes me proud. I like to think my teaching methods have given them knowledge, skills, confidence.… …they are loving the job, feeling valuable. Quite often, an employer will say "X is fantastic…better than some of our staff who have been here years.""

Richard is a time-served engineer who moved into teaching after working as an assessor. He completed in-service teaching qualifications. He is now a mentor on the Cert Ed. Richard says that learning about what must happen before assessment was an "eye-opener…I discovered that how you teach is as crucial as what you teach." He was inspired by his Cert Ed tutor's "knowledge of how students learn and how to teach both knowledge and skills". Richard's practice is shaped by his tutor's "ability to build up knowledge from a zero base…that stayed with me… so I build knowledge from scratch before anything else". Richard gives an example "My T level students were working with a local rig-building company. They walked in and without prompting they organised themselves and did the risk assessment." He has found that "…there is no other way than to teach content first and keep going back to it again and again so that when they (students) go into work their grounding is secure and they can apply it in real time."

Tom recognises the impact of this and understands that he is experiencing something unique through the direct involvement of BP staff in this process. "We can put the theory into practice straight away in college but then there's this next bit …where we learn about when the theory doesn't match up…because the real-life work is different…there's always something different to throw you and then you have to think your way out of it."

Richard says knowing the students' characters, goals and backgrounds is a significant part of his pedagogy. His students come from several very disadvantaged areas "some aren't well-supported at home for lots of reasons…and they often hold down more than one part time job…it is important that I know these things."

Tom had a difficult time at secondary school, experiencing a managed move, permanent exclusion and a PRU. He was sanctioned frequently at school and was very unhappy throughout this period. His mother tried hard to get a school to accept him in his final year. Then, at the start of year 11, two things happened- he was offered a place at a school subject to conditions, "I was so grateful" and he spotted an opportunity which he thought was meant for him.

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"I saw it on my phone and couldn't believe it. It was like this was the thing I had waited for…and would make me so happy…and all the other negative stuff would be in the past".

This was the moment when Tom saw the BP Scholarship scheme on ETC's website. "There were 20 places…and I needed good GCSE's." He read everything he could find on BP's structure, strategy and plans for clean energy in the Tees Valley and "I made getting on the scheme my goal for life." He saved the details as his phone lockscreen "so it would be a spur…and I could remind myself of my dream every time I looked at my phone." It is still there on his phone. Tom had time to "work like I have never done before" to achieve the grades needed.

"I buckled down…when I started my predicted grades were 1's and 2's. I left with 5s and 6's."

Besides the entry qualifications, there was an interview and test.

"So, I prepared by finding out everything I could about the company…and clean energy… on the day "I wore a suit and got a haircut…I wanted them to see I had made the effort."

Richard talks more about routines "they need structure if they are going to work to pass exams and get good jobs. College can be the place of structure". he has also seen the impact on achievement of learning that follows a set pattern "every lesson starts with a challenging question to make them dig out the answer from earlier learning."

Tom says" his questions make you really think hard, but we learn to drill down for the answer".

Richard uses individual learning plans to deliver lessons, an individualised approach that gives students confidence and structure…" They feel proud of their achievements, and it helps them to work to exceed their targets." Order and calm routines provide the stability which many students "actually want and like." "Expectations from day 1…work and behaviour and attendance …setting ground rules and sticking to them…. seating plans to establish and maintain good behaviour and respect so they can learn without distraction."

Tom's learning is fired by his ambition to work for BP and inspired by role models.

"I met the project manager for green hydrogen…Richard said "go on, introduce yourself and tell him about yourself…and I did…at school that wouldn't have been encouraged. I would have been called out for it".

High quality teaching is "top priority" in college with a single college approach to pedagogy based on metacognition. Richard has visited lessons at Bede, and both

the Principal and CEO regularly re-affirm the importance of pedagogy. "Jason (Principal) is key to keeping it at the forefront" and the CEO is "involved and interested". Messaging about the importance of teaching and learning comes from the top of the organisation and the CEO/Principal includes it on all briefings and meetings. The Town Hall meetings held termly at each of the colleges in the group always starts with an update on teaching and learning. The metacognitive approach taken by college leaders means that teachers know that what they implement is credible and evidence based- Richard sees how effective scaffolding and guided practice[17] enable students to find a way through a difficult problem and then do it independently.

At the end of year 11, all BP scholars were retained on a qualification which has 100% achievement rate.

3. The Education and Training Collective (ETC)

Becoming metacognitive

- **A level Biology**

Teacher Katie

Students Alice and Thomas

"I've always been aware of how important the memory is in learning…I see every day that it isn't about luck- you can develop the brain in so many ways…every student can do that."

Katie speaks from experience. She attended a low achieving secondary and was on free school meals. She understands the effects of poverty and knows where her students come from. She was "good at learning and enjoyed it." She remembers revising then covering up the material and re-writing it. "Nobody showed me or told me…I did it instinctively."

Alice is Katie's student. Neither of her parents studied after age 16 and she is a family first in applying to HE to read medical science. Her journey has not been easy. Now in her second year, she reflects on the impact of Katie's teaching on her work and her life.

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[17] Education Endowment Foundation. (2018). *Metacognition and self-regulated learning*. [Online]. Education Endowment Foundation. Last Updated: 27 April 2018. Available at: educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

"I have become a metacognitive person! …I understand how I learn best and what works, and I have learnt the hard way to plan and organise my work and my life."

Alice loves the brain and how it works. She thinks this is partly because of her life experience and the way Katie teaches. "I had to use my brain to sort out my life and attitudes…. moving north in year 11 was a shock and starting at college was another shock. I found the work very hard and suddenly I wasn't the best in class anymore…I realised being in top sets at school gave me a false sense of my ability. I want to be a doctor…but I don't know any doctors really. I struggled with all these adjustments…both in work and in handling my emotional response…how I managed was to work on my life using the same methods as Katie does to teach us to work on Biology…."

Katie teaches In Bede College, the sixth form arm of ETC. She is now a curriculum leader, with 24 years' teaching experience, 19 in secondary and her PGCE was in secondary science. She describes the impact of her PGCE placement "it reinforced my subject knowledge and gave me the tools to teach. I learned so much… the memory, dual coding, teacher modelling, scaffolding…and I got interested in Q and A which is now my specialist area."

Katie shares her Q and A expertise in webinars and is the "go to" person for teachers wanting to improve their questioning strategies. Thomas, another of Katie's students describes her questioning as "Synoptic…she pushes us to remember what we have learnt and to explain how our answers link to what we have done previously."

He explains Katie's technique "she asks the question and then waits while we all think about a response. Then she asks someone …so you can never stop thinking….and then she will ask "so what if x happened…and what would be the consequence? Why?"

Katie says "it can be easy to think that college students need a different approach…. but actually, their needs are the same…you have to teach behaviour for learning, establish routines…it is only the level that is different. You are still building knowledge and feeding the long-term memory".

Katie learnt early that "nothing should be ambiguous or left to interpretation", when it comes to organisation and expectations. "Where I want them to sit, exam dates, test dates, revision planning templates, what we will learn this lesson, where it fits in the wider picture, context slides to support connections….and expectations of work ". Katie runs her own early morning study session, to provide a quiet learning space and "get the brain going "

Thomas says "from day 1 there was no sugar coating. Teachers were clear about independence and self-discipline and target grades were communicated early "so

there were messages about our potential. This brought home to me the realisation that my subjects were hard, and I would not get through it as smoothly as I did in GCSE."

Katie's PGCE included content on behaviour management, and social and emotional learning. "I apply it all." She loves the fact that learning is so clearly the college's purpose and has adapted ideas from CPD including using cognitive interleaving.[18]

"Biology has a strong synoptic element, and interleaving helps students make the connections between aspects of the subject and enables them to develop their retrieval."

Knowledge, memory and retrieval are at the heart of Katie's practice. "Day in and day out" she teaches what she calls "foundational knowledge. Then when we learn new knowledge, we can stick it to the existing knowledge... and we glue it into the memory through practising…. like my childhood cover and re-write but hopefully more interesting".

One of these "more interesting" methods is allocating year 13 students to year 12 students as mentors. She says that the effect of this on year 13 is significant "because they are practising their own knowledge and skills and are having to recall in a synoptic way."

Thomas and Alice articulate some of the ways in which the knowledge taught by Katie has had a profound effect. Both identify "lightbulb moments". Learning about evolution led Thomas to question and reject earlier views. He also describes being "empowered" by knowledge in a very personal way.

"When we did the human heart and lungs in school I started to have panic attacks. I suddenly realised how if the heart packs up then that's it. I started checking my pulse obsessively and worrying about my heart. But in college Katie showed us the wider picture…and I started to understand how unlikely this would be because of my diet, lifestyle, genetic history. So, the knowledge I got in college made me see that this was…a very low risk… something I shouldn't worry about…and I felt empowered by the knowledge and still do whenever we go back to these topics. Now the cardio-vascular system is my favourite topic because I have overcome my fear."

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[18] Education Endowment Foundation. (16 August 2021). *Cognitive science approaches in the classroom*. [Online]. Education Endowment Foundation. Last Updated: 16 19. 19. August

Alice says she is "gripped by the "miniscule size of synapses when you consider how utterly critical, they are in the human body…. when they fail, other functions fail, and it can be catastrophic…these little things are terrifyingly significant."

Bede's CPD is delivered both in the sixth form and increasingly from the cross-college Quality team. CPD is followed up promptly with learning walks and feedback-so that the same principles used with students are also used with teachers. Parents and carers are part of the process. Gemma, Head of Teaching and Learning, delivers sessions on the metacognitive approach (the Five Principles) so parents understand how students should be working outside lessons. "They really get cognitive load when we explain the rationale for fewer, longer lessons".[19] Students are introduced to the Five Principles in induction, so the messaging is consistent. Bede is in year 4 of a process in which every teacher plans, implements and evaluates one of the Five Principles. This has coincided with a year-on-year increase in achievement rates.

"I think the really significant thing I have learnt is that the foundation principles are common across secondary and college students. There is no magic or mystery. It is providing a supportive and challenging learning environment where routines and expectations are understood. When that is in place, the teacher can build knowledge without distractions of poor behaviour. Then when knowledge is secure students can apply it in practical sessions."

4. Wirral Metropolitan College

Metacognition and "the Roundtable huddle"

- **Level 3 Art and Design (UAL)**

Teacher: Tony

Student: Will

When asked what he thought his students might say, about his methods, Tony's response is "I think (they) would say I am their guide on a safe and magical journey of discovery."

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[19] Daniel Muijs. (13 February 2019). *Developing the Education Inspection Framework: how we used cognitive load theory*. [Online]. educationinspectionblog.gov.uk. Last updated: 13 February 2019. Available at: educationinspection.blog.gov.uk [Accessed 9 January 2025].

Will agrees with this- he says Tony's teaching has given him confidence to follow an idea without needing to follow rules or conventions. "I had this lightbulb moment. Tony said "where do you want to go? And he just took the palette knife and used it with charcoal. I suddenly realised I could just follow my ideas and instincts. To achieve what I want."

Will attended a state comprehensive and his Art teacher insisted he should go to college rather than stay at school. He attended transition events, saw "the amazing work done by students" and met Tony. Will has support with extra time in assessments. He started on level 2 to give him time to focus on maths and English, and he achieved level 2 distinction and a grade 4 in English. Now on level 3, and working to Distinction, he still needs a grade 4 in maths for his university application. "When I started on level 3 I knew this was the right thing, but it was a big change in depth…annotation really mattered, and I had to work on it….to start with I had no idea where to start explaining my ideas and work." Tony explains that he spends time in year 1 teaching students how to work, plan, and evaluate their work. "They have to have the tools to do this from the start, but they arrive at different stages of readiness. So, I do the groundwork…this means teaching through the stages of developing knowledge, building the research, designing, reflecting and evaluating so that they have a working approach to help them move towards independent practice". This involves clear and sometimes challenging feedback. "When we start on design, Tony gives us feedback constantly…like what are you thinking about where to go next with this? What do you think this needs now? Tony pushes me to consider things I would not have done on my own …like…working in a loose way…"

Will reflects, too, on his maths re-sit and on the differences between maths and Art.

"Art is ambiguous, maths is not." In maths you move up through knowledge and rules… there is like a ladder of rules and processes, and you must work within them. Here I can move in any direction". Will explains that Tony's templates for interpretation and analysis have helped him organise and articulate his ideas. "These gave me a template for interpreting the artist's work, explaining how they influenced me…" Will loves the regular "Roundtable Huddle". "The huddle is brilliant but hard work…we are out of our comfort zone and have to move from theory to design. Tony pushes us to think differently. He teaches us that art is ambiguous". Everyone's involved- you can't not be…Tony demonstrates, asks questions and gives feedback on our answers…he pushes everyone to be analytical and to explain where they are going with something…we all critique. You can't hide from his questions. Sarah, the curriculum lead, attests to the power of the "huddle". She describes it as "electrifying."

Tony says "teaching Art is about teaching knowledge and then applying this in processes. But you must make both the knowledge and the processes beautiful and interesting".

He creates the beauty and interest through carefully crafted dialogue and questioning. "Constantly asking students why they have made a particular decision, what else they have considered, what is holding them back, what or who has influenced them…"

Tony is keen for students to take on "live" briefs from local companies and organisations so that they can apply their college learning to a remit from a client and an external timetable. Will has been offered a photographic commission by The Wide Welly company. In this case there is no specific brief, so "I have to think about the best way to do it- like the planning, design, research and evaluation." Will is using conditional knowledge here and has been well-prepared with Tony's teaching of a metacognitive approach.

Tony attended an all-boys' school run by a monastic order, with high levels of discipline. But Art lessons were a world apart, with inspiring teachers. They encouraged exploration and taught him to "question and be curious. I think this made me critical and analytical". He uses this approach in his teaching and the "huddle" method, which is inclusive of everyone, and also lets him know "who hasn't got it or isn't confident".

Tony came into teaching after working a curator at the Tate. He has been teaching for 25 years and his teacher training was an in-service Cert Ed. He works as a moderator for UAL and is a deputy head of curriculum.

Tony refers to the increasing numbers of students with EHCPs and high needs and to high levels of disadvantage. This is reflected in his use of scaffolding and careful balancing of support with challenge. "In year 2 the students' learning behaviours are such that they can work independently, organise and prioritise and are more disciplined in everything. This is because of the groundwork in year 1 to get those behaviours right."

Tony has seen a quantum leap over the last 2 years in the focus on teaching and learning in college. This reflects the profound commitment of the Principal and CEO, Gill. "When I arrived, nobody talked about teaching and learning. Now it's the main thing." Pedagogy and specifically metacognitive approaches are at the heart of the college's recovery from a Requires Improvement inspection judgement. Gill blocks out time to visit different curriculum areas, role models strategies for staff in tackling poor behaviour both in learning settings and around the campus. Her experience in areas of deprivation makes her a strong advocate of metacognitive practice and tells teachers that "caring in the right way" is the path to inclusion. "Care must not tip into

soft". Gill's messaging about the importance of teaching is match ed by her action in reviewing pay structures to reward good teachers.

Tony says he sees the impact of his teaching when his students' progress to university and art college "sometimes from level 1…it makes me reflect a lot on social mobility and the journey these students are on…which doesn't end here, and so teachers play a big part." The impact is also seen in a three-year improvement in achievement from 86.4% to 100%.

> "The Bede College and Wirral Metropolitan College case studies are great examples of the positive impact metacognitive strategies can have. We know from the wider evidence base that using these approaches can produce an additional seven months' progress over the course of a year. There is also some evidence to suggest that disadvantaged students are less likely to use the strategies without being explicitly taught them."
>
> **(Kathryn Davies Post-16 Lead Education Endowment Foundation)**

5. SMB College

Everything connects: the power of schema to enable change

- **Level 3 Extended Diploma in Animal Management**

Teacher Sam

Student Grace

Grace is a second-year student on the Extended Diploma in Animal management. She reflects on how she has been changed by learning and the part her teacher, Sam, has played in this. "Sam shows us the context of things …like the importance of animal experimentation in research…we need to research and learn in order for humans and animals to continue to live and thrive together". She remembers an early lesson "during induction…we learned about the common ancestor and the evolutionary timeline…I remember looking at tree climbing claw adaptations and thinking…for the first time …about the line connecting mammals with us. And that was inspiring. Alice says this new understanding of the interconnectedness of humans and animals has been "lifechanging" and has influenced her progression

and career plans. Her work experience in a zoo has also been instrumental in changing her perspective on debates around conservation.

Grace gives examples of some of the methods and approaches used by Sam to deepen knowledge and understanding.

"Sam teaches us by connections…we have to remember these connections all the time…from last year…". Grace gives the example of "learning cells, then tissues, then organs…and then pathology…so we move out from the tiniest organism to the big picture of the animal, so we know it inside out." She recalls a standout lesson when painting a dog and observing its movement brought the Musculo-skeletal system off the page and into "real time." She talks more about this when referencing dissection -"it brings theory to life."

Grace refers to Sam's "sticky learning" approach, describing it as building and securing knowledge in her long-term memory. "In a lesson on a new topic, say diabetes, we go back to kidneys and the pancreatic function…". Grace says new topics always pull in existing knowledge, "so you are constantly re-playing learning but sort of sticking it to the new knowledge."

Grace finds Sam's routine of building secure knowledge through learning and research before applying it in practical work powerful in enabling her to understand and make sense of her learning over time. She describes work-based experiences including a welfare assessment in an army kennel where she drew on knowledge built before the visit and practiced in different ways, including question and answer. Sam tells students that answering questions is like showing you're working out in maths. Grace comments that Sam's questions rarely require short answers. "He will ask what if x happened or why do you think... or where have we looked at this before? Or what would a conservationist think about that?"

Grace achieved very good GCSE grades and chose the course over A levels because of the combination of science and animal management. She will be the first in her family to progress to higher education. She had several meaningful encounters with college and teachers before starting. She met Sam and attended his mock lesson which introduced an element of realism. "It was dissection and I realized I would just have to get on with it…". She is glad that the less palatable aspects were introduced at the outset. "Because this is real science…and the live animal and the dead animal both need studying…I have learned to be objective."

Sam is in his fifth year of teaching. He is a T level examiner and an "advanced practitioner" in college, coaching and developing teachers. Sam's professional practice is shaped by 2 things- metacognitive approaches and strong subject knowledge. He sees the first of these-metacognitive approaches- as key to developing thinking "and when you have thinking skills you have so much- curiosity, determination, self-discipline." Sam refers here to Grace and the ways in which her

knowledge and her thinking skills have enabled her to shift her perspective towards scientific objectivity. "She sees the wider picture." Sam says he wants his students to progress "with more than the course content in their knowledge bank" and says he feels "privileged" to hear about her observation that "everything connects". He thinks there is much underlying her comment that points to a lifelong understanding of the natural world and the place of humans and animals within it.

Sam's PGCE included Subject Knowledge Enhancement, and he describes the entirety of it as "rich". "I observed in a PRU and a special school…and in primary… and saw how teachers used metacognition to help every student achieve whatever their circumstances or ability."

Sam uses spaced practice and interleaving "all the time…to bake in knowledge and enable students to connect new knowledge with it. In his role in college, he sees a lot of retrieval practice at the starts of lessons "which is a good place to start, but spacing and interleaving can be applied over time and beyond the single lesson". He gives an example from a project on noise stress. "We built the knowledge of noise stress over time and interleaved the knowledge with research, before a visit to a theme park with zoo". The students planned the visit and planned the incorporation of theory and research into it. Following this, they identified how their learning aligned with research and theory.

Sam explains that college is using pedagogy as a vehicle for recovery following RI judgement.

"We are on a journey… implementing a teaching and learning strategy which is practical and based on evidence." Sam says this work is led by the Assistant Principal, who is driving it across college, "sending out messages constantly." Sam says he is "a role model…for me and for teachers…he is genuinely interested in our subjects and pedagogy. He asks questions and can also be challenging."

Sam's students attend and achieve well- attendance is 97% and last year's achievement rate for Grace's qualification was 95%.

6. Brighton Metropolitan College: The Chichester Group

The "Bag for Life"- inclusive teaching and learning for life.

- **Level Two Travel and Tourism Teacher:**

Teacher: Gabi

Student: Ali

For Gabi, "the power of pedagogy is about transforming students and achieving much more than just a qualification." She goes on to say, "it has so many layers and if you use it in the right way, you can reach anyone in your classroom". Gabi's educational experience has influenced her own pedagogy. Her role models "were teachers who were kind, treated me with respect, didn't judge, and listened to me". Gabi explains that she sees herself in many of her students' backgrounds. Her own learning journey was disrupted, and she was not "active" in secondary education. However, she benefited from a hidden curriculum of business, customer service and life skills acquired through her pub-owning parents. Gabi describes her academic qualification results as "dreadful" but excelled when she went to college and completed a hair and beauty course.

Gabi moved into full time teaching sixteen years ago after working for over twenty years as cabin crew for British Airways. She completed a Cert Ed, then attended university part-time, where she completed a BA (hons) in Professional Education Studies. Gabi says she "felt brave" going to university as a mature student because she did not have an academic background. But she did have a clear sense that "developing myself as a student would bring advantages in enabling me to develop a model of teaching which was empathetic and inclusive." Gabi realised that what she was doing intuitively and practically was based on theory. "I spent a lot of time studying theory, but the real learning was putting the theory into practice". Here Gabi references the importance of secure declarative knowledge as a basis for developing procedural knowledge.

Gabi makes a point of recognising her students' individuality and knowing their starting points. Her student profile is typical of the area, and many students are disadvantaged. Most of Gabi's students have EHCPs and others have undiagnosed conditions.

Ali is deaf, has ADHD, and suffers from tics when he is anxious. He explains he was very unhappy in secondary school. He was bullied and ridiculed, and communication was difficult. Now a weekly resident at Hamilton Lodge School for the Deaf and full-time college student, he is "very happy" and feels confident to explain "how he likes to learn" and how he needs to be "communicated with". Ali describes the communication between his college teacher and Hamilton Lodge as "excellent". He has 1:1 support from the Additional Support team who sign for him. Ali "loves" his college course as there is "a lot of practical learning and learning by doing". He enjoys learning about new cultures and meeting different people.

Gabi reflects that learning for her students' needs to be a "gentle process" and she uses a range of styles that she can adapt to different backgrounds and needs. Gabi values the importance of feedback to support and develop her students, and that she "plays a wider role in developing her student's life skills, helping them develop their language and behaviours, in particular respect and kindness". Gabi refers to preparing her students with "a bag for life" which meets their overlapping needs. The

bag for life includes problem-solving, social interaction, and compassion. "Recognising how your students like to learn, talking to their other teachers, and working closely with the Additional Support team are vital for them to succeed". Gabi notes that her students enjoy and respond to practical learning and social interaction, and sees that besides teaching, she is developing positive attributes.

Gabi's practice reflects the EEF 5 a day core practice[20] which includes explicit instruction and flexible groupings to achieve outcomes. Gabi sees this as building class identity and personal self-worth. Gabi explains that when the students are in their groups, she makes sure that "everyone has a voice and feels valued and appreciated ". Ali describes how he works in different groupings for different tasks "we present our findings from the topics to each other and to other groups." Ali has taught his peers how to sign and how to present using signing, and in this transaction alone there is wider learning and development for every student.

Gabi scaffolds to move students towards independence, and Ali enjoys matching terminology to pictures which help him remember key terms, and how to use them.

Gabi understands the role of "motivational and developmental feedback" and always finds areas to "celebrate as well as improve". She uses an interactive platform called 'Pear Deck.' to encourage the contribution of all students and enable her to check levels of understanding.

Ali says that the teacher and the teaching strategies have helped him "grow and develop". He has "learned to not be shy and to be confident". He feels a lot calmer, and his ADHD is under control; he rarely experiences tics now. He plans to progress to level three next year and then go to university to study business management. Ali explains that he would like to teach and feels inspired by the methods he has experienced. He wants to make his family proud and wants to be challenged and grow. Ali has a part-time job in Boots and because of his college experience says, "he can calmly solve problems and deal with difficult customers".

Learning and values are an intrinsic part of the culture of The Chichester College Group. Two of CCG's core values are 'teaching and support are our prime focus' and 'kindness and compassion are at the heart of all we do.' Gabi's professional practice sits within this wider culture of learning and kindness.

Gabi proudly shares that her students nominated her for the Brighton Metropolitan College 'Inspirational Teacher Award'. Gabi feels her students recognise that she is

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[20] Gary Aubin. (June 2024). *The 'five-a day' for pupils with SEND - a cluster of adapted approaches*. [Online]. Education Endowment Foundation. Last Updated: June 2024. available at: educationfoundation.org.uk

a "role model for life" and appreciate how she uses a range of strategies and kindness and patience, so all students feel valued and progress.

7. New City College

Evidencing impact through supported experiments

- **GCSE mathematics**

Teacher: Behzad

Student: Anna

At New City College, the success of innovative teaching practices, such as supported experiments, stems from a strong institutional commitment to pedagogical development led by leaders such as Fiona, the Group Curriculum Director for English, and Emma, the Group Curriculum Director for maths.

Fiona emphasises empowering teachers while maintaining accountability, describing her approach as one of "giving teachers the frameworks to innovate while sharing feedback and outcomes across the institution." The "Supported Experiments" initiative is central to this strategy, encouraging teachers to trial new methods and refine their practice based on evidence. She highlights the importance of autonomy in fostering creativity, noting, "The best ideas often come from the teachers themselves." These experiments are celebrated annually at the Teaching and Learning Conference, a platform that reinforces a culture of shared learning.

In the Maths Department, Emma takes a complementary approach, blending structure with creativity. Recognising that many students struggle to engage with maths, she introduced projects like "maths in construction" and "maths in art," which integrate practical applications to make learning more relatable and enjoyable.

Building on the college's culture of experimentation, maths teacher Behzad designed and trialled a supported experiment aimed at tackling students' fear of multi-step exam questions. "I wanted to give students tools to see these big questions not as overwhelming but as manageable puzzles," he explains. His experiment focused on scaffolding complex problems into smaller, actionable steps. This draws on Sherrington's work on Rosenshein's Principles.

For Anna, a Level 3 Business student retaking her GCSE maths, this experimental approach proved transformative. Having struggled with maths throughout her education, Anna initially viewed the subject with trepidation. "I would have liked to pass it the first time, but I knew I needed to try again," she admits. The structured

and supportive environment created by Behzad allowed her to confront her anxieties head-on.

As part of his supported experiment, Behzad developed a teaching method that integrated scaffolding with real-world applications. His focus was on multi-step exam questions, often seen as a significant hurdle for students. He began by using visual aids, such as bar modelling, and interactive techniques like wall stations where students could work collaboratively on complex problems. These methods aimed to demystify large questions by breaking them into smaller, more approachable components.

For Anna, this approach was particularly effective. She recalls struggling with topics like circumference and πr^2 in school. "In secondary school, I didn't understand it at all. The teacher didn't explain it in a way that made sense to me," she says. However, during college lessons, Behzad applied his experiment's framework, using a mix of PowerPoint presentations, step-by-step examples, and guided problem-solving sessions to help her grasp these challenging concepts. "It finally clicked for me," she reflects.

A critical element of Behzad's experiment was using repetitive practice paired with immediate feedback to reinforce understanding.[21] For example, when teaching fractions, Anna was given targeted worksheets and asked to complete problems multiple times until she felt confident. "We'd do the same thing over and over if I didn't get it," Anna shares. This iterative process allowed her to build mastery incrementally.

Feedback also played a central role in the experiment. Behzad encouraged Anna and her peers to approach mistakes as learning opportunities. "I tell them, 'You're like my extended family. If I make mistakes, so can you,'" he explains. This ethos helped create a classroom environment where students felt safe to participate and take risks without fear of judgment.

As the term progressed, Anna, who had failed her initial resit, began to show significant improvement. Determined to succeed, she embraced the structured approach, attending additional lessons and completing extensive practice at home. "I decided to take it seriously. I did so much work at home—past papers and practice questions—and attended double lessons," she says. The combination of her effort and the experimental teaching strategies led to her passing the exam.

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[21] John Bowlby. (September 2005). *A Secure Base: parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. London: Routledge.

8. Dudley College

Knowing what, knowing how, knowing when

- **Level 3 Hairdressing Apprenticeship**

Teacher: Charlotte

Student: Tabitha

Charlotte is a hairdressing teacher at Dudley College. With a background in salon management and a passion for practical education, she creates immersive, hands-on experiences that prepare students for the complexities of the hairdressing industry. For Tabitha, a Level 3 apprentice, this approach has been transformative.

Tabitha initially pursued a different career path before realising her passion for hairdressing. Drawn by the creativity and client relationships the field offers; she enrolled in the hairdressing programme. "You really learn by doing," Tabitha reflects, emphasising the value of hands-on practice in building her confidence and technical skills.

Charlotte's teaching integrates practical application with theoretical underpinnings. Lessons are structured to reflect real-world scenarios, allowing students to engage actively with the material. For example, during a lesson on hair colouring, Charlotte incorporated health and safety by asking, "What PPE do we need?" and prompting students to retrieve and use the necessary equipment. This method- connecting declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge - ensures that students internalise industry standards while honing their technical abilities.

Tabitha highlights how Charlotte's step-by-step instruction fosters understanding. Techniques like pre-pigmentation and pre-softening were broken down into manageable parts, with Charlotte demonstrating each stage before guiding students through practice. "It really helped because it wasn't overwhelming," Tabitha recalls, adding that the process allowed her to master advanced colouring methods with confidence.

Charlotte frequently employs collaborative learning, encouraging students to share salon techniques and create new hybrid approaches. This mirrors real-world practices where hairdressers often learn from peers. "We create a new method together," Charlotte explains, underscoring the importance of teamwork in refining skills and fostering innovation. These collaborative exercises not only enhance technical proficiency but also build communication and problem-solving abilities.

Tabitha experienced this firsthand during her preparation for the WorldSkills competition. Encouraged by Charlotte to participate, she developed techniques through collaborative exercises and received tailored support to refine her skills. "Even if I come last, I'll still be in the top eight in the country, so that's something to be proud of," Tabitha shares, reflecting the confidence she gained through these collaborative learning opportunities.

Charlotte integrates formative assessment throughout her teaching, using open-ended questions to deepen understanding and develop students' conditional knowledge. After a haircut, she might ask, "Why did you choose that technique for this client's hair type?" or "How would you adapt your approach if the client's hair was thinner?" These reflective prompts encourage students to connect their actions to underlying principles, ensuring they are prepared for real-world decision-making.

Role-playing exercises further enhance this process. Charlotte structures these activities to simulate client interactions, gradually building students' confidence to handle diverse scenarios through using their procedural knowledge. "We'll role-play everything as much as we can—client conversations, consultations, you name it," she explains.

Charlotte's teaching methods are reflective of metacognitive learning steps including activating knowledge, independent practice and reflection. Her scaffolding and step by step approaches help students to develop secure knowledge whilst not overloading the working memory. It is this secure knowledge base that enables Charlotte's students to work confidently towards real client work.

9. New City College

GCSE English

- **Trust, Scaffolding, and Emotional Literacy**

Teacher: Jason

Student: Sayeed (name has been changed)

Jason, a GCSE English teacher at New City College, describes his teaching role as creating a "safe base" for students to explore and grow. For Sayeed, a retake student with a history of educational setbacks, Jason's approach has been transformative. "I think he's like a guide," Sayeed reflects, "someone who makes you feel it's okay to try again."

Sayeed initially approached his GCSE English retake with apprehension, burdened by past failures and a belief that he wasn't capable. However, Jason's teaching

philosophy, emphasises the importance of emotional safety in fostering academic resilience. "Students need to feel they have a secure base to return to when they encounter challenges," Jason explains. His classroom is structured around consistent routines and encouraging dialogue, building the trust essential for risk-taking and learning.

For Sayeed, this secure foundation allowed him to re-engage with English creatively. Jason identified Sayeed's passion for storytelling and used it as a conduit for growth. Encouraging him to expand on an idea about a father and son visiting a dinosaur park, Jason combined structured feedback with imaginative prompts. "Jason told me to describe the details, like the smell of the grass or the sound of the dinosaurs—it made me want to keep writing," Sayeed shares.

Attachment theory suggests that a positive relationship with a trusted adult can mitigate the effects of past failures. Jason's consistent encouragement and recognition of Sayeed's potential helped him move beyond avoidance. By scaffolding tasks—breaking them into manageable steps—Jason ensured that Sayeed felt supported while gradually building independence. "He doesn't just tell you what's wrong—he helps you figure out how to fix it," Sayeed says.

Jason's classroom exercises often revolved around turning mistakes into opportunities for deeper understanding. In one memorable activity, students were presented with unpunctuated or incorrectly punctuated instructions, requiring them to identify and correct the errors collaboratively. This approach engaged students in active problem-solving, fostering a sense of ownership over their learning. Jason explained, "I show them unpunctuated work and ask how it makes them feel—it's about understanding the reader's experience".

For Sayeed, this exercise was particularly impactful. Through Jason's guidance, punctuation became more than a technical hurdle; it was reframed as a tool to clarify and enhance meaning. Jason's method of scaffolding—breaking tasks into manageable steps—helped Sayeed build confidence incrementally.

The collaborative aspect of the task encouraged students to explore the effects of their choices. Jason's feedback was key, often involving reflective questioning such as why a particular correction worked or how a change might alter the meaning of a sentence. This iterative process reinforced critical thinking and persistence.

For Sayeed, the exercise marked a shift in his understanding. "Last year, punctuation was drilled into me a little more, just to get those extra marks," he reflected. The consistent emphasis on practice and reflection allowed him to approach punctuation with greater confidence and purpose.

By creating an environment where errors were embraced as learning opportunities, Jason enabled his students to take risks and develop a deeper appreciation for language. This approach not only improved Sayeed's technical skills but also empowered him to approach challenges with a problem-solving mindset.

Jason believes in the power of feedback as a tool for emotional and academic development. "When Sayeed struggled with punctuation, I reframed it as a skill he hadn't mastered yet," Jason explains. This language of growth aligns with attachment theory principles, helping Sayeed view challenges as opportunities rather than insurmountable obstacles. Through daily drills and interactive exercises, Sayeed's confidence grew alongside his technical skills.

"I used to hate punctuation, but now I think about where it belongs in the story," Sayeed notes. This shift in mindset reflects the secure attachment Jason fostered, allowing Sayeed to take ownership of his learning journey.

Jason's ability to integrate emotional literacy with academic goals is central to his practice. By creating a psychologically safe environment, he encourages students like Sayeed to confront and overcome their fears. "He doesn't let you give up on yourself," Sayeed says. This resilience is evident in Sayeed's progress and attitude. He missed out on a grade 4 by a few marks in his first retake but is approaching his second retake with energy and optimism.

Reflecting on his teaching, Jason highlights the transformative power of attachment in education. "When students feel valued and supported, they're willing to push themselves in ways they never thought possible," he explains. For Sayeed, this has meant not only improved writing skills but also a renewed belief in his potential.

Sayeed's journey underscores the profound impact of attachment-informed teaching. Jason's approach—anchored in trust, scaffolding, and emotional literacy—has helped Sayeed rewrite his narrative, both academically and personally. As Jason succinctly puts it, "Teaching isn't just about knowledge; it's about building the bonds that make learning possible."

10. Middlesborough College

Developing thinking and reflection

- **Health and Social Care Level 3**

Teachers: Pamela and Georgia

Student: Frances

Frances recalls one powerful lesson involving a simulated scenario of a haemorrhaging maternity patient.

We had to wear the equipment and calculate the blood loss while ensuring the patient stayed calm. It felt like being in a real ward, and I realised how important communication and teamwork are in these moments."

The team designed the session to replicate the intensity of a healthcare emergency while ensuring a safe environment for students to practise and learn from mistakes. This enables them to draw on declarative knowledge alongside procedural knowledge. It is essential preparation for the life and death realities which they will inevitably encounter in hospitals, where they will be required to use conditional knowledge as the situation demands.

"Students need the opportunity to experience high-pressure situations in a controlled way. This helps them build confidence and understand the gravity of their future roles."

The session didn't end when the scenario was over. The team integrated structured reflection through the college's SIM capture system, which records practical sessions for review. Francis describes how this impacted her learning:

"Watching the video back made me realise where I hesitated and why that might have been dangerous in real life. It helped me understand exactly what I need to work on."

Lucy, the team manager, views this reflective process as essential for metacognitive development, enabling students to analyse their actions and relate them back to theoretical principles such as consent protocols and communication strategies:

"Reflection helps students make the connection between what they did, why it mattered, and how they can improve next time. It's about building a critical understanding of their practice."

These methods reflect the college's overarching strategy which emphasises practical, reflective, and applied learning. This strategy incorporates Rosenshein's Principles of Instruction, Cognitive Load Theory, and Generative Learning (26) to ensure that lessons are both engaging and impactful.

Tamara, a senior leader at the college, explains how this approach supports teachers and students alike:

"Our focus is on creating safe spaces for both learning and reflection. By embedding strategies like metacognition into workshops, we're equipping students with the tools they need to succeed in real-world healthcare settings."

For Frances, the combination of practical learning, structured reflection, and supportive teaching has been empowering.

"I used to feel unsure about how I'd handle these situations in real life, but now I feel like I'm learning how to think on my feet," she says.

11. Franklin Sixth Form College

Empowering Voices: developing oracy for student success

- **A Level Business**

Teacher: Leanne

Student: Ingrid

At school, I was fearful of speaking out as it made me anxious about getting an answer wrong." Leanne is deeply committed to effective pedagogy, shaped by her own formal education experience. She recalls how the fear of making mistakes often led to a sense of isolation in the classroom. Determined to create a different environment, she designed her classroom to be one where mistakes weren't feared, and student voices are heard and listened to."

From the moment that students arrive at Franklin there is a proactive approach to inclusion that encourages a sense of community. This is part of the value system at the college. Leaders are conscious of the potential high levels of disadvantage as well as the fragile confidence of new students. The induction period is a key part of the strategy to welcome students, address any barriers, and ensure that all students, regardless of background, ability, or identity, feel supported, valued, and included. This ensures that inclusion is the number one priority within the role of all teachers. Ingrid says that her induction was key to her staying in college and feeling confident of achieving success. Illness and frequent hospitalisation had meant she had missed a lot of learning in secondary school and was anxious about her physical and emotional capacity to manage progression to college. From the outset, she felt her experience in college would be positive and happy. "I'm no longer nervous about speaking out. It's just part of the way we learn. When I am asked to put what I've learned into words, it helps me remember it and understand it better."

Leanne, and Head of Department Jaime, talk with passion about the ways in which they plan and deliver their curriculum with knowledge of their students in the forefront. "Talking constantly to students from a position of trust means we understand where they come from and what their ambitions are. Then we establish their starting points. And then we work out their individual "map" which will help them progress in line with their ambition." A key pillar in Franklin's pedagogy is oracy. "Many of our students find it hard to articulate concepts and ideas and to do so in a

disciplined way. But this is so crucial to their lives and careers after college."
Students are expected and encouraged to give voice to everything- ideas,
understanding, reflections, difficulties and moments of enlightenment. Teachers and
students identify one important aspect of the oracy strategy as "Viva Voce", where
they are expected to articulate their understanding and knowledge through
elaborative questioning, debate and discussion. This is important because it enables
teachers to assess individual student's understanding and adjust teaching and
assessment as a result. But beyond this, the focus on the student voice means that
teachers are developing skills and qualities outside the qualification.

The college's approach to oracy aligns with research evidence on its efficacy across
a range of indicators, including academic achievement, social and emotional
development, employability, life chances and civic empowerment.[22] Every classroom
features whiteboards on as many surfaces as possible, used to promote active
student participation in verbalising understanding, asking questions and thinking
about their own learning explicitly. "We arrive at the lesson and straight away we get
on with talking about what we will write on the boards. At the end of the lesson, we
re-visit the walls". Leanne describes this as retrieving learning from long term
memory whilst allowing her students to check their own levels of understanding.

 Ingrid loves college, is attending well and making very good progress from her
starting point. She has a clear view on the reasons for this and again identifies the
power of finding her voice and equally learning through attentive listening. Ingrid
particularly enjoys the ways in which Leanne incorporates current affairs and
trending media topics within discussion and debate. "I know so much more about the
world I live in since I came to college"

Examinations are also high on the agenda for Ingrid, but she doesn't feel anxious
because she is attending well, working hard, and knowledge retrieval is central in all
lessons.[23] 'Leanne will often bring up previous themes through quick fire questions
and our 10-minute starter that reflects what we have done before, sometimes even
from a year ago. I feel 100% confident in my subject and ready for the exams'.

Leanne is enthusiastic about the college's overall pedagogy which enables teachers
at all career phases to thrive and improve their practice. Sherrington's work on
walkthroughs are part of a coaching and development ethos. 'Everyone is on board
in this college – early career teachers, experienced teachers and   aspiring leaders.
It's all about the culture'. Messages about pedagogy are communicated directly by

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[22] The Chartered College of Teaching. (2024). *Oracy: the why and the how*. [Online]

[23] Grace Coker. (March 2024). *Rehearse and Repeat*. [Online]. Education Endowment Foundation.
Last Updated: March 2024. Available at: educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

the principal and senior team and include 'KIT' meetings, weekly departmental meetings and a well-planned cycle of CPD sessions that are now part of the learning culture of the college.

Ingrid has not only built her confidence through starting A-levels in college but also formulated an ambitious progression plan for herself. She knows her trajectory for success has been set in college with its values and pedagogy which have enabled her to thrive.

> It is a well-established certainty that the most important factor in a young person's experience of education is the quality of teaching and learning. Sixth form colleges will be keen to contribute experience and expertise to the developing evidence base. **(Bill Watkin CBE, CEO Sixth Form Colleges Association.)**

12. Buckinghamshire Adult Learning

Building confident communities through intergenerational learning

- **Family Learning**

Teacher: Wendy

Student: Rose

Rose achieved well at school but explained "I felt naïve about my decisions'. Her drama teacher was inspirational but beyond this subject she felt that school was focussed on performance more than students. After her children were born, she felt a strong urge to return to education to 'support my children and be a good role model' but lacked confidence. When BAL's provision moved online during the pandemic this removed a psychological barrier and enabled her to engage. Her teacher was a significant role model for her and a source of guidance beyond the lesson "her advice [on Rose's child's behaviour] was invaluable to help me understand why, and to develop coping strategies'.

BAL's vision is for lifelong and intergenerational Family Learning to build strong and capable communities and empower people to live and work meaningfully. It is informed by humanist principles of personal worth associated with Carl Rogers and Maslow's Hierarchy of Need and the social capital theory. BAL's approach aligns with Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

ABCD reflects the dual imperatives of the needs of individuals and socio-economic priorities. The high volumes of students with no and low prior attainment in BAL

provision have inherent potential to transform their own lives and contribute to the skills and employment needs in the local area and beyond. But many of these students start from a low base in terms of both confidence and attainment, so their learning journey starts with building self-worth and confidence before building ambition and setting achievement goals. In addition, many adults' re-engagement with learning is often affected by negative educational experiences and fear of judgement. Foundation Learning in BAL is led and delivered by staff with experience in early years and social sciences and their collective expertise in cognitive science shapes their approach. Wendy's pedagogy is built around the distinct needs of adult returners like Rose, building knowledge through experience and interaction, with less formal instruction. This concurs with Rose's account of how she has built her confidence through a range of experiences and interactions. After attending several sessions Rose felt confident enough to get involved with a local playgroup and subsequently helping to organise activities, using both knowledge and insight. 'I have learned a lot about the best ways to do this but am also applying my own understanding of parenting.'

Wendy understands that an important part of building confidence is developing determination and perseverance. Question and answer are a vital element. Used sensitively and with scaffolds this can be instrumental in developing a whole range of skills besides confidence; oracy, reasoning, thinking. Wendy does not rush to fill the gap following a question but will build in space to allow students to reflect, carefully managing this to allow processing and answer formulation in the less confident. She says, 'the key skill is reading the room and knowing families well'.

Rose recognises the significance of her learning journey, describing it as "holistic". Her journey started with an urge to re-enter learning so that her children would have a role model, and she would be better able to support her child's early development. Now she is studying education, volunteering, and is herself delivering learning to those who are at the start of the journey she has been on.

Wendy is supported in her pedagogy by a wider organisational approach that puts knowledge and skills at the heart of the quality cycle, referencing professional practice in every aspect of teachers' routines. There is a tangible pride in teachers' accounts of their successful work in engaging a whole family in learning and generating habits that will pass through the generations. Staff talk about a "legacy of learning". This reflects the sustained impact of work to make learning habitual and ingrained. In turn, this has huge scope for communities and local skills, for personal fulfilment and for wider social gain.

13. Hull College

Everyone Wins: Technology for inclusion

- **Adult Foundation Skills and ESOL**

Teacher Alina

Students Ariana and Zarmina

"When the teacher talks it comes onto my phone screen at the same time in my own language…it has helped so much…in ESOL and in my life… 'I am the first call and help the whole family'.

We are in Hull College talking to ESOL students about their experience of Microsoft Translate, a significant dimension of the college's groundbreaking strategy to transform and accelerate the development of language skills. Leaders recognise that language proficiency brings with it a whole host of attributes and capabilities. It is often the precursor to inclusion, employment, and personal fulfilment, which in turn bring rewards and benefits to communities and civic society. Everybody is a beneficiary of this approach, including teachers and others who interact first hand with students.

Alina teaches ESOL in the college. She reflects on the distinctive place of technology in her pedagogy, which, she says, is powerful- but not a replacement for "traditional forms of teaching". Alina believes that the relationship between student and teacher is first and foremost built on human interaction. Most teachers would agree that beneath many transactions with students lie implicit messages around other things- motivation, recognition, expectation, empathy, knowledge- and that these are part of the change wrought by learning, and through the teacher. Alina is a non-native English speaker with a passion for language whose own practice is informed by her understanding of learning science. And therefore, she sees technology as a "tool to enhance and personalise learning".

The impact of this digital transformation on teachers is notable. The Director of Digital Transformation says that teachers have a new "autonomy in their planning and delivery" because they have been given the digital and technical skills to teach differently, using time and resources in a much more individualised way. She refers to "removing glass ceilings" teachers are less fearful of technology and much more competent in deploying it.

Alina can see the impact of tools such as PowerPoint Live with i-translate. These are a powerful means of building and practising secure language knowledge and ensuring the basics are secure in the long-term memory. Ariana and Zarmina are enthusiastic about Alina's use of it because they can build understanding and comprehension skills much more rapidly and identify for themselves where there are gaps in their knowledge or if they need to work through something over a longer period. There is a sense from the students and from Alina that they are in control of

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their learning and with this comes increased confidence, enabling Alina to deploy a range of metacognitive strategies to help students understand their own learning.

"I use scaffolding in lots of different ways and always in response to individual needs." Scaffolding allows her to increase and decrease challenge in line with ability and pace of learning.

Ariana who progressed from ESOL to Law, reflects on her experience. "I was afraid it would be too hard, and I would be out of my depth when we got the first assignment, I felt like I was going back to my first ESOL lesson …but before the assignment the teacher provided a structured framework for the work and a way of working with research tools". Here, Ariana is describing scaffolding methods as giving her the means to complete the assignment, almost a satnav.

Alina believes that a key skill for students to develop is the use in combination of all the skills in writing in English, but also finds that this is a skill her students can find difficult, since it necessitates the pulling together of webs of knowledge, such as grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary and style. She encourages them to bring together these areas of knowledge in free writing about their own lives and experiences, which are often rooted in trauma. This gives them a powerful story to hinge their writing on and reflects some of the recognised trauma practice in social work and counselling.

Again, Alina has applied this approach in combination with AI. This aligns with a wider college strategy to address the learning barriers caused by trauma. Zarmina explained 'Last year, my first year I have taken part in a project to share 'my story', putting my experiences into AI and creating pictures that relate to my journey from Afghanistan to the UK, it helped me to improve and settle in quickly and made me feel there were people who were interested in my story".

Students use their stories and free writing to create a physical book they can use to reflect on their own progress. Alina, along with senior leaders, believe that this has been particularly powerful in promoting choice, collaborative learning, and most importantly confidence for the learner to feel their context for learning is fully understood.

The adaptations and approaches used by Alina, and others across the college, are a world away from the previous educational experiences of her students. Ariana and Zarmina reflect on an education cut short in their homeland at around the age of 12. They describe their time in college as life changing.

14. Sheffield City Council

Empowering Adult Learners: Personal Growth in Community Adult Education

- **Level 2 English Functional Skills**

Teacher: Louise

Students: Aamina and Beatrice

'I coasted at school; I would look out of the window because I was embarrassed. I now understand why I couldn't process things.' Beatrice started to make sense of her difficulties at school when she was assessed for dyslexia as an adult. Her early experiences, overlaid with much more positive ones as she re-engaged with learning, have brought wider benefits, not only for herself but for those around her. She explains this as a dual perspective "I can see myself in others", and in her work with families she has found a richer, deeper understanding based on this. Beatrice says that she has been transformed by her experience as an adult learner.

Aamina, originally from Iran, comes from a family that celebrates learning – her father an architect and brother who is a civil engineer. When she arrived in the UK, she studied ESOL in the college to Level 1, but when she had her children, there was no opportunity for her to continue. She found this period difficult, being both away from learning and more isolated from the wider English community. When her children started school Aamina wanted to volunteer at the school supporting early years children, role-modelling community activity as an example for her own children and improving her social inclusion and language. This gave her the impetus to return to study.

Overcoming challenges is a theme in the narrative of both learners' journeys. It is also a theme in Louise's own personal story. 'I was an average achiever and had a child at 20…but my dad encouraged me to re-engage with education, so I overcame my self-doubt." Louise's achievement of a Psychology degree as an adult makes her a role model for her students and leads to a real empathy with the challenges faced by many of her students.

With adults Louise will often pick subjects that she is interested in herself and which her students have expressed curiosity about. 'I have done a lot around sustainability. This enabled wider learning about the world they live in." Louise will identify topics that are relevant, for example local and national news, to "hook" students into the more challenging grammar work through topics which motivate.

Louise has primary teaching experience and applies many of the approaches she used with adults learning Functional Skills in English. She describes one of her main strategies as modelling which she uses to help build a deeper understanding of each language feature or concept. Louise explains that modelling theoretical tasks in small steps enables learners to follow her in steps and stages which avoid cognitive overload. Aamina and Beatrice agree that Louise's approach supports deeper understanding and enables them to discuss, ask questions and answer them and progress quickly. "The feedback we get from modelled examples helps us to manage work set outside lessons. We are getting more independent in our learning." Modelling topics are fundamental to the course outcomes, but Louise insists on the same approach in speaking. The confidence gained through social interaction modelling has a huge impact on these adult learners.

Aamina and Beatrice recognise reflection, self-correction and repeated practice as key approaches used in lessons. Beatrice recalls her difficulties with punctuation and tense 'we had to write on the white board and see if it was correct'. She was given the opportunity to say the sentence aloud to identify errors, and then self-correct and read aloud again. This constant practice and repetitive routine have brought the dual benefits of improved confidence in oracy and improved technical proficiency.

Jenny who leads the English curriculum believes that 'sometimes, for a range of reasons, adults have a stronger motivation to learn, compared to younger students'. Often their life experience gives them a wealth of material to build learning around. Louise says 'If you engage with people, give them things they are interested in, and are knowledgeable about, then, with support, they will be able to write about it'. She believes that having the theme or topic motivates them to apply the rules of written and spoken English, persisting through the difficulty because they are motivated by the subject. The adaptation of metacognitive methods from primary teaching is particularly interesting here, with improved progress and confidence in adult students.

15. Waltham Forest College

Self-awareness, identity and culture- bringing the world to the learner

- **Level 2 Barbering, Level 3 Business T Level, Level 3 Childcare and Education**

Teachers: Alan Kenny, Deividas Riauka, Angela Apostoli

Students: Ahmad, Muhammad, Ivan, Tamara, Noor, Sana

'Skin fades and curls are styles that students must learn about' says Alan, who teaches barbering. Planning practical lessons involves more than teaching

technique, it requires engaging with popular culture, identity and heritage. Students often bring their friends as models to be practiced on but as Alan notes, 'the boys will bring someone with the same hair cut … because that's what is in fashion in their circles'. He tailors practical work to reflect the diversity of students and their preferences, encouraging them to see the importance of barbering in expressing different cultures and identities.

Alan describes how he manages the learning environment: 'female students cannot remove headscarves to practice on one another where male students might walk through, so I must plan the timetabling carefully. I use screens to enable assessments to take place when female lecturers are required because of beliefs and values. His students are comfortable and happy, they recognise that barbering requires skills on many levels - it is not only the technical ability that is crucial- so too are the barber's attitude, language, and customer engagement. Modelling his respect for his students' varied backgrounds, beliefs and cultures, Alan is also preparing them to apply their understanding to the diversity of the workplace.

Ahmad, Alan's student located to the UK in 2019 and started school just before Covid and school closures. He describes some of the challenges which both these factors presented. As a third language, learning English was foremost among these 'I just expected I was going to fail'. The effects of lockdown meant a loss of the vital interaction which supports language learning. Ahmad and his friend Muhammad were on level 3 barbering, together they describe how Alan watches carefully across the room while students are practising cutting, 'he is not in your face, but he is next to us quickly when things are going wrong, he asks us questions on our correction techniques'. When students answer Alan's questions, they are explaining to the whole class and together, they build their skills and confidence for real work settings.

Ivan and Tamara are both studying computer science. Ivan says 'In Ukraine we are not really used to saying, sorry, teacher, can you help me? Not that they don't help, but because you didn't ask, it's just not the way that you do it there. Here it is more accessible for the student.' Tamara describes her education in India 'we memorised word for word but now I couldn't tell you what I learnt. Here, I am developing an understanding, if I am asked questions out of topic, I can now explain'. Both students can reflect on and evaluate their educational experiences outside the UK, and both can articulate how they are now self-aware of their own learning. 'Here, every lesson starts with a memory test, but not like in India where we learnt to copy word for word. Deividas ask us questions which get us to think about problems and solutions…so you are recalling facts but applying them to questions.'

Tamara has thrived in her recent work experience where she can now ask informed questions when learning how to build data management systems. This has been with a company whose head office is in India, 'Our experience of work is from different

countries', she likes the fact that her UK education is equipping her to work in international companies.

The Computer Science curriculum area is rich in diversity. Both Ivan and Tamara are taught by Deividas, who is Lithuanian, and his colleagues from Sri Lanka, Ireland, Ghana and Albania. Their pedagogy is shaped by their determination to prepare students for work in a globally connected world.

Students and teachers' backgrounds, social and educational experiences provide material for a curriculum which enables Ivan and Tamara to use their critical thinking and self-awareness in jobs of the future. Within the subject of computer science, discussion and learning range across different problems and solutions within different workplaces, different beliefs and values consider and question the role of the computer industry in this cultural and global context. 'Across classrooms, you'll see a consistent commitment to delivering high-quality, up-to-date education', Deividas says, and these are supported by strong examples of 'industry-relevant placements for both students and staff'.

This critical thinking is set in the context of a college-wide approach to pedagogy. When Janet, the Principal and CEO took up her post she recognised the need 'to change the culture and get back to our core purpose of education and students'. Expectations were set for all teachers to go into industry three days each year. This was followed with a drive for pedagogical consistency in lessons across the whole college, through the launch of the 'Forrest Five' core principles of retrieval, objective-sharing, instruction, assessment and plenary. This leadership of pedagogy from the top of the organisation creates a "fountainhead" empowering leader at all levels to insist on excellence. Jack, Director of Teaching and Learning has implemented an approach to learning behaviour known as "Insistence, consistency and persistence". The embedding of pedagogy was evidenced across the range of our interviews with students and teachers.

'Initial assessments and 'do now' activities establish a baseline for assessing students' knowledge and skills', say Angela, her students Noor and Sana are taught about different methods of observing children in early years settings. 'My do now activity is very short', I put together a list of observation types for them to check against and then ask for example, why would you use this method of observation? What else would you use this type for? Angela promotes the need for students to understand how to observe objectively and reflect on how they have made their assessment, but her questions are kept brief and targeted. Noor and Sana say 'the activity helps us remember, she asks us individual questions to make sure that we understand, these can be quite in depth, she'll ask, like, why? And why?

Angela's teaching is informed by knowing her students starting points and needs 'I do my retrieval tasks, but still, the lesson is unique to the learner and to your planning and style of delivery'. She discusses research in neuroplasticity, which offers evidence of the brain's ability to adapt throughout life, for Angela, cognitive theories revolve around the interaction between enriched environments and brain development, emphasising the importance of external stimuli in shaping cognitive abilities. Angela stresses, the importance of 'giving students activities where they can work things out themselves based on the environment of their work placements.

16. West Herts College

Backwards design for exams

- **Level 3 Sports Science**

Teacher: Laura Allgrove

Students: Nick and Isla

'When you start to become educated, you just see everything very, very differently'. The Principal and CEO, Gill Worgan talks about her journey into education after working as a leader in industry. She is driven by what education can do for people, and it is a passion that has shaped her own life, it was "transformative". … in the way I saw the world, the way I understood the world, and the way I could engage with the world'. Gill's goal is to provide life-changing experiences for all the students that come to West Herts College, and she clearly makes this happen.

Gill, together with Alice, the college's Director of Quality Improvement, are relentlessly hawk-eyed on data, particularly early signs indicating students who may not be achieving in line with their abilities. The previous year, they noted a drop in exam pass rates and responded with a range of interventions. Alice explains that some of these were around exam anxiety, confidence, and physical wellbeing, they focused on 'mindfulness, eating healthy, breathing and revision techniques - things that we hadn't necessarily focused on, particularly post covid'. Other interventions focused on teacher expertise and skills, developing teacher's pedagogy for students' assessment for and of learning. An online ' exams room' to support learners with exam technique, revision strategies and mindfulness techniques was created and, Alice flipped the quality assurance cycle on its head, adopting a "backwards design" model[24] focusing first on the students' end-of-journey assessments. These strategies resulted in 90% achievement for all exam performance related subjects.

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[24] Grant P. Wiggins and Jay McTighe. (2005). *Understanding By Design*. Pearson Education.

Nick, a level 3 Sports Science Student, shares his early experiences of this approach. 'Our first anatomy lesson with Laura [his teacher], started with part of an exam paper to see if we knew anything. A few people in our class were confident because they had done it for GCSE but a few of us had never taken anatomy. I think I scored about three marks. Whilst this initial assessment seemed daunting, Laura had clarified the purpose and method beforehand. Students understood that this purpose was twofold, to gauge students' starting points and, their anxieties about sitting exams. Laura says she gets her students to reflect a lot, '… because that's really important, how they're performing, how they think they're performing'.

Nick recalls 'A few weeks later, after we had learned everything in the topic, she gave us the same paper. It was great to see where we had started from and where we had progressed to'. Isla, who is also in Nick's class explains how Laura adopted collaborative teaching methods in their lessons, 'we worked together on knowledge maps for different aspects of anatomy and physiology … some on the skeletal system, others on the cardiovascular system, or on muscles'. Students explain concepts to each other, this encourages them to think about their understanding and develop their communication skills. Laura uses flexible groupings to harness the team ethos whilst building theoretical knowledge required for exams and tests.

Laura uses metacognitive approaches and shares the efficacy and credibility of these with students. To develop the capacity of working memory and improve long term memory, she incorporates interleaving and cognitive load theory, introducing new topics in manageable chunks each week. Each session includes a review question, helping students assess their learning and retention of knowledge, 'They [the students] have an exam question on something that they've learned, checking they've learned it, checking they know it'.

Nick and Isla talk about their lessons where students practice sports massage on one another. At first these lessons felt daunting, but Laura made the group feel comfortable, acknowledging the sensitivities, she was respectful of student's feelings. Practical sessions are accompanied by both teacher and student metacognitive talk "Let's do some digging into that…tell me what questions this raises in your mind…"

Laura remembers her own teacher's methods of question and answer, which put her under pressure to think. 'I would ask a question, and they would ask me a question back and I would think, why are they doing that?' For example, if she was learning about sports massage and asked what's effleurage, her teachers would then ask, '… well what is tapotement?' She has adopted this method of leading students towards the answer through retrieval. 'The students love it, rather than me giving them the

answers, they're thinking about it, processing, what they already know, which highlights what they need to then work on'.

Laura's questioning supports the development of knowledge. Students are constantly practising their knowledge through retrieving it in different ways. 'What do you think about that? What's this? Can you answer that? Can you help with that?'. This approach allows Laura to differentiate the emotional support she gives to students 'It's a bit like Maslow's hierarchy of needs', she says. Isla, who was once afraid to raise her hand at school says that Laura has built up her confidence, 'It isn't always about right or wrong answers, its more about discussing and analysing your answer, it's very encouraging'. Nick feels his revision techniques have improved and he is more organised and dedicated to completing coursework.

The college's professional development priorities focus on the quality of education, industry requirements, job-specific legislation, individuals' career aspirations and succession planning. All teachers undertake an industry placement or demonstrate industry upskilling through paid employment and are also supported to become external examiners. Gill notes, 'We foster a culture where we identify areas for improvement and remove blockers to help our staff be highly effective in their roles'.

Alice is empowered to design and implement improvements and because she has a direct line of communication to teachers, the college's strategies are evidence-informed so that teachers are using their time and energy designing and implementing methods that work. Gill believes effective leadership in education involves creating an environment where everybody thrives, saying, 'It's about creating the best culture possible for teachers to succeed'. Laura feels this support strongly, noting she has the time to share her methods and grow in her practice. She has delivered CPD on exam preparation techniques to other teachers.

The college's annual CPD schedule includes topics such as creating positive learning environments, teaching strategies, neurodiversity in the classroom, questioning techniques, and using tools like Canva, Padlet and TeacherMatic AI to support teachers and students. Laura values the college's support which not only helps her students to succeed but allows her to share her expertise with colleagues.

17. Darlington College

Beyond Technique: Fostering Growth, Reflection and Confidence

- **Level 3 T Level in Education and Childcare**

Teacher: Emma Clegg

Student: Charlotte

Emma reflects on Maslow and Bloom and the changing approaches to teacher training across her career. "They are still relevant…and can be part of a metacognitive approach…because the starting point for everything in learning is human trust". She recalls the rapport she had with certain teachers at school and remembers being motivated by those who took time to get to know her, and those who knew how to push her. This has influenced her own teaching, and David, the principal and CEO re-affirms the importance of building early relationships 'It's how you make people feel, students have got to have confidence in you'. Carole, the deputy principal, echoes this, 'It is understanding the back story, so they [the teachers] can better understand the models they use to engage with students".

Charlotte is studying a T Level in Education and Early Years. She knew from her taster day that Emma was someone she would have a rapport with. 'I respond well to people that I click with, if I feel that someone doesn't like me or my personality … nothing is going to go into my brain'. She felt she 'clicked' with Emma straight away and had a deep respect for Emma's industry experience. Emma was clearly a role model for Charlotte

Emma's insights into her students' backgrounds and personalities enables her to adopt specific approaches in presenting course content. She uses recall and retrieval to connect existing learning with new learning, and often starts lessons with a reversal of the teacher as questioner, instead giving students a stimulus word for which they are required to generate a question for their peers. This is harder work and involves challenges around reasoning, evidence, listening and oracy.

Collaborative approaches support oracy- many students are from disadvantaged backgrounds and groupwork brings opportunities for cognitive, linguistic and social/emotional development. Emma uses collaborative approaches when students have a secure knowledge base to draw upon. She gives an example of the whole class creation of a theorist board and Charlotte recalls choosing Vygotsky. 'This will always help me remember his theory of the zone of proximal development".

Emma also uses dual coding- knowledge organisers and infographics are designed by students following research. 'We put these on the wall and use them to test each other', says Charlotte, who has recently created one of these on holistic development. She describes how Emma uses 'Tons of methods… we might watch a video about something, and then we'll discuss it asking questions like, how did this happen? What should have happened? What would we have done differently?' Emma explains she is using a hierarchy of questions to challenge and develop a deep understanding of a complex sector. 'So, it's about changing and differentiating, for example, can you describe the different types of abuse? Then can you explain the effects that might have on the child, and then I might say, can you explore the possible life chances that might be the impact of the abuse?' She knows how important it is for students working in the sector to reflect on their learning and experiences in an analytical way, to develop emotional intelligence, insight and self-knowledge. She teaches them to use reflective models, including Gibbs. 'The students cannot always remember the stage theory of all reflective models however,

so they use a word to remember each part. Others might make a mind-map'. Emma feels it is important to be inclusive and respect how everyone learns, she says 'this goes beyond differentiation'.

Emma uses the learning from placements as a key reflective approach. Students are expected to analyse what they have experienced and learned, bringing it back to class to support whole group learning and development. She gives an example of students' critical analysis of the Montessori method 'One group will go away and look at how amazing Montessori is, another group will look at things that Montessori doesn't cover, or the disadvantages. When they return, both groups have five minutes to put their case across, while those not speaking must take notes which they will use in counterarguments'. This will be followed by a debate. Again, Emma is using reflective work on placements alongside oracy development and critical thinking.

David's leadership of learning is influenced by his profound commitment to inclusion. 'So many of our students are re-engaging for the second, third or even fourth time'. Curriculum planning is built on progression and giving students the confidence to have ambitions and goals. His message to teachers is 'We are part of that individual's journey, and we must do everything we can to help that person on their journey'. David believes that opportunities to develop students' cultural capital are key to building ambition and confidence and the Turing scheme has enabled students in Hairdressing and Hospitality to visit Thailand. 'Really targeting socio-economic deprivation in the area is opening doors and opportunities for them'. He feels that by talking to students, providing learning in the way they feel comfortable, and giving them diverse cultural opportunities to develop their cultural capital, is also about 'giving them middle class confidence'.

The senior team and curriculum managers are regular visitors in lessons, supporting and challenging teachers to reflect and improve. 'What it is that they could do to make that same lesson work better for them and the students, if they were to do it again', they ask. There is strong support for improving pedagogy and the college has invested in learning coaches, and a staff hub for informal peer support and development where 'people can go and just have a conversation around teaching and learning'. In recognising the colleges socio-economic and community context, when it comes to teaching, leaders know that 'one size doesn't fit all'.

18. Education Partnership North-East

Beyond the qualification- pedagogy for life and work

- **Level 3 Creative Media Practice and A Level English Literature**

Teachers: Kim Lindsey, Sally Taylor

Students: Rowan and Paige

Kim creates an independent learning environment for students to sit 'outside lessons, to read or work.' In the room, there is a well-stocked box of books for them to use. During lessons, Kim makes no assumptions that her students can get out smart phones to research. Instead, she focuses on 'oracy, using discussion-based learning, where students can share their voice and hear others.' The nature of English Literature positions it ideally to develop students' oracy and confidence in formulating views and ideas. Kim says she aims to 'broaden students' knowledge beyond the vast array of literature by white dead men,' exploring concepts and theories including post-colonialism and feminism, and making links between literature and history in "Heart of Darkness."

Paige says that Kim brings literature to life and helps her make sense of complex issues. 'Kim is really passionate about books, and this makes us passionate...we share her enthusiasm... she uses probing questions to help us learn.' Kim says she often use 'Socratic questioning' to develop critical thinking and enquiry 'remind me again about the different critical interpretations of X." She teases out their deep thought and by asking them to remind her, she tells them that she is 'celebrating their hard work and its results" Paige says they are encouraged to challenge each other and read to each other. Kim believes it is important for students to understand how they learn and how their brains work. For each of her classes she runs a workshop session on metacognition. She introduces them to schema, the memory and knowledge. Studying literature involves understanding the culture and context of texts, and Kim is keen to provide opportunities for her students to develop insights into texts in their own time and through a detached 21st century cultural lens. This enables them to make connections and to view their own world in a much wider context.

Both Kim and Paige refer to exploring literature using the college's 180° Igloo. Kim selected an immersive experience being inside the 19th century novella, Yellow Wallpaper, a book exploring themes of mental health, gender roles and the oppressive treatment of women. Paige and her peers were able to make meaningful connections with the silencing of women across centuries and continents and understand deeper hidden meanings. Kim says, 'it gave them the ability to make these connections.," Paige feels that students are encouraged to see different points of view and adopt alternative standpoints of characters, 'Kim encourages peer learning, and we have lively debates,' she adds.

Ellen, the college Principal and CEO reflects on how her own background has influenced her leadership of learning. She witnessed as a young person the transformative impact of education opportunities on people's lives, through her parent's work. But she is also very much aware that education can only transform the lives of those who engage with it, and understands that her students' attendance is crucial, and that inextricably linked with attendance is high quality teaching.

Recently she took a camera crew around the college's campuses, talking to students about attendance. 'students' attendance is absolutely linked to the quality of teaching and learning, regardless of a young person's background or personal circumstances', she caveats this to say that attendance may not be 100%, for example, 'if there is a young carer who at school only achieved 40% attendance, but we can get them to 60% attendance, that's improvement. So, it is all about the individual.' The film, later shared with governors, was the trigger for a conversation about the college's eight Pedagogical Principles, developed by staff and launched last year.

Sally, who teaches level 3 media studies, draws on Vygotsky's theoretical concept to implement scaffolding, where learning occurs when students receive help just beyond their current abilities. She stretches her students just beyond their current skills and reduces scaffolds as they become more independent. Sally designs "live" project briefs with industry clients and scaffolds learning at all stages through the media production cycle – research, planning, design, evaluation, and refinement, using metacognitive approaches. An example recently involved students' production of a promotional video. Industry professionals came to support student's work, 'students were able to shadow them, then take ownership of the work at key points,' this provided students with opportunities to use their declarative and procedural knowledge as the basis for developing conditional knowledge.

Rowan explains each of the stages in project-based work to a live brief, 'Planning, research, investigation, pre-production and post-production techniques," she identifies the cumulative learning inherent in this approach. 'So, it's like, what I've learned from the first project has helped with the second then, the next one, and with each new one, I am using what I learned in previous one.' Rowan has since been interviewed by the BBC and has created work for the Sunderland short film festival, she adds how her learning experiences have increased her confidence. Collaborative learning and agile problem solving are essential to a fast-paced industry and Rowan also describes collaboratively fixing sound in post-production work using a range of software tools.

Sally is inspired by Ellen's commitment to learning beyond the qualification. Ellen was the driving force for project work across college in the wake of the 2024 summer riots. The intention was to enrich student understanding of the importance of community cohesion and inclusion. The project, 'Sunderland's thread of life' involved students across the college, and Creative Media students produced film and video work. Sally believes that leaders are pivotal in enabling staff and students to engage with learning opportunities in such real contexts. There is a strong belief in understanding students' backgrounds and in turn helping them to understand how they fit into the wider community.

The college strives to embed equitable pedagogical practices. Ellen feels that, quite rightly, the FE sector spends a lot of time focusing on skills for economic productivity, careers and jobs but says 'as a college, when we sat and really thought about this, we realised that it is the underpinning pedagogy that enables students to contribute to economic productivity. This called for a new approach to refreshing our pedagogy. Everything else is shifting around us, and our practice must respond to societal change.'

College leaders developed and implemented a set of pedagogical principles designed to reflect the shifts and changes in wider society which inevitably impact on students. These reference the conscious shaping of practice to meet needs, and include CPD themes around research, evidence, and collaboration across communities of practice.

Powerful pedagogy: insights and learning

The case studies presented a wealth of information about impactful teaching and learning. These are synthesised in this section under thematic headings. We recognise the difficulties in attempting to categorise and define in this way, not least because any one strategy will so often demonstrate a range of others. Good questioning involves a range of other powerful processes- oracy, retrieval, schema amongst others. The thematic analysis here demonstrates these inter-relationships clearly, but the presentation under themes we hope will be helpful to readers in understanding the very nature of metacognitive learning.

Powerful knowledge

This came up in our study repeatedly. Students articulated the change (some called it a "lightbulb moment") in them because of acquiring knowledge within their subject domain which they can apply in a wider and life-changing way. These students commented that they were able to apply core knowledge within and between domains of both study and life. In this way, learning-and good teaching-has changed their lives. Teachers explained that knowledge, theory and facts are vital for students to generate new knowledge from existing knowledge and develop "schema", the interconnected networks which enable students to organise, connect and elaborate knowledge. When Grace (SMB) says "everything connects" she is synthesising knowledge of the interdependency of humans and the natural world. When George (Barnsley College) reflects that he is studying far more than the set text and learning about inequality and suffering across continents and centuries, he is developing a rich understanding of the world and his place in it. Paige (EPNE) makes a similar observation about her study of The Yellow Wallpaper which helped her to superimpose a 21st century perspective onto a 19th century one. Most teachers emphasised the "knowledge first" approach.

Students on technical qualifications and Apprenticeships who go out from college to Industry Placement and Work Experience identified techniques used by their teacher which they said moved them from theory to practice. This helped them to understand that college was primarily the environment for learning and practice, while work was primarily the place to apply learning and practice. This was articulated by Luke (Barnsley), Tom (ETC) and Tabitha (Dudley). Tabitha's teacher, Charlotte, plans questioning which pushes students to connect their practice with underlying knowledge. Tabitha describes the sharing of salon practice which fosters creative problem solving. The students talked about "applying it (knowledge) in real time", "when the theory doesn't match up because real life work is different" and "you have to think your way out of it" (Tom). Here, students are making sense of the three aspects of knowledge, knowing what, knowing how and knowing when. In learning

science these are often referred to as declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge.

One of the most affirming things in our study is the recognition by students that they are learning beyond the qualification and transferring this learning within and between aspects of their study and their live. This is again linked to building webs of knowledge, or "schema". Both George and Helen (Barnsley) describe this, Helen uses the word "connections" and George says "one thing leads to another" he is acquiring knowledge and understanding of the continuum of human experience and his place in it- a sound basis for a career in journalism. Oran's (Barnsley) adaptation of the Spotify model has developed Luke's ability to see the benefits for coders in collective effort, and to work in ways which both meet the needs of and anticipate the future needs of the digital industry. We saw several examples of "teaching beyond". This happens in lots of different ways, ranging from the self-knowledge, self-regulation and insights of students such as Anna, (New City College) in her "determination to succeed" having experienced feelings of failure, to Tom's extensive research in to BP, and to Grace's simple yet enlightened phrase " Everything connects". Alina (Hull) hooks knowledge onto lived experience so that the motivation to write in English is fired. Gabi's "bag for life" has given Ali the ability to interact effectively, solve problems, overcome difficulties- and get a part time job. In some cases, learning beyond the qualification brings heightened cultural awareness. Tony's barbering students learn how hair styles are connected symbolically with heritage and identity.

The power of the teacher

This was a running thread in both teacher and student testimony. Teachers reflected on their varying experiences of school and the continuum of teaching talent from very good to very poor. In either case, experience provides teachers with a template- which means at least that something useful has come from poor teaching.

For our students in the sample, good teachers do much more than teach.

The importance of trust and emotional safety emerged strongly in the stories of both GCSE re-sit students in New City College. Here, students were thriving because of the strong attachment to teachers who created the "bonds" or conditions for learning. Re-sit students often struggle with fear and anxiety because of past failure. In both these cases, the teachers' approaches shaped a different response- one of determination and self-belief. Anna passed maths after failing twice previously. Behzad's implementation of incremental mastery helped not only her maths skills but her growth mindset- she started to see results from repeated practice and steely determination. Behzad's re-framing of language means that students like Anna begin

to see mistakes as "learning" and hard questions as "manageable puzzles". In these GCSE resit lessons, daily drills become mastery, and punctuation becomes the means by which Sayeed is able to tell his story with meaning. When Sayeed says Jason is "like a guide" he echoes some of the comments made by students in local authority provision. Rose (BAL) re-engaged with learning to be a role model for her children. In BAL she found a trusted role model in Wendy and in turn became a role model herself. This is a good example of the ways in which good teaching can break intergenerational patterns of non-engagement. Wendy's influence as role model and mentor has impacted on more lives than Rose's.

Tony's "safe and magical journey" (WMC) gives students the courage to follow innate artistic instincts, changing the trajectory of their thinking. In Hull College, teachers' use of i-translate gives students their voice and enables them to tell their story. But we note that Alina is clear-eyed about the teacher-student learning relationship being a human encounter rather than a robotic one. In Barnsley, Richard knows which students hold down part time jobs and who is not supported at home. He knows how hard-won Tom's achievements are, in the light of the very real risk he may have become NEET. He gives Tom the confidence to network and develop skills which his employer of choice is looking for.

Powerful questions and dialogue

None of our students told us that answering questions is easy. They told us that it demands deep thinking and the "drag and drop" of knowledge from across the learning journey. Students told us that question sessions can be lengthy, requiring constant focus and recall and that they can also be a driving force across the learning session. None of the students mentioned online quizzes and multiple-choice questions. This should not lead us to infer that these methods are not used and are not valuable. And these methods were sometimes identified when we asked about AI and software. But when asked about question-and-answer student responded with an answer about the human interface of their teacher's questions. Students explained some approaches to questions- the "ask, request, nominate" approach, (Katie)," the "viva" at Franklin and hierarchical and guided student questioning at Darlington. Some teachers give their question sessions a name - The "huddle" and the "scrum", and these were identified as particularly powerful in the students' learning. Several teachers identified the power of questioning as a means of making sure students draw on their knowledge of what, how and when- the synthesising of declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge. Tabitha (Dudley) is asked these questions throughout practice sessions. Ingrid (Franklin) likes the "quick fire" spaced retrieval because it helps her to feel confident and exam-ready, and interleaving (West Hertfordshire College) through using exam questions has had a clear impact on exam performance.

Powerful insights, self-knowledge and self-regulation

Several students used phrases such as "I suddenly realised…" and "I felt empowered" to describe new insights into their learning enabled by the teacher. Alice (SMB) understands the impact of "sticky learning." She understands the power of the brain to organise and connect knowledge. Several identified changes in their worldview, and sometimes described an increased objectivity over issues including evolution, conservation, and their own mental wellbeing. Luke, (Barnsley) recognises the impact of the 2/3-day work/study pattern in T level and the learning from this has influenced his decision to apply for a higher-level apprenticeship. He has learned what works and what has impact.

Anna, (New City College) developed determination, resilience and self-belief, crucially once she was given the tools to achieve success. She attended additional lessons, did significant amounts of work at home, and embraced difficulty. Tom (ETC) transformed his predicted grades because he had a target to reach which meant "everything" to him.

Will (WMC) makes an interesting observation on the differences between maths GCSE and Art. He finds maths hard because he says it is a "ladder" of rules and skills; in contrast, Art can be "loose" and he can come at it from any angle and through any design and any media without having to follow rules. Here, Will is reaching an understanding of the structure of both subjects, and with this, insights into how he learns. This is important, because it points to a reason why maths is difficult for him. Will can see that some or all this difficulty is inherent in the subject discipline of maths.This touches on Ruth Ashbee's work on subject specificity- maths requires interpretation, reduction and generalising and Art is expressive.[25]

A similar insight comes from Grace (Bede) who has in her own words become "a metacognitive person," putting into practice her teachers' methods and "using my brain to sort out my life". She notes the impact on her grades, as does George (Barnsley) where working backwards from deadlines, drafting and checking results in improved grades.

Nick (West Herts) identified the powerful effect of working backwards from the exam question and seeing the tangible stages of progress. Tom (ETC) reflects on his new-found confidence in networking with BP, behaviour which would have been discouraged at school.

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[25] Ashbee, R.(June 2021) Curriculum: *Theory, culture and the subject specialisms.* Routledge

The power of habits, routines and expectations

The "third dimension" of teaching was a recurring theme, with many students acknowledging the impact of consistent expectations, habits and routines on their own development of self-regulation. "I leant the hard way to plan and organise my work" (Grace). It would be interesting to evidence the impact of school closure during the pandemic on this, but it is not an area we explored here. What is very clear is that teachers recognise that the backgrounds and circumstances of many of their students make consistency, order and clarity a key aspect of their pedagogy. Some referred to their role in providing structure for students whose lives outside college lacked structure. "College can be the place of structure" (Richard, ETC).

Katie (Bede) observed that college students are little different to younger students, and that behaviour for learning has to be taught. She uses the phrase "no ambiguity" - and tells students where to sit, and what they will learn. Tony (Wirral Metropolitan College) explicitly teaches behaviour and routines in year 1 "how to research, how to design, how to reflect, how to evaluate", a strategy also used by Sam (SMB). Several students identified lesson routines "quick fire questions" to start lessons, the weekly "Big Question", and ground rules " from day one" (Richard, ETC). When Thomas (Bede) was given his target grade at the start of his first year he suddenly " became aware of what was expected of me".

Students reported the positive impact of clarity and consistency, referring to structure in lessons, markers from the teacher about what they will learn this lesson, how they will learn it and how it fits within the wider picture.

Powerful metacognitive approaches

Metacognition was a rich seam running through the college case studies. College's engagement with evidence, research and cognitive science is notable in conversations with students and teachers. Strong and visible leadership of pedagogy emerged in our conversations and was associated with teachers who understood that their role was inextricably connected to the college's primary purpose. In these cases, teachers were conversant with metacognitive approaches and the evidence behind them. There were frequent references to college's adaptation of Rosenshein's Principles, Vygotsky, Dweck (growth mindset), and Sherrington's interpretation of Rosenshine.

Some teachers of younger students, and those who had experience of teaching in schools, were aware of and used EEF resources, one pointing out that from her experience, the late adolescent brain is in many ways indistinguishable from the secondary school student brain. "…you are still building knowledge and feeding the long-term memory". (Katie, Bede). In Sheffield City Learning, Louise adapts metacognitive strategies from her primary teaching experience.

Many teachers identified scaffolding, both over a single lesson and over time. Oran (Barnsley) draws on Rosenshine to model steps in problem solving, scaffolding the development of understanding and retention of knowledge. Alina's student (Hull) reflects on how pre-assignment scaffolding restored her confidence and enabled her to use a planning template to organise her work. Behzad (New City College) uses scaffolding to turn multi-step maths questions into "manageable puzzles." Rachel (EPNE) uses scaffolding to stretch students just beyond their current skill level. Charlotte, (Darlington) told us about the impact of knowledge organisers, infographics and dual coding. Isla and Nick, (West Herts) identified knowledge maps, interleaving and cognitive load, and in Bede college the Principal's Welcome Meeting for parents and carers includes a presentation on the Five Metacognitive Principles to support parental understanding of the college's pedagogy. Kim (EPNE) delivers workshops on metacognition to all her groups so they can see her implementation of it in subsequent lessons.

Charlotte (Dudley) uses guided practice to teach techniques in steps and stages, and in Middlesbrough College, the "taking teaching higher" strategy draws on cognitive load theory and generative learning. In Brighton Metropolitan College, Ali enjoys flexible groupings, organised by Gabi to achieve specific outcomes. Sayeed's learning has been transformed by Jason's scaffolding in English.

We also found metacognitive strategies used as a technique to support students across longer term projects and assignments where planning, monitoring and evaluation help students to improve through knowledge of their "learning selves".

This manifested in several ways. In EPNE, Creative Media students working to client-led live briefs follow a cycle of plan, research, pre-production design, implementation, post-production evaluation. In SMB, knowledge building and theory preceded a visit to a theme park with zoo and was followed by post-visit work aligning theory to findings and evaluation. Tony (WMC) explicitly teaches the stages of researching, designing, reflecting and evaluating, and George is applying this in planning his external commission.

Our students experienced effective feedback in a variety of ways. Methods such as scrums and huddles provide feedback in a dynamic and iterative way. Helen's personalised audio feedback enables George to store it in his long-term memory and hear the voice of the teacher whenever he is writing an essay.

In Bede College, Cognitive Load Theory has been used to re-structure the timetable, so that students attend 2 longer lessons a day.

We found fewer explicit references to metacognitive principles and to evidence-based methods in the local authority provision and in some colleges. BALs' principles are humanist and teachers draw on Rogers, Kolb and Maslow. These teachers identified experiential learning theory as key to building self-esteem and

confidence in adult returners. They explained this as enabling students to learn from experience, and through this building confidence and independence.

Powerful oracy and interaction

The high impact of verbal interaction and dialogic activities is identified in the EEF toolkit, and research indicates their value to academic and socio-economic development and to wider life chances in terms of employment and social engagement. The evidence on oracy suggests that its impact is greatest in the early education stages. However, our teachers and students told us that they found speaking, listening, debating, and presenting, enriching and explained the impact on their learning and their personal development. Several providers in the study draw students from very deprived areas and increasing numbers with additional and high needs. In these cases, developing oracy in the post-16 phase and with adult students, comes across as having significant potential and reflects the ambition of teachers for their students. Oran (Barnsley) uses the leader-free micro project method as a means of enabling his students to confound the "negative connotations" associated with Barnsley and prepare them for an industry which needs team players, and articulate problem solvers. Luke attributes his inclusion in client meetings to development of his oral skills. When Tom is able to approach BP managers and introduce himself he is doing something which would have been discouraged in school. For Alina's students, collaborative work on their individual and collective narratives enables them to affirm their past in the context of the present. Laura (Darlington) uses learning from work placements as a basis for developing oracy through knowledge-informed debate. In Franklin, a college drawing on very deprived areas, oracy is a pillar in the college's pedagogy, and students' confidence and fluency are developed as standard in every classroom. When students have a degree of confidence, verbal interaction in mandated through the "viva voce" process. The same is true in Darlington, where oracy and collaborative groupings are planned to improve linguistic fluency, cognitive development and socio-emotional strength. In EPNE, Rowan's BBC interview is testament to her increased confidence and fluency and Paige's critical thinking skills have been developed through deep question and answer and metacognitive dialogue. The huddle and the scrum have been mentioned before, but are worth noting again here as powerful in challenging students to communicate verbally difficult concepts, problems and solutions.

The power of feedback

Feedback is a coat of many colours in our study, covering informal and frequent interactions, individualised feedback, praise and recognition and formal assessment, with many other aspects, such as the huddle and the scrum, in between. The feedback relationship is powerful because the person delivering it is the expert, and the person receiving it is the novice. Most of us can remember either destructive or

motivating feedback, or both, and therefore it has a power which endures. In Barnsley, Helen's audio feedback means that George can play this back at any stage to remind him of previous pitfalls or areas to improve. In his case, feedback enabled both the increased grade he needed and the added bonus of growth mindset. In Brighton, Gabi uses feedback to develop not only skills and knowledge but the qualities of respect and kindness. Ali's progress reflects the success of Gabi's considered feedback. Anna thrived as a result of Behzad's iterative approach to the cycle of immediate feedback with repeated practice, so that feedback is not judgement. Both Behzad and Jason adopt the language of growth in giving feedback, describing the skill as something not yet mastered. In this way, feedback becomes a means of both emotional and academic development. In Middlesbrough College, Frances plays back her practical session and engages in structured reflection on her performance, bringing heightened self-awareness in her occupational role. Nick and Isla (West Hertfordshire College) experience the "endgame"- an exam question- at the start of the unit and then experience it again at the end. This provides them with a tangible progress marker.

The power of the Principal and CEO as a leader of learning

The CEOs and Principals in our study came into FE from a range of different backgrounds. Some had chosen to move into education from other sectors, and some were themselves adult returners into learning, and fired by their personal experience of transformational teaching. In our study we found that leadership of pedagogy takes different forms, and that what is important to staff is that they recognise one specific individual in their organisation who is interested, involved, supportive and committed to their professional development. Teachers commented on how leaders of pedagogy are knowledgeable about each curriculum area, and work to improve this understanding constantly- which employers matter, what the assessment model is, how work placements are integrated into learning programmes. Within our sample of providers, it would not be helpful to draw any conclusions about whether the impact is more powerful if this person is the CEO/Principal. What does emerge is the impact of these who lead pedagogy in senior roles. Staff report the way in which leaders of pedagogy are role models and a source of inspiration. One teacher told us how they had watched (and learned) as the CEO/Principal had effectively and calmly de-escalated conflict, transmitting messages about learning behaviour and expectations to both students and staff. This is role modelling of learning behaviour at its most powerful. Other teachers spoke of the ways in which they are inspired by the CEO/Principal, observing and learning from direct leadership of learning across the college. Visible leadership of pedagogy from the CEO/Principal strengthens mutual understanding and respect- teachers talked of how they feel their work is understood and valued. CEO/Principals see a key aspect of their role in pedagogy as signalling and messaging constantly

and ensuring that teacher expertise is paramount. One described it as "creating the conditions for excellence."

One thing is clear- and that is the deep sense of pride felt by the CEO/Principals we spoke to. Their reaction can be summed up by Grant Glendinning, CEO/Principal of the Education and Training Collective:

"What makes me most proud reading this is that for these three students there are thousands more…and that their teachers are transforming lives, quietly and committedly, every day. I cannot tell you how that makes me feel. It counts for so much."

The last word

The power of the metacognitive lesson

Leaders of teaching and learning across the further education sector will recognise the many and varied ways of evaluating and improving pedagogy, both in a single lesson and a longer learning sequence. How they do this will reflect the distinctive nature and context of their provision, their culture and values, their expectations and standards. Inspection criteria are commonly used, either directly or nuanced within the provider's framework and quality processes. The absence of a sector evidence-base for pedagogical practice means that there is wide variety of approaches, including "custom and practice" as well as a growing application of contemporary learning science. "What is a good lesson?" is a question that may well be answered differently by an early career teacher, a teacher of T level or A level, a teacher with many years of experience, or experience in different educational phases or provider types and a teacher who has come into further education from industry .And of course, by the students themselves.

Conversely, when we asked the students questions about good, memorable and powerful lessons, they identified a common range of characteristics. We have listed them here, in no particular order of importance. The metacognitive theme emerges with clarity from the voices of students. They identified the following:

The warm and welcoming teacher who knows them and likes everyone in the group.

The feeling that the class is a group that comes together every lesson for the same purpose and with a shared effort.

Feeling excited to come to the lesson, see the group and the teacher- a sense of anticipation.

Knowing that "taking a back seat" in this lesson will not be possible and that you will need to be alert "in a good way". Students referred to being out of their comfort zone.

Knowing where the lesson fits within the big picture- the qualification, the unit the standard, the topic, the paper.

Having a sense of what they will go away from the lesson with- knowledge, skills, a marker of progress, a test score, a good feeling.

Knowing what is coming in the lesson and understanding the lesson journey- how many sections, balance of theory/ practice/ application.

Evidence that they have "grown" in the lesson. They know something new or can do something better. Some mention the "lightbulb" moment.

Knowing what will be expected of them in the lesson; what will they need to remember from earlier work? How will they contribute?

Having to think hard- it is satisfying, gives them confidence that they can remember, and that they are progressing. And the lesson "flies".

Being very clear about what is expected in the lesson, both effort and behaviour.

"What I have learned in these lessons is how to think better both in college and in my own life. I am a different person."

"I think about my strengths and weaknesses; I look at my marks and tests and work on a plan and tactics for getting better. I think I have much more self-control."

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