# IS THERE EVIDENCE FOR THAT?

Promoting research-led teaching at Wilson's School

## WELCOME BACK TO THE SPRING TERM!

Though it may not seem like it, warm weather and longer days are just around the corner. Until then, this refreshed version of our research-led newsletter will keep you interested and inspired!

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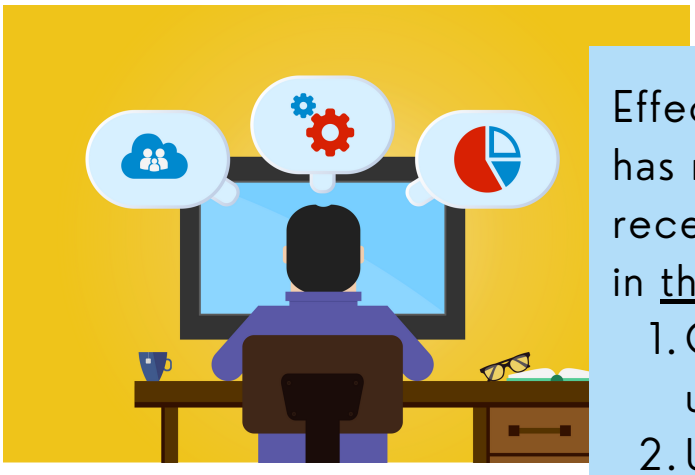
## TECHNOLOGY AND TEACHING



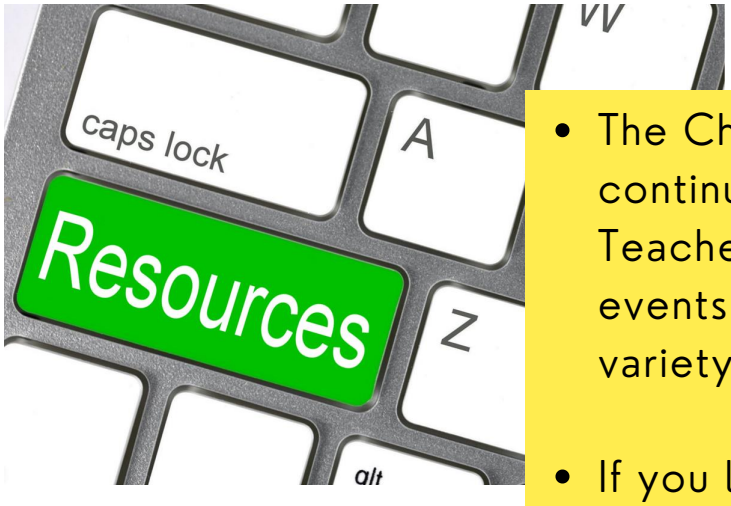
Effective use of technology in the classroom has never been more important, and the EEF recently published its four recommendations in this report.

1. Consider how learning is aided by the use of technology.
2. Use technology to model and improve explanations.
3. Technology can promote pupil practice.
4. Assessment and feedback can be improved with technology.

Interested in using technology to improve your explanations? Adam Boxer writes about how he incorporates tech (or low/no tech) in his teaching.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BLOGOSPHERE?


1. Do you want to know more about interleaving? 3-Star learning experiences explores the evidence behind this technique and how to incorporate it into your lessons.
2. Tom Sherrington writes an excellent blog, teacherhead.com, including this post with five ways to do daily review in the classroom.
3. Are you feeling inspired after our recent CPD to improve the questions you ask in your lessons? In this post, Dylan Wiliam discusses how to ask the right questions at the right time. Hinge questions can be tricky to get right, but this article from SecEd looks at how to make multiple choice hinge questions for your lessons.




# FOCUS ON CPD

- The Chartered College of Teachers continues their #ECSeries for Early Career Teachers, free for members alongside other events for experienced teachers covering a variety of topics.

- If you like podcasts, check out Teachers Talk Radio where a range of topics are discussed, including a chat with Zoe Enser to discuss what works and what doesn't when it comes to CPD.

# MAKING EVERY MATHS LESSON COUNT - EMMA MCCREA

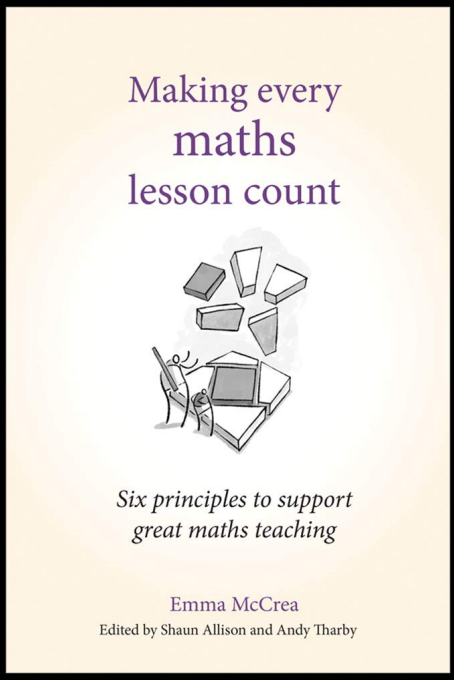
**BY EMILY PASCHOUD**

During reading week, the Maths department all looked at the same book "Making every maths lesson count" by Emma McCrea. This book is part of a series of books and there are subject specific equivalents for lots of other subjects including History, Science, and English. There is also a more general book "Making every lesson count" for non-subject specific pedagogy.

When, as a department, we discussed the book, the main points raised were that we all found it very accessible, written in an easy to read style and containing many specific and relatable examples. There were also references to some useful online resources containing copious examples to use in lessons and tie into all of The CPD we have been doing in recent years on retrieval practice, along with specific advice on how to implement low stakes assessment.

We particularly focussed on the chapters on challenge and practice and found there to be some great advice on how to implement deliberate practice and the way that this can assist in the longevity of learning as well as some interesting points regarding proxies for learning, mirroring Tim's recent talk.

At the end of each chapter, there are clear summary points as well as a series of questions to help you reflect on your own practice and ways in which you could implement changes to have the greatest impact on pupil outcomes. I would strongly recommend this series of books for anyone who wishes to take the next steps to develop their teaching practice as it has ideas and examples that are useful to both teachers at the start of their career as well as those who are more experienced.




# ON THE READING LIST

- This is one for the scientists! In 'Teaching Secondary Science: A Complete Guide', Adam Boxer explores the need for crystal clear explanations.

- In 'Huh: Curriculum conversations between subject and senior leaders', Mary Myatt considers how subject specialists and senior leaders can better communicate when discussing the curriculum.

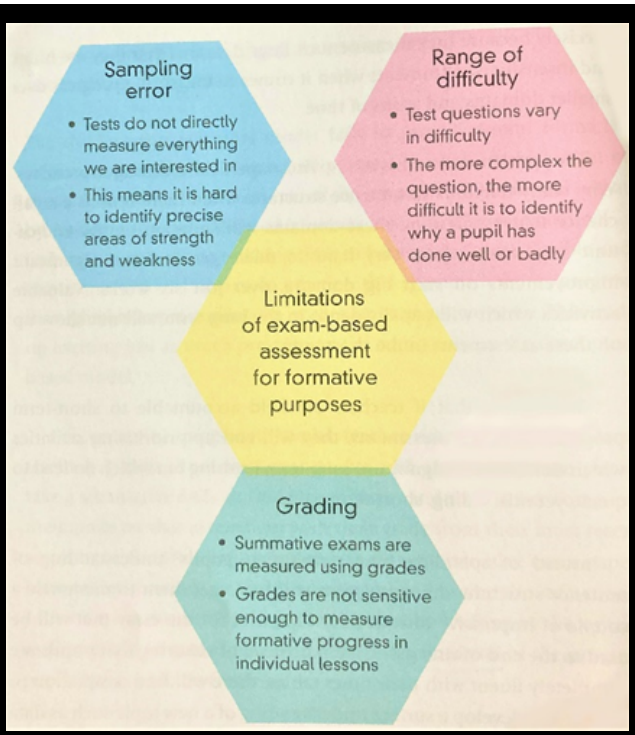
- In 'Teach to the Top: Aiming High for Every Learner' Megan Mansworth challenges teachers to aim high for all pupils, regardless of their starting points, in order to make fantastic progress.

# 'MAKING GOOD PROGRESS? THE FUTURE OF ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING' BY DAISY CHRISTODOULOU.

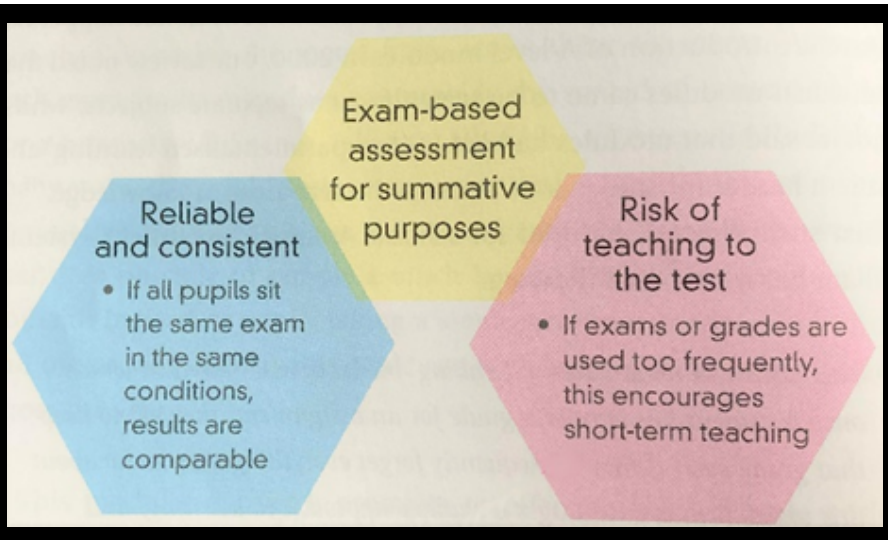
**BY PHOEBE GRANT**

Given the obstacles presented by the past 18 months to the world of assessment I thought it would be most fitting to reflect on these changes we have had to make during the most recent Reading Week. I was pointed in the direction of Christodoulou and her work 'Making Good Progress? The future of Assessment for Learning' who offered sensible and practical solutions to problems posed by historically used methods of assessing pupil progress. This book was not written to highlight the importance of assessing pupil progress, that's obvious. Rather Christodoulou drew upon her role as Head of Assessment at Ark Schools, a network of 35 academy schools in England, alongside the most recent global research to outline what is effective assessment and how to successfully implement it.

Christodoulou begins by taking the reader through the educational innovation of Assessment for Learning (AfL) as defined by Dylan William and Paul Black, beginning with their 1998 publication, 'Inside the Black Box...'. This centres around decades of research that shows that if pupils are given feedback, progress would dramatically improve. However, as Christodoulou notes, William and Black were disappointed by the lack of understanding by schools of how to successfully implement AfL. In a majority of places grades or levels were simply replaced with comments. However, at the heart of this was this problem: if a student simply sees a comment telling them, in a roundabout way, that the work they produced would have gained them a Grade 6, how on earth is the student going to understand how to get a Grade 7 next time! And this is where Christodoulou walks the reader through two popular in-school assessment systems: descriptor-based systems, which award a grade by judging work against descriptors, and exam-based systems, which award a grade based on exam performance.[1] However both of these have their limitations for formative and summative purposes: [2]

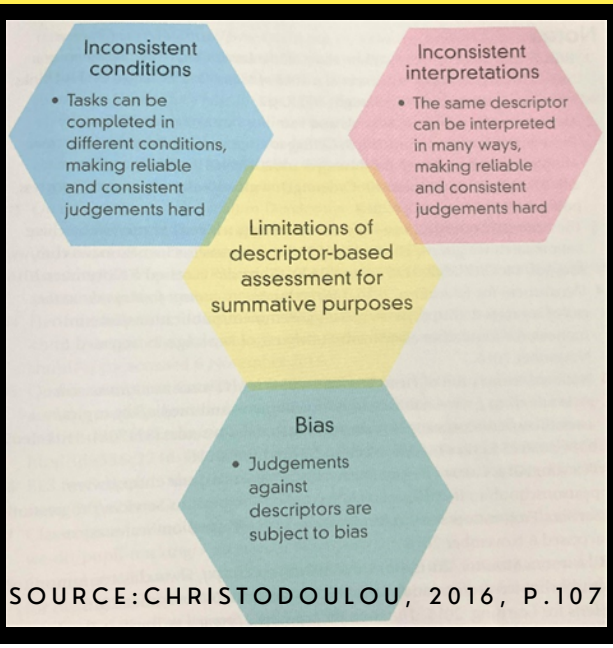



SOURCE:CHRISTODOULOU, 2016, P.130

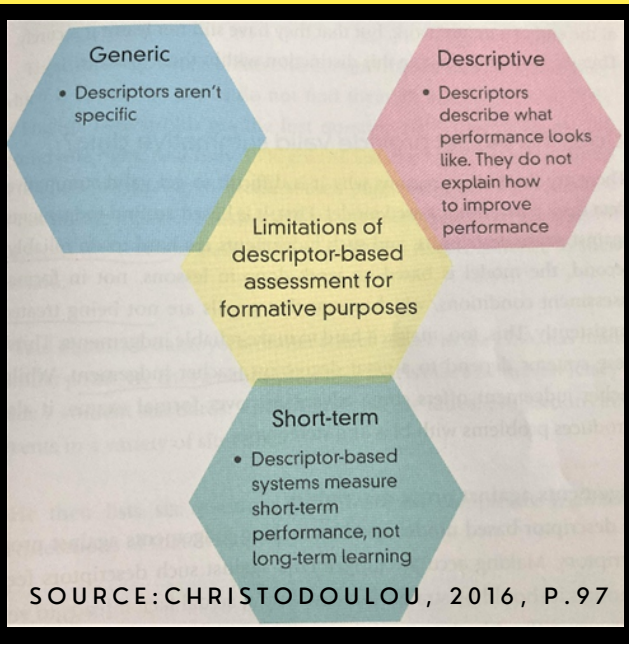



SOURCE:CHRISTODOULOU, 2016, P.130

[1] Christodoulou, 2016, p.15
[2] I am not going to go into specific details about this; rather to give an overview via diagrams Christodoulou, uses.



SOURCE:CHRISTODOULOU, 2016, P.107



SOURCE:CHRISTODOULOU, 2016, P.97

So, what does Christodoulou suggest instead? It should come as no surprise that she grounds her response in curriculum intentions.[3] For if we know this then we can begin to craft a robust program on how we assess pupil progress, or as Christodoulou begins to define it, a school's 'progression model'.[4] Christodoulou stresses that these curriculum intentions should both be specific to the subject and consistently at the heart of how we summatively and formatively assess pupil progress. She condenses the features of a successful progression model into two areas: long-term aims and short-term actions that break down the long-term aims (or curriculum intentions) into specific tasks. Now to put this into the context of Wilson's this is where a department's Core Concepts play a key role. If these echo the department's long-term aims across the seven-year curriculum then it will become easier to produce short-term actions that enable teachers to summatively and formatively assess pupil progress. Christodoulou then moves on to outlining the features of successful formative and summative assessments under a department's 'model of progression':

**Features of successful summative assessments:** [5]

1. Standard conditions: ensure fairness and comparability
2. Large domain: shared meanings are typically based on significant domains [6]
3. Infrequent: pupils need time to improve on large domains
4. Scaled score: unlike raw marks, scaled scores are consistent across different assessments; less distorting than grades

**Features of successful formative assessments:** [7]

1. Specific: specific and previse questions allow teachers to easily identify next steps
2. Repetitive: practice and repetition make perfect
3. Frequent: frequent retrieval improves learning and checks if pupils have really understood something
4. Recorded as raw marks: raw marks make it easy to track lesson-by-lesson improvement and identify next steps

[3] Christodoulou, 2016, p.145
[4] Christodoulou, 2016, p.145
[5] Christodoulou, 2016, p.197
[6] This is an oddly phrased way of asking teachers to draw upon a breadth of content which students are assessed on in the same way yearly exams or public examinations do.
[7] Christodoulou, 2016, p.177

## BUT WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN THE CLASSROOM?

It means many things but in the spirit of not overloading, a good place to start would be to review your lessons and programs of study and ask yourself, do these reflect the department's curriculum intentions? If so, then in line with what Christodoulou suggests above, how one craft's questions is of the up-most importance. This is nothing new for the Wilson's Teaching Excellence Criteria, but rather Christodoulou has given a fresh insight into how we can go about doing this. She offers many solutions but three which stood out to me where these: the challenge of multi-choice questions, the setting of non-negotiables and the demand of relevant prior knowledge in student responses. For the purposes of this piece, I am going to focus on the use of multiple-choice questions as it seems most apt for creating practical and effective assessment tasks. I'll admit, I have often over-looked the usefulness of multi-choice questions, seeing them as effective in subjects such as Maths and Science, but less so in humanity-based subjects given the need for students to frequently write extended pieces. However, Christodoulou provides a compelling case for the inclusion of multiple-choice questions to assess pupil progress, suggesting that it should be the precursor to students putting pen to paper. By doing this Christodoulou argues that teachers will be able to pin-point misconceptions with greater accuracy, far more so than in a piece of writing. Given the type of student we have at Wilson's they will often be able to write a perfectly good paragraph which draws on some relevant subject knowledge but it won't necessarily be the right content to draw upon in response to the question.

Christodoulou suggests therefore that careful crafting of multi-choice questions, with the use of distractors, can help teachers target student misconception far more easily than wading through vaguely correct pieces of writing.  A distractor is an option that contains accurate content relevant to the subject matter but doesn't directly answer the question. For instance, students are taught in the unit - Religion, Peace and Conflict – for their RS GCSE that there are three commonly accepted reasons for why nations or communities go to war: greed, self defence and retaliation. If I was to craft a multiple-choice question based around this topic and included the distractor of religion or belief system being a reason for war this would drill down on whether students actually did or did not know the three commonly accepted reasons. Historically religion or a belief system has been used in the past to declare war (do not worry, this is not turning into an essay on teaching religious studies!) but for the purposes of the question the answer of religion or a belief system would be incorrect. This could then lead to fruitful discussions for more challenging questions on how religion or beliefs systems have been used for acts of war, especially in the context of how you theologically determine whether a war is morally right or not. In the context of the GCSE this would be a useful segway into tackling difficult essay questions. The above would be far more difficult to do if I simply asked students to write a paragraph on what are the reasons for war; it might start to look like a shopping list created by the world leaders, which no one wants!

Many thanks to Emily and Phoebe for contributing to this newsletter and sharing their thoughts on what they've been reading! If you've read something interesting and would like to get involved in the Summer term newsletter, please get in touch.