



# IS THERE EVIDENCE FOR THAT?

Promoting research-led teaching at Wilson's School

## SUMMER TERM UPDATE

It's a new term and summer is just around the corner! After a challenging few years in schools, it is important to consider wellbeing. Not just for students, but for teachers as well. Included in this term's newsletter are resources focusing on the wellbeing of staff in schools.



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## CONSIDERING GROWTH MINDSET

The work of psychologist Carol Dweck, who studies human motivation, suggests two mindsets to view intelligence. You either believe your intelligence is fixed and therefore what you achieve is finite, or that your intelligence can develop. This is the growth mindset.

It's not surprising that this theory became popular in education. If we can get students to believe in a growth mindset, then they will do better. Right?!

Unfortunately, the evidence is somewhat more mixed. In this excellent blog, Harry Fletcher-Wood considers his own journey to understanding the importance of growth mindset theory and makes sense of contradictory studies examining its impact.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BLOGOSPHERE?



1. Marking student work is a huge source of teacher workload. Adam Boxer considers whether marking policies are necessary and how to provide valuable feedback to students more efficiently.
2. Tom Sherrington writes an excellent blog, teacherhead.com, including this post with easy access to key teaching and learning research summaries.
3. Cognitive science formed the basis of much of our CPD in recent years, including cognitive load theory, retrieval practice and interleaving. A recent EEF report reviews the evidence for cognitive science approaches in teaching. Zoe Enser considers the report's findings alongside her real life experiences as an English teacher in this blog post.

## FOCUS ON CPD



- The Chartered College of Teachers has a range of events free to members. Membership is an inexpensive £3.96 per month and includes access to the Impact journal, member discounts and much more!
- English teacher and CPD coordinator Jamie Clark @XpatEducator developed a series of handy one-pagers summarising key ideas in teaching, such as questioning, feedback and modelling. These are available to download here.

# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



What do we know about the mental health and the wellbeing of teachers today? Each year, Education Support produces the Teacher Wellbeing index.

## Over the past five years, this revealed that:

- stress and anxiety remain high in the profession
- workload and work-life balance are key factors
- many teachers consider leaving the profession
- there is stigma around seeking support for mental health but awareness of wellbeing policies has increased

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. Penny Rabiger reflects on what makes staff feel valued, and it's not just cake in the staff room (although we do like cake!).
2. Education Support has a huge range of resources including this webinar on how to form supportive relationships with colleagues.
3. The Chartered College of Teaching considers the impact of the pandemic on teacher wellbeing in this blog, while Adrian Bethune at Teachappy urges us to reflect on how we perceive our work as teachers.

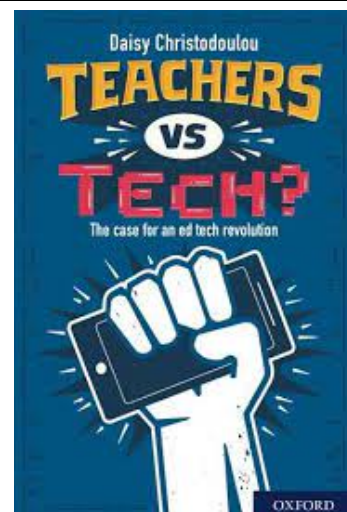
## ON THE LIST: READING AND LISTENING

- Join us for Wilson's teaching and learning book club on **Thursday 5th May at 1.15 pm in the MFL Café Lockdown (in room 14)** where we will discuss Mary Myatt's 'Back on Track: Fewer things, greater depth' .
- American educator and theorist E.D Hirsch discusses why knowledge matters in education with Ollie Lovell on his ERRR podcast. His ideas have been hugely influential to UK education policy and this is a fascinating discussion about the importance of shared cultural knowledge.
- The well regarded 'How Learning Happens' by Paul A. Kirschner and Carl Hendrick explores a range of ideas from educational psychology and what they mean in practice.

# 'TEACHERS VS TECH THE CASE FOR AN ED TECH REVOLUTION' - DAISY CHRISTODOULOU

'If we assume that learning styles exist, that cognitive overload doesn't exist, that students can pick up knowledge as they go, and that attention is an infinite resource, we will never improve education.'

This book is a clear and well-written exploration of how technology may be used to complement students' learning. The author presents a concise summary of how learning works, grounded in the theories of cognitive sciences. This is the basis for assessing the various ways technology could be used by teachers and students. She reminds us that working memory is limited while long term memory is infinite. The teacher, as the expert, provides direct instruction to pupils to help them build long term memory. This is how they learn.



## Key points

- The majority of edtech packages often assume students' prior knowledge in order to complete activities or tasks. For example, when setting students the task to write a persuasive letter there is the expectation that students already understand how to use the English language.
- Learning through discovery or by 'just looking things up' can be difficult for novice learners who do not have the necessary background knowledge to understand what they discover. It is difficult for a novice to evaluate the quality of websites and online sources. We can use technology carefully to build memory, but it cannot be used in place of memory.
- Making learning active by using authentic tasks – such as project-based work – can overwhelm working memory and students often focus on completing an aspect of the task instead of learning knowledge. For instance, learning to use a computer program rather than actually learning the content of the lesson.
- Using devices in the classroom must be done carefully to avoid distraction and inefficient attempts at task switching. This means the student is switching their attention back and forth between multiple tasks in a way that not only impedes progress but is much more error prone. This can be avoided by limiting access to the internet or other programs on the device.

## What should we use and how can we use it?

- Active learning through quizzing can promote thinking and memory without taxing working memory. There are many apps that enable teachers to devise quizzes quickly and easily.
- The author suggests using software with spaced algorithms when quizzing students, such as flashcard apps like Anki. These give teachers feedback on student progress. Teacher expertise is important to adjust to the needs of students and impart tacit knowledge.
- Use technology to facilitate comparative judgement instead of traditional marking. This is particularly relevant in essay subjects where a device can be used to image and screen mirror two students' work for the purposes of comparison. Comparative marking can be more accurate than absolute judgements, improving in accuracy as more comparisons are made.