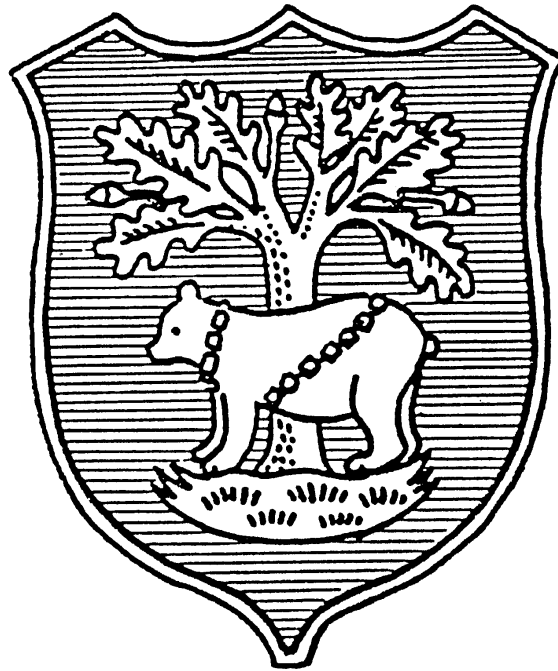


THE BERWICKSHIRE HIGH SCHOOL



POLICY ON LEARNING AND TEACHING NOVEMBER 2007

'There can be no single right way to study or best way to teach. Yet many teachers and educationalists still proclaim the overriding merits of one particular philosophy of teaching and roundly denounce the alternatives. Why should that be? It seems that a teacher's strong preference for one or another teaching approach - say formal rather than informal - is a reflection of their own learning style and personality. In one way it is not unreasonable: he (she) may teach best using that approach. But best for whom? Presumably only for those who share the teacher's own style.' Noel Entwistle

INTRODUCTION

At the heart of good learning is quality teaching and the intention of our Learning and Teaching Policy is to encourage enjoyable and effective classroom practice which embraces different learning styles and promotes active learning so that young people can realise their potential in educational and human terms. This policy is based on the relationship between practice and theory, where each inform the other, where the science and art of teaching meet.

Many of the recent developments in learning have been brought about by discoveries in neuroscience, psychology and sociological studies and such developments help us adapt teaching methodologies in order to create better learning for young people and it is our intention to keep abreast with emerging research about learning.

The following advice and guidelines are to support teachers in helping the learner learn.

EMOTIONAL CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

A learning environment characterised by warm and supportive relationships and where young people feel relaxed, will create the right emotional conditions for learning. How far emotional intelligence can be nurtured in class will depend on the quality of relationships between teachers and learners, therefore we wish to encourage staff to establish good relationships with young people by:

- empathising with young people and encouraging young people to empathise
- encouraging pupils to become self-aware, for example understanding their strengths, development needs and so on
- using and encouraging the use of the language of optimism
- promoting coping strategies in dealing with stress and anxiety
- encouraging young people to take responsibility for their own learning and performance and demonstrating resilience in the face of obstacles
- encouraging young people to work with others: valuing the contributions of other people, whilst encouraging their participation in problem solving and decision-making

COGNITIVE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

We understand the need for a high level of stimulation and challenge in daily learning because it is this which creates the optimum cognitive conditions for learning. In general we wish to develop an enriched learning environment by:

- creating non-threatening classrooms where learners are free from anxiety
- providing **visual**, **auditory** and **kinaesthetic** ways of learning
- ensuring adequate levels of challenge and providing ongoing feedback
- engaging children actively in their learning
- breaking the learning into chunks to aid concentration
- previewing and reviewing to create memory hooks and associations
- making use of memory techniques, mnemonics and mind maps
- using regular brain breaks to help maintain focus
- using **self** and **peer assessment** to foster **metacognition**
- ensuring a sufficiently high level of challenge to promote flow
- communicating the importance of a balanced and nutritious diet
- encouraging regular exercise and adequate rest
- ensuring that learners remain properly hydrated

VISUAL, AUDITORY AND KINAESTHETIC

VISUAL LEARNERS

Visual Learners learn best when they are able to see or read information. They prefer information to be in the form of text, symbols, charts, diagrams and pictures. Visual learners enjoy:

- writing their own notes showing important words and ideas
- making graphs and diagrams
- making **mind maps** or spider diagrams to show the connections between things
- learning from videos or TV programmes
- reading books and magazines or looking at the Internet
- learning from pictures, diagrams, posters and wall charts

AUDITORY LEARNERS

Auditory Learners are most effective when they can hear information. They prefer group work and learn well through listening and talking. Auditory learners enjoy:

- talking out loud and repeating things - even to themselves
- making up little stories and rhymes to remember how things are connected
- using mnemonics and other tricks for improving memory
- talking about what they have learned or what they don't understand
- teaching parents or friends while learning themselves
- listening to an audio recording

KINAESTHETIC LEARNERS

Kinaesthetic Learners prefer to learn by touching or doing. This type of learner likes activity-based, practical, investigative learning. Kinaesthetic learners enjoy:

- moving around when they are studying
- practising problems and examples
- making models
- carrying out experiments and practical activities
- practising skills
- showing other people how something is done

The more senses children use when learning, the more likely they are to acquire new knowledge and skills. It is important, therefore, to encourage the use of all senses by promoting reading, hearing, speaking, seeing and touching as part of learning.

ASSESSMENT IS FOR LEARNING STRATEGIES

It is understood that learners learn best when there are clear expectations, they understand what they are trying to learn, feedback is given about the quality of their work and specific remedial strategies are discussed. In this context we actively promote a range of Assessment is For Learning techniques:

- Sharing learning outcomes
- Negotiating success criteria through modelling and discussion
- Sharing the meaning of success criteria
- Effective use of questioning to promote critical thinking
- Traffic lights
- Self and peer assessment
- Formative assessment: strengths and development needs
- Feedback which is specific, positive and identifies areas for improvement
- Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and take appropriate action when development needs have been identified
- Regular feedback is given to help pupils meet the demands of their next steps (see PLP Policy)
- Use effective dialogue about learning
- Sharing learning outcomes with parents (see Homework Policy)

APPRECIATING GENDER DIFFERENCES

There appear to be two main cerebral differences in the physical make up of males and females: firstly the *corpus callosum*, which links the left and right hemispheres of the brain is relatively larger in females than in males. Secondly, the left side of the *cortex* grows more slowly in males than in females. This may explain why boys tend to develop formal language and communication skills later than girls and find it less easy to work collaboratively. Language and expression are two specifically weak areas of male performance. They need additional support to master written language, to express themselves verbally and to learn to enjoy reading. Strategies to support boys are:

- Being Assertive. Boys commonly regard teachers as not being sufficiently strict or assertive. They like to know where they stand; they like teachers who are strict but fair
- Boys Need Challenge. Boys say that many teachers do not put them under enough pressure. Providing that boys feel secure, they respond positively to challenges. Group and team challenges are particularly motivating for boys
- Clear Targets and Expectation. Boys, in particular, respond well to SMART targets (small, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited), especially those targets over which they have some ownership. By making *learning intentions* clear and explicit, young people tend to be more focused on task and persevere for longer

ACTIVE LEARNING

Both boys and girls enjoy and respond well to learning situations that promote active involvement. Many young people do not cope well with extended periods of sitting still and listening, and enabling young people to be physically active in their learning leads to higher levels of motivation and engagement.

- Co-operative Learning - where young people work together in small groups on a structured activity, for example, to explore a question, to solve a problem, to create a product. Co-operative learning helps young people become actively and constructively involved in content, to take ownership of their own learning, and to resolve group conflicts and improve teamwork skills
- The Learning Team - a concept based on the idea that pupils are responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own. These methods emphasise the use of team goals and team success which can be achieved only if all members of the team learn the objectives being taught
- Peer Teaching or Mentoring - a strategy based on the belief that a young person learns better when they have to learn something to teach another young person
- Brainstorming - a technique which helps to develop creative and critical thinking skills. Young people work in groups where each member has to think up as many ideas as possible about a problem or issue. Individual contributions are gathered together without any attempt initially to categorise them, evaluate or establish a priority. Once the brainstorm is complete, groups turn to the task of thinking more critically about the ideas that have emerged, so that some basis for choosing what is relevant or important is established
- Buzz Groups - these provide an opportunity for pupils to say what they think and ask questions about what they have been studying. It allows individual difficulties and points for clarification to surface within a small group context
- Think-Pair-Share - initially individual pupils spend time considering a problem or issue on their own before pairing up with a partner to compare notes. The results of their deliberations are then shared with the rest of the class
- Rainbow groups - each pupil in a group is given a number or a colour. When the group has worked together, all the pupils with the same number or colour form new groups to compare what they have done. In this way pupils' initial thoughts and suggestions can be challenged and extended by others
- Twos to Fours - pupils work initially in pairs before joining with another pair to compare notes. Again this provides a valuable opportunity to explain their own points of view and respond to the views of the others
- Critique Sessions - in groups, pupils offer constructive suggestions and comments about ways to improve each other's work

MEDIATED LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Mediated Learning is a process in which the teacher places himself/herself between the young person and the environment in order to control and influence the type, number and frequency of stimuli to which the young person is subjected, and to help them interpret those stimuli in a way that improves their understanding of the world. Mediated learning is something which is part of all good teaching practice but have targeted specific groups in Support for Learning base where the following Mediated Learning factors are considered:

INTENTIONALITY AND RECIPROCITY

It is as if the mediator deliberately holds a magnifying glass up to a particular stimulus in order to bring it into sharper focus and distinguish it from other stimuli. This is intentionality. The intensification of the stimulus catches the mediatee's attention and causes what Feuerstein calls "a state of vigilance" toward the stimuli. This is reciprocity.

MEANING

It is as if the mediator provides a key to understanding the significance of stimuli. The key, or the mediation of meaning, unlocks and interprets the cultural context in which the mediatee is situated.

TRANSCENDENCE

Every single activity has in it the potential for transcendence. Transcendence is the bridge that connects related activities and ideas, and links immediate needs to ever-expanding needs.

COMPETENCE

The feeling of competence is not necessarily associated with an objective or an absolute definition of success but rather with the mediatee's perception of having been successful. It can be likened to the mediatee's conception of her or himself as a "star".

SELF-REGULATION AND CONTROL OF BEHAVIOUR

Mediating self-regulation and control of behaviour can be likened to instilling in a child a self-regulatory traffic light. The red light will stop the child from rushing impulsively into a task or situation, the yellow light will caution the child to engage in reflective thinking about the task, and the green light will encourage the child to go through the activity systematically and appropriately.

SHARING

Sharing relates to the intrinsic need for interdependence. It can be likened to two interlocking hearts.

INDIVIDUATION

Individuation can be likened to a thumb print, which is unique and different for each and every individual. Putting one's own independent and original mark on something would be like leaving one's thumbprint.

GOAL PLANNING

Goal planning can be likened to setting your sights on a target and developing a strategy to aim for the bull's eye.

CHALLENGE

Mediation of challenge can be likened to exploring new and strange territories. Like climbing a mountain, it requires determination to persevere. The emotional peaks the explorer experiences are the excitement of success.

SELF-CHANGE

Awareness of self-change is like plotting one's achievements and failures on a chart. The overall picture gives an indication of how much one has changed. The responsibility for the fluctuations in the graph, however, lie with the individual.