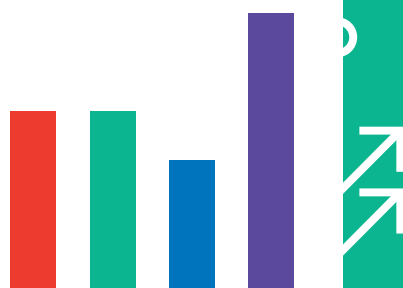


DEVELOPING GREAT TEACHING

Case studies from:
Kellett School, Bangkok Patana
and Dulwich College - Shanghai Pudong



Evidence Based
Education



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A COMMON LANGUAGE FOR GREAT TEACHING



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As part of a review of Continuous Professional Learning (CPL), the senior leadership team at Kellett School identified the potential of using a clearly articulated common language when it comes to teaching and learning.

Determined that this language be evidence-informed, we decided to adopt the Model for Great Teaching based on the free Great Teaching Toolkit: Evidence Review published by Evidence Based Education.

We use the model's four 'dimensions' and 17 'elements' as our teaching and learning framework. This has helped us provide more meaning and purpose to the range of professional learning opportunities offered to our staff. Why did we decide to adopt this model? What has our journey been like and where are we going next in respect to CPL?

ARE GREAT TEACHERS BORN OR MADE?

Think about this question for a second. Are some people just 'natural' teachers or can great teaching be learnt? Perhaps just less than a decade ago many senior leaders and teachers may not have been aware of the tsunami of research that was about to come their way. Today, it is hard to ignore the ongoing and sometimes controversial discourse on what may or may not 'work' in the classroom. But one thing is clear: great teaching can be learnt, and engaging teachers in the conversation about what this looks like can be transformative.

"Engaging teachers in the conversation about what great teaching looks like can be transformative."



LET SOMEONE DO THE HARD WORK FOR YOU

For the busy senior leader, sifting through the available research is not without its challenges. Reading journal articles, blogs and academic papers is time-consuming, and the quality of some educational research is dubious, with small sample sizes and questionable applications to a real, dynamic classroom. Questions that I often asked relate to 'transferability', for example: 'How is research carried out in a laboratory or with university age students transferable to a primary or key stage four classroom? What might this look like in drama or modern foreign languages?'

With so much research out there, it can be difficult to know where to start and where to find answers to questions like this. But this is precisely why we decided to adopt the Model for Great Teaching – the hard work had been done for us! Countless pieces of research had already been scrutinised, compared and considered by over 74 collaborators from 11 countries, all of whom are really invested in helping teachers have the biggest impact on student learning.

WHY THE MODEL FOR GREAT TEACHING HELPED US

The model suggests the 'best bets' for high-quality teaching and learning. Divided into four 'dimensions' the model suggests that great teaching is supported by:

1. Understanding the (subject) content
2. Creating a supportive environment
3. Maximising opportunities to learn
4. Activating hard thinking

Of course, there are other models out there – most educators will have heard of Rosenshine's Principles, for example. What made the Model for Great Teaching stand out for Kellett School, however, was the range of models and studies reviewed (including Rosenshine's Principles), its accessibility, ease of use and the fact that the research is clear: teaching is incredibly complex and differs across ages, contexts and subjects. Our adopted model is therefore flexible and transferable to any classroom.



IMPLEMENTING A NEW MODEL

Not long after the Model for Great Teaching was published, Evidence Based Education established an online platform – the Great Teaching Toolkit (GTT) – supporting teachers and leaders to better understand each of the four dimensions and constituent elements. Having access to the platform really helped with the personalisation of teachers' professional learning. The GTT has structured courses broken down into smaller 'elements' (eg, Explaining) outlining 'something that may be worth investing time and effort to work on'. It also includes video and survey tools to generate feedback for teachers on their practice. Having access to a structured short course (typically eight weeks) has allowed our staff to learn more and explore the area of their teaching they are looking to change or improve upon.

Whilst staff were encouraged to explore the individual elements of great teaching themselves, it was also felt we needed something to initially unite staff and create 'buy-in' to the GTT. We therefore asked all staff to focus on the elements of the third dimension: 'Maximising Opportunity to Learn'. This encompasses:

1. Managing time and resources effectively
2. Ensuring rules, expectations and consequences for behaviour are explicit and consistently applied
3. Preventing, anticipating and responding to potentially disruptive incidents and reinforcing positive behaviour

At the start of an academic year this made sense. We wanted to ensure staff were using the same language and focusing on the same themes to help give a consistent message to our students.

Throughout our first year, we dedicated time during INSET days to allow departments to discuss how the GTT could be implemented within their subject areas. It is widely accepted there isn't a 'one size fits all' to great teaching. For example, the fourth dimension, 'Activating Hard Thinking', will look different in PE compared to science. We found this 'tight but loose' approach worked well – departments had access to the common language of great teaching and could work together to shape what this might look like in their subjects.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we continue our journey, Kellett School continues to embed the best available evidence to drive its programme for professional learning. We regularly refer to the Model for Great Teaching, reminding everyone that as a school we are 100% invested in understanding what high-quality teaching and learning looks like. All staff have been asked to set themselves a target linked to the model, and these will be discussed and supported by subject leaders. Because we are actively encouraging our staff to take risks and try something new in the classroom, we are also looking to formally adopt more peer-peer support so teachers can observe, discuss and give feedback to each other. The GTT helps enable this through its collaborative ethos.

Given that teaching and learning should be the heart of what a school does, departmental and senior leadership meetings also have the four dimensions as a framework for their agendas. We realised this was missing initially and felt that to truly embed the language of great teaching, the framework had to be incorporated. At the end of the day, if middle and senior leaders are not talking about great teaching then something is amiss!

Finally, we have found the shared common language for teaching and learning so powerful that we have also built our own in-house model for effective subject and pastoral leadership. This offers our middle leaders a framework to reflect and set meaningful, personalised targets. The idea here is to create a common conversation around leadership and to help focus line-management meetings between subject and senior leaders.



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FEEDBACK FROM THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE



Mike Downes

Head of History
Dulwich College, Shanghai Pudong

The college began using the Great Teaching Toolkit as an initial pilot of 40-45 staff, before rolling out more widely. This was as part of their ongoing commitment to professional development that is evidence-based and personalised for their staff.

HOW WAS THE GREAT TEACHING TOOLKIT INITIALLY LAUNCHED?

Mike and his colleagues started by working through the GTT Foundation Course, saying “the course really stood out to me as a way to improve the quality of teaching, and from this point on, is where I decided to make a departmental Professional Learning (PL) focus”.

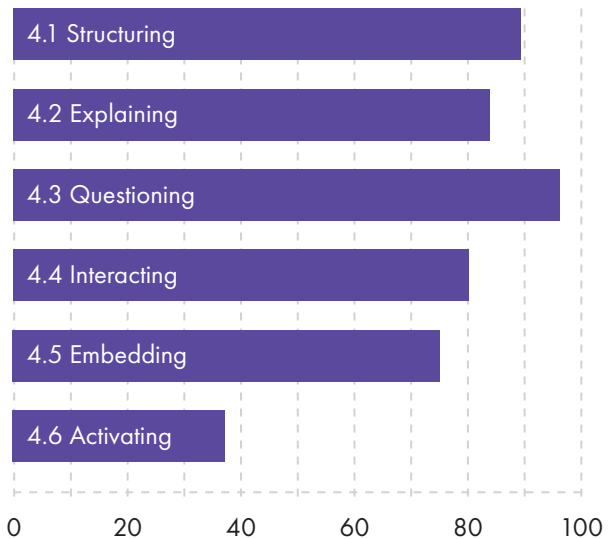
As part of a group of five colleagues, Mike then started to explore the Model for Great Teaching in greater depth, focussing on Dimension 4 – Activating hard thinking. He and his colleagues decided to use the student surveys to gain insights about their current practice and help them choose what Element to work on improving first.



HOW WERE THE STUDENT PERCEPTION SURVEYS USED?

Mike chose to get feedback from his Year 11 class in October 2022 and noticed that the student endorsement for Element 4.6 – Activating was much lower than for the other Elements; 37% compared to other scores of between 75% and 96% endorsement. His colleague’s students had a similar perspective so Mike and others in the History department decided to focus their efforts on developing practice in relation to this Element.

Mike added, “Personally, I think student perception is really important as it allows for not only myself, but my team to highlight which areas they need to work on to improve. The survey was such a useful, informative diagnostic tool that really empowered me to take advantage and take control of my own PL. It became something much more. It wasn’t just my PL, but it became the PL of the whole IGCSE cohort.”

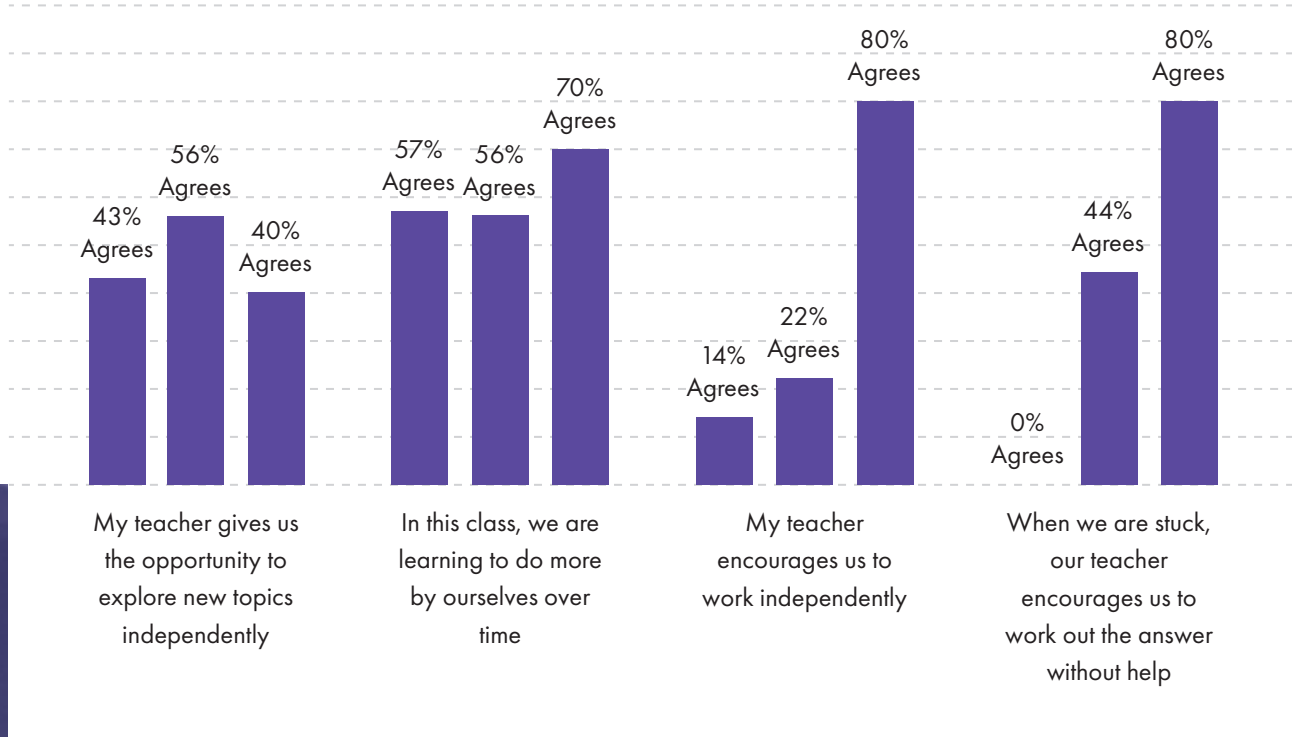


While the feedback above provided an overview, the surveys allowed Mike to dig deeper into the insights provided by his students.. The survey suggested that his students relied too much on him and that he could do more to promote student autonomy and independence. Mike then set about exploring a number of resources about students’ metacognition and how teachers can help students to plan, regulate and monitor their own learning. This research gave Mike a few strategy ideas that he was able to try out with his students over the next few months.

HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT THE CHANGES YOU MADE WERE HAVING AN IMPACT?

Following this period of integrating new strategies into his practice, Mike reran the survey twice more with the same class, once in March and once more in April. The **student perception feedback suggested a significant improvement**, with his average score for Element 4.6 – Activating increasing from 37% in October, to 59% in March and even further to 77% in April.

The image below shows the breakdown of scores over four of the survey items, with the three bars of each showing feedback from October to April, left to right. This shows an especially noteworthy improvement for “My teacher encourages us to work independently” and “When we are stuck, our teacher encourages us to work out the answer without help”.



When thinking about the change he'd seen in his students over this time, Mike said "rather than me saying that they need to improve in certain areas, eventually they were able to take ownership [...].

I found that the students became much more independent, autonomous with their learning, and much more automatic. This is because their skills of metacognition and self-regulation became much more fluent, and that for me is the major change."

03

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH FOR GREAT TEACHING



Eleanor Richards

Great Teaching Lead
Bangkok Patana

Matt Seddon

Secondary Principal

Luke Jones

Assistant Principal

Bangkok Patana School are now entering their second year of using the Great Teaching Toolkit (GTT). Following an initial pilot, the school are now rolling it out across all Secondary colleagues, underpinning their Professional Growth Programme. We spoke to Secondary Principal, Matt Seddon, Assistant Principal, Luke Jones and Great Teaching Lead, Eleanor Richards about how they're using the GTT to help staff become even greater.



HOW DID YOU GET STARTED WITH THE GTT - HOW DID YOU IMPLEMENT IT?

Matt: "I was already familiar with the Model for Great Teaching and GTT from previous CPL work. When I moved to Bangkok Patana School, I wanted to ensure that we had a clear and consistent articulation of teaching so that our staff could have rich conversations about our students, their learning and what happens in our classrooms. The Model for Great Teaching enables us to have a shared language across all of our staff about the most important aspects of our practice."

Luke: "We initially piloted the GTT with around 20 volunteers. This allowed us to organise regular meetings to discuss what was working well, and how we could approach scalability. As with many new initiatives, there were some colleagues who were more sceptical at first, but it became apparent that the tools contained within the GTT could be really powerful for leveraging improvement. That's not saying there wasn't great teaching happening in the school already – it's acknowledging we can always get even better."

HOW HAVE YOU USED THE GTT TOOLS AND FEATURES?

In the first year, staff were given free rein to choose whether they wanted to use the student surveys to get feedback from those who matter most in their classrooms. One of the members of staff described them as **'transformative'**, as student feedback had really opened his eyes to how he supported students in planning and regulating their own learning – Element 4.6: Activating in the Model for Great Teaching.

Eleanor: "This year, we'd really like all staff to experience using the student survey tool to investigate their professional development interests further, so we've added regular survey windows into our calendar once students have had time to become familiar with their teachers. We've already had great feedback from colleagues who've found the surveys easy to use and love the way the information generated is displayed. The team at EBE are also always very responsive to any questions and suggestions that we have."

"Once colleagues have chosen an element to work on, those who are interested will work in small groups from different faculties who share a similar focus. These 'Great Teaching Teams' will collaborate and support each other over the rest of the year. The teams will have the option of working through the course relating to their element, or simply using the bank of resources provided in the GTT to further explore the element and possible classroom strategies in more detail. As the year goes on, **we want to see staff trying out ideas in their classroom**, and we're giving them the time and space to evaluate the impact on their students' learning."

CAN YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH MODEL?

Matt: "We've built our model around Prof Coe's mantra that a great teacher is one who is willing to do what it takes to be demonstrably more effective next year than this. We've stripped away unnecessary systems and asked our teachers one simple question – 'how can you be even better next year'? The **GTT provides that framework and the means to generate actionable feedback.**"

Luke: "Coaching is becoming a huge part of what we do and we want groups of teachers to work together, building collective expertise and giving each other feedback. The GTT provides opportunities for coaching conversations in a Professional Development offering that helps every member of staff become even better, whilst also acknowledging every teacher and every classroom is different."





GREAT TEACHING MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

Research tells us that what teachers know and do matters more to student outcomes than anything else we can influence. The **Great Teaching Toolkit** makes it easier for all teachers to make a difference, however good they are.



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