



TEACHING & LEARNING POLICY AND PRACTICE

Aims & Objectives

Central to this policy is the principle of aiming to create independent, lifelong learners who can take ownership of their learning and enjoy it. We aim to create a supportive, stimulating and inclusive environment for learning, designed to maximise student attainment.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all staff, as well as students and parents, clearly understand how to ensure the provision of a quality learning experience at the College.

The policy is designed to:

- Ensure students develop independent thinking and learning skills to maximise their potential during the course of their studies in the College, and for their future lives;
- Improve Curriculum planning to ensure quality teaching and learning;
- Promote a whole-college approach to teaching and learning;
- Maximise student attainment and achievement.

To ensure that this policy becomes the standard for creating a quality teaching and learning experience for all students at the College, it is important that the following occurs:

All staff will:

- Be made fully aware of the content of this policy;
- Implement the policy while planning their lessons;
- Recognise that quality teaching and learning is the result of careful planning.

In order to be successful we need:

- Creative teaching and learning strategies;
- Differentiated strategies and resources for students of all abilities and English levels;
- Teachers who promote motivation and self-confidence, with high expectations of all learners and celebration of success;
- Student ownership of learning and celebration of the student voice;
- An effective partnership between the College, the student, and the student's home, which recognises and promotes the love of learning for learning's sake.

Teaching Essentials

It is important to set high standards and expectations from the start of the year. All teachers should think clearly about the teaching pedagogies that they use and seek to develop these skills during their time at the College.

Subject Knowledge

Teachers must prepare subject material in advance in line with schemes of work. This will include thinking about the different explanations, questions and language development issues that they will encounter with an international class. They should also keep their subject knowledge relevant and up to date.

Pace of Lessons

There should be enough material prepared for a full 60 minute lesson; it is better to prepare too much material than to have too little. It is essential that the material has the right types of challenge present.

Knowing the Students

It is good practice to address students by their preferred names and this is best achieved by having an established seating plan. Teachers will need to use their judgement in determining which groups of students work well together. The seating plan should be flexible to allow for different groupings depending on the activity. These seating plans should be changed on a regular basis.

Getting to know students abilities and progress level

This is essential to Assessment for Learning and once a teacher has determined how students are dealing with a topic, they should consider how the material needs to be uniquely adapted. Hence lesson planning must be based upon the prior learning of students.

Maintaining an Academic Atmosphere

This occurs when a teacher is confident in front of a class and the first key to this is meticulous preparation. Once a class realises that a teacher is in control of their material, they will naturally have confidence in the teacher. A lesson should be constructed so that tasks and activities do enable times of silence, preferably before paired or collaborative work is used in the first instance.

The start of the lesson

A teacher would normally expect to ask students to enter a class and then seat them where requested as per the seating plan. Mobile and smart phones should be collected and placed away in the box available in all classrooms (unless it is used as a tool to support and/or enhance student's learning). Students should be registered within 5 minutes of arriving.

Lesson plans

Lesson planning should be discussed with the relevant CD and prepared for each lesson. It is often necessary to have plans written out, if even succinctly, so that the objective of a lesson is in a teacher's mind, alongside the learning outcomes involved. It is crucial that students are aware of what they need to know over a series of lessons. Hence a lesson objective may run over a number of lessons being informed by AfL, the learning needs of the student and language development.

It is important that it is the students who are doing most of the work and therefore the learning. It is best practice to ensure that a variety of tasks are used in one lesson. However, it may well be that engagement in a lesson is sustained through relevant questioning or through a high level challenge rather than a change of activity. The sequence of lessons for a topic can also be the vehicle through which a variation of activity is delivered.

Questions to consider when planning a lesson at CATS College

- What are the key objectives of the lesson?
- What are the key outcomes of the lesson?
- What is the main language development that will take place using the subject content?
- How will this language development occur?
- How will this language development be assessed through the subject content?
- How will the students prior learning inform your planning?
- What questions have been planned for the lesson?
- What silent activity is to be used?
- What paired activity is to be used?
- What group activity is to be used?
- What differentiated tasks have been considered?
Has time been given to reviewing homework by students in response to teacher feedback?
- Is homework to be used in consolidating knowledge and understanding or as a preparatory task to explore the next topic?
- Is the level of challenge appropriate for this class?
- Have enough materials been prepared for a 60 minute lesson?

Time management

It is essential to avoid over-preparation of resources as this can lead to teacher fatigue. It is not essential to have a PowerPoint or Prezi for each lesson. It is sensible to use materials that have been produced within the department and tailoring them to meet the needs of a group of learners. Each resource needs to be thought through as this is part of the preparation process.

Homework/Prep

A homework task needs to be carefully thought through and time given to explaining the purpose and nature of the task in lesson. This can be the type of task that consolidates learning, or identifies problems that a student has with learning. Finishing off a task started in class is usually not an acceptable use of homework time. The task should enable a teacher to assess the understanding and progress of the student. This assessment of homework should then be used in the planning of future lessons. Teacher should give appropriate time to explaining the nature of the task.

Questioning

This is a fairly straightforward fashion of ensuring student engagement with a subject. Naturally there will be times when some questioning is spontaneous. However, the best questions are planned in advance and may need to be student specific. There is little point in asking the easiest question to the brightest student or vice versa. Supplementary questions or different questions need to be thought through. A no-hands-up policy or the use of the lollipop sticks ensures that students are more engaged as random questioning of students keeps them concentrating.

Students' Self-Esteem

We need to show care for - and have sensitivity regarding - students' self-esteem. This is best undertaken by avoiding commenting before the whole class on the ability or performance of a

student. Comments on a student's work should be framed in a positive and constructive fashion. Differentiated activities will ensure that students are set up to succeed in a lesson. We should refrain from making jokes or comments at a student's expense and from sarcasm. This of course does not mean we lack any humour with students, but should remain on a formal relationship with them.

High-Quality Teaching

By conducting lessons in a business-like and challenging manner teachers can engender a sense of learning for its own sake. Students respond to subject knowledge developed interestingly in a positive atmosphere by using tasks with the right level of challenge. A sense of satisfaction should be felt by students and teachers alike in knowing that their partnership has enabled learning and progress in the lesson. The passion and enthusiasm of a teacher for their subject is crucial to a sense of enjoyment in lessons.

Language Development

CATS College is an international college and with this in mind, all teachers need to cater for their students' language needs in class. All teachers must understand the importance of exploiting language development opportunities as much as possible in their subject classes. Teachers must strive to strike a balance between teaching content to a high standard whilst making sure that students have an appropriate grasp of the language involved and are able to successfully associate it with the taught content. This will ensure that students are able to access syllabus and specification fully. Teachers are supported in this by the EAP Department, through ongoing advice and INSET sessions organised throughout the year. Departmental training will also take place to demonstrate possible ways in which to implement language into classes. The CATS College error correction code will also be standard procedure across all subject classes for assessed pieces of work (available here: <G:\CATS London\Teaching & Learning\English Correction Codes>).

Lesson Observations

Learning from observing and being observed is a right and privilege for all teachers. At CATS London we hope that all teachers will learn from all observations and help to create a flourishing learning community. Peer observations, departmental observations and SLT learning walks take place to help us all develop as learners for the benefit of the students.

Peer Pairs

All teachers are in peer observation pairs. These are designed across departments, but not across management structures, i.e. MLT are in pair groups together. The pair will observe one another every half-term with a particular focus that is agreed in advance which looks to improve the learning of students and teachers alike. The focus may come from the learning and teaching priorities as highlighted in the College Development Plan. These observations aim to be about 20 minutes in length. The observations are informal and feedback should be a discussion about learning between the members of two pairs meeting together. Time is fixed for these meetings to take place on the last Thursday afternoon of each half-term. Pairs then feedback to the staff training co-ordinator what they have learnt.

Departmental observations

CDs will conduct regular learning walks, dropping in on lessons for about 20 minutes. These walks will have an agreed focus on learning. Feedback will be given on learning walks at least once every half-term during departmental meetings. This will usually occur at the second departmental meeting of each half-term.

The CD will also observe every member of their department teach a whole lesson at least twice a year. CD observations will be followed by verbal and written feedback, with written feedback provided on the college lesson observation form. If the learning in a lesson is graded 3 or 4 the CD must form a supportive action plan with the teacher within two weeks of the observation. This should be discussed with the Staff Training co-ordinator and ensure detailed and practical support so that learning improves. All completed lesson observation forms should be submitted to the Staff Training co-ordinator.

Observations should happen as follows:

Two weeks after autumn half-term the observation will be graded and announced;

In the last two weeks of the autumn term there will be graded and unannounced observations of staff graded 3 / 4 in the previous observation;

Last two weeks before spring half term - graded and unannounced lesson observations if deemed necessary;

In term 2 each member of staff should invite their CD into two lessons where they wish to highlight something they wish to demonstrate as good practice so that this can be shared with the rest of the department.

CDs will be observed annually by the Vice principal in the Autumn Term.

SLT Learning Walks

SLT will be involved in learning walks throughout the academic year. These will be looking at specific focus areas concerning learning and feedback of a general nature will be provided by one member of SLT at staff briefing every other week.

The Staff Development co-ordinator will monitor participation in lesson observation and use the forms to help disseminate good practice between departments.

Work Scrutiny

The purpose of work scrutiny, carried out at a whole-college and department levels, is to share good practice between teachers and departments and to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the interests of our students. This will be made up of two parts: departmental work evaluation and student evaluation.

Departmental work evaluation will be conducted by CDs with support from the Vice Principal. Two departmental work evaluations will take place during an academic year. CDs and the VP will review a sample of folders across all subject areas for the relevant programme of study.

Student evaluations will consist of questionnaires on their learning experiences in each subject and PoS twice during the academic year. They will also receive questionnaire to elicit their boarding, activities and administrative experiences. This will occur once in each of the Autumn and Spring terms. In addition, the Student Council will be asked to comment on the learning experiences of students throughout the year through student representatives.

Comments from the departmental work evaluation and student evaluation, as well as any follow-up, will be passed to the SLT and used to maintain and improve the high standards of teaching and learning.

The Learning Environment

The classroom should be a place conducive to learning where students desire to learn and are motivated by their surroundings. The classroom teacher is responsible for maintaining an environment which fosters students' interest in their subject. Classroom displays should be appropriate and updated on a regular basis.

Use of ICT

Schemes of Work and Planning should make reference to ICT opportunities such as appropriate websites, software or interactive resources. Members of staff should, where possible, use new technology to enhance the delivery of their Curriculum. The aim is to provide an improvement upon other methods of teaching and learning.

Ethos and Values, SMSC and British Values

Lessons will encourage respect for other people paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equalities Act. Students should receive an effective preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British Society. Students will be taught in ways which do not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

USEFUL RESOURCES

INDEPENDENT AND EFFECTIVE LEARNERS: HOW TO RECOGNISE

Developing Effective Learners (DfES – Unit 17 Pedagogy and Practice) identifies the following skills.

Effective learners can:

- organise and sequence their work;
- solve complex problems;
- appreciate when they need to seek help or ask questions;
- read and gather information and take notes;
- share ideas or work in a group;
- appreciate the purpose of what they are doing and make connections with other work;
- evaluate their work and plan what they can do.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Principal in consultation with staff will undertake systematic monitoring and conduct regular reviews of the Teaching and Learning Policy and procedures in order to evaluate them to ensure that the operation is effective, fair and consistent.

Promoting Learning in Practice:

The 5 R's are widely recognised as attributes in independent learners:

- Resilience – sticking at it, having a positive attitude, finding interest in what they are doing, setting targets, practising;
- Resourcefulness – using imagination, learning in different ways, asking good questions and taking risks;
- Responsibility – knowing right and wrong, getting on with it, taking time to help others;
- Reasoning – saying which is better and why, considering all the evidence, choosing the best method and working it through;
- Reflection – asking “why?”, staying calm, listening to different people and learning from mistakes.

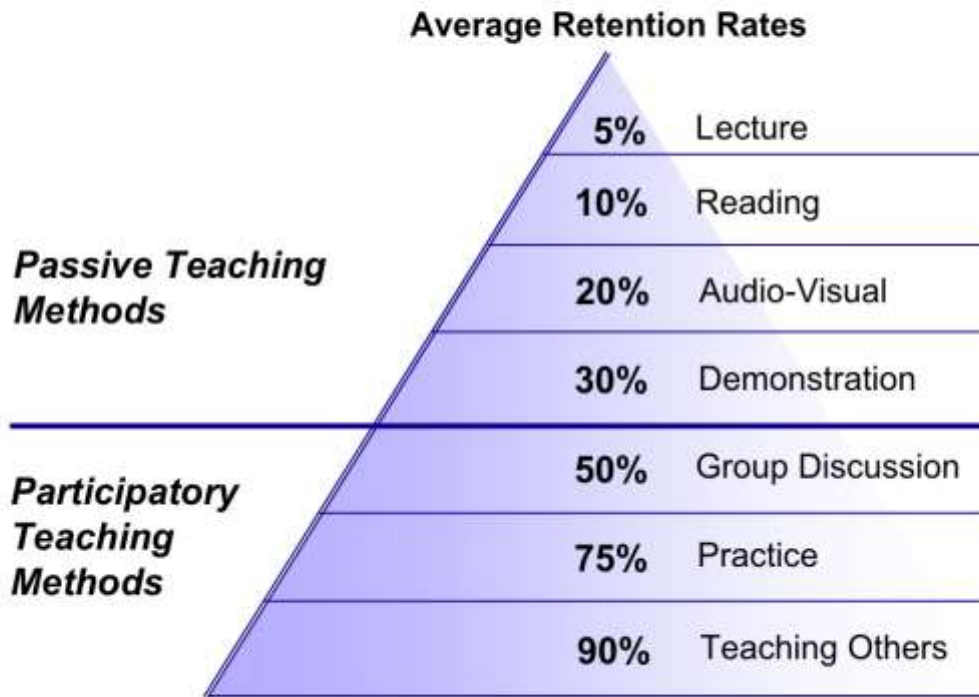
These can be reinforced in a variety of ways:

- Taught discreetly;
- Promoted throughout the College posters and Study Skills sessions;
- Identified within schemes of work;
- Turned into a learning objective, focusing on one or more of the skills.

TEACHING TECHNIQUES TO ENCOURAGE ACTIVE THINKING

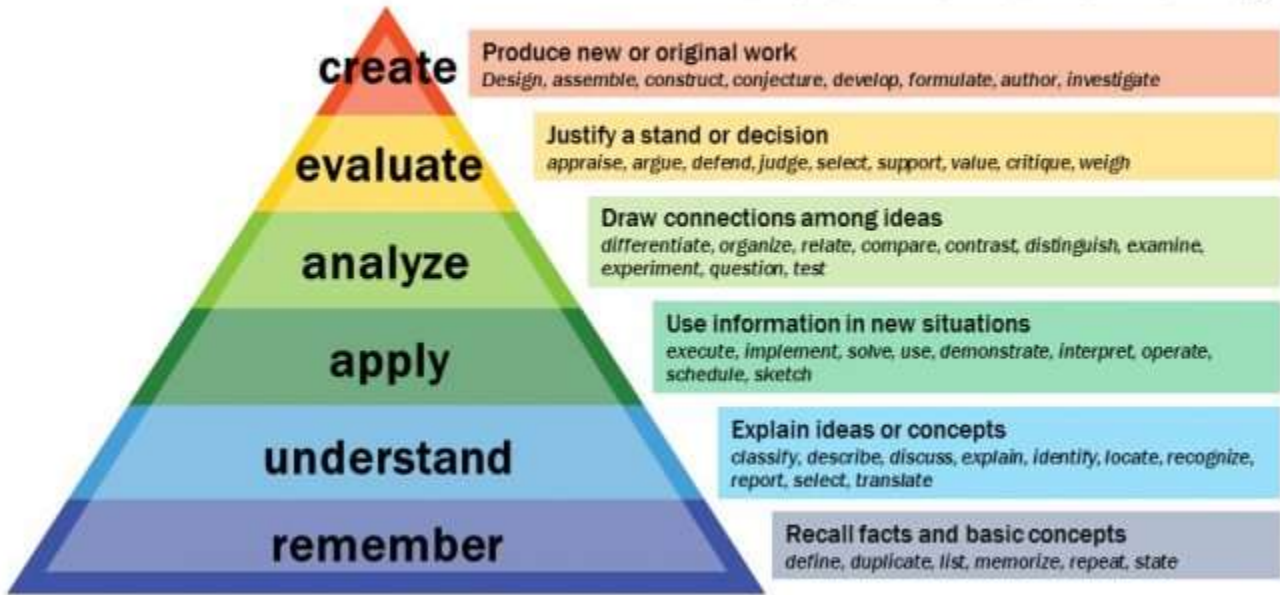
| Technique | Benefits of Technique |
|-------------------------|--|
| Analogy | encourages creativity explores new and different ways of thinking uses personal analogies to reinforce long-term understanding |
| Classify | collecting, sorting, categorising and re-categorising develops understanding inductive approach engages |
| Creating Cognitive Maps | helps to link ideas and create overview help to reveal misconceptions |
| Predict | encourages speculation improves engaging with subsequent learning |
| Rank Order | stimulates decision-making |
| Reduce Information | requires selection of key information from text or chart learn about effective organisation aids revision competitive element by imposing word limit |
| Sequence Text | put broken up text in correct sequence develops understanding of structure of text or a process can help in description of process |
| Transform Information | aids learning as students have to deconstruct, before reconstruction helps reveal misconceptions variety : text to picture, flowchart or diagram, visualising music, building model for a process or vice versa |
| Verbalise | explaining to peers consolidates learning helps identify gaps in understanding encourages peer support and encouragement |

The Learning Pyramid*



*Adapted from National Training Laboratories. Bethel, Maine

Bloom's Taxonomy



 Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching

Reviewed: October 2020
Next review: August 2021