



# Launceston College MAT

## Great Teaching Habits

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10. Insist on rigour 



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## Great Teaching Habits

Teaching is a rewarding and exciting process. In one sense, it is very simple – teach students what they need to know, and they will learn. In reality, we know that teaching is much more complex, and effective teaching is not always easy to define. The positive impacts of the work that teachers do are sometimes easy to see. However, they may not be evident immediately, and may not even emerge until much later in students' lives.

Research into effective teaching over the last half-century or so does identify certain key practices which are effective ways to help young people to learn. So we can be broadly clear about what works. We can also be clear about what is less likely to work. What is crucial is the way in which those effective teaching approaches are applied in individual contexts. Effective teaching is likely to be developed through habitual, reflective and deliberate practice over time.

The Great Teaching Habits are informed by a range of research, and are focus points for developing teaching skills. They are not prescriptive, but allow creative adaptation and exploration by teachers dependent on their context and needs.

There are so many potentially complex aspects to teaching that it can sometimes be difficult to know where to start. It can also be challenging to focus on one area long enough to make a really sustained development. The Great Teaching Habits are not exhaustive, but define a 'house style' by identifying a limited set of teacher behaviours for us to consider, reflect on and examine creatively and collaboratively.

# 1. Do now task



“One feature of effective teaching is to ensure that students spend the maximum time engaged in the academic or practical work of the subject. By ensuring students have a clear routine at the start of the lesson you can use every moment effectively and build a culture of high expectations. These tasks are likely to have an element of deep thinking, or serve as a review of previous learning”

You could try to:

- Spend between 5 and 8 minutes reviewing previous learning
- Have a big question or other stimulus to start discussion
- Present a problem which tests learning from last lesson
- Question individuals to test prior learning
- Test the specific knowledge or understanding required to access the learning you have planned
- Repeat the same type of ‘do now’ to develop fluency
- Provide an opportunity for students to respond to feedback



## 2. The intent of the learning is clear and understood



“Students will learn more effectively over time if the intention of the teaching is clear to them. While it is important to allow students to explore and inquire freely, and to reflect back on their learning over time, giving them a measurable way of knowing what you want them to do will provide an effective focus.”

You could try to:

- Be clear about what you want students to learn and set appropriate objectives
- Use a task manager or break down stages of objectives
- Use a knowledge organiser or progression map
- Make links to other learning or experiences that help students to contextualise their learning
- Refer to concepts or abstract ideas connected to the learning which help students to answer the question ‘why are we doing this?’ or ‘what are we working towards?’
- Give students the opportunity to articulate the intent of the learning and their progress within it
- Link the intention of learning to previous learning or ‘big picture’ ideas

## 3. Everyone participates



“All students have the right to access the teaching and feedback provided by their teachers. Some groups of students will need more input than others to reach the best possible outcomes. Some students may be shy or reluctant to participate. Our attention may be unwittingly drawn to the most amenable or vocal students. Teachers need to create learning environments where everyone is included sensitively, and in the right proportion, and no one has an easy ‘opt out’ of engagement. Ultimately, a culture of participation is likely to be built over time and based on effective relationships in the class.”

You could try to:

- Create a practice of ‘all hands up’ or ‘no hands up’, or other non-verbal signals which mean student ‘opt-out’ is harder
- Develop group work and collaborative learning strategies to encourage different types of participation
- Plan your participation strategies in advance
- Use ‘turn and talk’ or ‘think, pair, share’ to encourage everyone to speak, or use whiteboards to get responses from everyone
- Use repetition and choral speaking, or use whiteboards or other non-verbal response methods
- Aim to question every student or specific groups of students at least once in a lesson sequence
- Give thinking and waiting time before asking for responses
- Consider the individual needs of students and reflect on different creative ways in which participation could be encouraged and praised. It doesn’t only have to be traditional verbal participation. ‘Forcing it’ is likely to be counter-productive in the long term.

## 4. Explain clearly and concisely

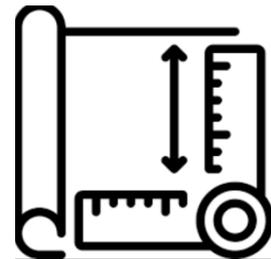


“Teachers are usually good at talking and often need lots of flexibility to think of the right words on the spot. Explanations can sometimes be too long and efforts to make sure everyone ‘gets it’ can lead to too much teacher talk time. Highly accomplished teachers and lecturers can often make complex ideas seem accessible and clear because they explain them well. Pre-planned, efficient and clear explanations can save time and increase clarity and students’ capacity to work independently.”

You could try to:

- Plan explanations carefully; focus on being concise
- Give explanations which take into account cognitive load theory, limiting the amount delivered in one go
- ‘Chunk’ information appropriately, especially for students with special educational needs
- Deliver explanations which allow students to think deeply as well as understand the mechanics of the task
- Anticipate and clarify likely misconceptions
- Combine explanation with visual prompts – dual coding
- Intersperse explanations with questions and prompts to check absorption and understanding

## 5. Provide models for success



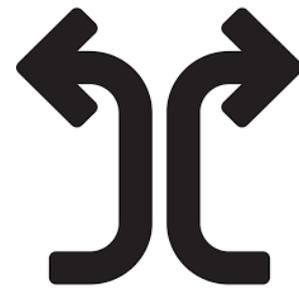
“Modelling learning is a crucial part of what makes an effective teacher, and will likely be one ‘human’ characteristic not easily replicated by robots. Teachers should model learning skills and dispositions, including the fun, joy and creativity of learning! They should give worked and broken down examples and use analogy, comparison and real life example to model complex abstract concepts. This is where your inspiring creativity can really shine as a teacher.”

You could try to:

- Use marked or annotated exemplars
- Use modelling to foreground metacognition, narrate the process, ask questions, suggest alternatives, talk through misconceptions , ‘failures’ and solutions
- Talk through your own thinking
- Use positive modelling and tone to encourage growth mindsets
- Walk through tasks a step at a time and create opportunities for guided practice
- Use inventive pictorial or conceptual comparison to harness abstract thinking
- Effective modelling should increase student independence, not foster dependence
- Share successful student work
- Use a video explainer or visualiser
- Use displays and ‘wow walls’ to model success
- Use checklists, toolkits and self assessment grids



## 6. Circulate to check for understanding



“Rather than assuming that students have ‘got it’, actively check the responses of students by moving around the learning space, peering at books while students work, and gather data on student understanding. A very simple and effective formative assessment! Students should know you will come to actively check them during the lesson. Be present in the room for the students, and they will be more likely to attend to you. You will also be much more effective at ‘taking the temperature’ of your class as you teach”

You could try to:

- Plan a route around the room
- Circulate to identified or priority groups first
- Consider a seating plan which optimises circulation
- During independent practice, develop the use of verbal or non-verbal signals to communicate misconceptions, praise, next steps or behaviour for learning in a way that is unobtrusive
- Try creating a standardised format for recording answers so you can check responses quickly and easily
- Take pit-stops, mini-plenaries or plan ‘hinge’ questions
- Give ‘live’ feedback



## 7. Provide opportunities for independent practice



“Once students have clear learning intentions, and tasks and ideas have been explained and modelled, students need lots of opportunities to engage in practising the ‘stuff’ of their learning. Independent practice also serves as a formative assessment process – you know what they have taken from your teaching by what they can do independently of you. After all, even the best teaching may be forgotten unless students rehearse it enough to become fluent”

You could try to:

- Include a good chunk of independent practice in learning sequences
- Consider if independent practice might require an element of focused deep thinking
- Independent practice may be achieved in group discussion or collaboratively
- Use timers to create specific points where independent practice occurs
- Offer opportunities for open-ended, creative tasks where possible
- Practice makes permanent, not perfect! Make sure students are practising often, and well
- The level of a student’s independence may limit their ability to practice independently – build these skills up gradually over time



## 8. Ask a large number of effective questions



“Questions are one of the most important ways that teachers should check for understanding. Asking the right questions at the right time and adapting teaching as a result will make teaching more responsive to student need, and allows quick assessment of individual and class understanding.”

You could try to:

- Ask lots of questions, ideally to every student in a learning sequence
- Plan specific questions targeted to your learning intention
- Plan who you will ask questions to
- Give thinking time, returning to students as necessary
- Break down questions if students cannot answer, to allow them to build up with what they do know
- Ask a range of questions: from understanding and factual to critical and evaluative
- Use exit tickets
- Use ‘Bloom’s Taxonomy’ question stems to range over different thinking skills

## 9. Give students feedback



“Effective teachers facilitate effective learners by giving them feedback on what they have done. Feedback is often verbal and sometimes written. It gives the students a sense of how they are working towards the goals you have set them. Feedback gives the students the benefit of your expert judgement about what they are doing. Feedback should be meaningful, motivating and manageable.”

You could try to:

- Mark or annotate written work with meaningful, motivating comments – for no other reason than to support student progress and understanding!
- Avoid marking for show
- Give students some record of their progress towards their goals or targets
- Give time to act on feedback
- Give general, whole class feedback gleaned from reading or marking representative samples
- Identify and share common misconceptions
- Facilitate students to show improvement in their books – in which case effective feedback must have taken place!

# 10. Insist on rigour



“Even the most ambitious and idealistic curriculum or lesson plan needs robust and systematic implementation if it is to succeed. Students may come to lessons with a range of different expectations and natural dispositions. One of the greatest gifts teachers can impart to students is a sense that they can achieve something. Great teachers share their high expectations, and firmly, warmly insist on them being met. Students should be supported to meet the highest levels of academic challenge too. If students nearly get the right answer, don’t fill in the gaps for them, bounce it back and make them get it ‘all the way right.’”

You could try to:

- Break down complex questions, then build up
- Don’t let students get into habits of giving incomplete or inaccurate answers, or answers to different questions to the one you asked
- Follow a line of inquiry with students, and don’t give up
- Foreground presentation and pride in work
- Use positive aspirational language and don’t apologise for challenge
- Push up into the next Key Stage/ progression point if required
- Make praise proportional to achievement
- Avoid completing explanations for students and then praising them for your own ideas
- Build in opportunities for re-draft or improvement