Our Commitment to Learning:

We encourage excellence and perseverance in learning.

We strive for continuous improvement.

This is an interesting edition of our newsletter. It provides a range of rich and diverse articles, which in a small way, give us an insight into the talents and interests of our staff. Paul McLoughlan shares the richness of the recent Teach, Teach Play Conference and the enormous and exciting opportunities provided by technology. Michelle Finch, celebrates the benefits of a Humanities education, and Matthew de Jong takes up the theme of learning engagement and the role played by motivation. Val Augustine takes us on a journey to Cambodia and looks at some wonderful work being done to help the vulnerable children of that country. Catherine Tweddle writes in praise of the graphic novel and Tess Tonks in her article, challenges the pursuit of fame as motivation for involvement in theatre, a theme that could be aptly applied to life more generally. She goes on to quote Kevin Spacey thus, “fame is not a career, it is a state of being. It is not sustainable on its own. Don’t become an actor to be famous, to be recognized. Act because you have to, because you can’t imagine a life where you didn’t.” In addition to the richness of these staff contributions there is a summary of Carol Dweck’s article on the critical role played by praise in student learning.

This is a rich and interesting edition, with arguably, something for everyone. I am very grateful to the staff who contributed it.

Mr Rodney Knight
Head of Learning & Teaching
According to the TV show ‘The Project’, the no.1 twitter hashtag in Australia on April 7th was #TTPlay. This was used to share all the exciting happenings from the inaugural Teach Tech Play conference that I attended at Ivanhoe Grammar during the recent holidays along with nearly 300 other educators.

The three keynote presenters were fantastic (Alice Keeler from the US, Mark Anderson from the UK, Ryan Trainor from Aus) and I also went to 8 workshops over the two days. Here are a few highlights I’ve selected to share from some sessions I attended. (Please follow any of the 30+ hyperlinks in this article to find out more about areas that interest you.)

Adobe Apps
Adobe is known for their high quality programs such as Photoshop, but they also have many free mobile apps for tablet/phones that are super easy to use:
• Adobe Post (create stunning graphics)
• Adobe Clip (edit video clips)
• Adobe Slate (create simple groovy websites)
• Adobe Voice (narrate pics to make video)

Google Expeditions
Google expeditions will be released in the next year and we had a demonstration by Suan. He gave us a guided expedition to Yosemite, The Great Barrier Reef and The Great Wall of China.

Expeditions uses Google Cardboard to provide a 360 degree virtual reality teacher-guided tour of various locations. You can view 360 degree videos on youtube to get a feel for this type of experience if you haven’t seen google cardboard in action yet. In this session we also looked at the Google Cultural Institute which provides ‘street view’ type virtual trips to art galleries and museums - where you can zoom in to closer detail than you would see if you were actually at the painting in real life.
Google Apps/Classroom
Alice Keeler presented countless examples of how to maximise the effectiveness of using GAFE - including keyboard shortcuts, Chrome extensions, Add-ons, Scripts, workflows and many classroom applications.

Other presentations with accessible slides:
• Hacking Staff Professional Learning
• Hacking Google Classroom
• Toying with Makerspaces
• Google Apps Scripts

Quotes
Here's a few quotes from the conference that are worth reflecting on:
"Is it cheating to use technology that you have access to every day in your life?"
"Search is the new literacy"
Alice Keeler

"Sitting in rows all day, give me a break!"
"Keep IT simple, Keep IT real, Make IT count"
"Low stakes quizzing works...take the temperature of learning"
Mark Anderson

Video
Keynote presenters often select appropriate and entertaining videos to highlight their message which is something I’m trying to incorporate in classes as well - here’s a few used by Alice:
• Teachers are Superstars (Hugh Jackman)
• Word Crimes
• Don’t Believe everything on the internet

Reflections
I enjoyed the variety of learning at this event - from the geeky google apps tips and tricks, through to the big picture group discussions and networking about the future directions in education.

Want a second opinion? Here are some reflections on this conference from other educators:
• You don’t need expensive resources to encourage deeper thinking
• Top 5 Things to Try in Classroom: TTP Conference
• Teach Tech Play conference - Mark Anderson

Summing up this excellent conference in a couple of pages doesn’t really do it justice - if you want further info please let me know!

Mark Anderson - ictevangelist
Reading and the rise of the Graphic Novel

Catherine Tweddle
English Faculty

From humble beginnings in its original form, the popular comic has been reinvigorated, re-modelled and has now re-emerged as a literary form worthy of praise even in the most highbrow of circles.

Remember those comics of old: The Phantom, Batman, Ginger Meggs? They may have been great entertainment but were hardly considered to be ‘of substance’ by ‘real’ readers. Yet the appeal of colourful images supplemented with a few lines of text, has seen the essence of comic reading become an important source of literature. Even the most suspect literary critics have modified their opinions on what was once regarded as the domain of kids and adults looking for escapism in its most basic form.

In a world where the novel has decreased in popularity for many people and is in competition with Facebook, Snapchat and other forms of social media allowing for instant communication, the graphic novel is an accessible alternative. Although the conventional novel is far from dead, it is however, facing stiff competition from many other forms of ‘reading’.
In fact, the graphic novel, The Incredible Maus, a son’s tale of his father’s survival of the Holocaust, has recently been added to the Victorian Curriculum’s Year 12 English booklist. Not so long ago, two graphic novels were nominated for the Costa Award – a prestigious literary prize – a sure sign of a bending of the boundaries.

Far from losing the art of reading, the comic in this form, actually provides students with opportunities for using their skills of critical analysis, a skill which is highly valued in today’s society. While students still study novels and have been introduced to film as text, the literary merits of graphic or visual novels could be seen as the bridge between the two worlds, developing students’ reading skills in different ways.

Rather than being viewed as alternatives for struggling readers, they can now be viewed as reading of substance for all. Leaving alone the entertainment value, which colourful pictures can tend to suggest is their purpose, pictorial novels can serve to encourage and engage readers of all persuasions. While they may be a lot more costly to produce than conventional books, their value lies in bringing to life a world of reading that is becoming unfamiliar to many of the current generation of young people.

Try one of these for starters: Maus; Days of the Bagnold Summer; Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth; Dotter in Her Father’s Eyes.

Or simply, dust off that copy of The Phantom and feel guilty no more.
The Remarkable Power of Education to Change Society

A case study - Svay Pak, Cambodia

Val Augustin
Head of Mathematics

In January 2016, I visited Cambodia for a week with a group of likeminded people. Among our activities, we visited the Tuol Sleng Genocide museum in Phnom Penh, ran a free medical clinic for a provincial village, and visited the village of Svay Pak, 11 km away from Phnom Penh. This trip highlighted the harsh reality of the destructive capacity of absolute power in the wrong hands, the role of education to heal this destruction, and the remarkable people who have chosen to take positive steps toward the restoration of one village in this shattered country.

During the Pol Pot regime in the late 1970s, Cambodia was in a state of economic, social and emotional distress. The history books record the destruction of key buildings such as places of worship, manufacturing plants, academic institutions, and places of business. There was also the mass transport of citizens of Cambodia from the major cities outward to the regional areas, to be put to work as labourers on farms, to support the vision of Pol Pot for everyone to return to an agrarian society, without the use of machines that required fuel, but to run purely on hand tools. As part of a strategic dismantling of society and any possible points of influence and sources of challenge,
Pol Pot organized the mass execution of all business owners, academics, religious people, journalists, politicians and any bespectacled individuals (and their families) who could stand in his way by virtue of education or wealth. The family unit across the country was destroyed as parents were separated from their children. Children who were not enlisted into Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge army were sent to the fields to work long hours as farm labourers. Many of these children would never see their parents again. (1)

For the most part, Cambodia as a country has had little large-scale help from any external forces with the exception of small-scale charitable trusts and not-for-profit organisations since the Vietnamese army intervened to end the Pol Pot regime. The Vietnamese instigated house arrest and strict curfews for the survivors, and actively discouraged communication between neighbours, further stripping back the already tenous connections of friendship, society and family ties.

Enter the present day, almost forty years after the beginning of the Pol Pot regime. The surviving children have now grown into adults aged 40 and above; the demographic of Cambodia is skewed toward young people aged 30 and below; and there are very rare individuals who are aged above 60 years of age. In the absence of legitimate businesses and education, the economy of the less affluent provincial areas has been dominated by black marketeers, loan sharks and human traffickers.

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Learning & Teaching
The role of parents in the protection of their children from harm is taken for granted in polite society. Where there are no parents, there is no protection of children, who are physically weak, and vulnerable to anyone who wishes to take advantage of them. Where poverty reigns, children can be bought and sold as commodities in order to benefit the economy of the buyer and the seller. Even today parents are concerned about leaving their neighbourhood to go to work as this puts their children at risk of being sold to traffickers by their own neighbours.

In present day Cambodia, where the average monthly wage is 186 US Dollars (2), families live a hand-to-mouth existence. As they have no real savings, they are vulnerable to situations where they need a lump sum, for example, to pay for medical treatment in a user-pays system. There have been girls who have been sold for sex due to their family misfortune in a series of events along the lines of: a parent becomes ill, needs medical attention, borrows money from a loan shark at exorbitant interest rates, finds the debt accumulating quickly, cannot pay the money back, and then sells the daughter for a price to eventually work off the family debt and return to the family. These girls are often recruited from provincial areas and transported to other areas to be used for sex.

Svay Pak, which for years had been the hub of child prostitution, filled with under-age brothels, was the place to visit for paedophile tourism. (3) The economy of the village was built on a lack of industry and no jobs, men who gamble and drink for most of the day, and relied on the income generated by the sale of girls into sex slavery and the income stream they generated for their families as they served men. Girls aged 5 and above were bought and sold, with a premium paid for virgin pre-pubescent girls. If a parent really loved their girl, they would still see them every day, whereas if the girl was unloved she would have been sent away(4).

Don and Bridget Brewster heard of the issue of child sex trafficking in Cambodia in 2005 and returned to Cambodia to effect change for the better (5). In the intervening years, they have rescued girls and women from their brothels, given them safe places to live, and rehabilitated them to be able to contribute to society again. Where once there was a main street filled with brothels, there are a scattering of shop fronts instead. Svay Pak was officially closed in 2005, thanks to international pressure. The local economy built on cafes and moto-drivers who served the tourists’ needs, is in disarray. The source of income has not yet been replaced by legitimate business endeavours.

Don, Bridget and their team have set up sewing factories to provide employment opportunities to the women who have come out of sex slavery and an avenue for families to break the cycle of poverty. They have set up a gymnasium for the men to have a positive outlet for their energy rather than having to fall into the default negative activities of gambling and unemployment. They are in the ongoing process of educating the Svay Pak society that children are not to be sold as sex slaves, and that there is a benefit to gaining a legitimate education.

They have set up an elementary school that gives opportunity to gain an education to Grade 6 level. In a country where provincial education levels are low and a person educated to Grade 3 level is considered a prized asset to the village, a primary school education up to Grade 6 is worth
a great deal and will go far toward improving employability in wider society.

Parents are invested in their children’s education through an investment of a small sum of money, affordable for the family but encouraging an appreciation of the education that they are paying for their children to gain. While the majority of students are on scholarships subsidized by charitable donors, the parents take a greater interest in their children’s progress due to their level of financial investment in their children’s education. In 2015, the team of teachers of the community school in Svay Pak (AIM Rahab’s House School), entered their team of Grade 3 students placed second in a STEM competition (6) in a field that was mainly Grade 5 students from the more prestigious schools in Cambodia. (7)

Through the sewing factories, parents have a source of income and health care provided by the company so that they do not have to borrow money from loan sharks. Through participation in the cycle of legitimate employment, parents change their mindsets, give their children a childhood, and encourage their children to aspire to greater avenues of employment beyond prostitution.

To assert that child prostitution in Cambodia is now no longer an issue would be naïve indeed. Child prostitution is still occurring in Cambodia in a different form and in different locations8. But at least in Svay Pak, child prostitution has been reduced, thanks to some ordinary people doing extraordinary things with a wholistic approach, educating the whole society, beginning with the children and their parents.

(Endnotes)
1 Personal account, tourguide at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, 17 January 2016


Teaching Humanities in the 21st Century

The problem
We live in an age seemingly dominated by technology, science and mathematics. Indeed, the number of students enrolling in Humanities related courses both at a secondary and post-secondary level has progressively declined for some time. As a secondary teacher with 20 years experience teaching in the humanities area I have found many students may initially perceive humanities as a “soft option” or a waste of time. Scholarships, incentives, quality professional development are sorely lacking in the Humanities. Many joke that a humanities degree does not equal income. Furthermore, as a leader of humanities teaching teams over the years, I have found it to be a difficult area to manage given that many teachers are given humanities subjects to supplement a load comprised predominantly of other disciplines and therefore, little priority is given to the curriculum or professional development of teachers in the area. These are the challenges. So why do I persevere? Why am I more convinced and passionate than ever about the importance of a humanities curriculum in our schools? Because more than ever we need people who understand our world. In a global age, we need to understand other societies. Just because the value of the humanities is not directly measurable in terms of economic output, does not mean there is no value.

The Relevance
The humanities provide an insightful understanding into moral, ethical, political, and ideological forces. A successful society depends upon altruism, charity, civility, compassion, and generosity, and the humanities evaluate and emphasize the importance of these characteristics. The humanities conserve and safeguard those aspects of our being that intersect with the meanings of human existence beyond industry. The study of humanities, both in its pursuit and the perspective it provides, rewards the student with the skills needed for self-critical reflection, adaptability, and self-teaching. I know when teaching classes such as Philosophy students are possibly for the first time ever taking the opportunity to really step back and think about the world, their place in it, why they are in it and what they want from their life. It is such an amazing opportunity for true independent thought that does not require a precise answer or response, rather a methodical approach to thinking through ideas. In History I see students relating to Ancient characters and demonstrating appreciation for the similarities and differences they share with other cultures.
In Geography I see students gaining a better understanding of why wars occur more often in lands rich in natural resources or why other countries seem plagued by natural disasters. Our students get to understand their voting rights, what is unique about our political system and what it means to be an Australian Citizen- surely this is essential knowledge?

As Churchill aptly states “When we stopped being citizens and began to think of ourselves – or rather, each other – only as consumers, we relinquished thousands of years of human development. How can we sustain our civilisation if we don’t understand how it works?..Even in instrumentalist terms, the humanities represent 5,000 years of free research and development in what it means to be human. I think we should make use of that.” (2014).

The Students
Humanities and Social Sciences learners are guided by futures thinking in that the area of study is crucial to better understand and influence society of the future by understanding society of the present and past. Humanities and Social Sciences learners need to be self-directed. They need to be flexible and creative. They need to be collaborative. They need to have complex thinking skills and be reflective of their learning. They also need to have some vision of their role in the world and so be able to apply their skills to something meaningful for them and others.

The inquiry process, a process strongly identified with Humanities and Social Sciences, promotes all of these desired skills. My experience is that students really do want to know about their world and they love looking at the past and tracking the progression of different societies. You can see by their faces how they mentally imagine themselves living in ancient times. Students will shed tears when studying the sadness of war. Students will get angry when they learn about threats to their environment. Students will be motivated to make change, to take action. It is inspiring to be part of this.

The Future
No single event has thrust Terrorism into the world limelight more than the September 11 attacks. Since then, the threat of terrorism is visible to anyone with a phone, ipad, computer or television and the images are instant. Our students see these and they worry. They want to try and understand why these things happen. If students do not study humanities how can anyone expect them to understand issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict and the War on Terror without knowing about colonialism and the partition of the Middle East after World War II? If students do not study humanities then how can we expect them to make truly informed votes in our elections? If students do not study humanities how can they appreciate the unique geographical properties of our regions and the importance of sustainability? It is imperative that all educational institutions recognise, value and celebrate the contributions of humanities to the collective understandings of our whole world.

Schools must stop placing lower priority on this area and recognise that the skills required to effectively study humanities underpin success in almost all other disciplines. We need teachers who are passionate in the humanities. We need students to not feel undervalued because they choose humanities over other areas. We need to realise that more than ever our world needs people who understand each other.

References:
In 2011 myself and my VCE Drama class were lucky enough to be selected to be part of Kevin Spacey’s Richard III education programme in Sydney. The audition and selection process was rigorous and time consuming. Each student had to write an 800 word rationale for their application as well as provide a 3 minute monologue of one of their favourite pieces of theatre. I was also required to write 3,000 words on our schools Drama/Theatre programme and a reference for each of the students who wished to apply. It was rather daunting and taxing for us all. Not only did the process take many hours but the students were forced to examine their reasons for studying Drama, explore their experiences on stage and of course watch themselves through a recorded medium. I think we have all experienced that cringe when we hear our voice recorded or see ourselves on the television. I know I do. (This is perhaps why I never watch the DVD of our school productions or shows that I have been in.)

So we booked our flights and our beds at the fabulous Sydney Rocks YHA (If you haven’t stayed there I recommend you do) and headed down to the Sydney Theatre Company HQ for our workshop. It was here that my eyes were opened to a significant issue we face as Drama teachers in the our current climate; our obsession with fame and the character of a true artist.

As a Drama teacher I often hear students say, “I just want to be famous”. “Famous for what?” I ask.

Fame as we know it has changed dramatically over the years and today we are bombarded with images of celebrities “famous for being famous”. A study in 2012, (Maltby) found that the most popular life goal for 10-12 year olds was to be ‘famous solely for the sake of being famous’. I am always amazed and confused when I scroll through social media and see ‘likes’ for a so-called celebrity’s selfie; heavily filtered,edited with some inane comment about their dog.
I’ve noticed young people (and the not so young) do this too. It’s true, I just don’t get it.
Students tell me they can take up to 50 photos of themselves before they get the right one, (I guess, I am somewhat impressed by their work ethic.)
Once upon a time we used to stick pictures of Marilyn Monroe or James Dean on our wall and ignore the fact that these too were the products of heavy filtering and editing. We looked at them in awe because they were famous, mysterious and strangely powerful.

Why is it that so many people crave fame?
A new study by Dara Greenwood (2013) and colleagues found three main reasons why people seek fame:
• The desire to be seen/valued (e.g., “Being on the cover of a magazine”, “Being recognized in public”)
• The desire for an elite, high status lifestyle (e.g., “Having the ability to travel in first class and stay at exclusive resorts”, “Living in a mansion or penthouse apartment”)
• The desire to use fame to help others or make them proud (e.g., “Being able to financially support family and friends”, “Being a role model to others”)

I guess it is the last of these that I use as my focus as a Drama teacher and director. The desire to create something beautiful and profound for the world, to become a strong and positive example for hundreds, thousands even millions of people.
That said, researchers have found that preoccupations with peer acceptance amongst adolescents might make the social recognition that comes with fame all the more appealing.
“Therefore, the intense desire for fame among preadolescents and teenagers can be put in a broader context, satisfying a fundamental human need.” We need to acknowledge this ‘fundamental need’ as educators and ensure it is being meet without harm or shame.

Importantly, there are also links to creativity.
“…the importance of intrinsic (i.e., process-focused) and extrinsic (i.e., outcome-focused) motivation, they also argue for an overlooked motivator of creativity: prosocial motivation. Perhaps creativity researchers can join forces with researchers investigating the appeal of fame to see if there are common motivations that underlie both the desire to create and the desire for fame. For instance, perhaps famous people with a prosocial motivation produce creative work that has a distinct prosocial flavour to it.”

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So back to Kevin Spacey. When he addressed the group of successful applicants on our trip to Sydney he asked the students why they had come and why they loved the theatre. A number of them responded with ‘because you’re famous’ or ‘because we wanna be famous’. He stopped the address and spoke frankly to the group. These are the words he spoke.

“Fame is not a career, it is a state of being. It is not sustainable on its own. Don’t become an actor to be famous, to be recognised. Act because you have to, because you can’t imagine a life where you didn’t. Believe in your art not only a gift, but as an obligation. Then if fame comes to you, your feet will be planted firmly and you can grow with it ... or without it”

Learning & Teaching

So here’s the catch, as a Drama teacher, students often look to me to help realise their call to fame. I find the common practise of shameless self-promotion and big noting abhorrent. When a student, or anyone, comes to an audition bragging of how good they are my shutters come down. Narcissism is not only confronting and ugly but it is self consuming and unsustainable, just ask the Greeks. We all want to be accepted, acknowledge and celebrated but we need to promote the ‘motivator of creativity’ in our classrooms which will provide the students with an ‘intrinsic value’ regardless of the level of fame they achieve. We are not going to end our student’s preoccupation with online fame (and shame) but we might work to help them to realise its deeper values.

References:
• Greenwood, D., et al. Fame and the social self: The need to belong, narcissism, and relatedness predict the appeal of fame.
• Maltby, D (2009). British Journal of Psychology. “An interest in fame; Confirming the measurement and empirical conceptualization of fame.”
Motivation

Matthew de Jong
Religious Education Coordinator

Learners are motivational
A hypothetical case study

Jake is a Year 7 student who has been showing less and less interest in his class work since the beginning of this school year. In past years Jake has seemed engaged with his schoolwork, often asking and answering question in class, and spending time on completing projects for homework. This year he was late handing up his last project and his project was poorly done.

Jake’s teacher has attempted to talk to him. Jake’s response was that he did not really care about his schoolwork this year, that much of it was getting too hard for him anyway, and he couldn’t see much point in putting in time for stuff that was boring and too difficult for him.

Your task
You are an educational consultant. Consider Jake’s position in terms of the motivational theory that you have read. Provide:

1. an analysis of Jake’s possible motivational states, and
2. some practical advice for Jake’s teacher.

Motivation is one aspect amongst many, of our psychology and behaviour that is very complex. It differs from person to person and can be heavily influenced by our environment and personality. This will be explored in more detail later in this essay. In Jake’s case there does seem to be some environmental factors at play that have negatively affected his motivation at school. Jake’s poor motivation means that he is no longer investing his maximum energy into completing tasks, feels poorly about school, and doesn’t persist at completing tasks to his best ability.

There are a number of theories of motivation that have been developed over the last hundred years or so. Perhaps the theory that has the most relevance here is the achievement goal theory. This theory is particularly relevant here in Jake’s case in that it describes some elements in the classroom teaching and assessing environment that can influence the motivation of students. Another theory is the social cognitive learning theory. How this theory might relate to Jake will be explored a little later in this essay.

It is worth noting that Jake was motivated in primary school. Up until the end of grade six, he was motivated, engaged, interacting with his teachers and interested in his learning. What changed? His move to secondary

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school, and some factors that have to do with the educational environment in the secondary context. According to achievement goal theory these could have negatively impacted on Jake’s motivation.

Achievement goal theory states that students have a number of reasons for learning. In a school context students like Jake strive for mastery goals (learning) and performance goals (ability/ego). Mastery goals are generally evaluated against oneself (have I learned?) and performance goals are evaluated against others (did I do better than ...?). (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006). Research indicates that performance goals are common in secondary schools and according to Urdan and Schoenfelder (2006), “is usually associated with a negative pattern of motivational beliefs and behaviours.” (p. 334) Performance goals emphasise achieving academically by outperforming others, achieving high grades and obtaining social rewards like recognition from others. In this case Jake is more likely to give up when his work is difficult, not ask for help and use basic thinking strategies to solve problems.

On the other hand when Jake was in primary school mastery goals were emphasised, Jake would more likely, “persist longer when faced with difficulty, [is] more likely to accept difficult or challenging tasks, use more deep level cognitive processing strategies, [be] more intrinsically motivated, and feel better about school and school work.” (Urdan & Schoenfelder, 2006, p. 334) Mastery goals emphasise academic achievement by demonstrating understanding, competence and self-improvement.

One significant part of Albert Bandura’s social cognitive learning theory can be applied to Jake’s situation. Social cognitive learning theory can explain how confidence develops, and how it affects behavioural outcomes such as a student’s effort and persistence. (Bruning, Schraw, Norby, 2011, p. 107) It appears that Jake has what Bandura would call low self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can affect task engagement, persistence and successful performance. (Bruning et al., 2011, p. 110) The task ahead would be to improve Jake’s self-efficacy so that his performance improves. Improving Jake’s self-efficacy will also lead to Jake not displaying avoidant behaviours, (Bruning et al., 2011, p. 111), such as claiming the work is too difficult and putting in the time required to perform well.

From the point of view of the achievement goal theory there are a few things Jake’s teacher could do to improve his motivation. Research indicates that there are a number of benefits for students’ motivation in the classroom when there is a preference for mastery goals over performance goals. For Jake’s teacher the aim would be to promote mastery goals and de-emphasise performance goals. Jake’s teacher could do this in a number of ways.

Firstly, Jake’s teacher needs to make sure that Jake and his classmates only complete what Urdan et al (2006) describe as, “appropriately challenging and meaningful academic work.” This implies that the academic work that Jake’s teacher picks for him to complete should be of high academically demand, should have a focus on the value of learning, and to support this the teacher should offer Jake motivational support, emotional support and Jake should have social support from his peers during instruction. All academic instruction should be of both verbal and imaginal coding. (Bruning et al, 2011, p. 63.) Secondly, Jake needs to be assessed appropriately. Assessments where students are compared directly with each other, where high achievement is rewarded, where ability differences amongst the students in Jake’s class are emphasised and grading on a normative curve should all be avoided. These types of assessments tend to promote performance goals. It is worth noting that in particular that, excessive “praise can lead students to fear failure, avoid risks, doubt themselves when they fail, and cope poorly with setbacks”, ( Dweck & Carol, 1999, p. 2). Schools that emphasise high test results send a very clear message to their students - you
are valued only if you score well! This might explain in some way why Jake is not trying any more. He is protecting his ‘ego’, not wanting to show his peers his lesser ability. Jake also needs to be given feedback that is information oriented, formative and focuses on how Jake’s performance can be improved. This will lead to greater intrinsic motivation, more persistence, better task engagement for Jake. (Bruning et al, 2011, p. 126)

Thirdly, Jake’s teacher should endeavour to offer Jake and his peers more opportunity for choice and autonomy in completing tasks. These sort of tasks should promote learning for understanding, developing skills and Jake will be encouraged to develop his own mastery goals. (Urdan et al, 2006, p. 336) This should ensure that all students including Jake see that the school promotes learning for understanding, all can learn and that this is more important than who gets the best grades in class.

In terms of Social cognitive learning theory, Jake’s teacher can improve Jake’s self-efficacy by attempting the following. Firstly have experts visit the classroom to model expertise and also use peers as models. Secondly, give Jake the opportunity to provide his own feedback and this feedback needs to point out why Jake did well or didn’t do well in a task. Building self-efficacy in Jake will also mean that Jake’s teacher provides him with time to complete tasks and even allow him to work in small groups. (Bruning et al, 2011, p. 115-116)

Taking all of the above into account, hopefully Jake’s teacher should see an improvement in Jake’s motivation, engagement and development of skills.

Bibliography:


The Perils and Promises of Praise

Rodney Knight
Head of Learning & Teaching

This is a potted summary of an article by Carol S. Dweck which raises some key issues for us. It may be a timely read.

Praise is intricately connected to how students view their intelligence. Some students believe that their intellectual ability is a fixed trait. They have a certain amount of intelligence, and that’s that. Students with this fixed mind-set become excessively concerned with how smart they are, seeking tasks that will prove their intelligence and avoiding ones that might not (Dweck, 1999, 2006). The desire to learn takes a backseat.

Other students believe that their intellectual ability is something they can develop through effort and education. They don’t necessarily believe that anyone can become an Einstein or a Mozart, but they do understand that even Einstein and Mozart had to put in years of effort to become who they were. When students believe that they can develop their intelligence, they focus on doing just that. Not worrying about how smart they will appear, they take on challenges and stick to them (Dweck, 1999, 2006).

The Two Faces of Effort.

The fixed and growth mind-sets create two different psychological worlds. In the fixed mind-set, students care first and foremost about how they’ll be judged: smart or not smart. Repeatedly, students with this mind-set reject opportunities to learn if they might make mistakes (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, & Wan, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). When they do make mistakes or reveal deficiencies, rather than correct them, they try to hide them (Nussbaum & Dweck, 2007).

They are also afraid of effort because effort makes them feel dumb. They believe that if you have the ability, you shouldn’t need effort (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck 2007), that ability should bring success all by itself. This is one of the worst beliefs that students can hold. It can cause many bright students to stop working in school when the curriculum becomes challenging.

Finally, students in the fixed mind-set don’t recover well from setbacks. When they hit a setback in school, they decrease their efforts and consider cheating (Blackwell et al., 2007). The idea of fixed intelligence does not offer them viable ways to improve.

By contrast, in the growth mind-set, students care about learning. When they make a mistake or exhibit a deficiency, they correct it (Blackwell et al., 2007; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2007). For them, effort is a positive thing: It ignites their intelligence and causes it to grow. In the face of failure, these students escalate their efforts and look for new learning strategies.

It is not surprising, then, that when we have followed students over challenging school transitions or courses, we find that those with growth mid-sets outperform their classmates with fixed mind-sets even when they entered with equal skills and knowledge. A growth mind-set fosters the growth of ability over time (Blackwell et al., 2007; Mangels, Butterfield, Lamb, Good, & Dweck, 2006; see a;sp Grant & Dweck, 2003).
The Effects of Praise

Many educators have hoped to maximise students’ confidence in their abilities, their enjoyment of learning, and their ability to thrive in school by praising their intelligence. We’ve studied the effects of this kind of praise in children as young as 4 years old and as old as adolescence, in students in inner-city and rural settings, and in students of different ethnicities— and we’ve consistently found the same thing (Cimpian, Arce, Markman, & Dweck, 2007; Kamins & Dweck, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998): Praising students’ intelligence gives them a short burst of pride, followed by a long string of negative consequences.

Praising students for their intelligence, then, hands them not motivation and resilience but a fixed mind-set with all its vulnerability. In contrast, effort or “process” praise (praise for engagement, perseverance, strategies, improvement, and the like) fosters hardy motivation. It tells students what they’ve done to be successful and what they need to do to be successful again in the future.

Motivation to Learn

Finding that growth mind-set creates motivation and resilience— and leads to higher achievement— we sought to develop an intervention that would teach this mind-set to students. We decided to aim our intervention at students who were making the transition to 7th grade because this is a time of great vulnerability. School often gets more difficult in 7th grade, grading becomes more stringent, and the environment becomes more impersonal. Many students take stock of themselves and their intellectual abilities at this time and decide whether they want to be involved with school. Not surprisingly, it is often a time of disengagement and plunging achievement.

We performed our intervention in a New York City junior high school in which many students were struggling with the transition and were showing plummeting grades. If students learned a growth mind-set, we reasoned, they might be able to meet this challenge with increased, rather than decreased, effort. We therefore developed an eight-session workshop in which both the control group and the growth-mind-set group learned study skills, time management techniques, and memory strategies (Blackwell et al., 2007). However, in the growth-mind-set intervention, students also learned about their brains and what they could do to make their intelligence grow.

They learned that the brain is like a muscle— the more they exercise it, the stronger it becomes. They learned that every time they try hard and learn something new, their brain forms new connections that, over time, make them smarter. They learned that intellectual development is not the natural unfolding of intelligence, but rather the formation of new connections brought about through effort and learning.

Students were riveted by this information. The idea that their intellectual growth was largely in their hands fascinated them. In fact, even the most disruptive students suddenly sat still and took notice, with the most unruly boy of the lot looking up at us and saying, “You mean I don’t have to be dumb?”

Our research shows that educators cannot hand students confidence on a silver platter by praising their intelligence. Instead, we can help them gain the tools they need to maintain their confidence in learning by keeping them focused on the process of achievement.
THE CULTURE OF LEARNING AT MARIAN COLLEGE

Our Commitment to Learning
We encourage excellence and perseverance in learning
We strive for continuous improvement.

Classroom Expectations

- Trial and consistently build into our teaching the five strands of Dylan Wiliam’s model from Formative Engagement:
  - Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
  - Evidence of learning
  - Feedback for Learning
  - Peer Supported learning
  - Self Regulated learning

- Know the students as learners
- Punctual commencement of classes
- Provide a variety of tasks in each lesson
- Respect the learning environment
- Set high standards and expectations re student preparation, behavior, engagement and work standards
- Prompt return of assessed student work
- Set homework related to the class-work and check homework tasks when due
- Implement consequences for breaches of the Student Learning Action Statement

Student Learning - Action Statement

I WILL:

- Learn in every lesson
- Come prepared for every lesson in attitude and action
- Respect the learning environment
- Respect the rights of others to learn
- Accept new challenges
- Persevere and complete all tasks to the best of my ability
- Accept feedback as a chance to grow