

# ECT Mentor session

**Module 3:** Developing quality pedagogy

**Week 10:** Making new concepts accessible through targeted support

## Session Elements



discuss with a mentor



rehearsal



analyse artefacts



reflection



observe a colleague



action planning

## Learning Intentions for this session

Your ECT will learn how to:

- 5f.** balance input of new content so that pupils master important concepts
- 5h.** make use of well-designed resources (e.g. textbooks)
- 5l.** consider carefully whether intervening within lessons with individuals and small groups would be more efficient and effective than planning lessons for different groups of pupils

## Introduction

In their self-directed study session earlier this week, your mentee extended their knowledge of how adaptive teaching can impact on learning. They considered how the configuration of groupings can help pupils build their knowledge, access the curriculum and make progress. They also considered how pupil success is underpinned by having frequent opportunities to practise and by the gradual removal of scaffolds as their expertise increases. Your mentee reflected on their practice in relation to the standards and identified which of these ideas might have the biggest impact on their current practice. Your mentee will have either asked for you to observe them for 15 minutes or recorded a segment of their lesson to reflect on how

they support all learners in overcoming barriers to learning.

The learning outcomes from their self-directed study were to learn that:

- 5.3 adapting teaching in a responsive way, including by providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling, is likely to increase pupil success.
- 5.4 adaptive teaching is less likely to be valuable if it causes the teacher to artificially create distinct tasks for different groups of pupils or to set lower expectations for particular pupils.
- 5.6 there is a common misconception that pupils have distinct and identifiable learning styles.

This is not supported by evidence and attempting to tailor lessons to learning styles is unlikely to be beneficial.

In this session, you will facilitate your mentee in developing their understanding of why it is important to evaluate pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills and how this can be achieved (discussions with pupils, during whole-class feedback, checking classwork, summative assessment of their work, etc.) Through discussion, your mentee should be able to identify when certain pupils need more help to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills; what help they need; and the best way to adapt their teaching to support them. You will address the educational research which refutes the idea that lessons need to cater for pupils' 'learning styles' - this does not improve learning.

## Research and Practice Summary

### Making new concepts accessible through targeted support – Year 12

#### Psychology

Conn is struggling with his Year 12 A Level Psychology class: the pupils are having difficulties communicating their prior understanding of complex concepts and so are failing to apply this knowledge to solving problems. He has tried a number of things, including personalising resources for each member of the class and teaching them according to what they have told him are their preferred learning styles. He is now overloaded with work and still not happy with the progress his pupils are making.

Why might pupils be struggling to communicate their prior knowledge?

Why might Conn's hard work not be producing the outcomes he wants?

How might he better target his support so that the pupils can access the new

**Adaptive teaching** involves the teacher being flexible and responsive about the methods they use in lessons to ensure that they can meet the needs of all their pupils and deviate from the lesson plan, where necessary. Adaptive teaching requires a reflective approach since the teacher needs to be able to acknowledge the need to change the strategy being used. Although adaptive teaching is easier with experience, it can be achieved early in a teacher's career through careful planning – by anticipating pupil misconceptions before they arise, for example. It is important that this is done in response to pupils' needs, not as an artificial process which breaks the flow of the lesson.

Adaptive teaching includes providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling but creating separate, distinct tasks for different groups is less likely to be valuable: it risks lowering expectations for some, and it can add unnecessarily to workload.



To help your pupils make progress, you should:

- use formative assessment to identify those who need content further broken down
- adapt your lessons but keep your expectations high for all
- change your groups frequently
- rather than plan different tasks and lessons, intervene within lessons with individuals and small groups

Conn changed his approach. Alongside better scaffolding of information, he decided to group his pupils based on current assessment data. In order to target his support, he planned a group work lesson on 'attachment', which used a variety of scaffolding prompts to remind the students of the concepts and knowledge required to show an understanding of attachment. These prompts included a short video on the 'nature v nurture' debate and some key associated words such as 'secure', 'insecure avoidant' and 'insecure resistant'. He stopped planning towards his pupils' preferred learning styles because it was not helping.

**Critical knowledge** is the essential information and concepts pupils need to learn the next steps in an area of the curriculum. It is linked to the idea of foundational concepts. Critical knowledge might be a key concept, piece of vocabulary or a mathematical process without which the next steps can't be taken.

It is important that the curriculum is carefully sequenced, so that pupils learn **foundational concepts** first – concepts that are needed in order to understand more complex information. Examples of foundational concepts include learning the alphabet and phonetic sounds in literacy; learning to count, add and subtract in mathematics; and learning about cells and atoms in science. Over time, building foundational understanding can help pupils develop confidence in their abilities to recall relevant information while their knowledge gradually becomes more complex and external support (or scaffolding) is gradually withdrawn.



To help your pupils to master foundational concepts, you should:

- with your colleagues, identify what these are and ensure they are prioritised in your curriculum
- with your colleagues, identify the likely common misconceptions that can hamper understanding of the important concepts
- give concrete examples and metaphors, as these are often useful in helping pupils understand abstract concepts (e.g. stories and narratives, sayings, rules, mnemonics, equations and models.)

Conn's pupils were able to use the scaffolds and prompts to access their prior understanding and work collaboratively to produce a labelled diagram of nature versus nurture. By using current assessment data, he was able to identify knowledge gaps that were common across particular groups of pupils and group them according to their more specific needs. Conn was able to focus more time in lesson to help specific groups to develop their diagrams. He could reframe questions and give extra modelling to the groups with struggling pupils, when required, to maintain the level of discussion in the group and promote deeper understanding. He didn't produce a different lesson plan or resources for them or have a separate set of learning outcomes. Instead, he focused on foundational concepts. Other groups could work independently of him, without additional scaffolding, to complete the finished product.

During the lesson, he moved around the room and used questioning to check individual pupils' understanding. By doing this, he was able to identify where additional/less scaffolding was required and adapt his intervention accordingly.

### **What did Conn learn about making new concepts accessible through targeted support?**

Conn saved time by not producing extra resources for the class, instead refocusing his attention in lesson to target his support where it was needed. Grouping his pupils using their current assessment data helped him to achieve this in a way that meant he did not need to have separate learning objectives or resources. He learned that teaching to preferred learning styles didn't help the pupils and only added to his workload.

## **Mentor Meeting Activities**

Throughout the session, try to refer explicitly to the Learning Intentions and encourage your mentee to record key points in their Learning Log. Tailor your use of the Theory to Practice activities below in response to the Review and Plan section of this session.

### **Review and Plan 5 mins**

Clarify the Learning Intentions for this session with your mentee.

At the start of this module, you looked at all of the 'learn how to' statements for Standards 4 and 5 and conducted a module audit with your mentee: in some areas they will already be confident and skilled; in others they will want more practice and support from you and others. Look back at this audit now and use it to help decide how you and your mentee will make the most productive use of the suggested Theory to Practice activities below.

## Theory to Practice 40 mins



### 1. Discuss with mentor

You may have observed the lesson your mentee planned in their self-directed study session. Otherwise, you should use some of the time now to watch the video of that lesson or read the annotations they made on a detailed plan of the lesson. Your purpose is not to assess or grade the lesson but to probe their thinking and offer constructive challenge.

Consider some or all of these questions with the mentee (not all will apply):

Key concepts -

- how did you balance introducing new content with teaching key concepts?
- what were the key concepts within this topic?
- how well do your pupils know and understand these concepts - how do you know?

Adapting a resource -

- how did you adapt it in the lesson to support pupils?
- how did you adapt it in the lesson to stretch pupils?
- did any of your pupils request additional resources?

Intervention in class -

- did it seem effective?
- how did you support pupils who didn't have the required knowledge, understanding or skills compared to other pupils?
- how did you identify key pupils that needed help?
- how did you adapt questions to stretch and/or support pupils in their learning?

Successful outcomes -

- did the pupils achieve their learning outcomes?
- was it more effective to give targeted in-class support than creating extra resources or separate tasks for individual pupils?
- did you save planning time by using one rich resource which you could adapt in the lesson?



## 2. Action planning

Help your mentee to identify next steps arising from the lesson you viewed. Be careful not to allow too many extra targets to emerge – concentrating on one area of teaching to improve would be much better.

### Next Steps 5 mins

Agree with your mentee how they will now put their learning from this week's session(s) into practice in their teaching. Help your mentee to clarify:

1. the action(s) they will take and how these action(s) are expected to contribute to improving pupil learning
2. what success will 'look like' in relation to these action(s)
3. how they will evaluate their success in taking these action(s)

Note the date of your next mentor meeting, when you will check on your mentee's progress.