

Volume 4

May. 2022

TeachBetter

Professional Development Insights
for Teachers in China

Message from the Editor	2
TeachBetter in Review	3
Teach Better, Connect Better	4
Teachers in China	5
Sessions in a Nutshell	6
Teacher Toolkit: Hotseating	12
Goody Two Shoes	14
Hidden Head	15
Starting a Quiet Revolution	16
Advice Ayi	17
Growing Students; Growth Mindsets	18
Save the Date	19
TeachBetter: Classroom Wellbeing	20



Message from the Editor

Kate Rowe
Venture Education

Perhaps it's just me, but the fact that it's May already has come as a bit of a shock. I was really only just getting used to the idea that it's 2022, and here we are, with the fourth series of TeachBetter wrapping up around our ears. It has been, for many of us, a heck of an academic year, demanding continual adaptation and creativity as we go on living through the shocks and aftershocks of the pandemic, and trying to mitigate their effects on our students, our colleagues and ourselves. This series, focusing on a wealth of issues around confidence and communication, and as varied and interesting as usual, converged for me on a principle that seems particularly important to remember at the moment: to be confident, and to be an effective communicator, you have to commit hopefully to the present.

Kierkegaard once described confidence as 'the present tense of hope' – we saw this in action in the first two sessions in the way they encouraged us to welcome uncertainty into our classroom, and have high hopes for what the unexpected might bring - using both planning and self-regulation not to bat contingencies away but to be sure that we can handle them and make the most of them when they come along. In the second two sessions, we were reminded of just how complex and rich communication is in all its linguistic and non-verbal forms, and just how attentive we need to be in the moment in order to make the most of it, and honour what students bring with them into the classroom. We are immensely grateful to all of our expert speakers, Dr Rebecca Webb, Tab Betts, Dr Mario Moya, Dr Sabine Little and Rob Fonseca for their insight, research and experience; they are all excellent advertisements for their universities.

We'd also like to thank the amazing members of the TeachBetter community, Lisa Donoghue, Dr Li (Lily) Cai, Eduardo Gonzalez, and Xolisile Sithole who have submitted some really insightful and thought-provoking Chalkface articles, and to this edition's fantastic Hidden Head (you know who you are). I thoroughly enjoyed reading each and every word – and they confirmed my hopes that our new Teachers in China registration model is starting life with the best possible early years support in the form of all the TeachBetter community members who have already signed up. We will be running the next TeachBetter series in the Autumn term on the incredibly important topic of classroom wellbeing – make sure you have registered well before then to pick up all the other Teachers in China benefits. So, until we meet again, very best wishes for a restful summer full of confidence and all the right sorts of communication!





TeachBetter in Review

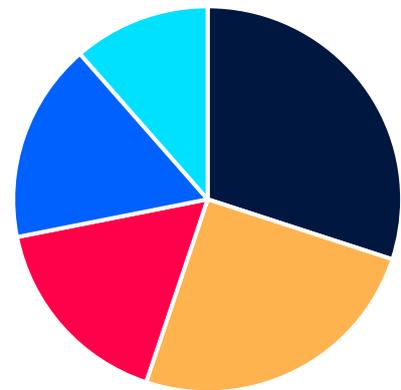
In May, Venture hosted the fourth TeachBetter series: free online workshops for teachers in China

With seven hundred registrations, the response from the community was fantastic, and we received great feedback for the webinars which, this series, were led by:

- University of Sussex
- University of East London
- University of Sheffield
- London Metropolitan University

Shanghai has overtaken Beijing as the top spot of TeachBetter registrants, with cities in Guangdong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang following close behind.

- Shanghai
- Beijing
- Guangdong
- Jiangsu
- Zhejiang



This series has also seen an incredible number of overseas registrants, spanning 9 countries.

Can you identify all of their flags? (answers written below - no cheating!)



1. Ghana 2. India 3. Liberia 4. Laos 5. Liberia 6. Malaysia 7. Philippines 8. Russia 9. Rwanda



Teach **Better**, Connect **Better**

Dr Li (Lily) Cai reflects on the positive aspects of being a member of the TeachBetter community, and gives us an insight into what you are all actually up to when the sessions are going on.

It was a blessing to have 'met' TeachBetter in the world at this time we live in. I managed to listen to three of the sessions, this series, mostly while I was commuting on train or on my bicycle. The organiser, the speakers, and participants – other teachers like me, and all the reflections they have brought me, all have been surprisingly delightful.

Mary is a fantastic chair for talks and super-efficient. She gives you the feeling that she is not just virtually talking to you online but rather actually speaking to you in person. All the three speakers also were extremely proficient in their online lectures – articulate, insightful and most importantly, pleasantly interactive. For each talk I have reflected so much: applying their concepts, ideas and valuable input in ways that I probably would never be able to digest simply by reading. The sound of their voices, their personable interpretations, and the way they gave feedback on participants' comments – although I could only sit down with my computer for only one part of one talk – all was unforgettable. I can clearly recall what Dr. Moya said about confidence and self-esteem when I was just walking out of the metro station in rain, and how Mr. Fonseca discussed self-determination theory when I cycled across that noisy bridge. I was impressed to see Dr. Little using some Chinese texts illustrating her points on multilingualism. I am sure I will teach better after hearing/seeing how they teach.

All the other teachers who have been participating, I must say, are brilliant. I heard/saw some of their responses, and was definitely inspired. Knowing that there are so many passionate teachers who care and make efforts, who actively learn and help each other, share their resources, is really a huge comfort for a time that we are all somehow isolated. So thank you, TeachBetter, for creating this professional, friendly and supportive community that helps us to teach better and connect better.

Dr Li (Lily) Cai
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To be part of the continuing community, make sure to scan or click the Teachers in China QR code on the next page and register for free!

Teachers in China

What we give you



1 TeachBetter

Four engaging online CPD workshops on a new theme every term, delivered by leading education experts from our partner universities.



2 Social impact

We work closely with charities across China. Every month, we share information about one charity, offering opportunities to support, and ways for your school to connect.



3 Support

We love our community. Reach out in the group for support from your peers on everything from pedagogy to travel tips, teaching resources to wellbeing.



4 Knowledge

Venture Education regularly releases reports, one-pagers and summaries on all aspects of education in China. You'll get up-to-date access to our research and market insights.



5 Freebies and discounts

Working alongside the best small businesses in China, we provide TIC teachers with flash discounts and freebies from your soon-to-be favourite places!



6 Flash pub quizzes

Who doesn't love a quiz? Sporadic Fridays at 5.55pm, our community quiz will go live! Share your knowledge of the weird and wonderful, bathe in the adulation of your peers and win prizes.

What we ask from you



Be prepared to respond to research survey requests when you can. We support universities around the world with their research and write several of our own reports, such as our annual teachers in China survey. The data we collect is shared with school leaders and academics in China to help them support teachers and improve education in the country. We'll also share key findings with the TIC community, so that you can understand the education ecosystem better.



Keep the community groups a positive and supportive environment. Let's do good things for each other, support each other's wellbeing, and establish education in China as a connected world of positive professional collaboration.

What we promise



Everything we've said is everything this is. We're not secretly a recruitment firm trying to harvest your data, and we aren't going to start making you download a mini-app to buy miraculous health cures. We just think there is both a space, and a need, for teachers in China to congregate, connect and support each other – registering is going to help with the rigour and breadth of what we can offer a community we already know and care about.

**PS. It's all free.
Just scan here:**





Session 1 in a Nutshell:

Topic: Playing with Uncertainty
Speakers: Dr Rebecca Webb & Tab Betts
University: University of Sussex

4 Big Ideas

1. Introducing uncertainty into your teaching approach has the capacity to engage students to a much greater extent and prompt deep and intrinsic learning.
2. Applying non-linear methods to the curriculum with, for example, clay, nature, lego, storytelling, freewriting and games, can all help to build more open-ended approaches to any subject.
3. As a teacher, thinking about your teaching through the lens of metaphor, and exploring not-knowing as well as more established discovery or mastery models, can enrich what happens in your classroom. The plane/train/boat metaphors set out by Webb and Kirby can be helpful for this.
4. Children come into your classroom knowing stuff. Leveraging this knowledge is highly empowering, and even culturally transformative.

4 Quotations Worth Remembering

1. 'We need the language of both science and poetry to save us from merely stockpiling endless "information" that fails to inform our ignorance or our irresponsibility.' Ursula Le Guin, 2017
2. "The objective of presenting content in the school curriculum is not to ensure that children get an accurate understanding of it, but to provide children with the opportunity to engage with content deeply . . . This means allowing them to make choices, and hence take a position.' Osberg & Biesta, 2007
3. "Metaphor becomes a bit of a not-knowing space." Rebecca Webb, 2022
4. "Opening up uncertainty confirms we're not alone." Tab Betts, 2022

4 Facts/Statistics

1. 'Uncertainty enhances learning. Uncertainty is found to be positively associated with motivation. As motivation increases, participants tend to spend more time on answering questions and to have higher accuracy in these questions.' – study by Ozcelik, Ozcelik and Cagiltay into the effect of uncertainty on learning in game-like environments.
2. In his book 'Thinking Fast and Slow', Daniel Kahneman explores two systems of thinking – System 1 – almost automatic, based on what we think we know, unreflective and System 2 – slow, reflective, open-minded – y'know, thinking. As a species, we really like relying on System 1.
3. Approaches that embrace uncertainty can be a cultural challenge in some schools in China (and around the world).
4. There are a number of simple and easy-to-use randomisers online which can be easily brought into the classroom – such as www.wheelofnames.com

4 Recommendations

1. The work of [Gert Biesta](#).
2. Webb, R., & Kirby, P. (2019, April). [Modelling Transformative Education](#)
3. [Rebecca's Transform in Education website](#)
4. [Tab's Active Learning Network](#)





Session 2 in a Nutshell:

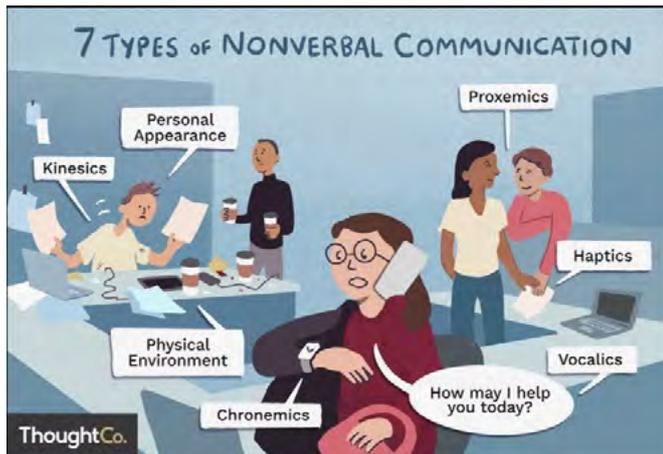
Topic: Teacher Presence
Speakers: Dr Mario Moya
University: University of East London

4 Big Ideas

1. Confidence for teaching (CfT) is not necessarily the same thing as general confidence.
2. Confidence is something that can be cultivated, and when you do cultivate it, it's contagious.
3. It is not a feeling or emotion; it is learned behaviour shaped by conscious projection and self-regulation, managing stress and control.
4. Effective communication is about the right combination of speech and non-verbal communication.

4 Quotations Worth Remembering

1. "Confidence is a magnet that attracts people toward you."
2. "You and your students need to vibrate at the same wavelength."
3. "There is a huge sense of security from being able to say 'I know what I am doing; I know what to do when a contingency happens; I know how to conduct myself.'"
4. "Self-esteem can be defined as a subjective evaluation of a sense of one's own worth."



4 Facts/Statistics

1. Confidence can be built through a range of concrete activities in the classroom including: review, mindset, support, feedback, roles, targets, strength, preparation, achievements, control.
2. Non-verbal communication can be broken down into 7 basic categories: personal appearance, kinesis, proxemics, haptics, vocalics, chronemics and the physical environment.
3. Performance toxicity can result from a 'toxic cocktail' of low self-esteem, anxiety and stress, imposter syndrome, and insufficient tools for emotional regulation.
4. Three separate systems are at work to determine your confidence as a teacher and in life – these can be thought of as your drive, soothing and threat systems.

4 Recommendations

1. The Teacher Confidence (TECON) scale – please ask for a copy in the TeachBetter group
2. Gilbert (2005) (Ed) Compassion: Conceptualizations, Research, and Use in Psychology. London: Routledge.
3. [Thoughtco](#): breakdown of 7 types of non-verbal communication
4. Denis Lawrence's work on teacher confidence, including his book [Teaching with Confidence: a guide to enhancing teacher self-esteem](#).

'7 Types of Nonverbal Communication' Source



Session 3 in a Nutshell:

Topic: Multilingualism as Social Justice
Speaker: Dr Sabine Little
University: University of Sheffield

4 Big Ideas

1. We need to think about the different literacies children bring into the classroom with them, rather than assuming there is only one.
2. A lot of the time, children (and their families) will self-censor great chunks of their cultural identity out of what they bring to school with them if teachers do not find a way to invite this in.
3. Teachers often know that celebrating multilingualism can be something that schools pay lip-service to, rather than fully engage with.
4. Multilingualism goes well beyond different words – it is about full expression and celebration of students' diverse cultural backgrounds.

4 Quotations Worth Remembering

1. "Literacy is not neutral but a social practice arising out of delimited cultural needs and goals. As such, there can only be literacy by ignoring the ubiquity of literacies." (Kiramba, 2017)
2. "No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he [sic] crosses the school threshold, nor to live and act as though school and home represent two totally separate and different cultures which have to be kept firmly apart." (DES, Bullock Report, 1975, p. 286)
3. "What multilingualism means has become a pressing educational matter of concern in the first half of the twenty-first century" (Heugh, 2018, p. 341)
4. "These children are genuine bilinguals, but this fact is often ignored or unrecognised by the schools. Their bilingualism is of great importance to the children and their families, and also

to society as a whole. In a linguistically conscious nation in the modern world we should see it as an asset, as something to be nurtured, and one of the agencies which should nurture it is the school. (Bullock Report, 1975) ...otherwise, children will continue to self-edit their identity in formal education contexts, assuming that there is a part of them "nobody wants to know about". (Little, 2022)

4 Teaching Ideas

1. Language working out boxes to help students identify structural differences between languages.
2. Language portraits – body portraits allowing students to explore different languages they speak and want to speak.
3. Language rhythm puzzles – matching the word in different languages to different rhythms.
4. Labelling work – allowing students to label work in multiple languages.

4 Recommendations

1. [Lost wor\(l\)ds](#): lesson plans and resources to support multilingualism in the classroom
2. Rivers of Reading activities (Cliff Hodges, 2010) can help you understand children's literacy development across time, and family literacy input, as well as links to identity.
3. [Advice on developing a multilingual library](#).
4. Little, S. (2019) 'Great Aunt Edna's Vase - Metaphor Use in Working with Heritage Language Families'. The Family Journal, 'DOI: 10.1177/1066480719833417 - For Green Open Access, [see here](#).



Session 4 in a Nutshell:

Topic: All the Classroom's a Stage...
Speaker: Rob Fonseca
University: London Metropolitan University

4 Big Ideas

1. Self-determination is central to learning, and can be affected by both our intrinsic motivations – those internally driven impulses we all have to learn new things – and extrinsic motivation – the 'carrots' and 'sticks' that keep us applying ourselves.
2. We can also divide motivation into three key factors: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Each of these can have a powerful effect on how much students will learn if we can find ways to build them into our classroom.
3. Talking about and changing groupings regularly can build competence and students' capacity to feel relatedness with different peers within their class.
4. Understanding semiotics, and especially positions of power within your classroom can help you relate to your class in different ways.

4 Quotations Worth Remembering

1. "In drama it is much better to differentiate by outcome than to limit them from the outset. Give them some stimulus and some impetus and see how far they go."
2. "This subject allows us to see a different side of people...this is because it's a different approach to learning."
3. "If I'm given a choice about something I want to learn, then I am going to learn it well."
4. "Children can sometimes find it very hard to say nice things about each other, and to take each other's work seriously."

4 Teaching Ideas

1. Positions of Power (Boal) – create a space with furniture, and invite each student in turn to occupy the position of greatest power.
2. Who's Got the Power? Tableaux – ask students in groups of 4 to create a still image, then discuss with the class who they think the most powerful person is.
3. Exploration – in any subject, asking a series of graded questions about exploring is a great way to set out the mindset they will need to learn and create good work.
4. Double U – even with big classes, setting them out in a double U shape means that no child is more than 2 seats away from you. "When you talk to them all, you have to catch them all in your net." Circles, when possible, are even more powerful.

4 Recommendations

1. *Self-Determination Theory*, by Richard M Ryan & Edward L Deci
2. [*Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice*](#), by Christopher P Niemi and Richard M Ryan
3. [*Humankind, a Hopeful History*](#), by Rutger Bregman
4. [*Games for Actors and Non-Actors*](#), by Augusto Boal



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Teacher Toolkit 4

Hotseating

Our tool for this season is drawn from the world of drama, but can be applied to practically any subject and any age-group. Hot-seating is an incredibly engaging and transformative exercise in empathy. In its simplest terms, hot-seating requires learners to take on the role of someone else, and then, in character, to answer questions the rest of the group decides to ask.

Tips

Hot-seating is a good activity to repeat with a class! If doing it for the first time, it is probably best to choose a relatively confident person to be the first actor, but in fact this exercise can be a really good opportunity for quieter, more reflective learners to really shine. The most thoughtful results are usually reached when not too many constraints about matching the externals of a character (voice, accent, pitch, etc) are given.

Why do it?

It is always thrilling to see what significant gains in understanding this simple and versatile exercise yields. It can allow learners to see problems and ideas from completely different perspectives, to better understand different stakeholders and players in events and organisations, and to engage with the arts at a deep level. In affective education, it can also be a powerful way for learners to swap roles and understand perspectives other than their own in conflict-resolution.

This activity is excellent for helping students understand complexity and conflict, and as such can be an excellent preparation for any discursive or opinion-based work. As an active and collaborative exercise, it can provide a very effective lead-in to more individual work.



How – in 6 steps

Before the class

1. Choose 1-5 roles for hot-seating and fill out the hot-seating cards.

During the class

2. Identify and explain to the whole group 1-5 roles for hot-seating, choosing one member of the group to play each. You may wish to give them the TT hot-seating card to think about and make notes on while the rest of the group is working on questions. If you are using props, hand these out to the actors.
3. Divide the rest of the group into teams and give them 5 minutes to brainstorm questions they would like to ask ONE of the characters.
4. Place a chair in the centre of the room and ask the first person playing a character to walk to the chair and sit down in character.
5. Begin by asking the first small group to ask their prepared questions, but open this out to any questions occurring to the rest of the group after the first 3. (3-5 minutes)
6. At the end of the conversation, thank the actor and ask them to leave the hot-seat. Repeat with other actors and roles.

When

As an exploratory tool, this is a very good exercise to use in the middle of a unit, when some knowledge of the topic has already been established, though this is less important if the topic is something that learners are likely to have prior knowledge of already. Hot-seating can also be very effective as a reflective exercise at the end of a unit. It can be particularly powerful in this context when it repeats earlier similar work, as a way of demonstrating how much more the learners know, understand and can empathise with.

Materials

While hot-seating can be done with no materials other than paper and pen for the questioners, it can also be both entertaining for all, and helpful to the learner in the hot-seat to use simple props to help denote the role being taken on. Wigs, crowns, and even lanyards or keys can all help to keep the learner in role, and help give them 'permission' to think and respond as someone other than themselves. If you do choose to use props, we recommend using one simple, gestural prop per role.

Real World Inspirations

This technique was originally devised by Konstantin Stanislavski as a technique for actors to help them get into character, and make the character real to the audience. However, playing the role of another person or thing is arguably as old as humanity itself, and continues to take on interesting new forms. In 1991 the White Ribbon Campaign began a series of charity walks to raise awareness in the fight against domestic violence. Challenging walkers to walk a mile in high heels, these walks are now taking place annually all over the world. In 2015, the world's first empathy museum opened its doors on London's Southbank, challenging passers-by to put on the shoes of another person and walk a mile, while listening to an audio recording of that person speaking. One of these visitors gave this evaluation, "I don't know if it worked for other people, but it made me really like other people."

Across the Curriculum

STEAM: Create roles outlining three to five stakeholders who are affected by an area which is the subject of ethical debate and allow the class to question each one in turn, as a precursor to reflective writing. Cloning, space exploration and pollution are all good topics for this approach, though roles can also be apportioned for the inventors and beneficiaries of new technology, and even parts of a process or taxonomy such as digestion, experimental equipment or even chemical elements.

Practical: In drama activities, hot-seating characters in a script can prove a powerful way 'in' for actors and directors. In devised work, it can be a useful pre-cursor to group improvisation.

Linguistic: Identify the roles of different people from the same historical event and ask learners to question each in turn.

Professional: Ask learners to question representatives of each different group of stakeholders in turn.

Time

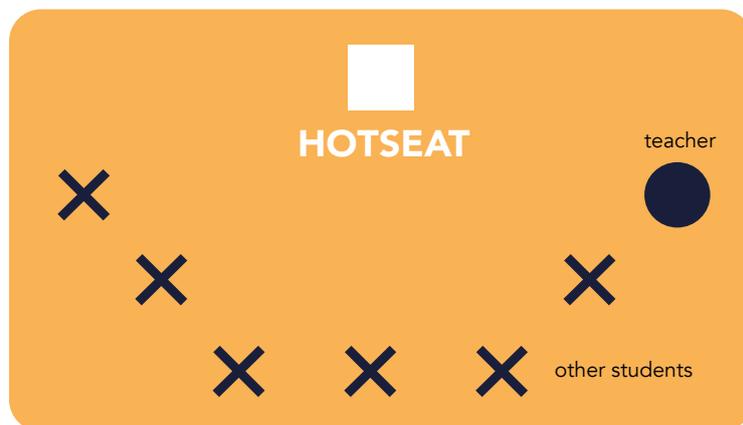
2
min

teacher
preparation
time

15-25
min

delivery
time

Seating



Hotseat Cards

Cards for students in the hotseat:

Who are you?

Where are you?

When are you?

Cards for students asking questions:

Your questions are for: _____

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Reflection Questions

- How easy or difficult was it to play the role?
- What do you understand now about the different ways this topic can be seen?
- Why do you think this person made the decisions she did?



From the Chalkface

Xolisile Sithole considers some of the cultural complexities as young learners develop their sense of identity

Goody Two Shoes

In early childhood, children start to develop what psychologist Carl Rogers defined as 'self concepts': the differentiation of 'this' from 'that'; 'me' from 'the world around me'. During this time, children are faced for the first time with an externalised picture of who they are, seeing how they may be similar or different from those around them in range of different categories, from social gender constructs ('boy' or 'girl'), to physical characteristics ('height' or 'weight') or even to value characteristics ('brilliant' or 'slow'). Around the age of 3, such categories start to form part of their identity and sense of self.

As kindergarten teachers we feed into this in various ways, our curriculum choices being the most obvious: teaching children, for example, "This is boy. Are you a boy?" In bilingual or multicultural schools, we often add the question, "Where are you from?"

These labels are not bad in essence, but they can have unintended consequences and can provoke strong reactions in children as they construct their developing sense of identity in relation to those around them. Take, for example, a child born of two cultures, with two languages, who in their class can seem to be a genius because they just "know everything": they can speak to the local and the foreign (other) teacher. This, again, is nothing to be concerned over in itself, but as practitioners it is imperative we are mindful of how these 'geniuses' are treated in the playground.

At any age social relationships are key to our mental health but to a kindergartener, social relationships are their bread and butter, one of the central areas of any child's growth. If their identity poses a threat to their social relationships; if they start to perceive themselves as 'other' in a situation where their peers are the same, it can be a source of distress. Without the language to express how they are truly feeling, it can begin to plant a seed that who they are is not relatable, that who they are is different and that this is bad. Responses may vary from reduced participation in class to not sharing about all their family members or trying to blend in with the most dominant group. Most disturbing of all, it can result in trying not to seem as smart because fitting in is more important than being themselves.

We must pay attention to how our classroom content is being lived in the playground, ensuring differentiation is consistently complemented with why being different is also totally universal and totally cool!

Xolisile Sithole
EYFS Homeroom Teacher
Malvern College Chengdu





The Hidden Head

What are Heads really thinking when they walk around the school?

In this regular feature, we ask a different anonymous head of a school in China what they think.

No matter how busy I am at school, I always try to 'do the rounds' at least once a day. I think we're supposed to call them learning walks nowadays, but they're essentially a chance for the Head to see the good work (hopefully!) going on at the school and to reinforce to teaching staff that they have a visible, supportive school leader, who is appreciative of the great work they do.

On some days, this can be the highlight of a very stressful day, but increasingly, these interactions with staff can pile on the stress even more. I can guarantee that every Head will relate to the following scenario. As you walk from classroom to classroom, one teacher might complain about a disruptive student, so you promise to call the parents. Another teacher may have a timetable clash for the following day, so you assure them you'll quickly follow up on that. Yet another teacher is having difficulty with a mixed ability class, so you feel compelled to mention some useful strategies for differentiated learning. You get the picture. I can also guarantee that most Heads go back to the office and bemoan the inability of their staff to solve such routine problems. However, the underlying issue in each of these cases is not the teacher, but the Head.

Although the intention in each of the above examples was to help and support the staff, the Head's default approach to take immediate action or give advice deprived these teachers of a chance to come up with their own solutions. When you give such direct advice or simply solve the problems of others without a second thought, the message you send as a Head is that your staff are not as capable as you and they should depend on you as their leader for all problems they may have. To be blunt, giving advice can be toxic. Sometimes it merely serves to reinforce negative behaviour and increase the workload of school leaders.

What is really needed in situations like this is for school leaders to empower teachers by simply paraphrasing their problems back to them and asking open-ended questions that lead to deeper thinking. This can enable staff to reflect on their issues and encourage them to generate workable solutions themselves. I know what you're thinking - this sounds like a lot of time and effort - and it's true that this may be more labour intensive in the short term, but it will almost certainly lead to more staff taking responsibility for their own problems and improve the overall efficiency of the school.

In sum, by giving teachers the ownership of their own problems and the responsibility to deal with them, school leaders are demonstrating their confidence and support for teachers, which is a much healthier relationship in the long term and will ensure a growth mindset among teachers, who because of this nurturing environment, may themselves develop into future school leaders.





From the Chalkface

Lisa Donoghue offers a powerful perspective on what it can feel like to be labelled 'shy'

Starting a Quiet Revolution

'Lisa is shy... Lisa is shy...' This phrase filled each and every one of my school reports from primary school through to the early years of my secondary education. The word 'shy' and its negative connotations defined me at school: if you were shy you must lack confidence and couldn't be good at anything; if you were not sharing every single thought inside your head with the world, then you weren't part of the lesson. School seemed to prize the qualities of noisiness and loudness. Unfortunately, these were two qualities I would never possess. School and I slowly drifted apart.

For three months at the age of 13 I stopped going to school completely because school felt so impossible. Eventually, my mum coaxed me back to lessons, telling me that if I didn't go to school, she'd go to prison. When I did, I made a conscious decision to return as the different version of me that my secondary school

seemed to desire: talkative and noisy. It seemed to work. I no longer had 'Lisa is shy' on my reports. Instead it was replaced by 'not working hard enough,' 'chatty,' and 'unfocused'. The irony of these comments was not lost on me.

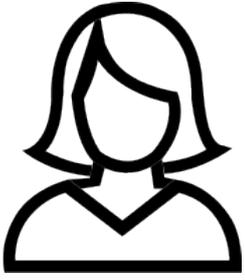
Who was it exactly that I was supposed to be?

Now I fully agree with every teacher who said I was quiet. Yet, I was always so much more: a committed and hard-working student, passionate about learning, drama and debating. Why was that so hard for teachers to see? Why fixate on one thing in students at the expense of everything else? Why do we want to 'cure' the quiet students and make them louder? In a world of noisy classrooms, let's tap into the power of these students who will always be listening to what teachers have to say.



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Advice Ayi

In this section, we attempt to answer some of the PD-related questions of the TeachBetter community

What's the best way to handle shy kids in a big classroom?

The first question you need to ask yourself as a teacher is 'Do I mean shy? Or do I mean quiet?'

These two things are vastly different - even though they might look similar when you first meet a class - and will need very different approaches. So, the first thing to do is to observe as closely and gather as much evidence as you can (talking to parents and watching at breaktimes are particularly helpful), and make a judgement call. Quiet kids will be quiet in most situations, familiar or unfamiliar. They are often perfectly comfortable being quiet, often come equipped with a whole range of observational super-powers and, aside from occasionally kicking them out of their comfort zone and showing them (for example) that they can absolutely smash public speaking tasks when they have to, you don't need to worry too much about them being quiet. Quiet is not a problem for anyone, as long as you are not building a classroom environment where only the gobby kids get your attention or can succeed.

Shy needs more work. The word 'shy' comes from the old High German 'sciuhen' meaning 'scared' and is not the same at all as quiet. A shy child might say nothing in your classroom, but go home, or to break with a friend, or to anywhere they feel safe, and never shut up. An inevitable part of being a grown-up is that you sometimes forget how much childhood can be ruled by fear. That's what shy kids are: fearful - sometimes of you, sometimes of the work, often of other children. It is your job to reduce that fear so they can get on with learning. So below are some golden rules for making the classroom a place where kids can forget to be shy.

1 Never, ever, tolerate mockery of anyone but you in your classroom. Have regular and frank conversations about being kind; respectful communication; 'friendly' and 'unfriendly' teasing and - gently and kindly - ensure that your more bumptious students always have to visibly apologise if they cross lines with class-members. Make being kind the hardest of any of your red lines with students. You'll find that it opens a thousand doors for all of them, but the shy ones most of all.

2 Find ways for shy students to be seen undercover - things like post-it surveys are great for this (where you ask a question, get anonymous responses on post-its and put them up for the class to read), or reading selections of work without saying who wrote it, or asking students to speak one-to-one then report what each other think. All of the above can be a great way to let shy students know that the things they have to contribute are valued and heard, and to normalise the idea that their voice exists in the group.

3 Don't tell them they're shy, or make this the headline in your communication with parents. A look at Lisa Donoghue's excellent article on being labelled shy in this edition will show you the damage this can do.

4 Go for variety when eliciting answers. Things like think/pair/share or mini whiteboards are great ways to ensure everyone is thinking hard, but also good ways to make shy kids feel like they are contributing in the same ways as everyone else. They don't all need following up with individual responses - but drawing comparisons to show when they have said the same as others can also be very reassuring.

5 Seat and group shy kids sensitively - they often respond really well to working with actually quiet kids, who can be among your best listeners.

6 Be interesting. One striking pattern among shy kids is that they can be surprisingly competitive, so games and thinking challenges with short timeframes and short answers can be a great way of drawing them out and helping them forget to be self-conscious.

7 Don't give up on talking to them if they don't respond at first. As with all children, there is no substitute for being genuinely pleased to see them, but they can be very good at convincing you to succumb to their invisibility or making you believe that they don't care about what you think. Shy kids do, sometimes passionately, want to engage and be seen - they just haven't always developed the armoury of appropriate answers. Give them lots of opportunities to practice, and they will often find their tongues in the end.



From the Chalkface

Eduardo Gonzalez offers us this useful checklist to help students develop a growth mindset

Growing Students; Growth Mindsets

When our students make critical mistakes, they can sometimes interpret this as a sign of weakness and avoid similar challenges in the future. It's our job to create a positive learning environment where – with the right guidance – our students can develop their skills through personal effort and start seeing their mistakes just as a way to improve particular areas. The following tips may help our students embrace a growth mindset.

Create awareness

The time and effort they have devoted to mastering specific skills before they have reached your classroom is sometimes overlooked. Making our students aware of their successes in other areas is the very first step to reminding them that they can move from not-knowing to knowing. They have already come a long way!

Focus

It's very easy to lose track of the changes we are trying to achieve. Setting SMART goals is by far the surest way to keep our students focused. And, don't forget to celebrate with your students whenever they achieve their goals.

Practice makes perfect

To get better at something, we need to practise. Encourage your students to come up with a list of familiar skills or processes that need to be practised before being mastered. Then, shift their attention to the fact that practice is the only way to get better at them.

Ask for help

We have all had students who refuse to ask for help even when they're struggling, and seen the effect it has in slowing their progress down. So, it's important to create connections and encourage our students to ask for help at the right time. It will make them faster learners.

Reflect on progress

Our students often live in the moment, and are just focused on the outcomes of whatever they're doing. So, help them build a habit of reflection by encouraging them to think about what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

These are some tips to help our students change the way they face challenges. It's our job to create a safe environment where our students strive and reach their full potential. A growth-minded teacher expects full effort and nothing more.

For a great introduction to some of Carol Dweck's seminal work on growth mindset, we recommend her [original TED talk on the subject](#).



Eduardo Gonzalez

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Save the **Date**

Here are 7 events or courses for teachers taking place in the coming months. Click an event to find out more!

7
JUN

The Sailboat Metaphor:
A Tool for Self-Reflection



8
JUN

Observations and Feedback
to grow teacher practice



16
JUN

Beating Teacher Burnout:
Using the Summer to Recharge



21
JUN

Flexible Learning Pathways
in Higher Education:
A UNESCO Project



28
JUN

Teaching with Confidence



29
JUN

Being a Mindful Listener



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TeachBetter:
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If you would like your event to be featured in next term's newsletter, contact mary@ventureeducation.org



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