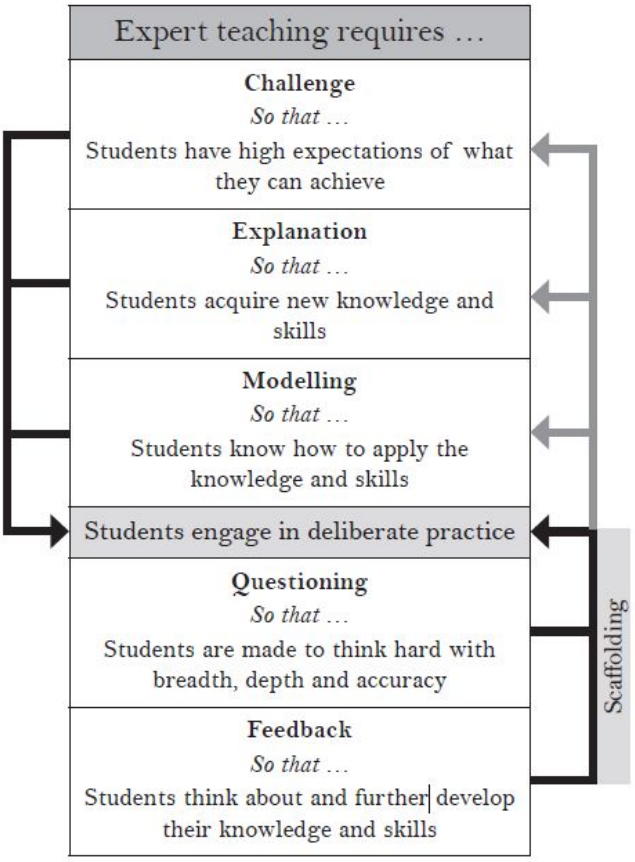
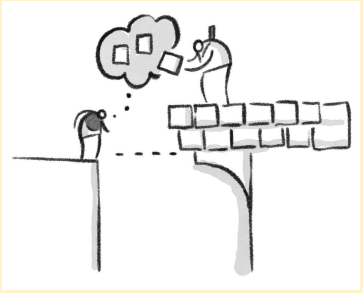
Making every *distance* lesson count

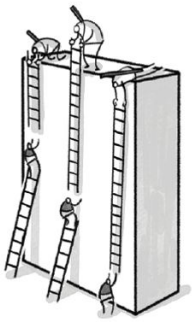




At Durrington we use the 6 principles above to shape our teaching. The COVID-19 outbreak has changed the way we have to teach. We have all had to adapt to distance teaching in recent weeks and this will become our normal for the foreseeable future. So how can these six evidence informed principles be applied to distance teaching, so we can make sure our distance teaching is as effective as it can be?

This booklet will explore how we can do this.

Some General Tips



Before we start thinking about the six principles, here are some general tips to consider to support your distance teaching:

- Try to create a **warm and supportive atmosphere** in your Google Classroom, as you would your physical classroom. For example, start the lesson with a message on your stream, asking how students are, is everybody ready to work? Etc.
- Establish **good habits** in your Google Classroom e.g. start off with a retrieval quiz, questions about prior knowledge, an introductory video etc.
- **Keep it simple** - learning new material is hard enough when students have their teachers on tap. It's really hard when they don't, so avoid trying to cover too much in one lesson and make sure instructions are very clear. This is something we will all need to keep under review as we work through what can realistically be achieved in an online lesson.
- **Be realistic** - this period of distance teaching is likely to last for a while, so don't start with heavily resourced lessons that you won't be able to sustain.
- Remember to **motivate students by praising them for their efforts** in rising to the challenge of this new way of working, but also as you would normally for specific aspects of their work.
- Be mindful of **disadvantaged students**. They may well have limited resources, a lack of parental support and not a great space to work in. Furthermore, they will probably have knowledge gaps and literacy challenges to contend with. See here for more on this.

We hope it helps.

The Durrington Research School Team

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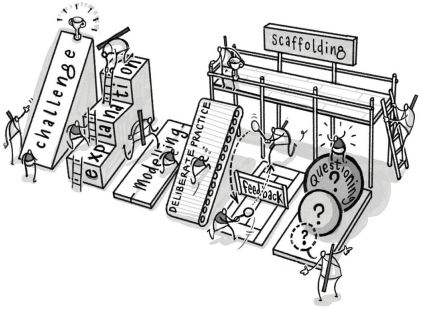
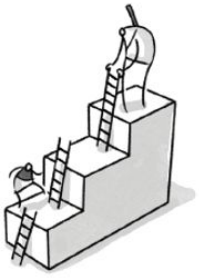


Challenge

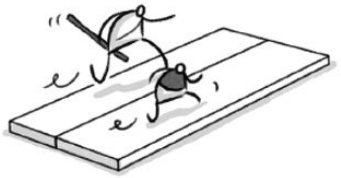
- As we all get to grips with setting work on Google Classrooms, the temptation is to focus solely on the task. In the same way that we do with lessons normally, we need to be considering whether or not the task is causing thinking - because it needs to be. So rather than just planning activities to be keeping them busy, consider if the activities will cause thinking.
- A well-designed task will go into depth but still rely on only one key concept. This is useful when we are not teaching a normal lesson in person - as long as the key concept they are studying is clear, questions can increase gradually in challenge and require students to use other related knowledge.
- In the same way as you would in a classroom lesson, use the stream to ask students more challenging questions on the lesson content, to ensure higher attaining students are being challenged.
- When students ask questions on the stream about the work, avoid just giving them the answer. Prompt them to think about it, perhaps through sharing a link to a page that contains the answer for them to find.
- Support students with challenging tier 2 and 3 vocabulary, by attaching the relevant knowledge organiser to the assignment you are setting.
- It might be worth re-thinking your curriculum. If there are particularly challenging topics due to be taught in the forthcoming summer term, it might be better to move these to the autumn term and replace them with less challenging topics that were due to be covered in the autumn term.
- Sharing examples of excellent work to raise the expectation of what students could achieve is really important in this online world. You can do this by collating pictures of excellent student work and after each lesson, posting them as an excellence gallery on the class stream. This can also be done collaborative by subject teams and shared weekly. See the example from art below:

Explanation



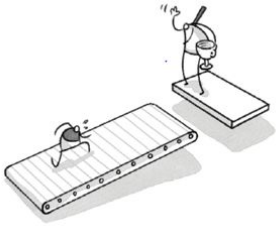
- Teachers spend a great deal of their time at the whiteboard, explaining something that is on the screen, often from a powerpoint. This can still be done with distance teaching, using software such as 'Loom'. Loom allows you to record a video with a powerpoint or something else that is on your computer screen and a small 'bubble' with you in it, talking it through. This blog explains it in more detail.
- This supports the idea of 'dual coding' i.e. we learn best if information is delivered through words and visuals. As you would normally though, just make sure that your resources e.g. slides, are not too cluttered, as this will put too much load on the working memory.
- Remember we learn new knowledge by making links to what we already know. This is why we as teachers tend to ask questions to ascertain their prior knowledge at the start of the lesson. You could do this by setting a quiz on Google Forms for students to do before the lesson, or record a short video for students to watch recapping the prior knowledge, again for them to watch before the lesson.
- Another approach to support activating their prior knowledge before the lesson is to ask them to create a mindmap on the topic you are going to study and submit this before the lesson. This will help to inform your lesson planning.
- You don't have to do the explaining! There are lots of videos on 'YouTube' of other teachers explaining key ideas - just make sure you check through them beforehand. TEDTalks and GCSE Bitesize might also be a source of useful videos.
- Be crystal clear with your task instructions. In a normal lesson you will be able to judge if students are confused by your instructions. You won't get this 'in the moment' feedback with distance teaching, so try to be as clear as possible.
- When students are interacting with content online, they will be assimilating this into their own schema (network of knowledge in their long term memory) on their own, without our intervention. It's easy to see how misconceptions can be embedded here. There are some strategies to help with this e.g. ask students to write a summary paragraph explaining the ides in their own words; or they could upload a podcast of themselves explaining the idea; another alternative is to produce a mindmap of the key ideas. Teachers can scan these offerings from students and quickly identify any emerging misconceptions and use these for whole class feedback at the start of the next lesson.

Modelling



- In the same way that software such as ‘Loom’ can be really useful for explaining new ideas, it can also be used for modelling. Similarly you could create a simple ‘You Tube’ video of you modelling a key idea. Here a science teacher, doing just this to model to his students how to balance chemical equations.
- This could be used to develop the idea of ‘I, We, You’ modelling. A video like this can be used for the ‘I’ stage. Students could then be set a similar task to do on Google Classroom’ and be able to ask you questions in the stream - the ‘we’ stage. They can then do some similar tasks independently for the ‘You’ stage.
- Subject areas should consider the metacognitive processes required to complete tasks and how this will be shared with students. Videos that talk through the steps of a task and labelled model examples can both be created and added to task assignments.
- Share examples of good work that students have completed on Google Classroom and ask students to identify and discuss why it is so good. This could also be done with a pre-prepared piece of not so good work, and ask students to discuss how it could be improved.
- Ask a question that requires a staged solution. One student at a time can then give each of the ‘next steps’ in the solution in the stream, so you get a collective solution modelled by a range of students.

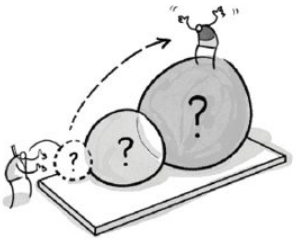
Practice



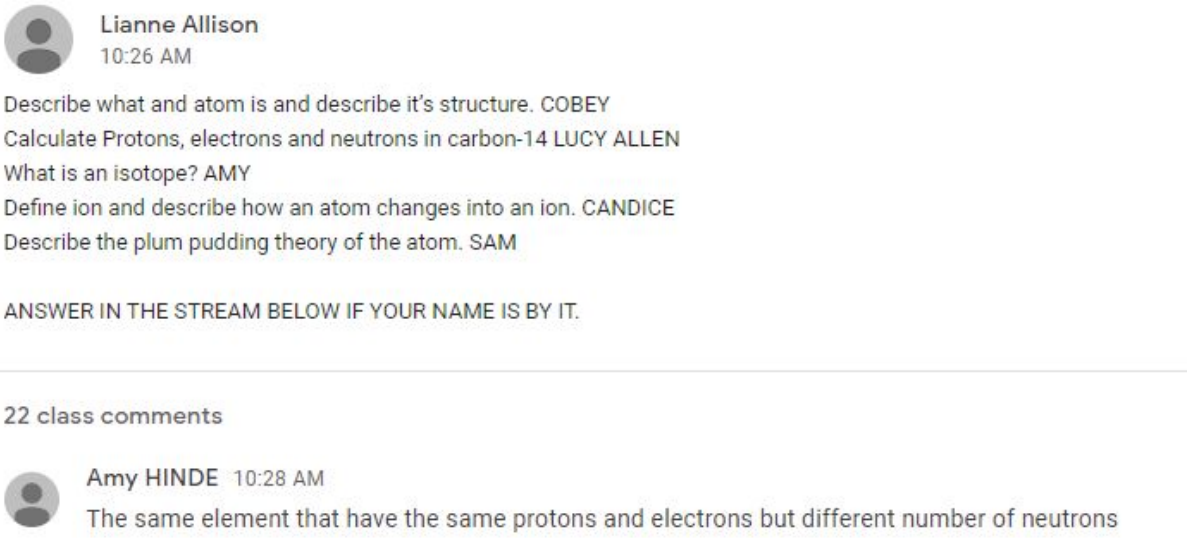
- Many of us start our lessons with a retrieval quiz, because we know how important retrieval practice is to the learning process. Google Forms are a great way to do this and they can be added directly from Google Classroom. Here’s a video explaining how.
- When creating these quizzes, remembering to include material from last week, last month and last year, so we are also spacing out the practice.
- We know that providing students with a worked example, really helps to reduce cognitive load and supports their practice. This is really important when they are working remotely. So when setting them a task on ‘Google Classroom’ include a worked example for them to use. More on this here.
- Don’t try to do too much and avoid moving on too early. In a normal lesson it’s easy to judge by how students are responding, when to slow down or speed up. You won’t get these obvious cues with distance teaching, so give students plenty of time to practice and engage with new material.
- In a normal classroom lesson, if students get stuck whilst they are practising, they might look in their book or ask their teacher for help to unstick them. Whilst they can still do both of these things using Google Classroom e.g. ask a question through the stream, they might choose not to. Plan for this,

by providing them with resources e.g. a link to a website, that will help to unstick them, on the aspects of the work that you know they are likely to find challenging.
- Don't forget to set tasks that help students to gather together evidence-informed revision materials. For instance, they can create flashcards at home and practise with them.

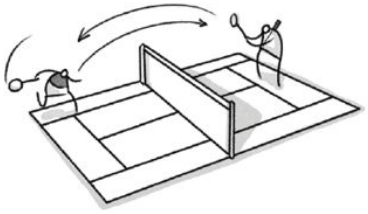
Questioning



- One element of teaching that doesn't need to stop for distance learning is questioning. Some of the subtleties such as pause time and cold calling may be redundant but other elements are still worth considering.
- Elaborative questions are an excellent form of formative assessment and a tool for deepening learning. Open questions can be posed on the Stream to elicit answers from multiple students. Alternatively the private comment section of the Classwork tab can be used to probe students further on any work they submit.
- Also, this may be an opportunity to bring some dialogic teaching into your practice. The stream can be used to stimulate a debate with the class regarding a previous lesson. This can be done at the start of a new lesson (which would also help with retrieval and strengthening memories). For example: "Morning everyone, thinking back to last lesson, how many people agreed that the Voting Rights Act was more significant than the Civil Rights Act?"
- Remember, if you include simple closed questions in your online lessons to check or embed knowledge, you must also provide the answers. Not necessarily with the questions (as this will undermine retrieval) but certainly by the end of the lesson. Otherwise any incorrect answers may be embedded in the students' long-term memories and will be hard to weed out later.
- Continue to develop students metacognitively by asking students to think about the strategies they used to tackle online tasks and how successful they were.
- Loom videos are great for questioning. So you can record yourself explaining a particular idea, using visuals on a powerpoint or something similar. You can then have a slide on with some questions, ask the students to pause the video and answer the questions. They can then take a photo of their answers and upload them. The problem with them posting answers to questions like this on the stream, is that everyone will see them.
- Cold calling can be used on Google Classroom. Ask some questions on the stream, but tell students to think about it and not answer. Then after a few minutes, repost the questions on the stream, but with student names after each question, who you want to answer in the stream. Example below:

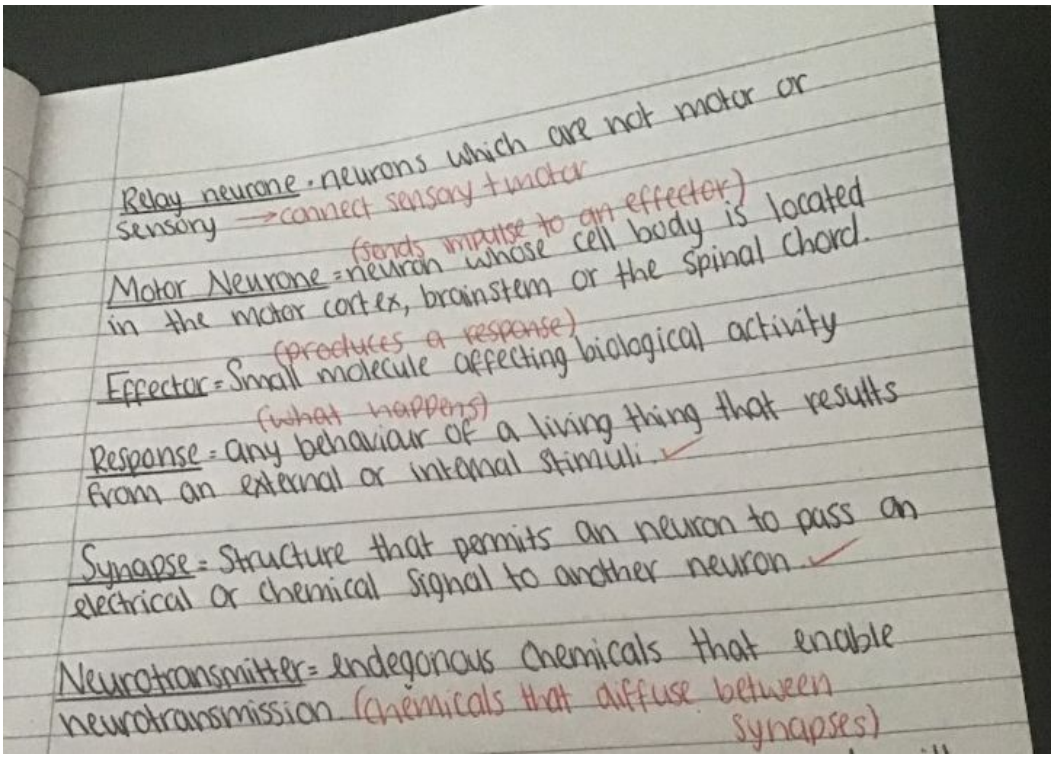


Feedback



- The importance of feedback in terms of closing any learning gaps can never be underestimated, and with distance learning feedback is even more vital in ensuring that misconceptions do not become embedded. However with the reduced ability to observe students as they work and the tendency for them to all submit work simultaneously within the last two minutes of the lesson providing high quality feedback is challenging.
- Google Quizzes can provide a great way of ensuring students build accurate surface knowledge. Quizzes can be set up so that when students submit their answers they are given a total score, and are shown the questions they answered incorrectly with the correct answer highlighted. Quizzes can be set up so that students repeat the quiz but the question and answer order (if using multiple choice) is mixed up. This only really works with one word answer or multiple choice questions.
- As well as using a Google Form at the end of a lesson, you might also want to use one at the midpoint of a lesson to assess how they are doing - as you would in a normal lesson.
- Another useful tool of the Google Quizzes is that the system will automatically inform you what questions were most commonly answered incorrectly - from this you can provide whole class feedback on these general areas of weakness.
- If students are submitting work at the end of the lesson, you are probably best served to take your time and provide feedback on this at the start of your next lesson, Again this could take the form of whole class feedback, where having read the work submitted by students you identify some common areas for development and then model to the class (perhaps using “Loom” - see above) how to improve. This is a really important point. In normal lessons, we don’t mark every individual piece of work. The same principle should be applied for distance teaching, which is why whole class feedback is such a great tool.
- The stream can be used to give students feedback that they can use to correct their work. In the example below, the teacher has set some questions for students to do. Once they have completed

them, the teacher discusses the answers on the stream, students correct/update their work and then upload a photo:



- You can also take and upload photos of excellent examples of student work and post these to your classroom. You can then explain why this piece of work deserves praise and ask students to compare their work to this model of excellence and make necessary changes - this has the added benefit of developing self-regulation within our learners.
- There are also a number of websites which allow you to set quizzes and then will analyse data for you and allow you to give personalised feedback to each student individually, or feed back as a class. Eedi.co.uk is free and uses multiple choice questions from Diagnostic Questions - there are an increasing amount of these available for many subjects.

Further Reading

Remote Learning: Why hasn't it worked before and what can we do to change that? *– really useful blog by Daisy Christodoulou exploring some of the mistakes that are commonly made with remote learning and how to avoid them. Also contains a list of great online learning resources at the end.*

Distance Learning Through the Lense of a Disadvantaged Pupils **-** *some really useful guidance from Marc Rowland.*

Amazing Educational Resources – *list of educational companies who are providing access to free online resources during the Coronavirus crisis.*

47 Ideas: How to Teach Online – *a list of resources for pupils, video sharing software for teachers and resources for teachers from Ross McGill.*

Setting work for a long haul shut-down – Tom Sherrington gives some typically great advice about distance teaching.

Learning in the time of Corona Virus: Planning distance schooling – *blog by Harry Fletcher-Wood exploring some of the issues around distance schooling and how we can plan for them.*

Remote Learning Advice from Eva Moskowitz – *an American CEO describes how their schools are preparing for the CV19 pandemic.*

Using Digital Technology to Improve Learning – *the EEF Guidance Report summarising the research evidence on digital learning.*

With Schools Closed: Part One **and** **With Schools Closed: Part Two** – *two very comprehensive blogs by Mark Anderson*

Teaching in the Time of COVID – *a blog containing lots of useful links by Robin Macpherson.*

Online Teaching & Learning Resources – *another collection of useful links from The Learning Scientists.*