



# Watford Grammar School for Boys

## Teaching & Learning Newsletter

### Spring Term 2021



#### Teaching and Learning as we Engage in Remote Learning Again

Following last term's newsletter, I wanted to take this opportunity to update and inform the wider school community how WBGS has continued the development of teaching and learning ideas. With the recent announcement of a further period of remote education the links between students, parents and teachers are more important than ever to encourage efficient and successful learning.

We understand there is significant uncertainty at the moment with regards to how grades will be awarded to those boys in the current year 11 and upper sixth and this will, no doubt, be a test of resilience for many boys. While we will avoid speculating on how grades will be assigned until the Government releases further guidance, there are a myriad of reasons to engage in education and attempt to develop further as a student besides preparing for exams and assessments. In addition to the enjoyment of learning, promotion of wellbeing is also a vital benefit of education.

One of the major reasons cited for keeping schools open up to this point has been the beneficial effect of learning upon pupils' wellbeing. Learning new information is something which is intrinsically rewarding for people and participating in education also gives opportunities to connect with others and gain further knowledge to take notice of the world around them. Indeed, during the last lockdown, many members of the WBGS community took additional opportunities to engage in further learning in addition to their academic studies - gaining new skills, languages and knowledge whilst giving themselves a clear sense of purpose and enjoyment.



We all hope for it to be safe to return to School and carry on with face-to-face learning as soon as possible however, there are things we can share in order to help make remote learning a more beneficial experience for all. Therefore, to help us move forwards as a learning community, I would like to share with you: an outline of teaching and learning developments which took place during INSET time for staff and give an overview of a couple more teaching and learning ideas which can be used to help the boys make the most of their time during remote learning.

#### **Teaching & Learning During INSET Time**

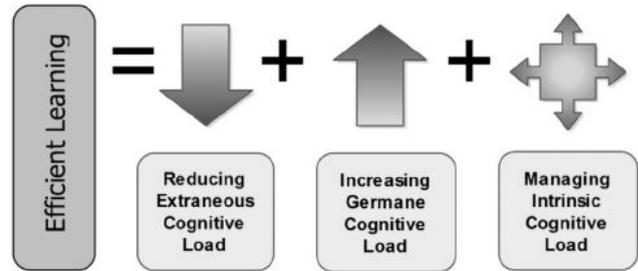
During this December's INSET day the WBGS staff took part in presentations and discussions of teaching and learning ideas and best practice with a focus on how these could be implemented within teaching departments and individual lessons. Ideas discussed included: Cornell Notes, Retrieval Practice, Effective Questioning, Cognitive Load Theory and Dual Coding. Many staff also took the opportunity to gain more knowledge of remote teaching platforms and practice using systems to be put in place, were we to return to remote learning - a situation we now find ourselves in this half-term. While the approaches taken to remote teaching and learning will naturally vary from teacher to teacher and from department to department, the opportunities to reflect upon different ideas and best practice from previous remote learning leaves us in a strong position to make sure our provision is as effective as possible over the next few weeks.

## Cognitive Load Theory

One key strategy a number of teachers are using is Cognitive Load Theory - I have included information on this idea as it may also inform how studying at home is approached. Cognitive Load Theory explains how learning can be shaped to maximise the rate at which information is transferred from short-term into long-term memory.

Intrinsic cognitive load is determined by the nature of the learning taking place but can be modified by: breaking down learning into manageable chunks to avoid overwhelming short-term memory.

Germane cognitive load can be increased by regularly recapping prior learning (eg. using retrieval practice) and by elaborating on knowledge - linking together different concepts.



Reducing extraneous cognitive load is where the most difference can be made during remote learning. Removing distractions such as mobile phones/ messaging app notifications and setting up a dedicated space for learning (however small) which is free of distractions greatly helps knowledge transfer into long-term memory.

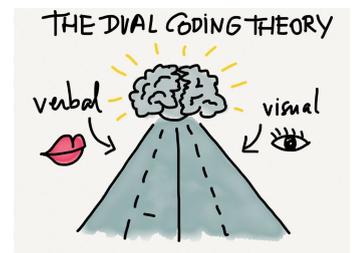
Multi-tasking is also something to be avoided wherever possible as it almost always means splitting attention and not doing any of the tasks to the best of your ability.

Here is a fantastic resource on the basics of Cognitive Load Theory from InnerDrive, who the School has worked with extensively over the last year, to show more on the idea and how it can be used to improve learning.

<https://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/cognitive-load-theory-basics>

## Dual Coding

This technique involves using two sources of information presented side-by-side in order to improve the transfer of knowledge from short-term to long-term memory. This can be used by boys at home if they produce revision resources which feature helpful diagrams or pictures linked to the information they are trying to learn. Taking this kind of approach has been shown by educational research to be twice as effective as trying to learn information without the diagrams or pictures. Resources most suited to Dual Coding include: flashcards, timelines, flow-charts etc...



InnerDrive guide to Dual Coding here: <https://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/revision-an-introduction-to-dual-coding>

We would like to thank you very much for taking the time to read this newsletter and would, again, like to thank you for any support you are giving your son to keep him focussed and engaging in remote learning. Please do look out for more ideas for how we can work together to support your son's learning in the Summer Term teaching and learning newsletter.

Yours Sincerely

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