

NQT Tip of the Week

Publish Date w/c	Teaching & Learning Tip (NQT)
16/12/13	Festive Learning Fun. Keeping students working in the last week of term can be challenging. This can be a good opportunity to try out competitive games with a learning outcome, before rolling them out to all your classes after the holidays. End of topic quizzes based on classic TV formats work a treat! Why not try your own version of <i>Blankety Blank</i> this week?
06/01/14	New Year's Resolution. In your first lesson with each class, get your students to think of a short-, medium- and long-term goal for their learning this year in your subject and to express them as written SMART targets on the cover of their exercise books. Revisit them regularly to check progress and review.
13/01/14	Postage Stamp Plenary. At the end of the lesson, get students to summarise their learning in the form of a postage stamp in their books. The 'stamp' shape must contain one image, one number or statistic and one word that sum up their learning from the lesson.
20/01/14	Picture This. Use a striking image as a way into a new topic. Students should be first encouraged to identify what the picture definitely reveals, followed by what it infers, and finally come up with a list of unanswered questions. The starter can be a powerful springboard for learning and the students take centre stage.
27/01/14	Adopt a Critical Friend. It's good to bounce ideas around sometimes or seek advice from a trusted colleague. Why not go for a coffee after work this week with a trusted colleague and aim to come up with one new teaching idea to try in the classroom, or work together to find one solution to a problem you might have with a particular student or class. Aim to meet once every half term.
03/02/14	Three Before Me. There are few things more frustrating than setting students off on a task to suddenly have hands in the air with students wanting to ask all sorts of questions they could probably find the answers to without asking you. Establish the routine of students checking in their notes, then looking in a reference book or text book and finally asking a class mate before asking you. Not only will this free you up to monitor learning and prepare the next phase, it will make students more independent and supportive of each other, too.
10/02/14	Thinking Time. When there is absolute silence in the classroom, we tend to panic. Don't! Ask questions and allow students time to think aloud with their friends or quietly to themselves before volunteering answers. When they do feedback, allow several responses, as rarely will one student have all the detail.
24/02/14	Balloon Game. Students each take on the persona of a famous personality and have to defend their right to stay on an overloaded hot air balloon. Encourage argument and debate and take a vote on who makes the most convincing arguments and deserves to stay safely on the balloon.
03/03/14	Thunks. Thunks are open questions which encourage students to debate, discuss and also consider their own values and beliefs. They are great to have as fillers, starters and essay titles! E.g. 'If it's right to tell the truth and wrong to hurt another person, is it still right to tell the truth if, in doing so, the outcome causes someone to get physically injured?'
10/03/14	Personalise to Motivate. Getting students motivated can be difficult at times. Letting them see a personal side to you in relation to your subject can sometimes spark renewed enthusiasm and interest in your subject. Use personal anecdotes and realia to add surprise, mystery and excitement to a lesson.

17/03/14	Speed Dating. Get students to sit opposite each other in pairs. Give them a topic or a set of questions (or better still, let them make up their own questions) to discuss in a limited time and then move on to a new partner. This activity is great for reinforcing, building confidence, consolidating and revising learning.
24/03/14	Mix and Match. Sometimes it can be fun to mix things up from the start of the lesson. Consider giving students a card when they arrive. Each card has a picture or a word on it and, like matching pairs, they have to find someone with the matching word / picture, who becomes their partner for part of the lesson.
31/03/14	Would you Rather ...? This old party game favourite is enjoyable and stimulates genuine debate in class between students. It encourages reasoning, justifying as well as explaining and giving opinions. E.g. Would humans learn more from flying to the edges of the Solar System or diving to the depths of the oceans?
21/04/14	Rapid and Sustained Progress. This is the mantra of the moment in teaching. Demonstrating it can be hard. Show rapid progress with regular mini-plenaries and use Bloom's taxonomy to deepen questioning as the lesson develops. Sustained progress over time can be shown through written dialogues with students in their books in response to work. Use the walls of the classroom to display examples of progress over a series of lessons in the form of a Route Map of their learning.
28/04/14	Get Noticed. By now, you are probably settled into the routine of work as an NQT. It's good to take stock of how far you've come and start to think ahead to where you want to be in two or three years' time. Talk with your line manager or another senior teacher about extra responsibilities you could take on. Remember, not everything has to be seen in monetary terms. Volunteering to do a small project for your department or the school will get you noticed and may contribute to moving your career forward in the future.
05/05/14	Coping with a Hard Class. Almost every teacher has a class that is more challenging than others they teach. Working together with a colleague on addressing issues and finding solutions is the key. If a lesson has gone badly, your instinct may be to go to the next lesson with that class all guns blazing. It's important to keep calm, look at what caused the problem and put measures in place to address that issue first. Begin each new lesson as a fresh start.
12/05/14	Washing Line Arguments. Put two extreme views at either end of a washing line across the front of your classroom. Students stand somewhere along the line in a continuum depending on their opinion, talking to each other to gauge where their view sits. Get the most extreme view on the right-hand side to sit with the person in the middle, the next most extreme view on the right-hand side with the next person to the right of the middle, and so on, until everyone is matched up. The pairs can then discuss and debate their views and try to come to a consensus of opinion.
19/05/14	At the Doctor's. As exams draw closer, it is good to build in some revision sessions in class or at lunchtime. Have students list topics or concepts they are very confident with and those areas they still struggle with, and then match strengths to needs, so that students can help each other. Common issues can be picked up and addressed by you with the whole class.
02/06/14	Meaningful Exam Analysis. When you return exams and test papers to students, plan your lesson around effective feedback and target setting. Get students to work together with the success criteria and mark schemes and find examples of excellent work and support each other to improve unsatisfactory responses to

	questions. Students can present their findings in small groups and produce a Top Tips sheet for next year's cohort, as well as set their own targets.
09/06/14	Student-centred. Who is most exhausted at the end of your lessons? If that's you, chances are your lessons are too teacher-centred. When you next plan a lesson and you think of a way to deliver new learning or lead a transition moment, stop and think of a way of making that element of the lesson student-led instead. The learning experience for students will be more powerful and long-lasting if they are in the driving seat and have to learn actively.
16/06/14	Marking, marking, marking! All teachers have complained about marking at some time or another. Try to vary your approach to make it more interesting. For example, focus on only looking for positive things sometimes, or provide students with a mark scheme and give them a chance to mark their own work first, or even allow students an element of choice over what and how they do their homework so you don't have to mark 30 almost identical pieces.
23/06/14	Set up a Careers Corner. As Year 12 return to normal lessons after their AS exams, it can be an opportune time to promote careers and courses that link well with your subject. Make a display of resources, links to jobs, famous people in your subject's field, etc., for students to view and ask questions about as they start to think about the next phase of their life.
30/06/14	Dominos. Make a set of dominos students have to connect together when you need to introduce or revise a lot of new terms and definitions. As a starter, students can use it to work out meanings from prior knowledge – saving you teaching time later. As a revision tool, students can remind themselves of prior learning and discover for themselves misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge.
07/07/14	Know Your Students. You will soon find out the names of the students you will be teaching in September. When you do, do some background homework. Find out all you can about your students, their academic backgrounds, target grades, behaviour record, family circumstances, attitude to school and others, etc. That will help you devise seating plans and plan appropriately differentiated lessons, as well as hopefully avoid you making erroneous assumptions in the first lesson.
14/07/14	Use the Whole School. Plan challenging and stimulating lessons in different parts of the school. How often have you taken a class to the library if you don't teach English? How often do your classes go outside if you're not a PE teacher? How often do you use the hall as a learning space? Find out the options in your school and how you could exploit new opportunities for different ways of learning.
21/07/14	Get Ahead. Get your first week's planning done for September now and get all your books organised and your desk tidied. You will relax much more in the summer, if you can get a little ahead of the game now.
01/09/14	Establish Routines. Whether you're starting out in the profession or you're an experienced teacher, coming back to work after the long summer break can be daunting. We all ask ourselves if we've still got what it takes to teach after a few weeks away from school. Students also need reminding of why they're at school. The key things to do in your first lesson, therefore, are to set clear expectations, be fair and, most importantly of all, be consistent in your approach to behaviour and managing high expectations.
08/09/14	Post-its. Post-it notes are useful, quick and easy ways of getting feedback from the whole class at the end of a lesson. Get students to summarise their learning in one sentence, or ask a question about something they didn't understand, or even make a suggestion about something they'd like to learn more about in a

	future lesson. Use the feedback in your forward planning.
15/09/14	Classrooms are Resources. The classroom can be your best resource. Use every space to stimulate learning, display work, provide self-help hints, showcase students' progress over time, provide discussion material, etc.
22/09/14	Diamond Nine. A useful technique for ranking ideas, opinions or factors in order of relevance, importance or significance. There are nine statements in all to be ranked with one at the top, then two side by side, then three, then two, followed by one at the bottom. Students work in pairs and feedback to the class by stating, explaining and justifying their decisions, with other students posing questions and offering alternatives.
29/09/14	Scaffolding. The best quality work will come from students who have the right scaffolding for the task at hand. Plan carefully for the support students will need to achieve what you set out for them and differentiate according to need. Scaffolding could be the text books and reference works available to help students, pictures and authentic materials, a framework for writing, checklists for a project, stepping stones for breaking down the stages of a complicated task, or even the particular grouping or pairing of students.
06/10/14	You're Not Alone. The honeymoon period is probably starting to wear off now as the nights draw in and flu starts to make the rounds. If things start to go wrong and you begin to feel stressed or under too much pressure, talk to your line manager or mentor at school. They will be able to coach you through this time and help you get back on your feet before any problems get worse. It's not shameful to seek help and advice.
13/10/14	Meet the Parents. Speaking to parents for the first time on your own can be daunting. Remember, no matter what you think of your students, they are someone else's children. Have all your facts ready and have concrete examples and evidence to show. Parents want to know how well their child is progressing and how their son / daughter can improve. They will also want to suss you out. Be smart, professional and to the point. Parents will usually be your biggest ally.
20/10/14	"I don't get on with him or her." You will rarely get on with everyone all of the time, especially in a busy, fast-paced and ever-changing environment like a school. Remember you can't change other people, but you can have some influence over how they relate to you and you have control over your responses to their behaviour. Learn to be flexible and empathetic. Colleagues are not purposely out to make your life miserable. Focus on what really matters – the students you teach! Try to resolve any conflicts face to face, privately and calmly. Seek advice from a senior colleague. Oh, and avoid gossip – it only makes things worse.