



WELLINGTON
COLLEGE

The Bridge

**Pioneering education
to serve and help shape
a better world.**

Newsletter
April 2024

Welcome to The Bridge

In this issue we focus on the Great Teaching Toolkit (GTT) and the experiences with the GTT across the Wellington Family of Schools

What is the Great Teaching Toolkit?

The GTT is an online resource and platform, developed by Evidence Based Education, and extremely highly regarded in the sector, that offers evidence-based strategies and techniques for teachers to enhance their classroom teaching and student outcomes in an individualised way.

Why are we using it?

For many reasons, but these three are to the fore:

1. It is based on the most robust and real evaluation of evidence, and pragmatic application to practice, that the sector has available – The GTT Evidence Review
 - a) Nuanced understanding of provenance, validity, significance and extent of transferability of the research
 - b) No cherry-picking or confirmation bias.
 - c) No extrapolation of weak correlations into strong causations.
2. It is based on ZERO judgement. Feeling judged leads to defensiveness, and a much decreased chance that someone can be authentic in seeking improvement.
3. It requires teachers to have agency and informed choice over what will be their focus.

In addition, Evidence Based Education has a very strong alignment with Wellington values:

Respect and Kindness – The GTT is founded on zero judgement, but instead on a belief that all teachers can get better, and, as mentioned above, one very good reason for this is to improve the chance of genuine engagement. In addition, respecting professional autonomy, individual perspectives and needs, is a foundation of belonging in a school community.

Courage – The GTT requires teachers to have the courage to ask for and relish feedback, and to welcome learning and growth.

Integrity – The GTT is based on the most balanced, realistic and authoritative review of the evidence about what works in teaching. Evidence Based Education published the GTT Evidence Review in 2020 to widespread positive reaction. The GTT therefore entirely avoids the pitfalls of cherry-picking research to suit a particular ideology or methodology.

Responsibility – Wellington enjoys a reputation for being one of the very best schools, a reputation shared by each Wellington family school in region. Wellington's purpose of Pioneering education to serve and help shape a better world creates an imperative for all Wellington teachers to take responsibility to be the best that they can be, and a responsibility for Wellington to do something good for them.





Experiences of the GTT from around the Wellington Family

“Not only does the GTT focus on developing the kind of teaching that really makes a difference to student learning; it also applies the same methodology to the design and delivery of its own courses and development cycles” **(Andrew MacCarthy, Wellington College International School Bangkok)**

“It has been instrumental in guiding the culture around teaching and learning at WCIP. All of our Senior School teachers have completed the Foundation Course along with one additional course and have now moved on to the 'practice & integrate' part of the cycle. Several teachers will be working with the TWC Economics department on sharing best practice in an element. All lesson observations and reflections take place through the lens of the GTT elements. 90% of formal PD has drawn on evidence presented in the GTT.” **(Julia Sutcliffe, Wellington College International Pune)**

“The GTT is a supportive platform that allows teachers to engage in self improvement through a guided programme. It has been founded on empirical research which has become the foundation for its model for great teaching. Based on continual self-improvement, it stands by an attitude of "give it a go" and rewards the effort of trying new strategies.” **(Chris Jenkins, Wellington College International School Bangkok)**

“Through understanding more about both cognitive load and retrieval, I realised how I sometimes unnecessarily overload students, sometimes I also split their attention, and thus I changed both how I introduce any topic, and what prior knowledge I want to activate. I feel like I am in a much better place to critique my own teaching”. **(Paul McCraw, Wellington College International School Bangkok)**





The GTT has provided food for thought for our teachers and leaders and made us consider the way we approach teaching and learning. Working in an international bilingual context, with educators coming from all around the world, the GTT will hopefully help us bring coherence to our approaches in the classroom. It is non-prescriptive, teacher-led, research based and rooted in common sense while being easy to use for a busy teacher. **(Lana Kulas, Huili School Shanghai)**

“One of the most positive aspects of being a Wellington teacher, apart from the students, is their approach to teaching itself and professional

development. What few individuals outside of Education realize is how radically teaching has changed over the past few decades. With ongoing research and contributions from the fields of Psychology and Neuroscience great teachers are increasingly made and not born. This lies at the heart of the GTT: we know what works, we can even say why it works, and now we need to help teachers put that body of knowledge into practice.

This seems straightforward, but as any teacher will tell you it is not. What makes the GTT special is the approach is individualized making it genuinely impactful on practice. For me, the ability to choose when I engaged with the topic made a difference. There is also a level of accountability built into the program with questions to help recall past units. While teachers are more than used to dishing out quizzes, it is nice to also be on the receiving end for once to genuinely maintain the techniques being taught.

Most importantly for me was not the course itself but the follow-up. The course itself is actually only an introduction. Teachers are then expected to implement the techniques taught including research, a clear implementation process, goal setting, and reflection on any changes including evidence of the change. Besides bringing a higher level of self-accountability, the research and implementation brought more change to my practice than the online lessons themselves. In my last unit, I looked at Maximising opportunity to learn with a focus on setting clear rules. I chose to implement this by looking at the rules for our Band room. The research led me to look at best practice globally and whole new aspects such as health and safety, professional equipment use guidelines, stagecraft, union practices, and advice from colleagues came into play. The result was not just a poster on the wall but a set of training guidelines for anyone wishing to use the equipment as well as safety audit tools for Performing Arts events.

As the name implies, professional development should be just that: development. It is more than just reviewing what trained teachers already know or, even worse, sitting through a presentation never to be recalled again. It should be a way for an instructor to grow as a practitioner and as an individual. So, in the end, the GTT is doing for teachers what we aim to do with our students. What could possibly be a better goal?” **(Olav Hekala, Head of Music, Wellington College International Pune)**

Reflections from Adam Hicks, Head of Physics at Wellington College



September 2023: I decide to survey my classes from the previous year using the Great Teaching Toolkit (GTT). The results are shown in Figure 1 & Figure 2. Instantly, a striking snapshot of my teaching emerges, pinpointing domains 1.3 (Relevant curriculum tasks) and 3.3 (Managing disruptive behaviour) as focal points.

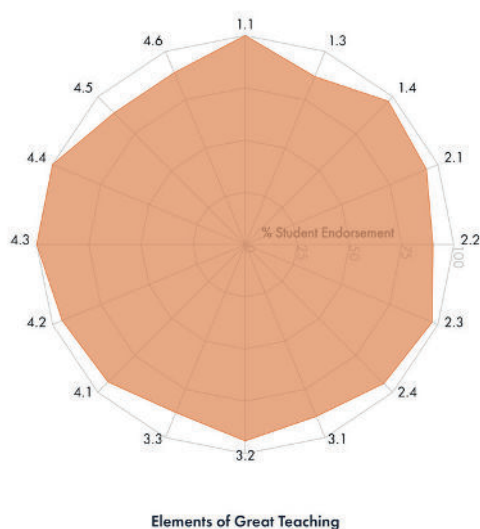


Figure 1: An overview of my teaching

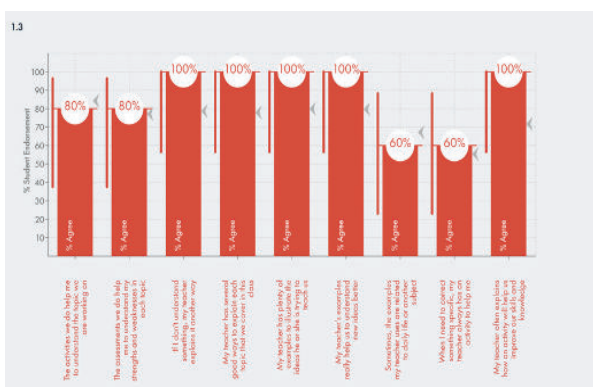


Figure 2: Drilling down into one particular element:
Relevant Curriculum Tasks

The GTT is an online platform that starts with essentially two propositions. Firstly, it challenges the notion that we, as educators, are fully aware of our strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, it acknowledges the diverse needs among teachers in every staff room, highlighting the need for targeted development.

The tool operates through ‘developmental cycles,’ each lasting approximately a term. It forces you to spotlight areas for improvement at the cycle’s inception, utilising

surveys, or observation. The survey tool itself is brilliant, being very objective, sidestepping character judgement and drilling down into each domain in detail.

Upon identifying a developmental area, it is time to start on the associated course. The stack of half-finished educational books in my room is quite staggering, as I start with the best intentions before gradually fizzing out. However, with the GTT succinctly presenting insights from meta studies and practically exploring their classroom applications, my motivation has remained.

Once the learning is done it is time to formulate a plan before implementing change in the classroom. This naturally leads to another round of surveys, not only to gauge development, but also to spotlight the next area of focus.

Just as we never expect a student to master a skill after a single exposure, the same holds true for teacher training, a pitfall we often succumb to with one-off inset sessions or day courses. For me, the biggest benefit of the GTT lies in its protracted nature, leading to enduring, positive change.

Worth a read:

[Great Teaching Toolkit Research by Mike Downes](#)

[Blog by Haili Hughes, Director of Education at Iris Connect](#) about how High Quality CPD can help schools overcome diverse challenges when it is adaptive, responsive and part of the culture

[The Current State of Professional Development for Teachers \(Teacher Tapp report, January 2024\)](#)

This is a robust piece of research with a large enough and current sample, to enable us to shape what The Bridge offers to teachers both here at Wellington and much further beyond.

Summary: The impact of teachers on their students’ academic progress varies widely, signalling the need for effective professional development. Currently, however, INSET often neglects classroom practice, focussing instead on administrative matters. Teachers seek domain-specific, directly applicable CPD with autonomy in selection. They desire flexibility, favouring online CPD while valuing social interaction in some sessions, especially for niche subjects.

Comment: This affirms both the purpose and practical application of the GTT, as well as The Bridge strategy.

Report and reflections: FOBISIA CPD Leaders Conference 2024 – Iain Henderson



I was fortunate enough to be asked to present the final session in the main auditorium at FOBISIA, on “The future of CPD”. The Federation of British International Schools in Asia has 96 member schools spread across 19 countries in Asia.

The conference was hosted by the British International School of Phuket, and thanks should go to their team for the excellence of the organisation and the way in which all felt welcomed. Likewise, the quality of both speakers and presentations was very high, and the overwhelming feeling was one of great optimism and confidence that the professional development of hundreds of teachers and the education of thousands of young people across the region are in great hands.

The theme of my presentation was to tie together some of the ideas coming from both this conference and other cutting-edge thinking in the sector. It also gave a good opportunity to explain a little about what The Bridge will do, in conjunction with the Festivals of Education, and how these will be exceptionally useful resources for FOBISIA member schools.

Some of the challenges currently faced in our profession include:

- Recruitment and Retention
- Current state of CPD with its dominance by compliance and statutory
- QA and judgement
- Tyranny of metrics
- Instrumental accountability
- Confirmation bias in quoting research and the deep perils of the meta-study
- Institutional isomorphism and the prioritisation of routine or uniformity over adaptive professionalism
- Transactional not transformative
- Territorial and adversarial stances
- Need to meet teachers where they are
- Lethal mutations – eg “do nows”



I highlighted some key areas that teachers need or are asking for (see the Teacher Tapp Report for some of the evidence for this)

- Individualised, asynchronous
- Online and self-paced
- Classroom practice and subject knowledge
- Agency
- Coaching and Instructional Coaching
- Leadership
- The potential of AI and some of the directions in which it has already made progress
- Recent developments and products
- The power of connecting at in-person events; networks, partnerships and sharing best practice
- Work with the ones we have
- Humanity: as much as education is changing, it elevates the essential importance of elevating humanity, of relationships and of connection. This is the piece that can never be replaced by any machine, and the piece that teachers and school leaders should ensure that they prepare for.



Upcoming Events

Festivals of Education:

[Shanghai](#) – 20th April 2024 (speaker application closed: ticket sales live)

[Crowthorne](#) – 4th and 5th July 2024 (speaker application closed: ticket sales live. 2000 free tickets available to state schools)

[Washington DC](#) – 28th September 2024 (site should be live now. Speaker application and Early Bird tickets open)

[Bangkok](#) – 9th November 2024 (site to be launched soon. Speaker application and Early Bird tickets)

Courses: The Bridge is pleased to promote these Wellington College Teaching Alliance courses, with many thanks to Lindsay Gowland

[Tough Conversations](#) – Book now for 20th May 2024

[Foundational Coaching](#) – Book now for 3rd and 6th June 2024

[Advanced Coaching](#) – Book now for 7th and 13th June 2024

Wellington College Leadership and Coaching Institute is running the following exciting course, which the Bridge is also pleased to promote:

[Educational leadership for flourishing founded on character](#) – Book now for 13th–14th June 2024

Day 1: Thursday 13th June 2024: Educational leadership for flourishing founded on character – Wellington College, Berkshire, UK.

Day 2: Friday 14th June 2024: Leadership for flourishing founded on character – Worcester College, University of Oxford, UK.

This conference will reimagine leadership as empowering human flourishing. We will build on both the extensive academic research regarding the power of leadership to impact individuals, organizations, societies, and ecosystems; and on the scientific and philosophical work on the nature and drivers of ecosystem-wide flourishing.

We aim to apply recent research to integrate the science and philosophy of flourishing with the art and science of leadership, and take flourishing to scale in organizations globally. Our 2024 conference will focus on the role of and development of character that empowers flourishing at all levels.

We will build upon the work of the Leadership for Flourishing group, which is a part of the Flourishing Network at The Human Flourishing Program, at Harvard University's Institute of Quantitative Social Sciences, the Wellington Leadership & Coaching Institute at The Bridge, Wellington College, and Global Social Leaders.

Conference principles

- The purpose of leadership is ecosystem-wide flourishing
- Anyone can lead because anyone can improve flourishing
- Love is key in both leadership and flourishing for individuals, organizations and societies globally
- Character is foundational to leadership for flourishing



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