

INSIGHT

MAIDEN ERLEGH INSTITUTE



**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
JOURNAL**

**ISSUE #1
MAY 2026**



**MAIDEN ERLEGH
TRUST**



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INTRODUCING INSIGHT...

Welcome to the first issue of *Insight* - the new termly Professional Development Journal for Maiden Erlegh Trust.

Insight is a space to celebrate great practice and share professional learning across our organisation. It's designed for colleagues in all roles, bringing together the experience, expertise, and evidence that shape our work everyday.

Each issue will feature updates from Lead Practitioners, examples of effective practice, and highlights from action-research inquiries and projects. You'll also find short CPD reflections, evidence digests, and recommendations for further reading, courses, and podcasts. Whether you want a quick idea to try tomorrow, or a deeper exploration of a colleague's project, we hope you find something useful.

The journal is designed to grow through your contributions. If you would like to share a piece of practice, reflect on something you've learned, or showcase an innovation, we'd love to include it in future issues - just contact one of us.

Chloe Bateman

Jack Alcock

Laura Hawkins

LEAD PRACTITIONER UPDATE

In this section, we share a short update on our work over the last term, highlighting what we have been focusing on and what is making the biggest impact...

As Lead Practitioners for Research and Innovation, we have the privilege of working closely with schools to support and strengthen professional development.

Alongside our own teaching responsibilities, we spend a lot of time observing lessons across our Hubs, talking with staff, and building a clear picture of what is happening in classrooms day to day. We design and deliver CPD pathways and courses for staff across our organisation - ensuring that all colleagues have access to high-quality opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. We work closely with CPD Leads and Hub Directors - offering coaching to staff in schools and helping to shape a coherent approach to professional learning.



LAURA HAWKINS LEAD PRACTITIONER PRIMARY HUB

The implementation of Master Readers has created a vibrant culture of reading, collaboration, and curiosity among pupils. Through shared reading sessions, targeted group support, and the promotion of high-quality texts, Master Readers is strengthening literacy outcomes and building confidence in both pupils and staff. We are excited to see its continued impact as we move forward on this journey.



JACK ALCOCK LEAD PRACTITIONER SPECIAL & ALTERNATIVE PROVISION HUB

I have been introducing coaching across the three Special and Alternative Provision schools to build effective habits.

I start with a teacher's personal goals and collaborate with them on small changes they can make. It's been much more effective than the traditional high pressure observations and feedback and it's been great to get into lessons and engage teachers in developing their practice!



CHLOE BATEMAN LEAD PRACTITIONER SECONDARY HUB

I have been developing a range of new CPD courses for our teaching and leadership colleagues across all Hubs - we are excited about our expanded offer for next year! I have created a new leadership and management training programme for Support and Administrative Staff and am currently working on a CPD Pathway for Teaching Assistants. I have enjoyed coaching a number of staff in our Secondary Hub and supporting their progress.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

By Laura Hawkins

**Lead Practitioner, Research & Innovation,
Primary Hub**

Our Primary Hub Learning Labs this year have focused on questioning as a key vehicle for driving participation and challenge within our lessons.

In my recent learning walks and lesson observations across the Primary Hub schools, it has been great to observe the development in the use of questioning techniques across a range of lessons.

In particular, teachers have been using structured 'think, pair, share' opportunities to promote 100% engagement. My observations have shown this technique has been valuable in providing thinking time and a chance for students to refine responses before sharing more widely with the whole class.

Purposeful, open-ended questioning has been deployed to challenge students' initial thinking and promote the clear articulation of ideas. These questions have enabled students to think outside the box and make connections across the curriculum.

This structured approach is building confidence, promoting collaboration, and deepening understanding across a range of subject areas. It has been fantastic to see students becoming increasingly confident in expressing their thinking and valuing the contributions of others.



MEI COURSE REVIEWS

Maximising Questioning - Jack Alcock

'Thank you for a very professional, engaging, and positive training session. Your ability to encourage and enthuse people to 'give it a try and rehearse' was great! The dynamic of research and practical engagement was ideal'

- Natasha Bright Thomas, Middle Leader at Maiden Erlegh School

'I have learnt how to improve my existing technique and try new ones. You made the training simple, your input and explanations were easy to understand and apply'

- Aya Yaucat-Guendi, Middle Leader at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge

RESEARCH IN ACTION

What can low-stakes quizzes demonstrate about the retention of key vocabulary?

By Keiran Dabrowski
Modern Foreign Languages Teacher, Theale Green School

As teachers, are we always aware of the level of progress our many students are making? In an endeavour to better understand my students' attainment, I employed low-stakes quizzes at the beginning of each lesson to measure the retention of key vocabulary. I found that low-stakes quizzes provide important information for whole class intervention which further aids student progress. Most importantly, it highlights a truth most educators already know - attendance is an important indicator of attainment possibility.

As suggested by a senior colleague, low-stakes quizzes are easy to implement as they do not interrupt the everyday learning of students. In the case of MFL, they allow us to specifically assess understanding of key vocabulary, such as opinion phrases or common verbs.

The low-stakes quizzes consisted of a combination of new and previously-acquired French vocabulary and phrases.

The key language was determined through looking at student books and understanding where to shift their focus in order for success in upcoming lessons. This primarily consisted of opinion phrases such as "J'aime" and "Je déteste," which can be reused across different themes and units. The low-stakes quizzes assessed the vocabulary post-input to better understand students' progress across a series of lessons.

Having completed a series of low-stakes quizzes with a Year 7 French class and recording their marks, I noticed that when students missed two lessons in a row, their results suffered. This can be observed in the table, where quizzes 3, 4, and 8 followed a break in lessons. I found that for higher-achieving students the low-stakes quizzes were successful in encouraging retention of language - as per Rosenshine's theory of learning in which the language needs to be recycled to strengthen recall for future use. This made it easier for the most-able student to reuse the targeted vocabulary and phrases.

My implementation of low-stakes quizzes demonstrated how they can be a useful tool for understanding and supporting student progress, but also how regular classroom practice and attendance can affect learning outcomes.

Name	Form	Average	Quiz 1		Quiz 2		Quiz 3		Quiz 4		Quiz 5		Quiz 6		Quiz 7		Quiz 8		Quiz 9		Quiz 10		Quiz 11	
			/10	%	/14	%	/22	%	/14	%	/10	%	/10	%	/12	%	/10	%	/10	%	/10	%	/20	%
Student A	2	87%	9	90%	14	100%	17	77%	14	100%	9	90%	10	100%	10	83%	5	50%			8	80%	20	100%
Student B	3	63%	7	70%	14	100%	10	45%	4	29%	10	100%	8	80%	2	17%	6	60%	7	70%	6	60%	12	60%
Student C	5	80%	8	80%	5	36%	12	55%	12	86%	10	100%	10	100%			10	100%	10	100%	10	100%	8	40%
Student D	4	49%	2	20%	11	79%	11	50%	4	29%	5	50%	7	70%	6	50%	4	40%	6	60%	5	50%	8	40%
Student E	4	90%	8	80%	14	100%	20	91%	14	100%	10	100%	10	100%	11	92%	6	60%	9	90%	10	100%	16	80%
Student F	3	55%	7	70%	13	93%	12	55%	10	71%	5	50%	3	30%	8	67%	1	10%	5	50%	6	60%	10	50%
Student G	5	72%	9	90%	14	100%	14	64%	5	36%	8	80%	9	90%	7	58%	5	50%	7	70%	8	80%		
Student H	1	94%	8	80%	14	100%	17	77%			10	100%	10	100%	12	100%	9	90%	10	100%	9	90%	20	100%
Student I	1	64%	7	70%	11	79%	13	59%	7	50%	7	70%	7	70%	6	50%	7	70%	7	70%	6	60%	12	60%
Student J	1	30%	1	10%	12	86%	12	55%			3	30%	1	10%	5	42%	2	20%	3	30%	1	10%	2	10%
Student K	2	47%	3	30%	11	79%	11	50%	3	21%	4	40%	4	40%	5	42%	5	50%	6	60%	6	60%	8	40%
Student L	2	77%			12	86%	16	73%	9	64%	8	80%	8	80%	10	83%	7	70%	9	90%	7	70%	14	70%
Student M	1	72%	9	90%	14	100%	10	45%			8	80%	6	60%	9	75%	8	80%	6	60%	6	60%		
Student N	5	83%	9	90%	14	100%	12	55%	7	50%	10	100%	9	90%	11	92%	7	70%	10	100%	7	70%	20	100%
Student O	5	55%	8	80%	14	100%	7	32%	1	7%														
Student P	5	47%	4	40%	14	100%	10	45%	1	7%	8	80%	5	50%			2	20%	5	50%	6	60%	3	15%
Student Q	3	68%	9	90%			9	41%	1	7%	10	100%	9	90%	11	92%	4	40%	9	90%			13	65%
Student R	1	71%	9	90%	12	86%	16	73%	1	7%	10	100%	8	80%	10	83%	2	20%	9	90%	8	80%	15	75%
Student S	2	80%	9	90%	14	100%	15	68%			10	100%	8	80%	10	83%	5	50%			6	60%	18	90%
Student T	5	82%	9	90%			14	64%	7	50%	10	100%			10	83%	8	80%			9	90%	20	100%
Student U	3	82%	10	100%	14	100%	17	77%	7	50%	8	80%	9	90%	12	100%	7	70%	9	90%	10	100%	10	50%
Student V	5	67%	8	80%	12	86%	11	50%	8	57%	10	100%	6	60%	9	75%	2	20%	8	80%	6	60%	14	70%
Student W	4	88%	10	100%	14	100%	14	64%	7	50%	10	100%	10	100%	12	100%	8	80%	10	100%	7	70%	20	100%
Student X	5	66%	8	80%	14	100%	14	64%	8	57%	7	70%	8	80%			2	20%	6	60%	6	60%	13	65%
		69.7%	7.4	74.3%	12.8	91.2%	13.1	59.5%	6.5	46.4%	8.3	82.6%	7.5	75.0%	8.8	73.3%	5.3	53.0%	7.6	75.5%	7.0	69.5%	13.1	65.7%
				0		16.9%		-31.8%		-13.0%		36.2%		-7.6%		-1.7%		-20.3%		22.5%		-6.0%		-3.8%

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT: RIVER ACADEMY

Steplab - The River Way

By Laura Billingham
Deputy Headteacher, River Academy

For many years now, schools have moved away from the all-important (and quite frankly useless) one-off lesson observations and towards a model of regular learning walks and drop-ins to quality assure and, most importantly, provide developmental feedback to staff about their practice.

There are a number of ways to record this information – paper, Microsoft Forms, Excel spreadsheets; MIS systems have even tried to integrate it into their platforms too. However, none of these systems have allowed CPD Leads to see the full cycle of development: how do you record the improvements that follow? The steps taken to get there? Let's go one step further – how might I link this to learning and guide staff to resources to support their development?

One word: Steplab.

Steplab was developed to solve the problem of scaling high-quality, actionable feedback for teachers, moving beyond manual, paper-based action steps. Its growth came alongside models of instructional coaching, tied in with popular professional development models like that of WalkThrus and Teach Like a Champion.

The result? A one-stop-shop for logging drop-ins; guiding and recording coaching sessions; sharing high quality resources and literature and, in the last 12 months, planning highly effective PD sessions. The system continues to grow!

At River, all staff conduct weekly drop-ins. Logged through Steplab, these are celebrated through 'shout outs' that are seen by all and shared in



Teaching & Learning (T&L) Briefings. Because staff are in others' teaching spaces throughout the week, it is as if I have eyes everywhere – coverage is vast! I am able to see the impact of T&L Briefings, and spot patterns to identify how we best use our T&L Briefing slots to further develop our practice.

I am also able to monitor the coaching cycles taking place: which step staff are focusing on, how they are progressing against this, what kind of feedback they are being given. These steps are personalised – so every member of staff at River has their own specific step to focus on, informed by The River Way (our House Style of teaching) and the drop-ins taking place.

“EVERY MEMBER OF STAFF AT RIVER HAS THEIR OWN SPECIFIC STEP TO FOCUS ON”

In our internal Staff Surveys, we regularly ask 'To what extent do you believe that River is a school which puts T&L at the core of what we do?' Every survey has resulted in a 100% 'strongly agree' response. I am in no doubt that Steplab plays a huge part in this. Linking to the EEF's guidance for effective PD: Steplab allows us to create the mechanisms to support effective PD. It builds knowledge through an extensive library of resources. It motivates staff as they work on their own, personal step to develop their practice. And the process of instructional coaching means that their development is, above all, embedded.



THE DEEP DIVE

How can we make sure students are on the same page as us about feedback?

By Chloe Bateman
Lead Practitioner, Research & Innovation,
Secondary Hub

With examination season upon us, I have been thinking about feedback.

We are very aware of the central role feedback plays in the learning process, but it can sometimes feel like the obstacles to this being done in a way that is consistently effective are hard to overcome.

How many of our students are eager to catch a glimpse at their grade, but their enthusiasm wanes when we begin discussing targets and development areas? How often have students reacted negatively to feedback in a way that impedes their ability to act upon it?

David Carless' investigation into how university students receive feedback highlights that students often find the process as challenging as teachers –

recognising that their emotional responses can make the process of working on their targets and development areas more challenging (2007).

**“RECEIVING
FEEDBACK CAN BE
AN EMOTIVE
EXPERIENCE FOR
STUDENTS”**

This is echoed by Boud who identified that receiving feedback can be an emotive experience for students – especially when their sense of self-worth is tied to external markers of success (1995). Although based on employees receiving feedback in the workplace, West et al.'s neuroscience-based study suggests that the body responds to feedback that the mind perceives as negative in the same way that it responds to physical threats (2019).

So, how can we support students in receiving feedback in the constructive way that it is intended?

1. Provide structured opportunities for students to discuss their perceptions of assessment and feedback at the start of the year and before key assessment points

e.g.,

Discuss the following questions with your partner:

- *Why do teachers ask you to do assessments?*
- *What would happen if you never got any feedback on your work?*
- *How do you feel when the teacher says there is an assessment? Why do you feel this way?*
- *What questions do you have about assessments this year?*

Giving students the time to ponder these questions brings student perceptions (and lots of misconceptions!) into the open before any specific assessment, allowing them to be discussed and challenged in a safe and supportive environment. Revisited regularly, they allow students to see assessment and conversations around assessment as a dialogue – rather than a one way process of them receiving feedback from the teacher.

2. Explain your intentions explicitly when providing feedback

e.g.,

'I have marked your assessments and focused on your spelling, and punctuation, and grammar. I've focused on this because this was a development area that I identified in your last assessment and that we have been working on together over the last few lessons.

I was looking specifically for the correct use of the conditional tense and spellings of key adjectives from this topic. Once you've got your assessment, we will work on two targets so that by the end of this lesson you will be ready for the next topic'



Being clear about your how and why lets students in on the secret and reinforces that the feedback they are receiving is part of a longer, well-planned journey that you are guiding them through, rather than a one-off isolated event.

3. Share examples of how you have responded to feedback

e.g.,

'I had some feedback from my manager last year to ask more questions to students in lessons. At first, I did feel a bit annoyed with myself that I wasn't asking as many questions as I thought I was. But then, I realised that the feedback wasn't negative or personal – it was my manager trying to help me become a better teacher.

This helped me to see it as a positive and take steps to act upon it'

**“WE HAVE THE
POTENTIAL TO
MANAGE THE
EMOTIVE AND
HOLISTIC ASPECT OF
THE FEEDBACK
PROCESS”**

Highlighting this not only demonstrates your own humanity to your students, but shares an important truth – that feedback is part of adult life too – not just school – and that being able to receive this in a positive way will be key to their wider development.

We may not be able to prevent that initial threatened response from some students, but by taking an empathetic position and pre-empting negative reactions before they happen, we have the potential to manage the emotive and holistic aspect of the feedback process in a sensitive and robust manner.

As Carless argues, ‘assessment is too important for us to assume that students are on the same wavelength as we are’ - so let's plan to get them on it (2007).

(1995) D.Boud, 'Enhancing Learning through Self-Assessment'

(2007) D.Carless, 'Differing Perceptions in the Feedback Process'

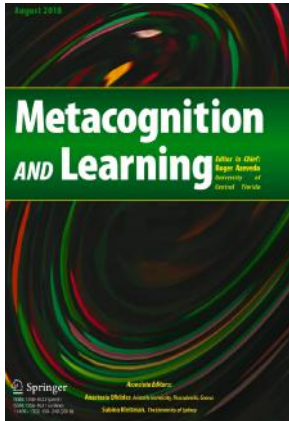
(2019) West et al., 'Asked for vs. Unasked for Feedback: an Experimental Study'

EVIDENCE DIGEST

The danger of distractions and the unreliability of student confidence

By Jack Alcock

Lead Practitioner, Research & Innovation, Special & AP Hub



Altamura et al.'s recent study **'Reading Media and Multitasking: Effects on Comprehension and Metacomprehension when Reading Multiple Texts'**

(2026) offers some sobering findings for anyone who teaches reading or relies on students reading

independently to understand the material required for their subject.

In this study, participants completed reading comprehension tasks on either paper or tablet, then were interrupted by messages asking them simple, unrelated questions.

Four findings stand out:

1. The interruptions significantly impaired performance on comprehension questions
2. Paper readers were more affected by the distraction than tablet readers - a counterintuitive result worth sitting with
3. Participants did not believe the messages had distracted them. They falsely judged their comprehension to still be strong
4. Some of the pages contained contradictions. Students were already poor at spotting these. The distractions made them worse - and yet their confidence in their own understanding remained high throughout

What does this mean in practice?

First, we cannot rely on students' self-reporting of their own understanding. Asking 'does everyone get that?' or 'does that make sense?' is not a reliable check - not out of dishonesty, but because students are consistently shown across multiple studies to be overconfident in their comprehension.

Second, the typical classroom is full of low-level distractions: students whispering, the register being called, a late arrival at the door. If students are reading independently, this research suggests those interruptions carry a real cost. Sustained, uninterrupted reading time is not a luxury - it's a condition for comprehension.

"SUSTAINED, UNINTERRUPTED READING TIME IS NOT A LUXURY - IT'S A CONDITION FOR COMPREHENSION"

Third, consider the student scrolling through social media at home, trying to make sense of contested or contradictory information while notifications arrive in a steady stream - all whilst feeling certain they understand what is really going on.

Now we can see the cognitive mechanism at work, it becomes easier to understand how misinformation, pseudoscience, and extreme views take root. The problem isn't just exposure; it's that distracted, overconfident readers are the least equipped to notice when something doesn't add up.





MET POD - COMING SOON!

We are delighted to announce that MET POD, our Trust-wide professional development podcast, will be back very soon!

We are looking forward to bringing you episodes on a range of topics including...

- Educational leadership and policy
- Innovation
- Equity and inclusion in education
- Teaching and learning
- Assessment and curriculum design
- Operational and business management
- HR and workforce development
- Change management

Drop us an email at

metpod@maidenerleghtrust.org if you would like to be a guest!

UPCOMING MEI COURSES

We may be nearing the end of the academic year, but our professional development offer continues to go from strength to strength.

Why not book onto one of our upcoming CPD opportunities to enhance your own practice and connect with likeminded colleagues?

Behaviour Support Workshops

Date: 9 June 2026, 9.00AM-3.00PM

Venue: River Academy

Facilitator: Charlotte Baggley

Engage in a comprehensive set of workshops designed to equip you with the knowledge and skills to effectively support and manage behaviour. Offering a blend of theory and practice, this course will develop your confidence and expertise in this fundamental area.

[MET Colleagues - click here to book](#)

THE LEARNING LOUNGE

Click on the links below to explore these free professional development resources...

The SENDcast

New SEND-related podcasts from a range of experts released every Thursday

Working Effectively with Teaching Assistants

Young Carers: Voices that Matter

Experiences of Girls in School with Undiagnosed ADHD

Navigating SEND Parenting: Tools for Thriving

Supporting the Transition from Primary to Secondary for SEN Children

Where Safeguarding and SEND Meet



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