



Ben Newmark

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR GREAT EXPLICIT TEACHING

<https://bennewmark.wordpress.com/2017/10/07/ten-principles-for-great-explicit-teaching/>

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Explicit teaching is coming in from the pedagogical cold. With the findings of cognitive science revealing the clear distinction between how experts and novices learn, the once obligatory *guide-on-the-side* rightly retreats as the *sage-on-the-stage* makes a comeback.

However, explicit teaching will not improve outcomes if it is done badly. Here, then, are ten principles I have learned in a frustratingly inefficient decade of trial and error. As such, I present them not as a definitive package but as what I hope might be a contribution to help others improve faster than I did.

BE SAGE BEFORE YOU STEP ON STAGE

To teach well explicitly, constantly upgrade your subject-specific knowledge. See it as a professional duty, privilege and perk of our positions. Schools should support this in their CPD.



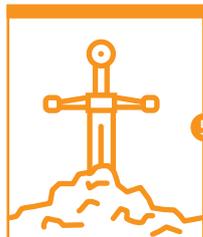
TEACH CHILDREN TO LISTEN

If explicit teaching is to be successful, teachers and schools must plan for children to listen silently, not interrupt and save questions until an appropriate time. It means stopping and starting again if even one child is off-task.



USE STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

Children find stories easy to remember. Use rhetorical questions, cliff-hangers, metaphors and analogies. But be careful they reinforce – and don't detract from – the intended learning.



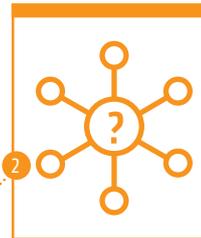
PRACTISE AND REHEARSE

We will not get better at delivering explanations if we do not include practice as part of the planning process. Think of your explanations as short theatrical performances, which means we should rehearse before we go live.



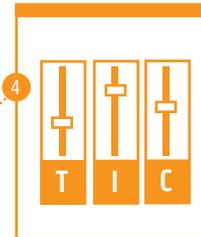
SUPPORT WITH BOARDWORK

Clear, neat illustrations and text reinforce and support explanations because presenting students with information in more than one way strengthens memory.



WHAT, NOT HOW

Think very carefully about what you are going to teach and how you are going to explain it. Strong subject knowledge makes this easier. As does making your own notes with bullet points or diagrams.



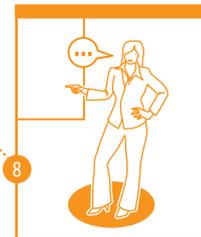
VARY TONE, INFLECTION AND CADENCE

Using cadence and inflection to stress and add further meaning to parts of an explanation is really effective in helping students understand what they are listening to.



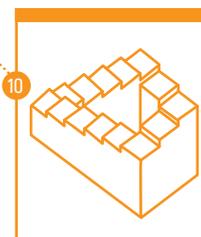
REPEAT AND LINK BACK

Use mnemonics and other strategies just as the Ancient Greeks did. Use adjectives deliberately. For example, in History, always refer to Harald Hardrada as 'ruthless Hardrada' to help students remember what is important about him.



TEACH FROM THE FRONT

Teach from one position – at the front where everyone can see you, next to the board. Still move but with purpose and linked to your explanation. For example, walk left and right during political explanations.



BEWARE OF ILLUSORY SUPERIORITY

Psychologists tell us that we are not good at assessing our own competence. This makes feedback essential. It may not be the length of your explanations that need attention, but their quality.