

RESOURCE

Teaching Skills Pathway

COURSE 2: HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Task 1: As Aristotle said, excellence is a habit not an act. Having high expectations of students is no different – it is about the things we do in the classroom every day to stretch and challenge our students.

As Matt said in Module 1 of this course, Doug Lemov says that teachers who have high expectations always insist that **“Right is right”**. In other words, they set and defend a high standard of correctness in their classroom. For example...

- They use simple positive language to express their appreciation of what a student has done and to express their expectation that he or she will now complete the task. For example: “You’re almost there. Can you find the last piece?”
- They insist that students answer the question they have asked not a different question entirely. These teachers are clear that the right answer to any question other than the one they have asked is, by definition, wrong.
- As well as insisting on the right answer, teachers with high expectations insist that students answer the right question at the right time. They protect the integrity of their lesson by not jumping ahead to engage an exciting right answer at the wrong time.
- These teachers insist their students use precise, technical vocabulary.

Do you do this? What does it look like in your classroom? Do you do it consistently with every class, all the time?

What more could you do in the future to ensure ‘right is right’?

Lemov also says that teachers who have high expectations “**Stretch it**”. In other words, a sequence of learning does not end with a right answer; these teachers reward right answers with follow-up questions that extend knowledge and test for reliability.

For example, they ask how or why, ask for another way to answer, ask for a better word, ask for evidence, ask students to integrate a related skill, and/or ask students to apply the same skill in a new setting.

Again, do you do this? What does it look like in your classroom? Do you do it consistently with every class, all the time?

What more could you do in the future to ensure you ‘stretch it’?

Finally, Lemov says that, for the teachers who have high expectations of their students, **“format matters”**. In other words, it is not just what their students say that matters but how they say it. To succeed, students must take their knowledge and express it in the language of opportunity.

Once again, do you do this? What does it look like in your classroom? Do you do it consistently with every class, all the time?

What more could you do in the future to ensure ‘format matters’?

Task 2: In Module 2, Matt argues that motivation requires:

1. A destination to aim for – knowing what the outcome looks like and not giving up until you reach it.
2. A model to follow – an exemplar on which to base your technique provided by someone who is regarded as an expert and who sets high expectations.
3. Regular checkpoints to show what progress has been made and what's still to do, coupled with regular celebrations of on-going achievements and timely messages about upcoming milestones.
4. Personalisation – the ability to make choices about how to carry out tasks in order to increase enjoyment and engagement.

Do you agree? What does this look like in your classroom? What works well? What more could you do in the future to motivate your students?

Task 3: Here is a transcript of what Matt says in Module 3 about expert teaching...

Expert teaching

If that is what it means to be an expert teacher, what does expert teaching look like? Well, it will probably come as no surprise to learn that there is no silver bullet, no secret formula to teaching expert lessons – what works is what's best. The best thing to do, therefore, is to get to know your students by regularly assessing them and then to plan for progress by teaching lessons that provide opportunities for all your students to fill gaps in their knowledge.

The best lessons do not exist in isolation, they are all about context, so it is better to think of a lesson as one learning episode in a long series. It does not necessarily need a neat beginning and end or to be in four parts, and it does not need to prescribe to a particular style of teaching. For example, every lesson does not need to include opportunities for group work or independent study. A lesson can be meaningfully spent with students reading or writing in silence so long as, in the wider context of the series, there is a variety of learning activities.

The best lessons are those in which students feel welcomed, valued, enthusiastic, engaged, eager to experiment and rewarded for hard work. The way to achieve this is to prize effort over attainment and focus on progress (learning) not outcomes.

In the best lessons, work is challenging but achievable. If the work is too easy, students will switch off; if the work is too hard, students will switch off. Work must be pitched in the "zone of proximal development" – hard but do-able with support. If something's too easy, we rely on our memory instead of thinking (e.g. 1+1); if it is too hard, we run out of processing power (e.g. 56 x 49,237) and stop thinking.

The best lessons present students with desirable difficulties – artificial barriers that make information harder to encode (learn initially) but easier to retrieve later – which lead to deeper learning. We achieve desirable difficulties by: spacing learning apart with increasingly long gaps; interleaving topics rather than finishing one topic then moving onto another; testing frequently – using low-stakes quizzes at the start of topics/lessons to identify prior learning as well as knowledge gaps, and to "interrupt forgetting"; and making learning materials less clearly organised so that students have to think hard about the materials (e.g. using a difficult-to-read font).

The best lessons also encourage students to make connections between new and existing information – applying prior knowledge to new knowledge – in order to improve the speed and ease with which they retrieve information from their long-term memories and transfer it into their working memories (where they can use it). Prior knowledge helps us to "chunk" information together, saving precious space in our limited working memory, allowing us to process more information.

When planning great lessons, we should focus on what students will be made to think about rather than on what they will do. We might, for example, organise a lesson around a big question. We then need to repeat learning several times – at least three times according to Graham Nuthall – if it is to penetrate students' long-term memories.

The best lessons make good use of low-stakes testing (or retrieval practice) such as multiple-choice quizzes because tests like these interrupt forgetting and reveal what has actually been learnt as well as what gaps exist.

The best lessons involve lots of classroom discussions – best achieved through artful questioning – because talking makes students think. Questions should only be used if they cause thinking and/or provide



information for the teacher about what to do next. The most common model of teacher talk is IRE – initiation, response, evaluation. But it doesn't work very well. A better model is ABC – agree/disagree with, build upon, and challenge – whereby students pass questions around the classroom. The Japanese call this “neriage” which means “to polish” – students polish each other's answers, refining them, challenging each other's thinking.

In the best lessons, there is a learning culture in which students produce high-quality work. You can also create an ethic of excellence like this by developing a sense of whole-class pride in the quality of learning and by ensuring that, once finished, assignments are made public – providing the work with a genuine audience.

In the best lessons, assessments – such as gallery critique – are used as the primary context for sharing knowledge and skills. To do this, you need to teach students how to give constructive feedback that is kind, helpful and specific, and you need to provide students with exemplars that show them what a great essay or experiment looks like.

Finally, the best lessons happen when you instil in students the belief that quality means rethinking, reworking, and polishing so that they feel celebrated, not ridiculed, for going back to the drawing board.

Reflect on what he says about the characteristics of the best lessons and self-assess your own teaching practice accordingly. What do you do well? What could you do better?

Task 4: In Module 4, Matt sets out 8 cornerstones of excellence, which are:

1. High quality work.
2. Genuine research.
3. A real audience.
4. In-built differentiation.
5. Collective responsibility.
6. Class critique.
7. Modelling success.
8. Drafting and redrafting.

Re-watch this explanation of each cornerstone and reflect on your current practice in each area. What do you do well? What could you do better?

Final task: Action Planning

Now put all the above into an action plan to ensure you enact positive change in your teaching practice.

Focus on no more than 3 take-away tasks at this stage. For each, set out what you want to change, how you will change it (what specific step-by-step actions you will take), when you will change it and what success will look like (the 'why?' or intended outcome).

What?	How?	When?	Why?
1			
2			
3			