



## Parmiter's School

# Home Teaching & Learning Newsletter

### May 2022 - 8th Edition

Welcome to the 8th edition of the Home Teaching and Learning newsletter. This edition focuses on revision techniques and includes an introduction to, and input from, members of our student Teaching and Learning (T&L) committee, which helps to enhance teaching and learning at Parmiter's.

## How we revise

Although we are now well and truly into exam season, **revision is key all year round** for keeping facts and knowledge in students' minds and for developing understanding throughout their courses. Two members of our school's student T&L committee have written about the types of revision they have experienced in lessons this year.

### Erno, Year 8

*"Many teachers elect for their students to create "graphic organisers", a general term for revision guides such as mind maps, posters, and similar. Vibrant colours help information be remembered, and Chromebooks are useful here, as students can create a one-page Google Slides presentation about the topic. These are easy to find later on in the year, when it comes to the end of the year, GCSE or A-Level revision, and are an effective method of learning."*



### Surani, Year 8

*"Past questions are incredibly useful because they implement a rough idea of what to expect in different exams. An example of a subject where we use this technique often is science. This is because each topic contains plenty of content, and it's helpful to get us thinking by memorising certain pieces of information in real-life situations - for example, using respiration facts to find out the breathing rate during physical exercise. As well as being able to retrieve certain information, these questions can be practised in timed conditions; this develops time-management skills and speed in an exam scenario. Additionally, this technique encourages us to develop our knowledge with short and long questions, as well as using mark schemes to check the accurate use of keywords."*



# The top six revision techniques used in Parmiter's

"But... I don't know how to revise!" Sound familiar? Of course, it does. It's a common phrase we hear from our students and you must hear it at home when it comes to exam preparation. We can assure you that we cover many revision strategies with students at school. Exploring and demonstrating effective learning strategies with your children is crucial to guide them away from unhelpful practices like last-minute 'cramming' sessions, caffeine-fueled all-nighters and the highlighting of everything on a worksheet. Here are our top six learning strategies:

Retrieval practice	Graphic organisers	Flashcards
<p>Retrieval practice is one of the most effective ways of learning that leads to fluency (Dunlosky, 2013). Trying to recall something from memory requires mental strain and effort, which is why low-stakes testing, rather than simply reading, highlighting and re-reading information is more effective. Knowing that students are about to test each other can be a wonderful engagement tool. To take this a step further, include some more challenging, higher-order thinking questions that encourage them to think about how this new learning relates to previous information they have learnt in the past.</p>	<p>Graphic organisers – such as mind maps, spider maps, sequential thinking and Venn diagrams – should be used as much as possible for students to show their thinking and understanding of key ideas and topics from memory. When learning, students need to be active and graphic organisers are a fantastic way of reconstructing information they have been exposed to whilst making useful links and connections to what they already know.</p> 	<p>Flashcards are a common resource students use when revising, but research suggests that around 30% of people do not use flashcards to self-test (Hartwig and Dunlosky, 2012). This is a real shame as there are great ways flashcards can be used to test knowledge, understanding and memory.</p> <p>One thing we would say with flashcards is to be wary of dropping the ones that you feel you are confident with. You should aim to revisit the material as often as you can, especially in the build-up to exams.</p>
Cornell note-taking	Spaced retrieval	Past questions
<p>The Cornell note-taking system is used by many of our GCSE and A-level students. This is an excellent way of getting them to think metacognitively (McCabe 2011), asking questions, noting key terms, and summarising the content being revised at the end of a lesson or during independent study. This method enables students to self-test what they have covered in the lesson as well as piece together previously learnt information.</p> 	<p>Spacing out learning and revisiting material as often as possible is so important for embedding knowledge and understanding. This is one reason why I feel we constantly need to expose students to the information they have previously learnt either in the lesson or through homework, mixing up material from different units in-class tests or assessments if they are going to hang onto the knowledge they gain.</p> <p>The key to effective revision is not the hours of cramming in the final few weeks or days before the exam but regular, focused, shorter sessions with regular 'brain breaks'. In their research on spacing effects, Cedepa et al. (2008) show that the optimal intervals for retaining information, for say one week, should be between one or two days, for six months, every three weeks and for one year, every four weeks.</p>	<p>Students need to practise different examination questions again and again, and over time, without looking at any notes.</p> <p>The effect of exploring worked examples or exam answers, as well as writing their own, helps students to process, practise and refine their revision to meet the parameters of exam success.</p> <p>The reason many of the aforementioned techniques work so well is that they encourage learners to be active agents in their learning. They need to think hard about the information with which they are faced. Learning that feels difficult embeds knowledge into memory better than learning that feels easy, which soon disappears – hence why we need to train students to avoid passive, superficial and time-consuming techniques (Quigley, 2016).</p>

# What is retrieval practice?

This year we have been focusing our efforts into refreshing retrieval practice across all our subjects and embedding this into our lessons. This helps students review and remember key areas and topics from their studies. **But what is retrieval practice?**

Retrieval practice is a teaching and learning strategy that can be used inside or outside of the classroom to help children learn. Retrieval practice focuses on getting information out of the memory. Through the act of retrieval, which involves recalling information through writing or verbally, that memory is then strengthened. Retrieval practice helps memory and therefore helps to improve learning. In lessons, teachers will regularly quiz their classes on what they have studied previously. This is not a high-stakes test or assessment, but instead a way to check what students can or cannot remember, and to also help improve their memory, knowledge and confidence. There has been a lot of research published that tells us this is an effective strategy for learners of all ages. The more children practise recalling information from memory, the easier that information will become to recall in the future. For more information on this, please click on the following [link](#) and maybe try some of these methods at home with your child!

## Student Teaching & Learning Committee

### Teaching & Learning Committee: What We Do

The T&L committee is one of five groups in the school congress. We attend half-termly meetings and members of the committee may be chosen to attend Full Congress, where the points discussed in previous meetings are raised to the SLT and School Captains. We aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning at Parmiter's. The major topics we discuss are:



- The use of Chromebooks and IT in lessons
- Productivity in lessons
- Teaching and learning ideas
- Homework setting and assessments.

Due to exam weeks occurring, our main focus has been on revision of late. Most ways in which we have focused on this particular topic is by sharing ideas and opinions. We've used these to help us to write articles for this T&L newsletter, and have been planning to produce a website to support the revision process for students, teachers, and even parents and carers.

### Plans moving forward:

- Create and develop our teaching and learning website
- Help in the creation of a Chromebook survey for students
- Creating teaching & learning briefings for students and sometimes teachers on key areas that will help improve teaching or learning at Parmiter's

(Erno and Surani Year 8 students from T&L committee)

