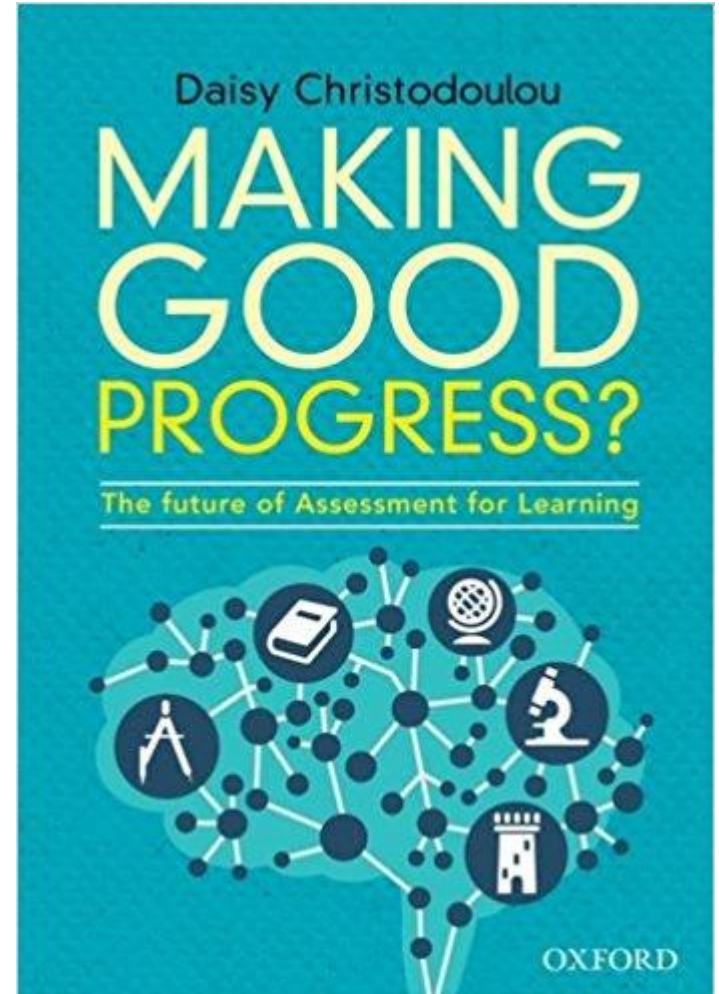


Making Good Progress?

Autumn Term 2017

Presentation (*condensed for printing*) by Matt Bennett & discussion notes



Synopsis – the main arguments – strengths and weaknesses

1. Why didn't Assessment for Learning transform our schools?

- It was initially well received – and was universally adopted by the government and teachers
- Based on decades of research
- In England, compared to other schools, teachers give a lot of oral and written feedback
- **HOWEVER** “there has been no (or at best limited) effect on learning outcomes nationally”
- Wiliam and Black – feedback hasn't been helpful “because the learner does not know how to use the feedback to improve.”
- Government support was counter-productive – formative became summative – there was high stakes accountability in some schools
- Teaching needs to *respond* to formative assessment data

2. Curriculum aims and teaching methods

- Generic Skill method versus Deliberate Practice method
- Developing *specific* tasks is required to be better at the *whole* skill
- “in order to develop skill, we need lots of specific knowledge and lots of deliberate practice at using that knowledge”

3. Making valid inferences from assessment data

- Wiliam and Black – the point of summative assessment is to produce a *shared meaning* about a pupil’s progress and performance. Formative assessment is to produce a *consequence* for the teacher and pupil.
- It is important to think about data validity – the process of establishing which kinds of conclusions are warranted and which are not. Does a C grade in Maths (for example) mean the student can hold a job requiring numeracy skills?
- Exams have to allow us to make valid inferences about a pupil’s performance in a certain subject
- Marks and grades need to be *reliable* – to ‘show little inconsistency between one measurement and the next’.
- There is often a trade-off between validity and reliability

4. Creating a model of progression

- “We cannot rely on just one assessment or one style of assessment for all the assessment information we need”
- Is the creation of models of progression – the link between formative and summative – the future?
- To textbook or not to textbook? (There are arguments for and against)
- Threats to validity – cramming, teaching to the test, marginal gains
- What knowledge is worth remembering after school?

5. Improving formative assessments

- They should be: Specific, frequent, repetitive, recorded as raw marks
- Multiple Choice questions can work formatively – with in-depth, specific and precise feedback
- “Testing doesn’t just help measure understanding; it helps develop understanding.” – The benefits of the testing effect are well-known (it is also known in some circles as ‘retrieval practice’)
- Formative assessment CAN be recorded – but aim for mastery – to get 90-100% of questions correct

6. Improving summative assessments

- We still need summative assessments – we need *shared meaning* (between teachers, students, parents and school leadership) about pupil performance and progress
- But how can we keep them without them becoming the model for *every* classroom activity?
- The idea of comparative judgement has become popular, to replace moderation methods
- Sampling needs to come from a large domain of content in order to determine if the summative assessment *does* help to create a ‘shared meaning’?
- Frequency of summative assessments – how often should they be?
- Raw scores versus grades – what is best?

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clear structure – taken on a journey	Left feeling like I've been taken down one, made to feel 'yes, yes, yes', only for her to conclude, 'this is all rubbish.
Ideas that are workable and can easily be implemented without deviating too far from current practice	Some paragraphs seemed too heavy on jargon – I had to re-read several times to ensure I understood, but even now I am not sure.
Doesn't destroy Wiliam and Black's original idea	
Great explanations – giving 'real-world' examples and analogies	

- What do we do in our own practice? What is the balance of formative to summative?
- Can all subjects be taught and assessed in the same manner?
- What works? How do we know it works?
- How brave are we? What can we change that will improve things?
- School-wide changes? Are we content with the flaws in the exam system and that, ultimately, it is these that guide our classroom practice?

MAIN THREADS OF THE CLUB MEETING (1)

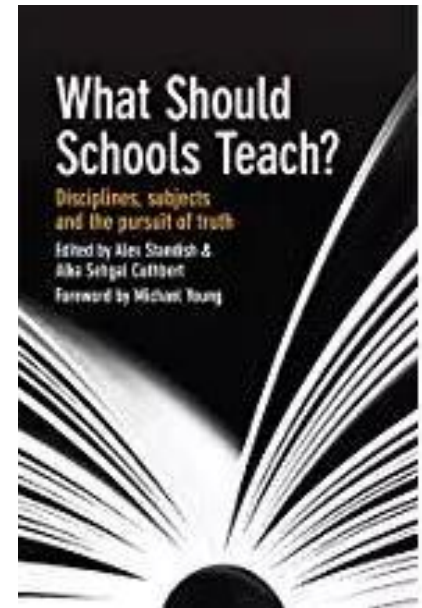
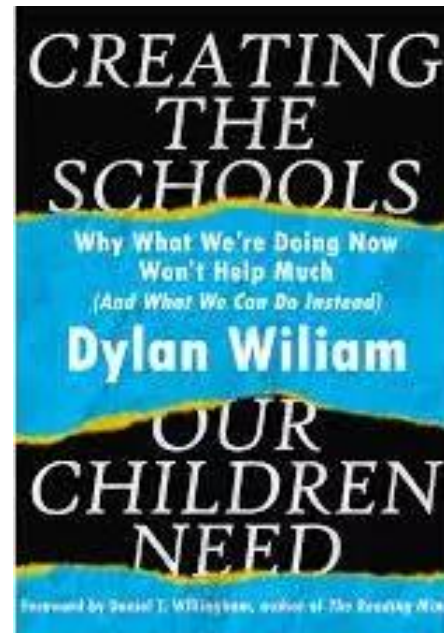
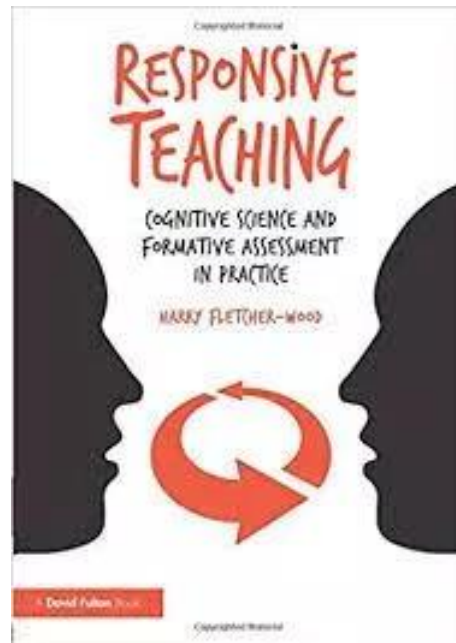
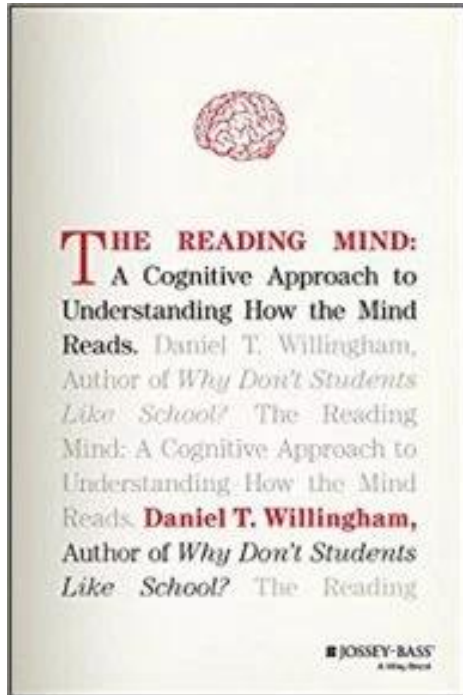
- Navigating the tension between summative and formative assessment is challenging yet very important
- ‘Generic skill’ - does practising ‘general skill’ actually promote a love of the subject? Do you lose that when you get rid of ‘generic skill’? *What IS a skill?*
- Sometimes there is an assumption that people will learn things from osmosis –this isn’t always the case!
- There was strong agreement that breaking down complex skills into chunks is very important – also phrased as ‘seeing the stepladder’
- How do you deal with the unexpected? How can pupils still perform when a ball comes in fast and upsets the game, or if there is a strangely-worded exam question?

MAIN THREADS OF THE CLUB MEETING (2)

- Discussion of ‘making valid inferences’ (how we consider a student’s competency within a field) reveals frustrations with the current system – there are so many variables on the day that can interfere (e.g. sickness)
- Competency in a field is on a spectrum: an amazing student will ‘blitz’ an exam, whatever is on it. There are only a few students on that level, however.
- Discussion of the ‘difficulty’ versus the ‘linear’ model of assessment: which does your subject favour and why?
- The point that testing doesn’t measure understanding, *it helps to develop* understanding, was highlighted
- Christodoulou’s principle of ‘comparative judgement’ was also highlighted

What are we reading next?

Books suggested for 2018-2019



How does Journal Club work?

- **Everyone is welcome**. Members include classroom teachers, Heads of Department, language assistants and members of SLT, from across Infant, Junior and Senior schools. **There is always cheese and biscuits.**
- We read extracts from one book (or one journal article), per term – **so we only meet once a term at 4.15-5.15**, just after the half-term holiday, to allow some holiday time for reading. You are still welcome to join Journal Club even if you can't make every meeting.
- We select texts to be read in future meeting by **voting**; members are encouraged to bring ideas for new texts for us to vote on.
- We **take it in turns to present and chair the meeting** (but you will never have to do this if you don't want to!) After the presentation (which summarises the main threads of the text), we then have a discussion about the research that we have read. It is always fascinating to hear other people's experiences from across the school and how that matches up to the research we have all read.
- Paula then writes up the minutes, **which are disseminated to all teaching staff in the Weekly Bulletin.**