



## Dialogue: KJ Norton-Berry, AP

Dialogue, in all its forms, is the foundation that underpins almost all the work that takes place in a school. Some examples are obvious: conversations that take place in Academic Mentoring and then the follow-on dialogue with parents; classroom questioning and modelling; weekly departmental emails that impart important information. All directly help students to succeed, and all are essential in the running of the organisation. However, other forms of dialogue are more subtle and sometimes less thought about or developed. Since the culture and behaviours of a community are shared and advanced by the quality of the dialogue taking place, these subtle forms can be particularly important. The self-esteem of a student, for example, can be enhanced by dialogue, however brief, in class or a corridor. I hope this edition of the Link helps you with ideas to help you develop dialogue in your practice but keep those more subtle but impactful interactions in mind too.

## How do you make the most of your limited time in Parents' Evening slots?

### Best Practice Tips for ECTs: Sarah Goodey, VP, Maths

All parties involved want the child to be successful. We need to use Parents' Evenings to ensure success is celebrated and everyone understands the next steps the child needs to take to accelerate their progress.

Opening with positive statements about the child's work ethic and character traits shows the adults at home we know their child. Having a copy of your class mark book which displays target grade, current predicted grade, homework completion and scores, and summative assessments can be helpful next, as we begin to examine progress in more detail.

Time the meeting so at one minute to go you ask, 'Is there anything we haven't discussed that you would like to raise?' This way, if there is an issue, there is still time to discuss it. If there isn't an issue you can spend the minute giving a general overview of the remainder of the course.

### My Top Three Tips: Sarah Perkins, History

- 1. Get the student perspective:** Always begin your consultation by asking the student how they believe they are progressing. Some of our quieter students may appear to be finding things fairly straightforward, but this isn't always the case. Equally, some students are completely oblivious to areas of weakness in their learning or progress.
- 2. Set SMART targets (see image below):** Before you meet, consider exactly what the student needs to do to improve. Explain how they will be able to meet the target, either in school or through homework. Follow this with a time-frame for checking in on whether progress has been met.
- 3. Get the parents involved:** Could they simply have a conversation with their child about what they've learnt in school? Could they test their child to support with revision? Are there household tasks which might support learning in a particular subject?

### Post-16 Parents' Evenings: Stuart Patman, AP, Criminology

While we may not have a lot of communication from parents and with parents at Post-16, those attending Parents' Evening do have an interest in their child's education and next steps. Most want their child to be happy and do well, but also know how they are doing as an individual.

We have 10 minutes with parents for Post-16 appointments, which is nice. Having a structure of points to cover relating to the course and their child's study is important I find, but also leaving time for parents to ask any questions.

It's good to have an idea of what the student wants to go on to next at the end of Post-16 because this helps make the conversation specific to them. Achievement is important, but don't forget to highlight other skills the student may have too. Parents really appreciate this personal development information.

### Parents' Evenings Priorities: Jo Hoenderkamp, Science

Understanding what the parent would most like to discuss is key, as is offering time for any worries to be aired. Imparting important information about success and possible areas for improvement with action steps is also a priority, including ideas about how work is done at home (eg revision for Year 11).

It's important to use a really wide range of data to support work on student growth areas. Useful information can include classwork and homework data, formative and summative assessments, behaviour and attendance data, and general ATL observations.

Most parents like to know the truth about the growth areas in their children's work, as long as you have a way forward for them. Signposting a tangible next step is really helpful, as is offering encouragement around any good work.

## How do you share best practice across your teams?

### English: Heather Clark-Hope, CL

We have a curriculum plan available for the year with an overview of each year group as well as half termly plans so that the team can plan their workloads around assessments. Weekly overviews are also sent out a week ahead to support colleagues.

Centrally-written lesson resources are available on TEAMS for tailoring for each class's needs. We also share successful resources informally via email.

Our Common PPA/Dept meetings are enhanced with training from team members with specific expertise. We are currently developing our planning practices to include more collaborative opportunities.

### Maths: Robyn Afford, CL

We use shared schemes on TEAMS along with mid-term plans. These are a combination of Trust resources and newly-developed ECA materials.

We also aim to do peer observation to foster shared dialogue. This has led to Open Door Days and an Open Door Week, where colleagues have opted to offer free classroom access to each other in order to observe practice and generate new ideas.

In addition, we circulate a dept bulletin of key points each week. This often includes signposting to interesting reading, CPD, podcasts etc.



## Improving classroom dialogue with the WALKTHURUs – Using 'I Say, You Say'

This is a quick and easy routine to **enhance engagement** and build **interaction**. Particularly helpful for new subject **vocabulary**.

**1** Teacher says key word slowly and clearly: **"I say Hypothesis!"**

**2** Teacher says: **"You say..."**  
Class calls back: **"Hypothesis!"**

Regular practice creates **pace** and **shared purpose**.  
Lovely teamwork tool.





## How do you make Academic Mentoring work for you?

### Etheldreda: Matthew Bareham, PE

I obviously set up a time when we are in form in the mornings, and then I tend to try and let the affected subject teacher know prior to the lesson starting.

I use data from progress reports and anything on SIMS or Edulink which is related to attendance or BPs etc. However, I try to only focus on the positives and strategies for moving forwards unless a different approach is needed.

I use an interview template document and an email template but also try make home contact informal and personal in nature if possible.

### Franklin: Anne Shaw, LRC

When I book the meeting, I arrange it in collaboration with the student, so they feel they have some choice in when we meet.

I look at their progress report and then we discuss any problems with individual subjects, homework, form time, Session 6, PLEDGES, friends, home. I end by asking the student if there is anything else they feel we should be discussing. The student also sets themselves two or three targets.

If there are issues, I will usually email the teacher and ask if they can discuss with the student and then I follow up later, sharing with parents too. I always try to end on a positive note.

### Turing: Jack Hindley, English

I find that fostering meaningful connections with students during tutor time establishes a rapport that motivates their attendance through a genuine desire to participate in the process. I also like to use a low-stakes questions sheet ahead of each meeting.

I use a wide range of information and data to inform each meeting and always try to end on a positive. This is really nice to share with parents, along with actionable targets. This helps build the support network around the student.

I use a template for meetings and tend to type up the parent email whilst chatting. This saves a LOT of time!

### Scott: Claire Wilson, Business

I use preprinted slips to help the students attend and I always try to gather data ahead of time (below). This includes attendance and behaviour info as well as any reports and PLEDGES records.

I angle the bulk of the meeting depending on the year group, obviously with a greater subject focus with older years. I tend to fill in a report template as we talk, which saves a lot of time.

I always try to set SMART targets (overleaf) and carry forward anything the student still needs to do. I find templates really useful for parent emails too, but I do try to vary them throughout the year.

### What do parents value about Academic Mentoring?

- "Since my twins started college, I have found the academic mentoring to be **informative and helpful** in knowing my children are happy at school."
- "I found the recent email **useful** and the teacher had taken the time to **get to know my child.**"
- "It was all **very clear** and prompted a **meaningful conversation** at home. Very happy this end."

### Seacole: Debbie Knott, Behaviour

I try to get on with appointments as soon as possible and arrange slots in a way which offers the students some choice. In my experience, they really look forward to their mentoring.

I always try to keep the tone positive and personalised with students, and in home communications too, which has led to some great interactions with families over the years.

I take an individualised approach but use a range of data too: my Senior Tutor is particularly excellent at sending out any information we might need, which really helps.

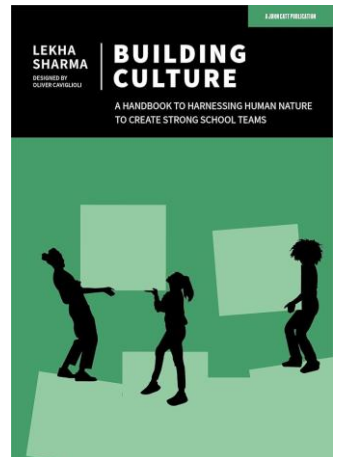
## What makes a good department meeting?

### Sam Craven, AP, Science

I recently had the pleasure of delivering a PBBL on turning around the culture of a department, part of which focused on how meetings offer a glimpse of your team culture. Culture is the combination of how it feels to work in the department and the way things are done. High performing teams have a common goal and debate is the best strategy to achieve it: meetings are the arena where everyone has their say and a path is chosen. Key to this is psychological safety, the belief that you will not be punished or humiliated for your questions and ideas or, crucially, your mistakes.

Achieving a common goal requires both celebrating progress and being honest about mistakes, since they are a critical part of evaluating whether the current path will lead to success. This level of psychological safety requires a vulnerability that can be difficult to nurture and must begin with the leaders of the group.

See Lekha Sharma's book for further details and more ideas for culture building.



### Academic Mentoring Year.....

Please allow

.....  
to attend their academic mentoring meeting at

..... in .....

Apologies for any inconvenience.

Many thanks

## How do you maximise impact in your mocks feedback?

### Charlotte Hindley, CL Science

We utilise **merit reports** to identify topic areas where there are gaps in knowledge or understanding for each class. This information is then collated into a **feedback grid** to relay the strengths and areas for improvement to students.

### Robyn Afford, CL Maths

In addition to the usual **QLA following mocks**, we have developed a key **intervention involving target students**. Whole classes are taken to computer rooms with specific revision websites to explore. Most of the class engages with these resources whilst a small group of students works directly with the teacher, **targeting key growth areas** determined by QLA.

### NEXT TIME... Join in too!

Showcase **your amazing practice** and contribute to the vibrant T and L culture around college!

The next edition will be on **Standards**. We need **YOUR EXPERT ANSWERS** to these questions:

Why are routines important in the classroom?

How do you ensure that your students experience long term learning and not just short term performance?

Do you have any routines or habit hacks which reduce your workload?

We are all role models. Which personal attributes do you aim to exemplify to your students?

How do you make your high expectations visible?

**Keen to contribute? Good!**  
Contact **Sam Craven** or **Charity Novick** with ideas, articles, tips, book reviews, questions etc.