MAY 2020

NEWSLETTER

GREAT NORTH MATHS HUB

In this month's issue:

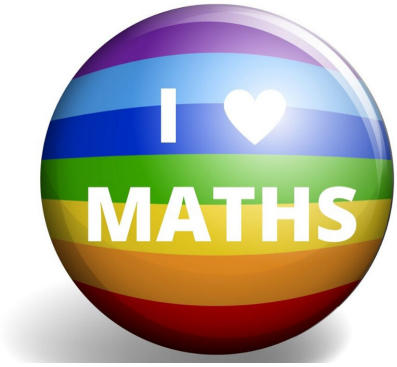
Welcome to the May edition of our newsletter. We hope this finds everyone in our Maths Hub community safe and well. As we find ourselves working in an ever evolving educational landscape, we continue to produce our newsletter to reflect the world we currently find ourselves in whilst also anticipating a partial return to normality in the autumn term.

Behind the scenes we are working to plan our Hub activity for next academic year and we will have many exciting opportunities on offer to teachers and schools. Being mindful of the current climate, it is unlikely that we will be running many face-to face activities until after the autumn half term break, ensuring teachers can remain in school and focus on their school community.

In this edition, our Secondary Maths Hub Lead, Karen Knox, discusses the varying forms that school improvement takes.

Our Primary Maths Hub Lead, Laura Tullock reflects on two months of home learning from a parent's perspective.

We also have updates from NCETM and exciting recruitment opportunities which have opened up with the Great North Maths Hub.



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School Improvement perspectives

Karen Knox

'Many years ago, as a senior leader in a large secondary school, part of my role was to help departments to improve. Mainly by holding them to account, expecting departments to know and deliver the school standards, using a framework that was generally agreed across the whole school, I set up a system of self-reviews and quality assurance to identify good practice and deliver that improvement. My mantra throughout was that there should be no surprises. The schedule of reviews should be clear. Teams should be transparent with strengths and weaknesses. If a departmental leader discovered something in the process that they didn't already know, I had many questions for them. If they could tell the story of the department, warts and all, then we were on much steadier ground.

I have discovered that some teachers have strengths that others cannot match to the same standard. Equally, some have weaknesses, that no matter how much effort goes into their amelioration, do not improve as required. I learned that good leaders use the strengths in their teams. Good leaders are explicit in setting out the requirements for their staff: vague requests will deservedly earn vague responses. Good leaders are kind to their staff, and acknowledge their endeavours. Good leaders see potential. Weaker leaders seek to blame others for what they see as the failings in their team.

As a school improvement partner for a local authority, the school improvement role is more independent, as on many occasions you are working in many schools, not just the one. There are good relationships built in this role, but generally one is not well known to the wider school, which can introduce a fear factor to a process such as a review or a visit. When you are outside the school looking in, it is easy to fall into a judgemental stance, and there is a need to remember that unless you walk a mile in the shoes of others you cannot experience their reality. That said, not being close to an issue can be useful in solving it. And if you can do that with kindness, all the better.

As an SLE, there may not be many opportunities to work with schools, so those that do come along have to work for the school that you are supporting and for you. Training does not always prepare you for the situations in which you may find yourself, but having some evidence-based strategies to deploy will help you make a start. Do your research, and try not to simply replicate your own school systems in the school that you are supporting - all settings are different!

Working with a leader in the school, rather than doing the improvement to the school, will have more impact. Find out the facts, look at the evidence, congratulate success and share it within the setting, and look for those areas to improve. Sometimes the skill is not in knowing the right answers, but in asking the right questions.

School improvement should not be punitive. Successful and enduring school improvement can often be collaborative. Schools with the ethos that everyone can and should improve, and who nurture their staff to do so are often more successful than those that punish perceived failure. Schools congratulating themselves on ridding the teaching team of dead wood sometimes end up with a few twigs struggling in a storm.

Strategies that work are not always whole school, although a school wide culture of improvement is essential. Staff and students have to value the diet they are offered or given. There must be a weighted load of subject specific training alongside the generic ethos and practice building training, but always with a purpose. The worst training, those two hours that you will never regain, is damaging to staff morale - don't do it!

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A school family makes the school a success, and look for the value that the support staff put into the setting. Celebrate their successes, as they are crucial to the school running smoothly and effectively.

School improvement surfaces in many shapes and forms. Participation in external workshops, collaborating with colleagues and revamping the curriculum can engender improvement. Working alongside colleagues, or stepping into a leadership role temporarily and modelling professional practice can also start a process of change. There is no one size fits all, but ultimately, in a maths department, if you can reach a point where the team values and is striving for strong subject knowledge and excellent pedagogy, you have made a difference.

Karen Knox.

Train to be a Secondary Mastery Specialist

Want to become an expert in teaching for mastery and work towards taking it beyond your own school? Train to become a Secondary Mastery Specialist. In this role you will receive fully funded training from experts, develop your own expertise, and then support others.The Secondary Mastery Specialist Programme began in 2016/17.

It is currently smaller than the primary programme and more exploratory in nature, but the number of Secondary Mastery Specialists is growing all the time.

Recruitment for Secondary Mastery Specialists to begin their training in 2020/21 is now open and closes on 8 June.

Further information and how to apply can be found here: **https://www.greatnorthmathshub.co.uk/train-to-be-a-secondary-mastery-specialist/**

Meet the team

This month, meet our Primary Maths Hub Lead, Laura Tullock.

Laura has worked with the Great North Maths Hub for several years, firstly as Teaching for Mastery Lead and now as the Primary Maths Hub Lead. Laura is also an NCETM Professional Development Accredited Lead, and currently delivers the PD programme.

She works across the region with teachers and leadership teams to develop their approaches to teaching Maths and implementing Teaching for Mastery approaches.

"I love everything about Maths, but the part of Maths that I get most excited about is pattern and relationship spotting - there's always a relationship to be found!

There's always a magic moment when a pattern is spotted and I loved see- ing those in my classroom!"

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Reflections on home learning: a parent's perspective

Laura Tullock

After nearly two months of working from home and having two children at home, I have been reflecting over the past week on what I have learnt. There have been lots and it has been a steep learning curve and so this article aims to share some of these lessons, focussing on the maths learning we have been working on. In reflecting on some ideas that have worked, I hope they may support others when supporting home learning for those pupils who will not return to school yet.

It's worth at this point stating that we have had great guidance from my children's school in where to look for lessons and we have welcomed their flexibility, creativity and sensitivity towards all of our differing circumstances. It's also worth noting that these lessons have come from our very unique family and different families will have different experiences.

It became clear after day one that what would normally take an hour to teach 30 Year One or Year Three pupils, would take significantly less time when working one on one with my own. I needed to lower my expectations of time!

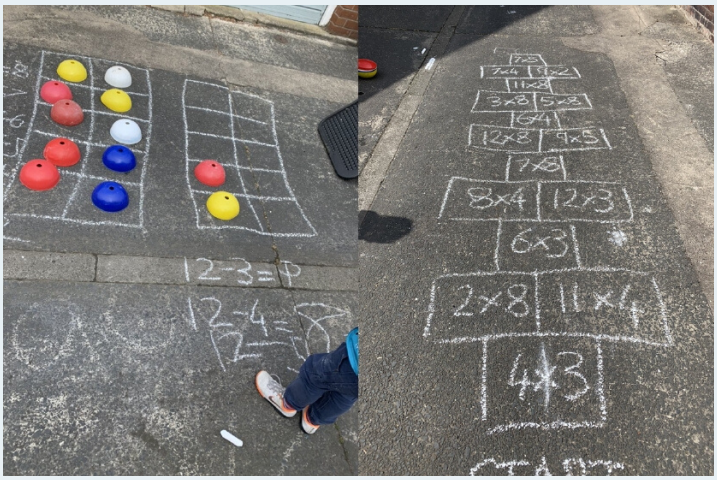
Online lessons worked for us at the start. They provided structure and almost a route map to follow. However two months later, our use of these has dwindled with protests from my eldest daughter that she just wants 'to see my teacher's face.' The arrival of NCETMs Primary lessons has overcome this, but we still use these alongside other activities. Don't get me wrong, these online lessons have been invaluable and provide much needed guidance and clarity in a bewildering situation. Sometimes, we have found the need to move away from the screen and into a different approach.

Timetables have not worked for us. The teacher in me really wanted them to, so we all knew what was coming. But after the first week this just became something we would argue over so they have been scrapped in favour of a list of tasks to be completed (with my own work tasks listed too!).

In addition to this, juggling the timetable of two children was proving difficult: some days they can work on different tasks at the same time, other days they need me to work with them and other days it's just difficult to get any work done! We treat each day as a new day!

When we don't follow the online lessons, we focus on some basic skills. I started to think about what an arithmetically proficient child in Year One and Year 3 would look like and so have focussed on practising (and learning) the relevant times tables facts for Year Three, key number facts for Year One, number bonds for both years, skip counting in relevant multiples for their year group and much more.

Chalk has been our best friend as we have taken our learning outside in the fresh air. We have chalked tens frames, times tables hopscotch and part whole models



These physical activities have been returned to several times (until the rain came) and were simple to set up.
For my youngest, I chalked the multiples of five out on the ground and then played games where he jumped from one multiple to another in order, out of order and backwards.

A great way to get him to practise Maths facts in disguise! You can find the link to a video of this activity here:
https://twitter.com/mrs_tullock/status/1258359158732214277

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We have baked more than ever before in this period of school closures. A favourite activity which I can sneak some Maths into! Weighing, scaling up, halving, reading scales and making arrays.

There are some areas of the curriculum which in our Maths Hub we refer to as 'little and often'; those areas which benefit from being returned to in frequent, short bursts. We've looked at some of these too such as naming 2D shapes, or in the case of my eldest, quadrilaterals. Telling the time for them both has been an area we have looked at and whilst my youngest has been learning to tell the time on an analogue clock, my eldest has looked at this in digital and 24 hour form. A rare chance for them to work alongside each other!

None of these activities are revolutionary in their form, but the shift to a balance between these and online lessons has really helped us find some balance as a family. I have been lucky to have the knowledge of the Primary curriculum behind me when devising these but perhaps they may support some of you to support parents when you are looking to offer ideas of activities that pupils can complete at home.

Laura Tullock.

NCETM Updates

NCETM continues to update their resources and advice for parents during this period of school closures.
Their Primary and Secondary Facebook pages continue to be manned by specialists from the NCETM Community. Don't forget to signpost your parents to them! Information and links to the pages can be found here:
https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/54456

You may also find it useful to signpost the following NCETM page to parents or colleagues which offers support and tips for parents, children and teachers alike:
https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/54450

If you are in a Primary school, don't forget that the NCETM is producing a suite of online lessons which children can access at home. They produce around fifteen new lessons a week, some of which are taught by specialists from the Great North Maths Hub. They can be found here:
https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/54454

NCETM continue to produce their monthly podcasts. Most recently they have been recording a series called Learning in Lockdown. In this series, Primary and Secondary teachers reflect on the different ways in which schools are providing remote learning. This series and other podcasts can be found here:
https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/51240

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The NCETM PD Lead Development and Accreditation Programme

The aim of the NCETM and the Maths Hubs Network is to provide opportunities for all practitioners of maths to benefit from high quality collaborative professional development (PD). This requires that there are enough people with the skills and capacity to lead, facilitate and support the professional development of others, both within and across settings.The NCETM PD Lead Development and Accreditation Programme (PDLDAP) is designed specifically to address this need.

This is part of the Maths Hubs Network's strategy to build up a group of Professional Development Leads who can support the work of local Maths Hubs.

You will need the full support of your headteacher/principal/senior manager to attend face-to-face sessions, and to give you appropriate opportunity to design, lead and evaluate your PD programme.

If you are a primary applicant, please consult with your Maths Hub prior to applying.

Further information and how to apply can be found here:
https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/39629

The Maths SLE School Improvement Support Programme

The SLE Programme is only open to designated maths SLEs attached to a Teaching School. The programme involves three face-to-face days, independent study and school-based work. Throughout the three days, participants will engage in specific sessions to develop:

- Skills in driving the improvement in maths, including developing the capacity of school leadership of maths
- Knowledge and understanding of the challenges and barriers to school improvement in maths and how to tackle them
- Knowledge and understanding of effective teaching of maths including teaching for mastery.

Further information and how to apply can be found here:
https://www.ncetm.org.uk/files/116918054/NCP20-06+SLE+Information+2020.pdf

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