

Teaching In a Terminal Testing World

Posted by [LeadingLearner](#) · January 31, 2016

The pendulum has swung once again and the World of modular examinations is disappearing in favour of the terminal examination. A single terminal examination is certainly more manageable for schools but concerns exist about the lack of a distributed assessment dimension and the removal of certain skills from the assessment. It's now down to a one off high stakes assessment that can leave teachers and pupils alike pretty nervous and anxious.



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It takes me back to the 1990s, prior to the modularisation of the curriculum, to teaching GCSE Chemistry with two papers in the June and the relative luxury of 25% of the marks based on a piece of coursework. Many current teachers won't have been teaching in the 1990s so here was my approach to teaching in a terminal testing world.

First tip would be to set an early deadline for completing the teaching of the course. My aim was February half term followed by a mock paper so I could get a snap shot of what pupils did and didn't know. As well as focussing some revision on the outcomes of the mocks I would *reteach the whole course again but this time just focusing on the main ideas and concepts*; connecting them together in a holistic way that is difficult when you are teaching first time around. Connecting ideas that you haven't yet taught pupils is at best a challenge but re-teaching the main concepts at the end of the course brings the potential of new and more coherent insights.

The revision programme ended up on a piece of A3 paper with *the key concepts forming flows of connected thinking*. There were sixteen boxes on the A3 piece of paper (if you try it that isn't very much space) and after each lesson's input pupils were required to summarise the most important information. I wish I had kept some of them as they were quite literally works of Art. *Each key concept or topic had what would now be known as a Knowledge Organiser*. I should have realised the educational World always turns full circle

but the Amstrad and Acorn Archimedes discs that they were on have long been consigned to the local rubbish tip. It was also important that pupils worked hard revising the details and completing the examination questions which were set.

Wednesday 1 Apr 2015	1: English / Engl
	Basic Spelling: Their, There, They're & Your, You're
	Complete Task 1 in the planner shared on Google Drive
	Reference: Task 1 – English Language Revision planner Blocks doc. Google Drive
	2: RS
	Learn the 'Religion: Rights and responsibilities' key words p64. Draw a chart to show why Christians use the Bible/ the teachings of the Church/ Conscience/ Situation ethics as a guide for making moral decisions. Explain which authority you think is most useful for making moral decisions (Bible, Church, Conscience, Situation ethics or all of them) and explain your reasons.
	Reference: Revision guide p 53-57
	3: History
USA - Changing Life in the USA 1930-2000	
Make a detailed timeline of all the key events from 1930-2000	
Reference: p.91-107 (revision book) or use dept revision guide	

I brought this approach to St. Mary's when I became Head teacher in September 2000 but scaled it up to a whole school level with a centrally generated individualised revision planner for every pupil. Revision started in mid-March following the launch of the revision planner at a Parents' Revision Information Evening. Increasing modularisation, early entry, vocational courses all took their toll and the process became increasingly difficult to maintain with any conviction.

Fast forward to last year and the new Head at St. Mary's, Simon Eccles, introduced his own version of the revision programme with a few great additions; the main elements are refreshingly familiar. Instead of using the old computer programme he searched out a company who had written a more sophisticated revision planning programme, [QDP Services Ltd.](#)

It basically involves setting up the project – adding subjects, examination dates, revision slots per night – write what pupils are required to do in each subject revision slot and then link up to your management information system and upload the pupil information. A few presses of a button and each student has a personalised revision plan.

Thanks to John Jenkins there is an example of a revision plan below for good old John Smith:

[John Smith 11Q – Full Revision Plan](#)

Sadly the programme won't do the revision for the student but a copy is emailed out to parents so they can keep encouraging or checking on what is being done. Allied with the forensic analysis of the mock papers, a fair wind and the tide coming in we hope that everything is in place to support our students, both Y11 and Sixth Form, to do their best. As we continually remind them, *the grade you get this summer will depend how hard you work and whether you work hard on the right things.*