



Learning Matters

The Teaching and Learning Publication of
Notley High School & Braintree Sixth Form



Challenging our most able and talented students

During the course of the last academic year, a group of teaching staff met every 3 weeks to discuss and trial teaching and learning strategies that were focused on supporting our most able and talented students. This edition of Learning Matters focuses on this work and aims to give some practical advice and information about how our most able and talented students can be most effectively supported to help their learning. There is also a focus on the Saturday morning TANGO workshops which are held for students from across Braintree schools and a report back from the recent Model United Nations Conference which a group of Year 10 and 11 students participated in during the autumn term.

What is meant by able and talented?

Young people with one or more abilities developed to a higher level significantly ahead of their year group, or with the potential to develop these abilities.

“Notley has continued to offer a varied and exciting range of opportunities for our most able students. Activities provide students with the chance to develop a variety of skills beyond those learnt within the classroom”.

*Michelle Robb,
TANGO and Able & Talented Co-ordinator*

How do we identify our able and talented students?

At Notley High School & Braintree Sixth Form, we have defined able and talented students as the top 10% of the ability range.

Year 7 – 11 students are identified in a range of ways including:

- CAT scores (mean CAT score of 120+)
- Subject expected grades
- Individual subject recommendations from staff (via Faculty Leader)
- High level of performance in talent areas

Year 12 – 13 students are identified by the following criteria (CATs are not used):

- 8 or above GCSE grade A - A*
- ALIS adaptive test baseline score of 118+
- Individual subject recommendations from staff (recognising that a student may be particularly able in one subject that could lead to undergraduate study in that area) via Subject Group Leader

[High quality teaching involves] “the engagement of students, who see themselves as active partners in the school’s life and work, not as passive consumers of a pre-planned product... Outstanding schools have a relaxed collegiate culture in which teaching ideas are shared unselfishly”

Source: Teaching & Learning Update, June 2011



2011/12

Working with

National
Literacy
Trust

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Edited by Helen Thomson

Name: Natalie Short, English Teacher

Activity: English - extension activities, different worksheets, essay questions instead of PEE (point, evidence and explain) paragraphs, different task, more complex versions of the same tasks.

Year Group: Year 8

What did I do?

Placed the 4 able and talented students on one desk so that they could discuss and complete the able and talented tasks together. When making story boards for their film I asked them to complete a more complex story board, which included times, music, how the shot would fade in and out and an explanation of why they chose to do it in that way. When completing the assessment I asked them to evaluate and compare two films instead of just stating which one they liked and why. They always had an extension task (or a push yourself task as I called it) which usually questioned why the author etc chose a certain technique for example. When we were making notes on techniques they had to use PEE paragraphs instead of simply finding an example. Extension tasks also included group discussion (as they sat together) about the work, author, poet or film.

Page No. _____	Scene _____	Production _____	Story Artist _____
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www.the-flying-antenna.com

Name: Holly Smith, English Teacher

Activity: English - students provided with a key poem to analyse and teach to the rest of the class

Year Group: Year 11

What did I do?

I arranged groupings, based on results achieved from the January exams. I made A* students the group leaders. Students were provided with a

'Literature Lesson Kit' that included their brief, some possible teaching methods, a blank lesson plan outline, assessment objectives, an example lesson plan and the marking criteria. The students had two lessons and a homework task to prepare for their lesson. They were told that this should last 10-15 minutes, although many groups spent longer.

"Participating in this working party really enabled me to consider stretching the most able students and provided me with the confidence and skills in order to be able to do this".

Holly Smith, English Teacher

"Students are most likely to thrive if given opportunities to learn independently and develop their thinking skills".

Dan Gee, Deputy Headteacher

Name: Lindsay Fouche, Subject Leader - RE

Activity: RE - Plato's Cave activity – writing a play based on a modern day version of the allegory

Year Group: Years 9, 10 and 11

What did I do?

Wider reading is used extensively in RE. A lot of this is in the form of newspaper and magazine articles on contemporary issues covered in the syllabus. The able and talented really enjoy this and are able to feed back to the rest of the class in class discussions rather than formal feedback or teach back sessions. I have found this works more successfully as some able and talented students, although able to access the material, are not always the best at formal presentations. All students are encouraged to watch the news and relevant documentaries but I find the able and talented are especially good at bringing any acquired knowledge to the lesson.

"Asking questions, understanding and considering diverse opinions, reflecting and challenging one's own views is a process which is encouraged in Religious Studies".

Lindsay Fouche, Subject Leader - RE

"The power to question is the basis of all human progress".

Indira Gandhi



Cardfields
Enjoying and achieving outside the classroom

Notley has continued to provide extension activities to our more able students and last term, 20 students were invited to take part in one of the residential weekends organised by GIFT at Cardfields, Hatfield Peverel.

Cardfields is a large country house located in Hatfield Peverel. The house and grounds were established pre-1902 and were once part of a large, private, country estate. The house sits in over 5 acres of mature and well-maintained grounds, has equipment for external activities and is surrounded by arable farmland and well-developed countryside.

During each of the residential weekends, there is plenty of discussion, individual attention, opportunity to go off at tangents, depth and breadth of learning at the highest level and networking with like-minded students.

The students work in small groups with a graduate/post-graduate expert lecturer in the field.

Students choose from a range of projects, including short stories, a history of games, designing an evilometer, and history's great speeches. They involve inventing, designing and creating, performing and reflecting.

All our students come back full of enthusiasm for these weekends.

For further information about GIFT, take a look at <http://www.giftltd.co.uk/>

"I really enjoyed the activities because they took it further than school. We explored different ideas and scenarios. In female theology, we discussed whether God is a woman and whether women should be allowed to become priests. I learnt co-operation and to consider other people's opinions".

Katie McAfee (Year 9)

"I did an improvisation course based on 'every picture tells a story'. I learnt new drama and confidence techniques, and to look beyond the obvious".

Jess Eaton-Fearne (Year 9)

"It is important to ensure that teaching and learning activities are differentiated appropriately to ensure that our most able and talented students are challenged, motivated to succeed and are able to make rapid progress".
Robin Newman, Deputy Headteacher

Model United Nations Conference at The Bishop's Stortford High School

On Saturday 12 November 2011, 10 able and talented students from Years 10 and 11 were invited along to a MUN Conference Day at The Bishop's Stortford High School. An MUN is a model United Nations where students who have an interest in issues affecting the world have discussions as the official United Nations do. Issues we discussed on the day included pollution in developing countries, human rights and lack of, the East Asian nations becoming increasingly powerful and an unknown crisis to solve throughout the day. The students of Notley were the only newcomers to the world of MUN conferences and being referred to as a 'delegate' as we were portraying an entire country's views and opinions through our speeches and proposals following research in the weeks building up to the event on the Saturday. I found the conference an interesting and new experience in which Notley's team-spirit was really developed.
Grace Hatchman (Year 11)

