

Simplifying English teaching and learning – Jennie Patterson

The Eden Method deconstructs the GCSE English exam expectations into 51 clearly defined steps, skills and qualities. These are divided into three sections – targets for writing (W), reading (R), and speaking and listening (S) – offering a logical approach to teaching and learning English.

The 51 steps are summarised into a single guide that gets stuck inside every English language exercise book in our school. We also have wall posters and desktop laminated versions. The method is aimed at pupils from years 7 to 11. We use it across the younger year groups so that they will become very familiar with what they are expected to achieve in the exam from an early age. In addition, the methodology really helps children with specific learning difficulties because what they have to achieve is so clear.

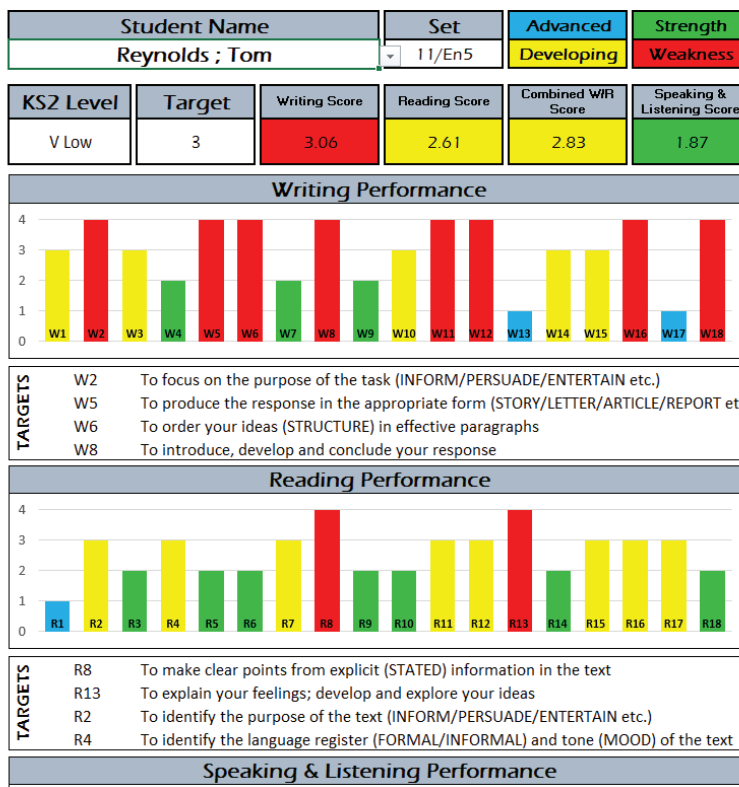
Rolling over data year by year

The program for the marking scheme that accompanies the method operates by cohort. This means, for instance, that Year 7 data 'rolls over' for five years – licences are for a student's lifetime in a school, which means that their journey in English is permanently accessible, regardless of lost books, staff changes or changes to the curriculum. The system simplifies marking while allowing me to offer concise and supportive feedback. For example, I might ask a student to address W13 when they respond to my feedback, which is: 'All of my spellings are correct and capital letters are used appropriately.' In addition, the program streamlines assessment and tracking because I now grade students' work using just four levels: advanced (blue), strong (green), developing (yellow) and weak (red). This produces a traffic lights system for every student for each of the 51 steps, along with summaries that help me plan lessons focusing on areas of class weakness.

The program also enables me to identify small groups for interventions, speak to parents in detail about what their child needs to focus on to pull themselves up a level, and engage students in their own progress. In fact, the colour coding itself creates a sense of impetus – boys in particular do not like to see blocks of red against their names and will work hard to turn this into a yellow or even green. At the same time, it simplifies differentiation because each student has a sticker in front of their exercise books

English Department: Student Performance Profile

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Each student's profile is very clear, and helps them identify areas for improvement for themselves

with their personal targets, and so they are always working away at a couple of these in any piece of work.

Understanding the whole journey

This is the first year I've used the Eden Method. I introduced it to my Year 8 students as the 51 things they need to work on to do well in their GCSE. While it sounds like a lot, when they realised that they did not need to know everything until the end of Year 11, it seemed less daunting.

When I presented it to students in Year 11, they identified areas they were already doing well in, even if they were not totally consistent, and areas for immediate improvement. Not all the steps are complicated or difficult. For example, one of the writing steps is simply: 'I consider my audience'; one for reading is: 'I read the text thoroughly and consider its context.'

I now tend to break teaching materials down by a given step. When working towards the speaking and listening element with Year 8, I showed students an example of what a good speech looked like, and linked each aspect back to the scheme. Then I asked them to focus on

one thing at a time. In a recent lesson, for instance, students focused on S5, which is: 'I speak fluently without hesitation, deviation or repetition.'

The Eden Method shows students precisely what they have to do and consequently they are taking more responsibility for reaching their personal targets and not just waiting for me to tell them what they need to work on. In fact, many are starting to set their own targets, which gives them a sense of independence and pride as they start to achieve them.

The program is very easy and accessible for pupils and staff alike.

The Eden Method pricing is from £5 + VAT/student for their whole time in your setting, which includes all resources and unlimited technical support. www.eden-method.com



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