

Timetables, Toxicity, and Discovery

Before we get to our usual smorgasbord of delight and discovery, a reminder that the Teacher Tapp 10K is back on. More teachers tapping helps us share your voice more authoritatively. And it makes it easier to do those critical breakdowns of answers, spotting whether teachers' responses differ by phase, subject, age or favourite pen colour. The magic number for us is 10,000 respondents. Some days we're above, some days we're below... so to encourage you to respond, every day we get more than 10,000 respondents, one lucky tappster will get a bundle of Teacher Tapp goodies to say thank you. So, as ever, keep tapping. (T&Cs [here](#).)

Who am I teaching? Delayed timetables

It is the last week of the summer holidays before secondary teachers start dealing with GCSE and A Level results, yet 8% of secondary teachers have not been given their timetable next year! Two thirds have seen the final version of their timetable and the rest have some draft or approximate view of what they are teaching. We guess this is one way to make the summer easier: you can't prepare for classes when you don't know who you'll be teaching.

Is your school a toxic school?

This week, we asked whether you had ever worked in a school which you thought was a toxic environment. Almost two thirds of you said you had: 67% of primary teachers and 63% of secondary teachers.

We had a look at who exactly said they had encountered this:

- There wasn't much difference between state-funded and private schools
- Women were more likely than men to say they had worked in a toxic environment (by 6 percentage points)

We asked teachers who said they had worked in a toxic environment to tell us more in a follow-up question. Two thirds of you mentioned school leadership in your responses. Complaints about leadership often focus on workload or expectations - but in this case, only 10% of you mentioned this. The greater concern was interpersonal relationships: 15% of you mentioned the word bullying, and 20% mentioned favourites or cliques.

What about these cliques then? We asked whether you felt there were cliques forming in your

school undermining wellbeing: 59% of you said yes. The figures were similar for primary and secondary schools – and were similar at all levels of seniority.

We did see differences by the demographic of your school however. The richer your intake, the less likely you were to see cliques forming. Why might this be? Could unstable staffing create conflict? Or is it the additional demands of teaching in a poorer area putting staff and their relationships under stress? We'll keep digging.

Over the past year, have you ever felt there were cliques forming in your school, which undermined confidence, excluded staff socially or impacted wellbeing in other ways?



Question answered by 9,172 teachers on 03/08/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)

■ Yes
■ Not sure
■ No

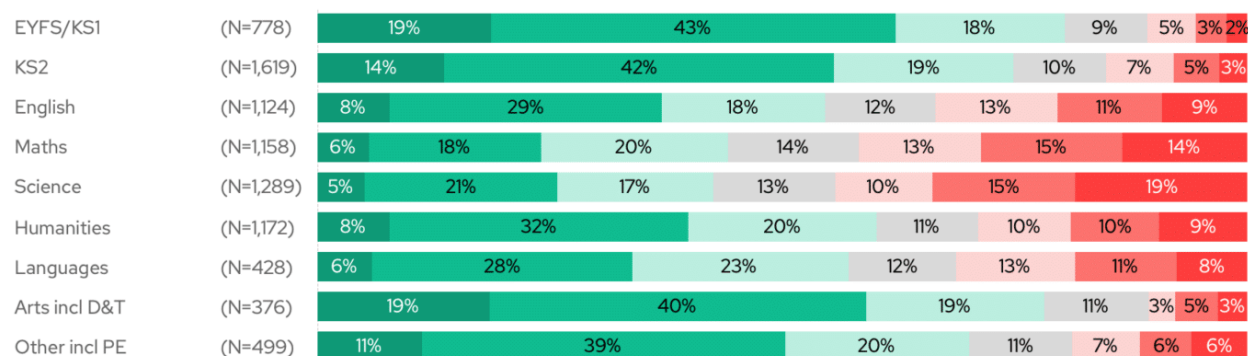
What we discovered about discovery learning

This week, we asked whether you agreed students learn best when they discover things for themselves. The answer was... but before we get to the answer, there was some doubt about the question. Did we mean discovery, as in leaving students to work out things for themselves, or discovery as in making meaning for themselves? Did 'learn best' mean 'make the most efficient use of time', or 'make the most memorable learning experience.' And so on...

It's not a perfect question, we discovered, but we stuck with this wording because we first asked this question, worded the same way, five years ago (!). Interestingly, there hasn't be a huge amount of movement: 66% of teachers agreed students learn best through discovery in 2018 – a number unchanged in 2023. There had been some changes (slightly fewer teachers 'strongly' agree, slightly more 'somewhat' agree – but none of it's enough to hang anything on).

But the Xsphere (the former twittersphere) most wanted to hear was how things broke down by subject. And, as many expected, primary teachers are more enthusiastic about discovery learning – maths and science teachers least enthusiastic.

Students learn best when they discover things for themselves

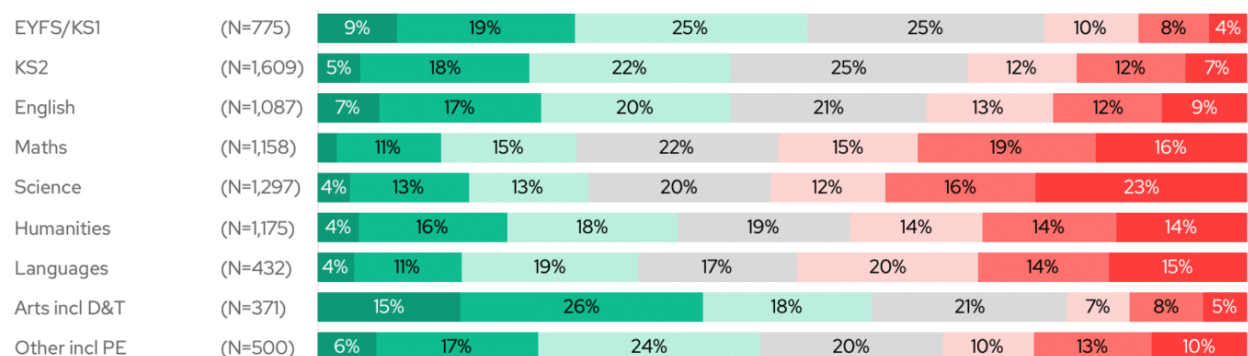


Question answered by 8,443 teachers on 04/08/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



These patterns were elegantly matched when we asked whether getting students to memorise facts inhibits their creativity. Yes it does (say primary and and arts teachers) – no it doesn't (say slightly more maths and science teachers).

I believe getting students to memorise lots of facts inhibits their creativity



Question answered by 8,404 teachers on 02/08/2023 (results weighted to reflect national teacher and school demographics)



See you in 2028 for the next instalment.

This Week's Ups and Downs

On the rise

Student choice on university attendance. The majority of teachers (59%) now think there should be no national targets on university attendance, up from just 44% in 2018. Instead, as many students who wish to go should attend university.

Heading down

■ Drinking alcohol during residential school trips. Only 51% of you feel that staff should be allowed to drink alcohol on residential trips, down from 63% in 2019.

■ Teaching resilience. The proportion of teachers who think schools should explicitly teach students about resilience has fallen from 91% in 2020 to 88% today. However, the majority still think this should simply be part of normal lessons, with no specific curriculum planning needed.

And finally...

The most read tip this week was on: [Visiting a Ready to Learn school](#)

And here are the rest for your reference:

- [A simple model for teacher sustainability and growth](#)
- [Formative assessment does not improve learning](#)
- [How to fail: A school improvement story](#)
- [Experts and novices](#)