

What Teachers Tapped Last Week #31 – 30th April 2018

A controversial week on Teacher Tapp! Lots of thorny opinion questions getting everyone thinking. We've plenty more where that came from! But before we get ahead of ourselves, here's what we learned this week...

1. [How many Teacher Tapp users click the tips and extra questions?](#)

Just under a month ago we changed the app so users can answer extra questions each day. Doing this changed the layout of the app and made the 'daily tip' button less obvious. A user asked this week if the change influenced the number of people reading the tips. Here's the stats: In the weeks before the app change:

- 55% of users looked at the daily tip, &
- 24% of users clicked on the tip

After the app change:

- 44% of users looked at the daily tip (down 11%), &
- 20% of users clicked on them (down just 4%)

Giving people the option between 'more questions' & reading the tips has reduced clicks a little, but only by 4% and we still get around 500 hits for a blog on any given day. (Some get many more).

How are the extra questions going?

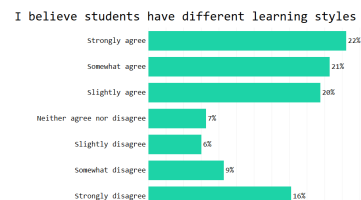
On any given day around 400 users now answer an 6 extra questions on average. In the last month alone the extra question option gave an additional 35,000 extra answers.

Does this mean we need to tweak the app? Possibly.

We could play around with the format, so the 'daily tip' is the only button on the first page, and the extra questions button is after the tip. But, tip click-throughs have only diminished by 4% so far, which might be worth it for the extra question push. Thoughts? Please use the feedback button in your app (in the top left menu) to let us know, or tweet us @TeacherTapp.

2. [Learning Styles](#)

We walked into a mire this week after asking the following question:



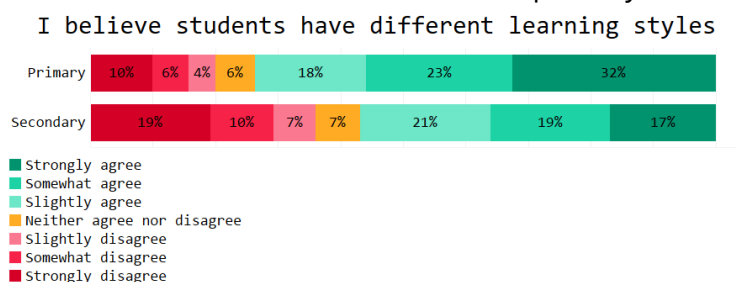
As with many aspects of education, this one divides people sharply. Those who disagree tend to strongly disagree, and Schools Minister Nick Gibb felt the number of people who agreed with the statement was concerning.

<https://twitter.com/NickGibbUK/status/989927235942567936>

https://twitter.com/Kris_Boulton/status/989875314955341830 But many teachers on social media pointed out there's a difference between believing students may have different learning preferences versus believing they can only learn in a certain style. (Or even learn best in it). As Harry Fletcher-Wood explained:

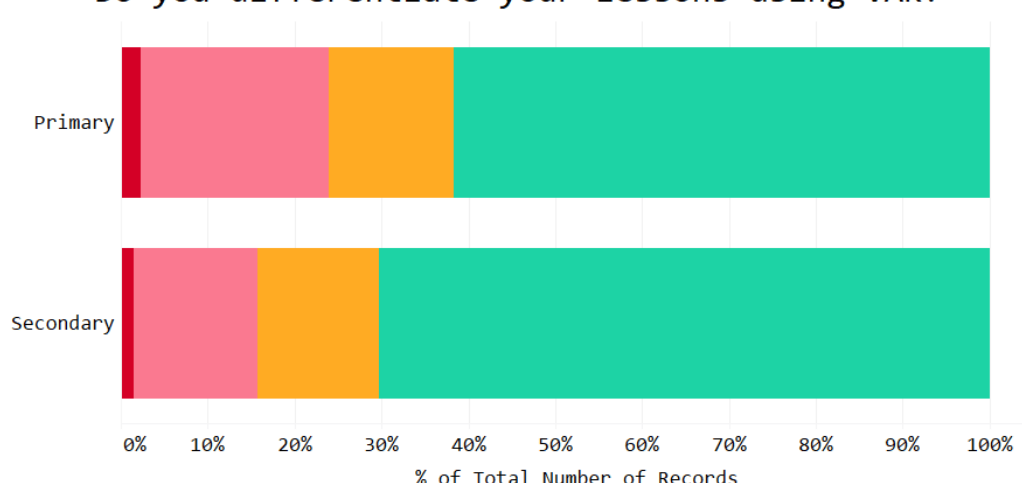
<https://twitter.com/HFletcherWood/status/990666715347513344> We don't know from this one question if people meant preferences, or a matched style, or anything else. However, we have some other data that can help us triangulate. Back in February we asked tappsters if they differentiated their teaching activities based on 'VAK' - that is, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic, which are the most common 'styles'. Only 18% of people said they did

differentiate for such styles, and 15% said they'd never even heard of VAK differentiation. Hence, while more than 60% of people believe children have learning styles (or, perhaps, preferences), we don't have evidence this is translating to masses of teachers changing their activities to accommodate those styles. We do see a small difference between primary and secondary colleagues on both measures:



(In the graphic below, dark red is 'always', pink is 'sometimes', yellow is 'don't know what VAK is', and green is 'no').

Do you differentiate your lessons using VAK?



But clearly this is not the last word in learning styles. Nor is it a cause for alarm. It is simply the start of a broader set of evidence.

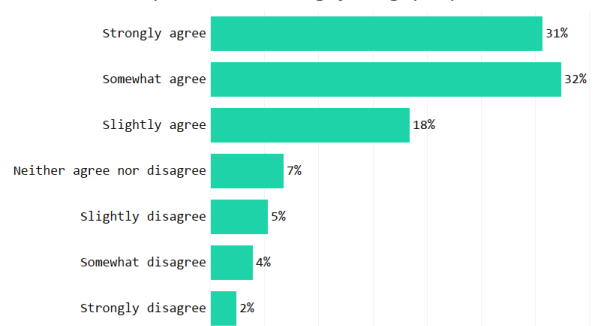
But isn't all this dangerously divisive?

A fair challenge came from one of our users this weekend:

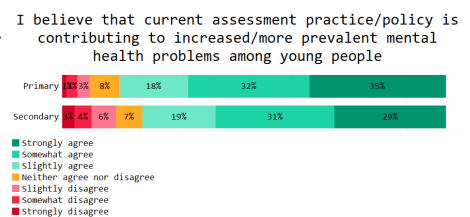
<https://twitter.com/Sabato0612/status/990655290969350144> In particular, some people were unhappy that individual questions are ambiguously worded. But the more we load sub-clauses and hedges and explanations into a question, the harder they are for people to answer accurately. Hence, we ask a range of questions in different ways. E.g. the VAK question and learning styles and we'll ask more in future. In doing so we can start to pick out subtle differences in who answers which question. Will that be a bit scary and uncomfortable? Maybe. But it's not like these opinions don't already exist and impact the way teachers plan lessons or discuss their work. All we want to do is make the implicit more explicit. Could that be dangerous or incorrect? Possibly. But then, a quest for truth often is. We should still try and do it anyway.

3. [Are exams making pupils sick?](#)

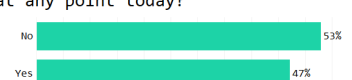
Mental health is a hot topic with Theresa May lumping loads of cash into schools to help reduce issues. But the National Education Union has said the government must accept it is 'responsible' for a purported rise in mental illness among young. Teachers agree. 63% of teachers strongly or somewhat agreed that school assessment in particular is increasing mental health problems among young people. I believe that current assessment practice/policy is contributing to increased/more prevalent mental health problems among young people



Primary teachers were most concerned – with 67% in strong or somewhat agreement. Secondary teachers were close behind with 60%.

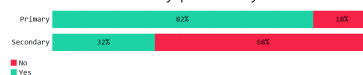


The view from the government so far is that teachers [more](#) are responsible for ensuring stress is not transferred to children. Or, as Nick Gibb hinted, if children did exams then perhaps they may be less stressed. You can make your own mind up on the likelihood of that one! 4. [A quick check on the state of teaching assistants](#) We have [written before about the problem of polls looking at teaching assistants](#). But we thought we'd check in again, now our sample is bigger, and see if we found the same pattern. If you ask teachers about how often they have a teaching assistant, it will look like half do, and half don't. Did you have a teaching assistant in your classroom at any point today?

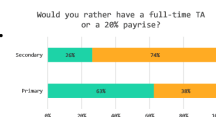


But this masks a huge variation between primary and secondary teachers. The majority of primary teachers have a TA for at least one hour each day, whereas a majority of secondary teachers do not. This replicates our finding from earlier in the year.

Did you have a teaching assistant in your classroom at any point today?

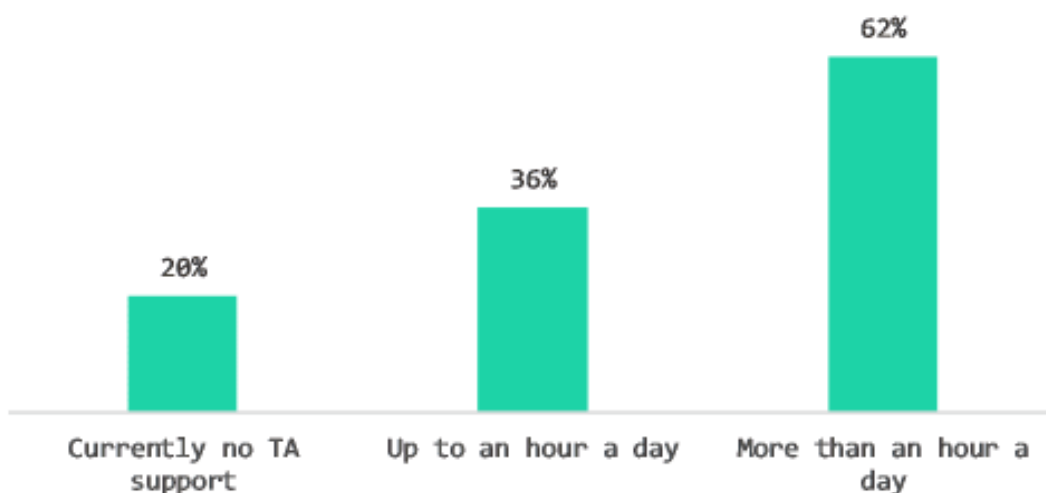


This matters because the more contact you have with a teaching assistant, the more likely you are to think they are useful. Hence, if you ask teachers would they rather have a TA or a payrise, most secondary teachers want cash and primary ones want assistants.



And those who already have a TA for more than an hour are the ones who most want a full-time assistant.

Those preferring a full-time TA over a 20% payrise

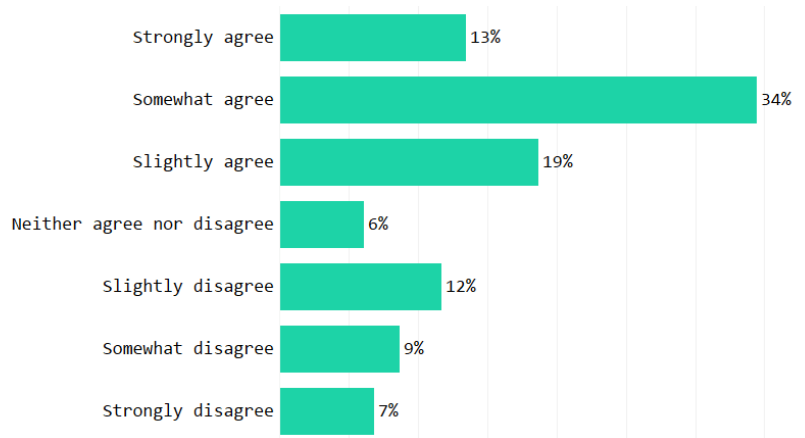


Hence, if the government wants further reductions in teaching assistants it is going to have to get over the fact that a a lot of primary teachers will be very unhappy about the idea.

5. The poorer you are, the harsher we go

'No excuses' schools get headlines in the press because of their strict behaviour policies. Many headteachers who push this form of schooling will tell you that it's rare across the wider school establishment. Yet, this week's figures show that 66% of teachers said they agreed in some way with 'no excuses' policies.

I'm a believer in a 'no excuses' behaviour policy

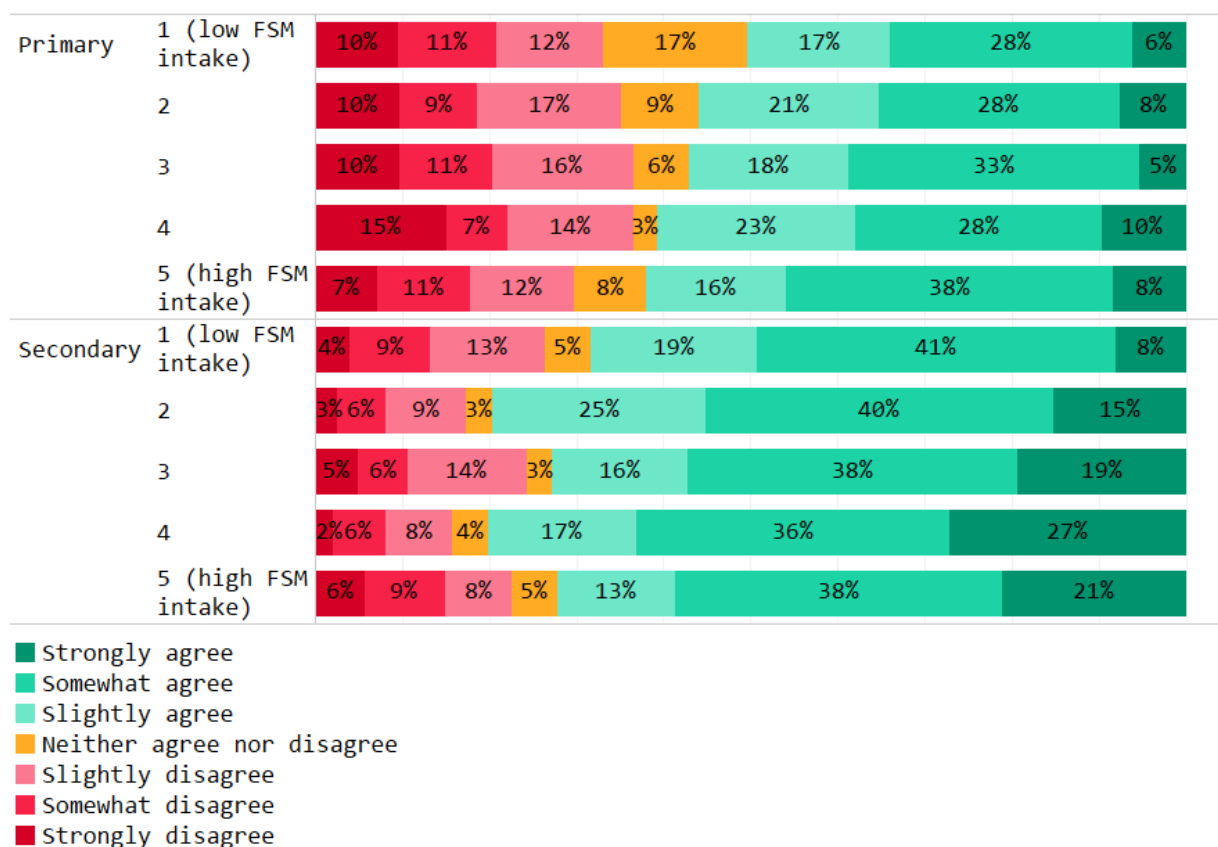


Teachers also showed support for:

- Same-day detentions: 78%
- Sanctions for talking in class: 73%
- Sanctions for failure to do homework: 71%

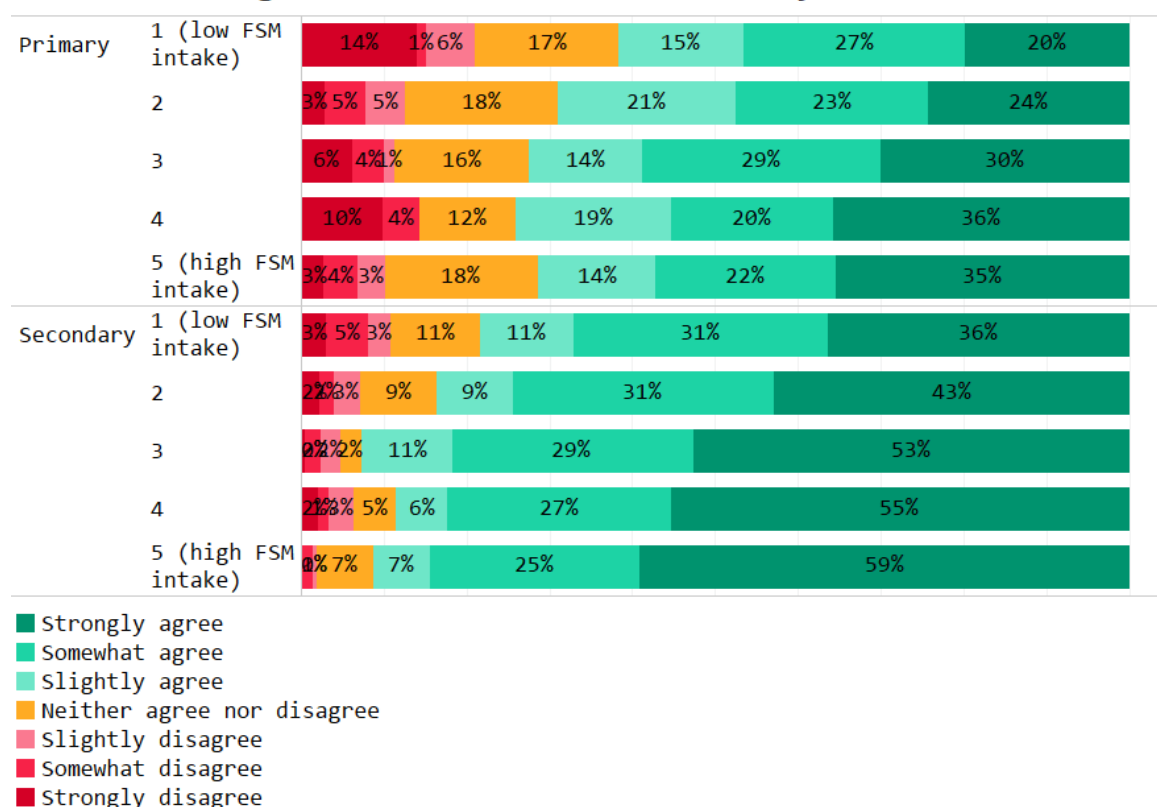
As a profession, teachers are more strict than one might believe from media coverage. But is there a difference depending on the type of pupils in a school? Some 'no excuses' advocates believe strictness is more necessary when pupils are from poorer families (either because they feel these families are less likely to model boundaries, or because such families have a greater desire for strictness). The table below splits teacher beliefs by the FSM intake of the schools where they currently teach. The top line of the graph shows that among primary schools with the lowest proportion of FSM pupils, just 6% of teachers strongly agree with a 'no excuses' behaviour policy. Contrast this with the bottom line, which shows that in secondary schools with the highest proportion of FSM pupils, 21% of teachers strongly agree - more than 3 times higher!

I'm a believer in a 'no excuses' behaviour policy



Teachers in secondary schools in poorer areas consistently showed up as stricter on all aspects of behaviour compared to colleagues in all primary schools (regardless of intake affluence).

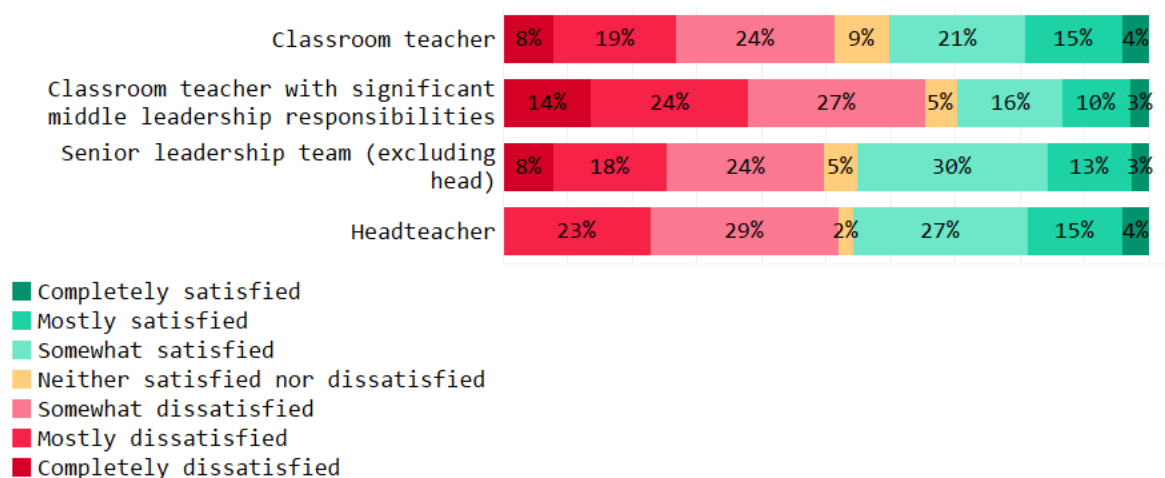
I'm a great believer in same-day detentions



Is this fair? It appears your view may depend on where you teach. Or do the strictest teachers magnetise to the poorest schools? That's a thinker...

6. The Curse of Middle Management

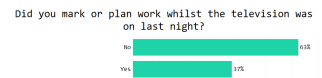
Middle managers are notoriously the most stressed workers in all professions. Teaching appears to be no different. Previous findings revealed that classroom teachers with middle leadership responsibilities worked the longest hours and reported most difficulty balancing expectations. This week learned middle leaders are also the most dissatisfied with their leisure time, too. **How satisfied are you with the amount of leisure time you have?**



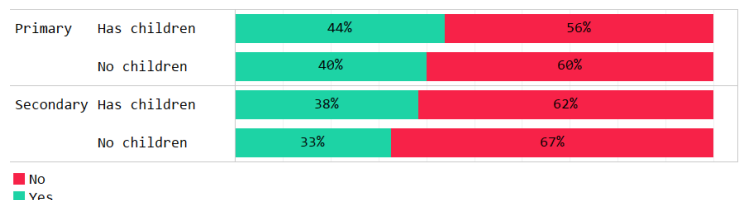
As in past results, we also found no headteachers were completely dissatisfied with their leisure time - compared to 14% of middle leaders. Why this discrepancy? One for everyone involved in the line management of middle leaders to ponder.

7. Marking in front of the television

Want some good news? Fewer teachers this week marked or planned in front of the television compared to when we asked back in October. Back then the 'yes' figure was 41%. But it is still slightly bonkers that one in three teachers is working each evening in front of the TV. Remember: this isn't just 'did you work'. It is a very specific question!



As we've been looking into the impact of family life on workload, we decided to separate out those with children versus those without... Did you mark or plan work whilst the television was on last night?



The biggest difference was primary vs secondary, with secondary teachers doing less telly-marking whether they had children or not. But there is a marked difference between primary teachers with children and secondary teachers who do not. Could gender or SLT roles be causing some of the difference? Possibly, (we can check for that in future). For now, however, the mystery of the TV-markers is starting to become clearer. ?? **

8. Finally, as ever, we learned that you really love our daily tips, so here are the links for last week:

[How long should exams be? 10 Principles of Rosenshine's Instruction](#) [Children are optimists - the pros and cons](#) [How to break down a task for a struggling child](#) [Genetics and IQ: A primer](#) [Learning styles myths: where did they come from?](#) *

Right folks - over and out for another week...

In the meantime, keep sharing what we are doing. Here's a [powerpoint slide \(with script\)](#), a [PDF](#), and a [black-and-white one-pager](#) to help. Remember, we need more of you before we can do the really exciting and detailed analysis! Enjoy the rest of the week... ** Enjoyed this post and want to join our Teacher Tapp panel? Sign up via the [iPhone App Store](#) or the [Android App Store](#). You can also check out more at www.teachertapp.com