

Why TASC?

By Alessio Bernardelli

Have you ever felt that most of the time you spend with your classes is used to spoon feed your pupils? Have you ever been frustrated because you seem to teach to the exam and your pupils don't seem to develop any real problem solving skills, creativity, or independence?

I have the good fortune to teach in Wales where the Welsh Assembly Government has made the bold and courageous decision to abolish SAT examinations at the end of KS2 and KS3. They have also released the new National Curriculum and the Skills Framework 2008, which has applied a radical shift from content to skills. These two documents have not only encouraged us but almost forced our Science Department to seriously consider and actively seek to develop new approaches to our teaching and learning strategies. What we found ourselves in need of was a structure that would allow our KS3 pupils to develop those essential skills outlined by WAG. The more we considered the WAG's documents, the more we became convinced that TASC is the Thinking Skills framework that best matched our needs and the skills that WAG is trying to develop in schools across Wales. My personal opinion is not only that the documents proposed by WAG are highly commendable in their vision, but that TASC fits very well in this vision because it is the most comprehensive and structured Thinking Skills framework I have ever come across. In addition, the wedges and their additional questions are so pupil friendly that even very young learners are able to use the framework easily. What I love most about TASC is its simplicity and yet amazing insight of the human brain and its logic. This remarkable mix basically allows even the youngest children to understand how their brain works and to learn how to use their minds to their full potential!

I introduced TASC in my Department a couple of years ago and the outcomes have been encouraging. A good number of our pupils has told us not only that TASC helps them learn more effectively, but also that the framework has changed their views of Science. In one case so much that this pupil commented: "Before I thought Science was lame, but now I think it's great!". But the outcomes didn't just include raised enjoyment of the subject, but also remarkable achievements of individual pupils who had been identified as being very challenging and with very poor skills. One such example is a yr 7 pupil whose writing skills were very worrying and who would refuse to do much of the work set in class. Well, during a TASC on circuits he exceeded our expectations by a light year, by not only becoming very engaged, but also by solving really complex situations and circuits well before anyone else in the class. In fact, in the extension exercise he solved and drew the correct circuit diagram in a much simpler way and using less wires than the example I had drawn in the Scheme of Work to show the other members of our team a possible solution.

With TASC we are hoping to create more independent and mature learners who can really use and develop their wonderful brains to their highest potential and who feel safe to make mistakes, and actually see these as challenges that will help them move forward rather than as failure.

"As long as I can learn something from the situation I am in it is impossible for me to fail" Anthony Robbins. I believe TASC, its wedges and approach to learning does just that, i.e. makes it impossible for the User to fail!