Cambridge

Issue 44, July 2024, Cambridge Schools Conference special edition

Outlook

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Effective communication: from competence to confidence



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Building the future of international education together



I'm delighted to see so many school leaders and teachers come together for the in-person Cambridge Schools Conference 2024, this year taking place here in Cambridge. By sharing global experiences and aligning our efforts, we can co-create the best teaching

and learning environment to make sure students are ready for a world which will look very different from today.

Climate change is with us and accelerating. What students learn, and where and how they are taught, is already being impacted by climate change. Here too we are coming together as a community to understand how best to integrate climate change education across our curricula and support schools to ensure students are equipped to take action and thrive in a changing world (p. 8 and p. 14).

Technological change is already upon us and moving at speed in the case of artificial intelligence (AI). At Cambridge, our experts are working with members of our community to understand how teaching, learning and assessment can be optimised using AI. Even though the future of international education is intertwined with such technologies, the human element remains irreplaceable. AI may be able to enhance parts of the education system, but it's the personal relationship between teacher and learner, and the interaction among learners, that are fundamental to the uptake of education.

Solving, or benefitting from, global challenges such as these requires people to communicate across borders, something which our 2024 global winner of the Dedicated Teacher Awards leverages to great success (p. 19).

I believe that an international education enriches students' learning experiences and promotes opportunities for young people to travel, pursue their education globally if they choose, and bring their expertise back to their home countries. At the heart of this cross-cultural learning is excellent communication. The skills of how we best harness speaking and listening in the education system are the theme of this particular conference.

I hope to meet many more of you here or at the next conference, because the future of education will not be achieved in isolation: it will be driven by us working together to help Cambridge learners be ready for the world.

Rod Smith, Group Managing Director, International Education



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Any feedback on this issue?

What would you like to read about in the next issue? Contact us at:

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cambridgeinternational.org

Cover illustration: Tetiana Yakunova



from competence to confidence

The ability to communicate effectively is central to the success of a learner, teacher or school leader.

The evidence is now clear that teaching effective communication skills significantly improves educational outcomes.

This year's Cambridge Schools Conference theme, 'Effective communication: from competence to confidence', highlights how important it is for us all to reflect honestly on how well we listen, speak, read and write.

Effective communication extends far beyond the mechanics of language. Educators can focus on nurturing learners' ability to:

- Craft compelling messages: Developing the skills to express thoughts and ideas creatively and clearly, both verbally and in writing, empowers learners to become effective communicators.
- Embrace active listening: By fostering an environment where learners can truly understand and respond to others' perspectives, we lay the foundations for meaningful dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.
- Hone critical thinking: Equipping learners with the ability to analyse information, form well-reasoned arguments and navigate the complexities of a constantly evolving world is essential for their future success.

 Approach challenges with confidence: Building confidence in expressing and listening to ideas with conviction and purpose allows learners to embrace new opportunities and contend with challenges with a greater appreciation of dialogue and clear expression.

Educators play a pivotal role in unlocking the transformative potential of communication. They can guide learners in understanding the power of language to shape their identities, emotions and interactions with the world around them. They can equip them to harness communication as a tool to inform, entertain and build strong connections with others.

Similarly, school leaders and teachers can consider how well they communicate with each other. This is in terms of how they speak and listen, and the extent to which they encourage a school environment where everyone can express their views and feel valued.

In this magazine, we share examples of effective communication practice through the interviews with our keynote speakers, through student voices and in showcasing the work of Cambridge's global Dedicated Teacher Awards winner.

Recordings of the conference keynote presentations will be available on our website in August at www.cambridgeinternational.org/csc

The future we want:

Cambridge students use their voice

At Cambridge, we believe all students should be given the space to lead and champion the issues that matter to them. Their voices, perspectives and experiences matter.

Cayetana Cicero Sanchez, 16

The Workshop, Mexico



As a secondlanguage English speaker, Cayetana has practised and perfected her communication skills since she was little.

She says the world needs young people's creative and innovative mindsets to achieve change.

'We are agents and leaders of change'

'The world needs change and we are the ones who will make changes. We learn about the issues facing the world at school, and the small adjustments we are currently making will eventually lead to bigger changes. I think we are also learning more things than an average adult, which means we are equipped with more skills to make a difference.'

Cayetana studies Cambridge Global Perspectives™. '[It] equips us with the skills to understand, investigate, analyse, communicate, and so much more. It gives us an understanding of the local and the global. This means we are not only being prepared for the next step of our education and going to the best universities but also for the future and the interconnected world we live in.'

Andrea Nabiya, 17

Braeside Lavington International School, Kenya



"As a student, I have a voice and it should be heard for the same reason everyone else's is heard. I want to see an equitable world, I

want to live in an equitable society and I believe that using my voice has, and will continue to have, an impact. By speaking up, I can raise awareness of key issues and encourage my peers to take action. I can also find solutions in places often neglected by the eyes of the experienced.'

'Finding a solution is only as useful as your ability to communicate it'

Andrea emphasised the role her Cambridge qualifications have played in helping her find and use her voice. 'Finding a solution is only as useful as your ability to communicate it. This is a skill that Cambridge Global Perspectives has helped me to cultivate, so not only am I able to present an idea, but I can also do so effectively, ensuring that those listening have as good an understanding as my own.'

Remoratile Sebekedi. 15

Nova Pioneer International School, South Africa



In South Africa, where young people make up more than 60% of the population, their meaningful engagement

beyond the classrooms is pivotal for a secure future.

'Our Cambridge curriculum offers us many opportunities to think critically and add our voice to the issues we care about. In the classroom, we take part in debates. This helps us come up with ways of solving problems, and it means we have the ability to communicate confidently and boldly – particularly with those with opposing views.'

A confident public speaker, Remoratile is developing her voice outside of the classroom and hopes to use it to help remove barriers to education.

'I want to take a stand and make a difference in issues that deeply affect my community such as teenage pregnancy, drugs, and negative attitudes towards going to school in general. These are examples of barriers to getting a high-quality education and contributing to the future we all want.'



The power of speaking and listening

Dr Neil Mercer, Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge and Director of Oracy Cambridge, explains why oracy is important, but often misunderstood.

'If there's one situation that proved how important oracy is, it's the Covid pandemic,' says Dr Neil Mercer, founder of Oracy Cambridge: the Centre for Effective Spoken Communication, which aims to promote oracy in schools and in wider society. 'At the end of lockdown, there was a review of how the pandemic had affected everyone's professional work at Hughes Hall, the College where Oracy Cambridge is based, and there was a strong realisation that much had been lost by not having face-to-face meetings.'

Using technology

'When you have a Zoom or Teams meeting, you tend to just get the business done, but with a face-to-face meeting, you come out afterwards and discuss what was said or talk about what else you're doing, so you develop relationships around the edges of the meeting.' The same applies to schools, says Neil. 'When students work in teams or groups, that's still done best in a face-to-face setting.'

Technology can, however, be a useful adjunct, he points out, giving the example of Talkwall [talkwall.uio.no], an online system which Cambridge educational researchers developed with colleagues at the University of Oslo, Norway. 'A system like Talkwall allows a teacher to bring together the results of what various groups have been talking about so outcomes can be shared, leading to a classroom discussion.'

Interpretations of oracy

The word oracy was invented in the UK in the 1960s by Professor of Education Andrew Wilkinson, who defined it as: the ability to communicate well through speaking and listening. 'The word has not taken off in countries such as the US, for example,' says Neil. 'Instead, there is a history of what's called rhetoric – encouraging students to get better at expressing themselves through public presentations – but this is only one part of oracy.'

"Introduce oracy to young children, in the same way that you would with reading, maths and writing."

Oracy Cambridge is seeing strong international interest in oracy in quite a few countries. 'China is putting it into the National Curriculum, an oracy forum is being set up in Japan and Singapore is seeing oracy as one of the areas of competence that young people should develop,' he says. However, Neil points out that the interpretation of oracy can vary and one reason is because of language: 'There is no equivalent word in many languages for something that doesn't trivialise talk but gives it the same sort of status as literacy and numeracy.'



Starting young

To enable students to leave school with competence in oracy and be ready for the world, Neil believes you need to 'begin at the beginning' and introduce oracy to young children, in the same way that you would with reading, maths and writing. 'One of the things the pandemic illustrated is just how much some young children rely on entry to school to help them develop a strong repertoire of spoken language skills, so the earlier you can start the better,' he says.

Developing oracy skills early also means students are learning how to work better in a group, how to communicate and how to be confident in standing up in class, all before the added issue of teenage self-consciousness. 'If children learn those skills at primary school, by the time they enter secondary school, it's a little bit more second nature,' says Neil.

Communication is a standalone skill

Neil advises teachers to explain to students who have English as a second language that oracy isn't language-specific. 'Students are learning communication skills not English-language skills and therefore students should be able to practise and develop those skills in their first language too,' he says. There will be cultural variations, however:

For example, in Mexico, where we've had links with UNAM for a long time, it's considered rude to disagree with someone overtly, so when we set up ground rules for working together, we needed to make it clear that you're not being rude if you constructively disagree.' UNAM is the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

Taking a whole-school approach

The evaluations that Oracy Cambridge has conducted with international schools, including recent research in Switzerland and Hungary, have concluded that oracy education requires a whole-school approach. 'Oracy must mean the same thing for all teachers and all students,' says Neil. 'If, when students move through the years or across different subject classes, oracy means something different, it won't work.'

"Oracy must mean the same thing for all teachers and all students."

The win-win of oracy education

Some schools might view oracy education as an extra burden. 'School leaders often say that they'd love to do oracy in schools but that the curriculum is so crowded, there's no room and they have to focus on subject learning,' he says. 'What we know from research, however, is that introducing oracy doesn't sacrifice attainment in other subjects. If students are able to think more clearly and effectively using language, this will support their overall learning, so it's a win-win.'

Professor Neil Mercer is delivering the keynote 'Becoming a good speaker and listener' at the Cambridge Schools Conference. A recording will be available on our website in August: www.cambridgeinternational.org/csc



Communicating the climate emergency

Dr Rupert Higham, Associate Professor in Educational Leadership at Institute of Education (University College London's Faculty of Education and Society), explains how schools can discuss climate change issues with students.

'Students are already frightened about their future,' says Dr Rupert Higham, who runs UCL's Applied Educational Leadership MA. 'That anxiety is a completely rational response to an awful situation and an even more awful prospect. We know from research that anxiety among young people is worst when they are given facts about the multiple crises we face but aren't given the knowledge, skills or opportunities to take practical action. Our responsibility as educators is to prepare and support students to take responsibility as they choose, when they feel they can.'

Rupert, a former teacher, stresses that this doesn't mean putting responsibility on young people to tackle climate change: 'There is a danger in education that we say we'll be doing our bit as educators by teaching them to be ready, but that's not good enough. They need to see us lead.'

Using relatable resources

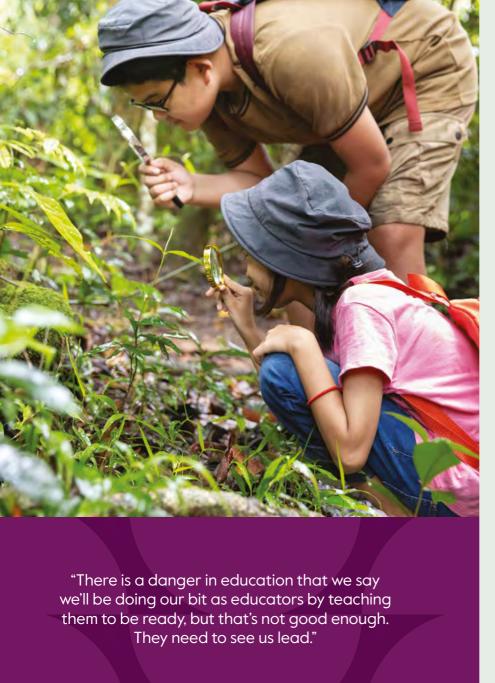
Rupert believes schools need to get closer to the heart of where young people are hearing misinformation and disinformation. 'I've seen some recent evidence that the number of young people not believing in climate change is surging significantly as a result of a massive increase in misinformation, particularly on TikTok,' he says. 'Schools could consider how they might use the sorts

of materials that students are using outside the school gates to help build their skills around fact-checking, seeking alternative viewpoints, critical comparison, recognising cognitive bias and engaging in respectful, but powerful, dialogues. We are all entitled to express our beliefs but,' he says, 'when people reject the scientific consensus on climate change, not with credible evidence but with conspiracies, remaining balanced and impartial can be challenging.'

Finding time for climate change education

UCL research recently found that there are many teachers and headteachers who don't feel confident teaching or acting on climate change and sustainability education. 'They care and they'd love to do more,' says Rupert. 'However, they feel so much pressure to improve their test results that having the space to think about climate change issues, how it might work across subjects or how they might give students the opportunities to think and act around climate change, feels too much.'

He suggests that schools move away from seeing environmental education as an additional body of information that needs to be added on top of what students already do, and instead weave topics and activities into other disciplines across the curriculum. 'Schools should become places where students learn



The power of school leaders

Rupert believes leaders have more power than they realise when it comes to climate change education, and that networks of schools around the world have an opportunity to model change and call for climate change education in unison, 'Good school leaders are valuable, respected members of their community and they are loved a lot more than politicians,' he says. 'That influence is magnified a thousand-fold when schools speak together. If they are brave enough to stick up for the planet and call on the community for help in doing that, the call will be answered. Imagine if ten, or a hundred, or a thousand school leaders presented a manifesto for change in education to respond to climate change threats -Politicians would be more likely to take note!'

about and respond to climate change,' he says. 'By making it a core organisational principle, you can move away from it feeling like a burden and see it as an engine that drives the school and the community.'

Rupert will expand on his ideas in his keynote on 'Educating for communication, confidence and moral purpose on a fragile planet' at the

Cambridge Schools Conference. A recording will be available on our website in August: www.cambridgeinternational.org/csc



Read our introduction paper:

Empowering Learners Through Climate Change Education





Shifting the narrative

Dr Linda Fisher is Professor of Languages Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge, and Dr Karen Forbes is Associate Professor in Second Language Education. They describe the positives of multilingualism and how it can help develop future-ready learners.

'I was at a European symposium recently where I was still hearing about children being punished for speaking their own language in school,' begins Dr Linda Fisher, who works closely with Dr Karen Forbes on projects that investigate multilingual identity. 'Schools can want to impose a language because they think it will be better for academic achievement and parents can think that too, but there's a huge amount of diversity in schools in terms of background and literacy. Each child needs a different level of support.'

There are a number of academic and social reasons for embracing the use of home languages. For example, drawing on a student's first language can sometimes help them understand a concept, explains Linda: 'It might be useful to go into another language, or for the student to discuss the concept with a buddy in that language. Teachers need to help parents understand this too, so if a student goes home and says they were speaking in their first language, the parent will understand.'

Developing wider skills

'Students can be seen as lacking in English language skills and that's viewed as a problem to be fixed, as opposed to seeing their other languages as a strength and something to build on,' agrees Karen. 'We need to shift that narrative. It's important to

think more broadly about the wider skills that having knowledge of another language or learning a language can develop,' she says.

'Students might be learning French or Spanish in school, for example, but think that they will never go to France or Spain, so why do they need to know that language? In fact, learning any form of language, even if it's at a lower level, develops communication skills, which can also help people to communicate in their first language,' says Karen. 'People who know other languages, or who have experienced other languages, tend to be more culturally competent, more empathetic towards others and more able to work with people from different contexts and different backgrounds.'

There are other advantages too. 'We see evidence of links between learning or speaking other languages and cognitive skills – things like problem solving, being able to see problems from different angles and different perspectives and taking different approaches to things. Roles are changing very quickly, so we're preparing students for an unknown future where it's going to be increasingly important for them to have skills that can be applied in different ways. Those wider skills are valued by employers, for example,' says Karen.

The effect of AI on language learning

Both Karen and Linda see multilingualism as just as important in a world that is advancing at a fast pace and one where simultaneous translation can be done by artificial intelligence (AI).

Karen says: 'Just as calculators have become a tool in maths, Al is a tool. Communication is not just about the literal translation of words. It's about that intercultural communication. If you are going to have an international team working on climate change, for example, those more complex questions are going to require really effective communication and understanding of different positions and nuances as well as the building of relationships.'

Linda agrees: 'I don't think there's any point denying AI is a very useful tool. It can be democratic in a sense because it's cheap, but it won't replace the need to realise why it's helping you and you can't replace what's been described as "soulful" communication with a piece of technology.'

Considering international perspectives

Multilingualism can help students see their own culture from a different perspective, says Linda: 'As the world moves, we've got to all stop considering our own lifestyle as the norm. Learning a new language can help you think more deeply about your own culture.'

It is also important from a research perspective says Karen: 'Sometimes evidence comes from a narrow English-language setting but gathering broader perspectives of what people are doing in different countries and contexts can improve research.'

Professor Linda Fisher and Dr Karen Forbes are delivering a joint keynote on 'Multilingualism and identity: understanding others and communicating with confidence'.

A recording of their keynote presentation will be on our website in August at www.cambridgeinternational.org/csc



Creating genuine multilingual spaces

Linda wants to encourage more schools to move from being monolingual to multilingual spaces. 'That includes how languages are represented physically in schools on the walls and around the school,' she says.

Karen agrees. 'It shouldn't be done in a tokenistic way. Sometimes you see signs for "welcome" in different languages and a school describing itself as multilingual and multicultural but the reality of what happens in the classroom is different. There needs to be broader thinking about what multilingualism actually means in practice – where those languages can be actively valued and used as resources.'

Being inclusive about multilingualism

Linda and Karen pose the idea that schools should consider multilingualism from a different perspective altogether. 'To be more inclusive, in our research we identify everybody as multilingual,' says Linda. 'We say that anything you do to communicate is your "basket of language", so it could be sign language or coding or named languages. There's no actual proficiency level that you need to hit to be able to call yourself a multilingual. Everyone is multilingual but you've just got a different set of resources. Everyone can be part of that.'

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Visit our stand at the Cambridge Schools Conference 6th & 7th July 2024, The Perse School, Cambridge







Awe and wonder in early years

Communication is key to developing important skills from birth to five years of age, and with more schools providing early years education, two experts share their advice below.

Q. How can we develop skills like comprehension and vocabulary in the early years classroom?

A. Alison Borthwick, an international education and mathematics advisor, and Cambridge author: I know it sounds simple, but make sure that all adults use correct vocabulary. We sometimes think that with young children we need to use different words to make it simple. Children are clever and can use extraordinary, clever language, whether it's science or mathematics vocabulary for example. Young learners absolutely love new language, so it's important to use it. Explain it if it's more complex, but certainly don't shy away from it.

Use questions that promote thinking – ones that inspire awe and wonder – and that really draw attention to comprehension. When you've read something, pause and invite children to think about, 'What would happen if...?' 'Why do you think the author wrote that?' 'What do you think it means?'. This will enable them to have a level of comprehension that is different from you telling them.

A. Abigail Barnett, Director for Cambridge 3–19 Curriculum, responsible for the Cambridge Early Years programme at Cambridge: The play-based approach that we promote as best practice for early years is a good context for developing speaking and listening skills. Setting up a guided play session for children, with various kinds of toys and objects that spark curiosity, will allow them to naturally start talking to one another about what they're doing.

There's a good opportunity here for you to introduce new vocabulary, but in a context that children understand. Remember, children at this age have a great ability to take on new vocabulary all the time. Those of you with your own children will have experienced this – cases where suddenly there's an explosion of new words. They'll also have their favourite words and ones they want to use all the time!

I think our early years learning environments can really support this process.

Alison and Abigail continued to answer teachers' questions around play-based learning, assessment, parental involvement and English as a second language for our Cambridge Brighter



Thinking Podcast, 'episode 45: Early Years Teaching and Learning'. To listen to the full episode, scan the QR code.

Engineering a better climate through education

According to an international survey, 80% of engineers believe that they can help tackle the climate crisis through their work, with 77% of them actively seeking out roles that prioritise climate change¹. Curricula must evolve to ensure that we are preparing students to be engineers of the future through climate change education

The Earth continues to heat up. The global-average temperature for the 12 months May 2023 to April 2024 is the highest on record, 1.61°C hotter than the pre-industrial years of 1850–1900². Consequences of this extreme heat are seen in the destructive wildfires, storms and floods being triggered around the world, and there is huge concern as to how these weather events are impacting structures such as bridges, roads and buildings.

For example, bridges crossing rivers are designed for maximum flood levels, but these levels are rising due to climate change flooding. And new research³ reveals that underground climate change could impact the stability of infrastructure in residential areas: cities with older buildings, such as those in Europe, could be more susceptible to underground heat changes which can cause the ground to swell up to 12 mm and shrink by 8 mm.

Engineers are focused on the risk of climate change. Almost every branch of engineering is incorporating climate change thinking into its work both to understand how to combat it, and how to harness its effects for good. This includes retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency, designing water conservation technologies, developing clean energy transportation, promoting biodiversity and so on.

Universities too are already embracing climate change in their engineering studies. For example, a pilot programme in the US across five US-based higher education institutions is embedding climate change teaching into engineering degrees⁴.

How can schools prepare engineers of the future?

To ensure that students arrive at university engineering courses equipped to work in a climate changed world, climate change education must be integrated into subjects that lead to engineering qualifications such as design & technology and economics, as well as more obvious mathematics and sciences.

Creating this link from school through to higher education was the aim of a recent meeting at Cambridge University Press & Assessment. Researchers and academics from the Department of Engineering at the University of Cambridge and Cambridge Zero challenged Cambridge educationalists to consider a much broader set of subjects, and adapt some ways of teaching engineering-related skills, in preparing students for engineering careers.



A systems-thinking approach

Engineers must take a wide approach to problemsolving and design, known as systems thinking, and consider the entire system rather than focusing on individual components of a project. 'We don't talk to our students about how to build a sustainable bridge or electric cars,' said Dr Dai Morgan, Course Director for the MPhil in Engineering for Sustainable Development at the University of Cambridge. 'Instead, we support them in developing a systems approach to their thinking, which equips them with the skills to ask questions that lead to better solutions. This is because what a good bridge looks like in one location might not be right for another.' Dai went on to explain how engineering must produce solutions that work within the context of the real world. 'Engineering for sustainable development means working within Earth's finite limits and the biodiversity and resources systems

that we rely on. A deep understanding of those is essential for engineers of the future, he said.

Dr Edoardo Borgomeo, Associate Professor of Water Engineering at the University of Cambridge, went further in describing how climate change should be brought into more subjects that support engineering. He described building dams and desalination plants to provide enough clean water in areas of shortage while at the same time ensuring that countries downstream are not impacted by the infrastructure. This can involve knowledge of politics and sociology.

An educational responsibility

Supported by such expert knowledge, Cambridge educationalists are working to meaningfully integrate climate change education across Cambridge curricula for ages 5–19, and understand how some teaching areas could embrace an approach informed by engineering skills. Christine Özden, Global Director for Climate Education at Cambridge, who convened the meeting, spoke of having no other choice than to provide climate change education for the engineers of the future. She concluded: 'As an organisation that reaches 100 million learners around the world, we not only have an incredible opportunity to support learning to tackle the climate crisis, but a responsibility.'

A full report on the meeting will be available on our website in the coming weeks.



To learn more about how International Education at Cambridge is advancing its work on climate change education read our Introduction paper.

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Support for schools

Our high-quality teaching resources help to maximise learning time and enable teachers to keep learners of all backgrounds and abilities engaged and developing at pace.

New lesson planning resources

'Lesson planning' is a new resource to help teachers plan lessons and make sure that planning is directly linked to effective teaching and learning. It includes a step-by-step video covering topics such as different types of planning, objectives and success criteria, and differentiation, assessment and homework.

There is also a lesson planning template and a list of key questions to consider before and after planning a lesson. More resources are coming soon. You can find the lesson planning resources on every syllabus page of the School Support Hub, in the 'Teaching & Learning' section. Go to www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

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Website: www.hoddereducation.com/computing

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Resource: Coursebook with digital access, Digital Coursebook, Digital Teacher's Resource, Practical Skills Workbook with digital access.

Published by: Cambridge University Press & Assessment



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Cambridge teachers have used the tools more than 200 000 times in the past 12 months and have given feedback to help us make improvements and develop new tools. The latest tools include 'Activity dice' which you can customise to help encourage reflection and review, and 'Timeliner' which is ideal to explore chronology and project plans.

We love hearing how you rate the tools and use them in your classrooms – as well as comments such as 'This is amazing' ('Spinner' tool) and 'It's just awesome' ('Names from a hat' tool). We listen to our community of teachers to help us develop impactful resources, so please fill in the feedback forms with the Teaching Tools to share your ideas.

You can access the Teaching Tools at www.cambridgeinternational.org/support



Cambridge Lower Secondary International English

Resource: Student's Book, Workbook, Teacher's Guide, and Digital Resources*

Published by: Marshall Cavendish Education





This series combines the curriculum framework from Cambridge with the Singapore methodology, effectively preparing students for their assessments while delivering ease of use in teaching and learning. It is

aligned to the Cambridge Lower Secondary English as a Second Language curriculum framework (0876).

Website: www.mceducation.com/cambridge-international/cambridge-lower-secondary-english *The digital resources will not go through the Cambridge endorsement process.

Cambridge International AS & A Level Digital Media & Design (2nd edition)

Resource: Student's Book (Print, Ebook)

Published by: Collins



The only endorsed resource written specifically for the revised syllabus (9481), it introduces students to the history of digital media, changes in the digital landscape and the use of industry tools and technologies through

project-based activities.

Website: www.collins.co.uk/digitalmedia
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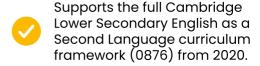
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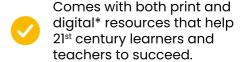
Unique blend of the curriculum framework from Cambridge International Education and Singapore methodology.

Enables students to gain confidence in preparation for their assessments.

2

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*These resources will not go through the Cambridge International Education endorsement process.

In praise of teachers

Read how an online programme set up by the 2024 global winner of the Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards brings the world into the classroom.

Education works best when curriculum, learning, assessment and teaching are closely aligned. These are the fundamentals of an education system like Cambridge, and here we shine the spotlight on the teaching part of this equation by celebrating our Dedicated Teacher global award winner.

International education, with its emphasis on cross-cultural connections and global perspectives, plays an important role in developing well-rounded, future-ready individuals. It's this cross-cultural approach that made English teacher Sydney Engelbert from Keningau Vocational College, stand out to judges of the 2024 Cambridge Dedicated Teacher Awards. Her work illustrates so well how an international education can create future leaders by providing the opportunity for them to communicate with people who hold different points of view.

From the rural setting of her school on the island of Borneo, Sydney has pioneered an online exchange programme with other vocational schools in Southeast Asia so that her students engage with peers across Malaysia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Indonesia. This virtual programme allows them to travel without stepping outside their classroom.

It's not only enhanced students' language skills but has also fostered cultural empathy and a deeper understanding of our interconnected world. Within two years of starting, the programme has benefitted almost 400 students and 50 teachers from participating schools.

At Cambridge, we believe teachers are at the heart of supporting every learner to reach their potential, giving them the confidence they need to thrive and make a positive impact in a changing world. Award entries illustrated the many and varied ways in which passionate teachers push through challenges to deliver education. Whether tackling language barriers to make sure refugees feel welcome in Romania, or opening up the world to students in a remote town in Malaysia through cultural exchange programmes, or creating a sustainability curriculum to help students better understand how the climate crisis impacts China, the teachers on our shortlist demonstrate incredible resilience, dedication and passion. You can read their inspiring stories in the shortlist:

dedicatedteacher.cambridge.org/entries

Congratulations Sydney. And thank you to all teachers for each day that you help to prepare your learners to thrive in and outside the classroom.





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We believe that young children should have the best possible start in life. Cambridge Early Years helps children develop knowledge, understanding and skills to thrive in and outside of school.

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