



Holy Family College

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"Quid retribuam — what shall I give back?"

DIARY

16 June

Youth Day

19-30 June

High School
exams

30 June

End of Term 2

25 July

Term 3 begins

HIGH SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

From Mind/shift

Retrieval Practice

By Katrina Schwartz May 21, 2017

Some of the best learning strategies aren't often used by teachers or students largely because of time pressures in the classroom. Frequent low-stakes quizzes that force students to recall information from their memories, combined with spaced out practice show some of the clearest results.

"Most people don't realize that taking the test can have a direct impact on subsequent retention," Dunlosky said. In his college courses he regularly quizzes students using word stems so that they repeatedly have to recall the information in their notes from memory. Many quiz formats can work for retrieval practice including multiple choice, fill-in the blank, or essay questions. The important thing is that they be low-stakes, so they don't produce anxiety in students or affect their grade.

"When your students take more low stakes tests they get more familiar with what they're struggling with, and so do you, so you can focus more of your teaching and homework on that more challenging content," Dunlosky said. In many ways he's describing formative assessment, a practice teachers have always used, but quizzing isn't just for teachers to take the pulse of the class, it's good for students' brains too.

A study conducted by Andrew Butler in 2010 compared how well students performed on a variety of tests when they either restudied material or took practice tests and restudied. He found that not only did students who studied and took a practice test remember more of the specific information than those who merely restudied, they also performed almost two times better on questions that required them to make inferences.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

Acts 1:10-12

“Students get a really powerful boost in their learning and ability to utilize that knowledge in other contexts,” Dunlosky said. Butler’s study is often cited as an example that retrieval practice can lead to transfer both within a domain and to new ones. “Testing the content, just retrieving the content from memory, allows them to use that content flexibly later,” Dunlosky said.

Blake Harvard teaches AP Psychology to students at James Clemens High School near Huntsville, Alabama. His students are mostly high achieving and college-bound, but still they often don’t know much about effective study strategies. He regularly gives them low-stakes quizzes on material he covered a few days before to both force them to recall the information and to show them the gaps in their learning.

“I find often that with high schoolers it makes sense when they hear it so they believe they’ve got it, but if you ask them a couple of days later they don’t know what they thought they did,” Harvard said. He’s always clear with students that the quizzes are a learning tool, something they can use in all their classes, not another score in the gradebook.

“If they know it’s not in the gradebook the stress isn’t there,” Harvard said. And, paradoxically, when the quiz doesn’t affect their grade, students are more willing to both take it and put some effort in. Harvard then tries to put the onus back on students to fill in the gaps, pointing them to banks of practice AP questions, for example. If everyone missed a concept, he’ll revisit it.

He’s pretty sure these practices are helping students because he has focused more on retrieval strategies this semester and on average his student test scores are up six percent. “There are a ton of variables there, but the one thing I know I’ve changed is my focus on these strategies,” he said. He also hears from students that they find frequent quizzing effective enough that they are using the strategy in other classes.

The latest on Study Skills

John Dunlosky of Kent State University and his collaborators reviewed a large collection of research related to ten different study skills. Their paper on improving students’ learning was published in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*. Dunlosky found that about half of the study skills did not work very well. Current research suggests that the other half are effective.

Here are the 5 study skills that Dunlosky and team found to be the most effective:

- **Elaborative interrogation:** Answering why a fact is true
- **Self-explanation:** Explaining what a section of text or an example problem means to you
- **Practice testing:** Testing yourself on the material you are trying to learn
- **Distributed practice:** Spreading your studying out over several sessions
- **Interleaved practice:** Mixing different kinds of problems together when studying.

Best Study Skills #4: Distributed Practice

- You have a test coming up, oh say, tomorrow. You haven't studied at all. Should you cram for it? Sure. And, good luck.
- For the next time, you'd really do better to space your studying out over the time you have. Do a little at a time over several study sessions. That's the idea behind distributed practice.
- One reason distributed practice aids learning is that you have to re-start your memory for the topic during each study session. Once your memory for the topic is warmed up and moving, doing more is fairly easy. Like a car coasting downhill, it's too easy. Stopping and starting is harder on your memory. That's good (unlike the car), because it strengthens your memory.
- Distributed practice seems to work regardless of how you go about studying. Yet, you can do best by combining it with practice testing. Don't be mad at your instructor for giving you lots of quizzes. They give you a double dose of good learning. Try (and try again) to get in the habit of doing it yourself!

De Beers English Olympiad

Some of our pupils in Grades 10, 11 and 12 wrote the De Beers English Olympiad three hour exam in March. We are very pleased to announce the following results:

Merit: 50-59%

Shanice Maeta

Audrey Ntini

Nthuthuko Kubheka

Keletso Mollo

Mpho Makananisi

Musa Tshabalala

Bronze: 60-69%

Megan Engelbrecht

Simpfiwe Fakude

Leruo Makhetha

Andile Martin

Tiaya Thambo

Dorcas Malemo

Gomodiwang Meshoe

Phumelele Zwane

Kgomotso Kolobe

Silver: 70-79%

Gilvania José

Abba Manu

Boipelo Sebyetseba

Sadie Mngoma

Congratulations to our pupils on their results!

Absence from school

All pupils must be at school every day, as teaching and learning continue with the normal timetable until 15 June. Some exams take place before Thursday 15 June, and in that case pupils may stay at home on those days if they are not writing those specific exams. Parents, please ensure that your children attend school.

Exam Procedures

Parents, please study the document entitled *Exam Procedures for Learners* which was given to pupils on Thursday 1 June, and which can also be found under Resources on the school Communicator, as part of the June exam timetable. Take special note of starting times for exams, and point 8 which deals with being absent from an exam.

Pentecost

Pentecost Sunday is the day of the Pentecost festival, a prominent feast in the calendar of Ancient Israel celebrating the giving of the Law on Sinai, and also later in the Christian liturgical year, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the remaining eleven disciples of Christ.

**School fees: cash payments**

Please pay cash into your local bank and send us proof of deposit, or do an EFT to pay fees. We want to cut down on the amount of cash coming into the school, for the safety of our staff and pupils. Thank you for your co-operation.

Sports Department news

Last Saturday our Open soccer teams hosted teams from St Benedict's, Durban. Our boys won their match 2-1, and the girls lost 1-2.

Our netball girls were in the playoffs last week. U14 and U16 played against Jeppe Girls and unfortunately lost both matches against very fit teams. The U15 girls played against Crawford and also lost.

The Open soccer boys played Mondeor High this week and won 3-2.

