



GEMS Winchester School Dubai



Learning & Teaching Policy (Whole School)

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Vice Principal/Deputy CEO, Head of Primary & Head of Secondary

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1. An Introduction to Teach Like A GEM

At both GEMS Education and GEMS Winchester School Dubai (WSD), we believe that every child deserves access to world-class teaching every single day and we are committed to providing a world-class level of education to all our learners.

The aim of this policy is to outline our approach to learning and teaching. As 'learning' and 'teaching' are at the heart of this policy, it is important to begin with clear definitions of these two terms:

- By 'learning', we mean a change in long-term memory
- By 'teaching', we mean creating situations in which learners will learn effectively

To bring our vision of world-class teaching to life, GEMS Education and WSD are implementing an evidence-informed approach to pedagogy that is known as 'Teach Like A GEM' (TLAG). Grounded in cognitive science, TLAG focuses on embedding knowledge in long-term memory, reducing working memory overload, and using techniques like spaced learning, interleaving and retrieval practice. The aim of this approach is to ensure we make learning stick by ensuring our students know more and can remember more.

At GEMS Education and WSD, we firmly believe that learning is a science, but teaching is an art. It takes skill, creativity and care to bring learning to life and make knowledge stick. Therefore, through our TLAG approach, we have codified simple, powerful techniques that help student soto remember more, think harder, and achieve success.

This codification comes to life in our 'Teach Like A GEM Playbook', which has been produced to provide all teachers with a shared language that supports great teaching in every classroom, in every subject. The Playbook contains 18 evidence-informed techniques that we expect our teachers to master. However, these techniques should not be seen in isolation. Instead, teachers are encouraged to fuse techniques together in an intuitive and seamless way. When used together, these techniques allow routine sot flow smoothly, reduce cognitive load and keep students focused on thinking and learning.

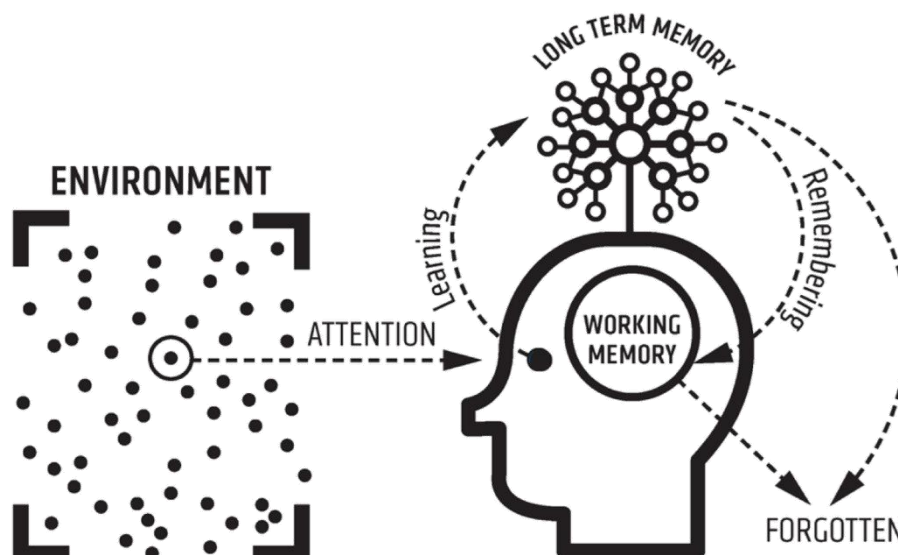
While this policy provides an overview of our Teach Like A GEM approach to our wider school community, all members of staff are encouraged to read this alongside their copy of the Teach Like A GEM Playbook.

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2. The Research Guiding Teach Like A GEM

Teach Like A GEM emphasises the artful, intuitive aspects of teaching alongside the evidence based, scientific nature of learning processes. It is based on evidence-informed research, such as Doug Lemov's Teach Like A Champion, Bark Rosenshine's 10 Principles of Instruction, retrieval practice, cognitive science and cognitive load theory. These frameworks emphasise explicit instruction, active student engagement and effective management of cognitive load to optimise learning.

At GEMS Education and WSD, we believe that world class teaching requires all staff to understand the mechanisms of the mind – this is how we think, learn and remember.



Adapted from Daniel Willingham's Simple Memory Model

As the Simple Memory Model above shows, learning begins when information from the environment enters working memory, but only if we are paying attention. Working memory is the bottleneck of our thinking, limiting how much we can process at any one time.

For information to be retained, it must be encoded into long-term memory through focused attention, meaningful engagement and deliberate practice. In this sense, learning is best understood as a change in long-term memory.

Remembering plays a crucial role. When we retrieve information, we bring it back into working memory, re-engage with it, strengthen connections and build deeper understanding. Without strong encoding or regular opportunities for remembering, knowledge is easily forgotten.

As a result, our ongoing assessment of students is also deliberately planned to check if knowledge, both substantive and procedural, is effectively retained in long-term memory. This ensures that students can revisit and recycle knowledge as they progress through the curriculum, ultimately achieving fluency in applying that knowledge across various contexts.

Cognitive Science Principles

There are seven key cognitive science principles that underpin our Teach Like A GEM approach. The table below briefly outlines what each principle is, why it is important and how we can ensure we achieve each principle in the classroom.

	Managing Cognitive Load	Working with Schemas	Spaced Learning	Interleaving	Retrieval Practice	Dual Coding	Embodied Learning
What	Structuring content to avoid overwhelming working memory	Organising knowledge into frameworks, making connections with pre-existing knowledge, skills, and concepts	Breaking up learning into intervals over time, with breaks in between	Mixing different topics, subjects or activities within a single lesson	Process of actively recalling information from memory with little or no prompting	Combining visual and auditory information to aid comprehension	Incorporating movement and physical activities into the learning process
Why	Enhances clarity and focus during lessons by optimising working memory and reducing overload	Facilitates deeper understanding, transfer of learning, and faster recall	Consolidates information, improves retention, and reduces cognitive overload	Develops more complex schemas and long-term memory retention	Strengthens memory, reveals gaps, and builds stronger, more connected schemas	Promotes understanding by appealing to both auditory and spatial subsystems of working memory	Supports learning through physical interaction with content
How	Minimising extraneous information, simplifying complex tasks, using worked examples	Grouping related information to form meaningful patterns	Filling intervals with unrelated content or activities within or between lessons	Alternating between topics to encourage linking concepts	Using recall to retrieve, re-engage, and re-encode information into long-term memory	Using a combination of formats (texts, images, diagrams, equations) when presenting content	Connecting motor activities (play, enacting, gesturing, movement, tracing) with cognitive processes

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3. Intent, Implementation and Impact of Teach Like A GEM

Intent

The Teach Like A GEM Playbook provides clear, actionable techniques that reflect GEMS Education and WSD's commitment to creating a world-class education. Both aspirational and practical, the Playbook is designed to enhance teaching quality, support professional growth and ultimately improve student outcomes. Built on rigorously tested, evidence-informed techniques, its purpose is to establish a more structured and consistent approach to learning & teaching across all year groups and subject areas.

The beauty of the Teach Like A GEM Playbook lies in its foundation of techniques that educators worldwide are already familiar with and regularly use in their daily practice. While many educators have encountered these principles in passing, the practical application linked with cognitive sciences is often untapped.

Implementation

The successful implementation of the Teach Like A GEM Playbook hinges on its integration into daily teaching practices and ongoing professional development through practice clinics and instructional coaching. Although the Playbook provides a structured framework, it also supports flexibility and adaptation. Teachers are encouraged to personalise the techniques to meet the unique needs of their students, making the Playbook a living document that evolves as new research, practices and technologies emerge.

Suggested adaptations for multilingual learners, gifted and/or talented learners and students of determination are outlined for each technique. While these strategies are tailored to specific groups, GEMS Education & WSD embrace the principle that what works for one works for all, and we encourage teachers to integrate these adaptations into their daily practice to benefit all students.

Through the use of practice clinics as well as instructional coaching, each technique will be explored with all staff so that they develop mastery. Using the 'See It, Name It, Do It' model, teachers will receive ongoing and targeted support focused on mastery of each technique.

For further information on our approach to implementation, please see [Section 5](#) of this policy.

Impact

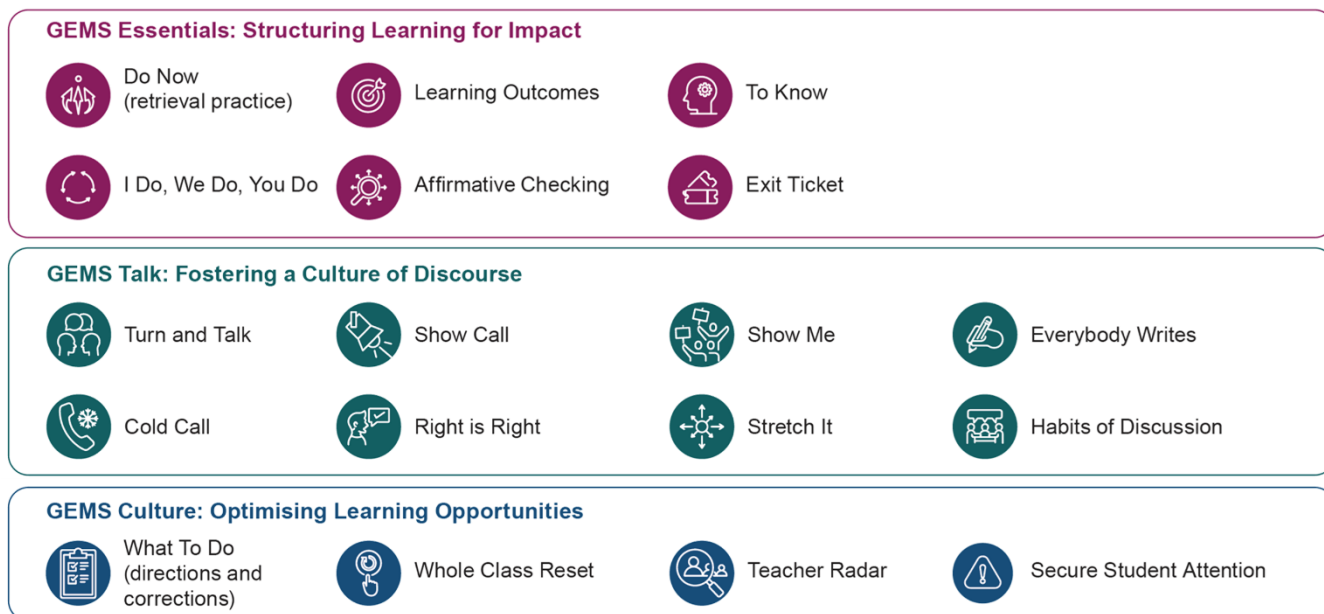
The Teach Like A GEM Playbook codifies effective techniques, promoting repetition that reinforces habitual application and fosters schema development. This process supports automaticity in learning & teaching, which reduces extraneous cognitive load and creates a cognitively optimised learning environment.

Ultimately, the impact of our Teach Like A GEM approach will be seen in an improved quality of teaching, which should further improve the progress and attainment of the students in all year groups and subjects.

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4. Teach Like A GEM Techniques Overview

In the image below, you will see the 18 evidence-informed techniques that are at the heart of the Teach Like A GEM approach; further information about each technique can be found in the Playbook.



GEMS Essentials

The GEMS Essentials are a comprehensive breakdown of micromaps in planning, designed to enhance students' ability to know, understand and retain information, by promoting strategies that reduce cognitive load and support memory retention, these key techniques are required to be implemented in every lesson, irrespective of year group or subject, fostering a consistent and impactful learning experience.

GEMS Talk

The GEMS Talk section focuses on techniques for fostering an environment that encourages open communication, enabling students to share ideas, ask questions and engage in meaningful collaborative discussions to promote critical thinking and deeper learning.

GEMS Culture

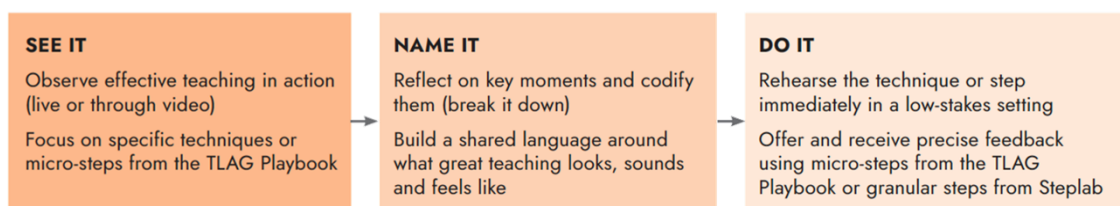
The GEMS Culture section focuses on strategies to build a strong learning environment where high expectations are clearly established, positively communicated and fully met by students. Regular use of the GEMS Culture techniques will help reinforce routines and classroom norms, building students' mental frameworks for productive and attentive classroom behaviours.

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5. Professional Development: Practice Clinics & Instructional Coaching

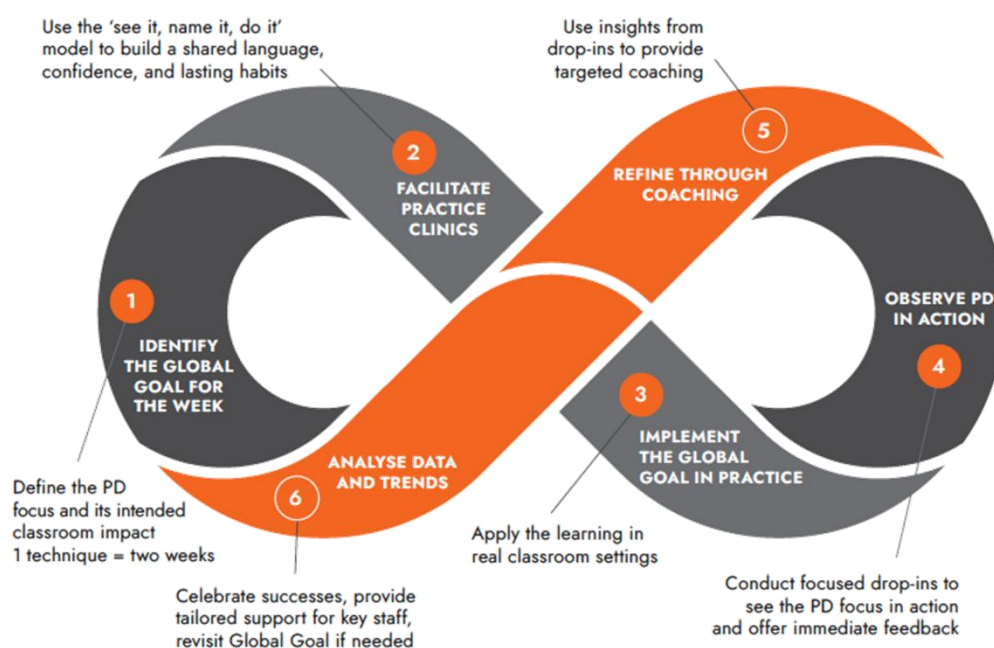
Professional Development is at the heart of successful implementation of the Teach Like A GEM approach and this relies upon a balanced approach that combines whole school professional development with individualised instructional coaching.

A central approach to implementation is the 'Global Goal of the Week', where whole-school professional development focuses on a single teaching technique. This shared goal fosters collaboration and consistency, with all staff engaging in short, focused practice clinics lasting 15-20 minutes. Using the 'See It, Name It, Do It' model, teachers see techniques by observing live or video models, name it by breaking it into actionable steps, and do it by rehearsing with colleagues in a low-stakes environment. This approach builds confidence and competence, enabling teachers to reflect on their practice and rehears the technique before applying it in the dynamic classroom setting.



Complementing this whole-school approach is individualised support through instructional coaching. This personalised process involves one teacher working closely with a school leader, to take small, tailored steps to improve their practice. Instructional coaches help identify specific areas for growth, often based on drop-ins, and provide opportunities for teachers to rehearse strategies, receive actionable feedback and develop sustainable habits. Instructional coaching prioritises development over judgement, creating a supportive environment where teachers can reflect on and refine their craft.

The model below summaries the approach to professional development we will take at WSD to implement the Teach Like A GEM approach.



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6. Quality Assurance

At WSD, quality assurance is used to ensure that our Teach Like A GEM approach is being implemented with fidelity across the school.

Drop-Ins: Weekly Quality Assurance

A drop-in is a 5–15-minute informal, unannounced visit by a leader, coach, or peer to observe a specific teaching aspect and provide immediate, constructive feedback. The purpose of a drop-in is to get a snapshot of teaching and learning in action without interrupting the flow of the lesson.

Drop-ins are designed to build a positive culture, allowing staff to feel supported, not judged. They should affirm good practice and motivate colleagues to continue embedding Teach Like A GEM through reinforcing progress by naming and celebrating improvements. Drop-ins also help to promote incremental change and encourage steady, manageable growth in practice. Finally, drop-ins are designed to create and embed our shared language by aligning staff around what world-class teaching looks like.

A great drop-in is purposeful and connected to the school's 'Global Goal of the Week' or a specific developmental need of the teacher being observed. This ensures that the drop-in feels relevant, targeted, and supportive. Feedback should be immediate, concise, and rooted in what was actually seen, highlighting specific routines, moments, or techniques that made a difference. Using clear sentence frames like "It was effective when you... As a result... Next time, try..." helps recap and celebrate strengths while also identifying meaningful next steps.

Drop-ins will be recorded on Steplab (our instructional coaching platform) and School Leaders will regularly review this data to identify areas of strength and areas for further improvement.

Formal Observations: Termly Quality Assurance

In line with GEMS Education Appraisal & Performance Management expectations, all teaching staff are expected to be observed each term with a formal, full lesson observation. Staff will be expected to provide full lesson plans and resources (including seating plans and class data) for these observations. These observations are also evaluative, with each teacher being graded against the KHDA Framework for great teaching, using the GEMS Education Lesson Observation proforma.

Formal observations should be recorded on BlueSky (our Appraisal & Performance Management platform) and School Leaders will regularly review this data to identify areas of strength and areas for further improvement.

Action Plans

An Action Plan is a 6-week intervention for teachers who have had a lesson observation rated as 'Weak', or who have been identified through weekly drop-ins as consistently failing to meet WSD expectations. The 6-week plan is designed to provide support for teachers who have not met the required standards.

There will be a maximum of 3 targets selected from areas identified in the most recent Quality Assurance observation. The target text is to be taken directly from the KHDA standards for teaching. Teacher participation and engagement is expected.

Throughout the 6-week process, teachers will have 3 full lesson observations using the Quality Assurance processes at WSD. There will be 1 consistent member of the SLT team for the three observations alongside a different Extended SLT member for each of the observations. This provides consistency as well as a range of staff to provide feedback.

There are three observations during an Action Plan. Each observation is graded and each of the observations are equally weighted. Across the 3 observations, teachers must achieve at least 2 out of 3 observations graded at 'Acceptable' or better to pass the Action Plan process.

Each observation will be recorded using the GEMS Education Lesson Observation proforma and feedback and next step targets will be given. Teachers progressing through an Action Plan will receive support from a member of the Extended Leadership Team for team teaching, coaching, mentoring and demonstration lessons.

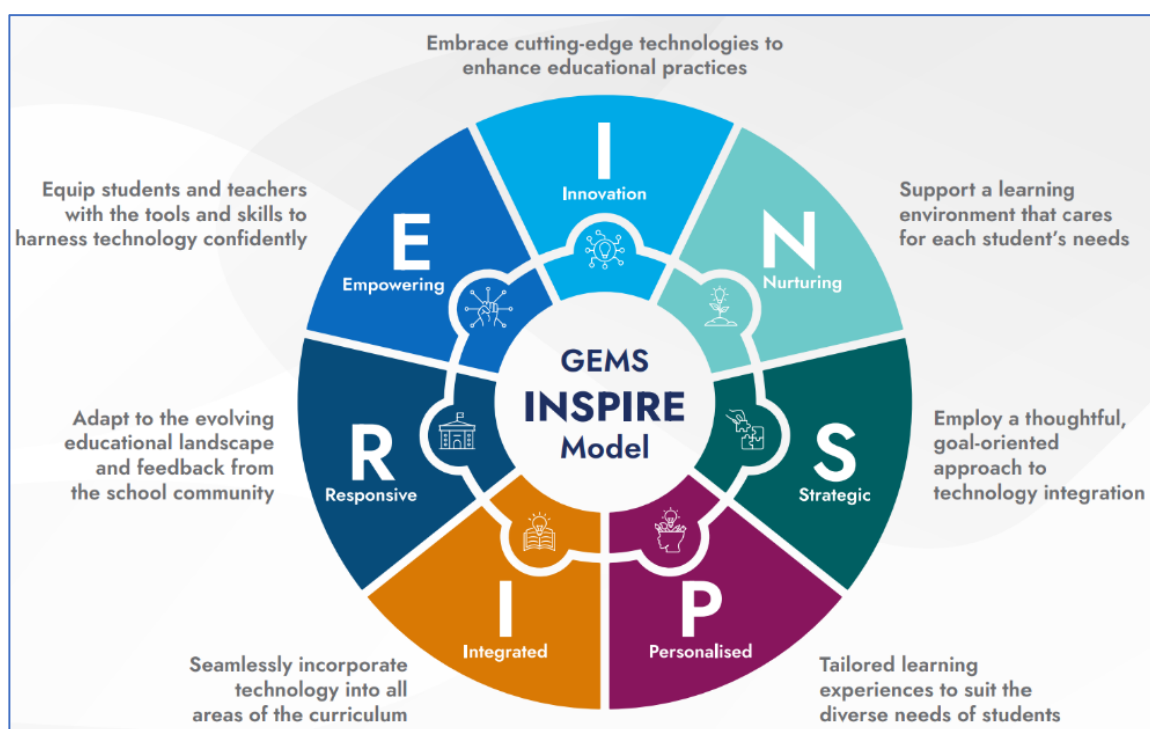
Failure to pass an Action Plan may result in the termination of employment contract, in line with UAE labour laws.

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7. GEMS INSPIRE: EdTech Integration

GEMS INSPIRE is an innovative digital education strategy designed to enhance learning and teaching across all GEMS Education schools through digital tools. It outlines GEMS Education's approach to employing technology that enriches and enhances educational outcomes and equips students for the digital future.

Some techniques included in the Teach Like A GEM Playbook are integrated with the GEMS INSPIRE model below, incorporating prompts for AI generator tools. However, as with any AI generated content, it is essential for teachers to thoroughly review the material to ensure it aligns with the intended learning outcomes and is appropriate for students in the context in which WSD operates.



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8. Links to Other Policies

Key policies which link to this Learning & Teaching Policy include:

- Behaviour Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Appraisal & Performance Management Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Literacy Policy
- Gifted and/or Talented Policy

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