Teaching and Learning Policy

YAS AMERICAN ACADEMY 2024-25

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High Quality Learning at YAA

1.0 Introduction

Current educational research emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to teaching and learning that nurtures confident, knowledgeable, and passionate learners. This approach is key to fostering the skills and attitudes necessary for students to actively engage in a diverse and sustainable global society. Research by Hattie (2009), Sweller (2011), and Black and Wiliam (1998) highlights the importance of creating positive learning environments, building on students' prior knowledge, promoting independent practice, and providing effective feedback. This policy is designed to guide the implementation of these evidence-based principles, supporting our mission to develop well-rounded individuals ready to make meaningful contributions to the world.

2.0 Aims

- To provide a consistent and structured learning environment that promotes inclusivity, engagement, and academic excellence.
- To implement teaching practices that address diverse learning needs, ensuring every student progresses and thrives.
- To use a shared language of learning that nurtures students' holistic development, equipping them to contribute thoughtfully and effectively to society.
- To engage in ongoing professional development, enhancing teaching practices in alignment with our mission to cultivate confident, skilled, and passionate learners.

3.0 Key Principles

Our non-negatable areas of teaching and learning that teachers must include within all lessons are SOAP;
- Starter Activities
- Objectives and success criteria
- Active Learning and Adaptive Teaching opportunities
- Progress and Pace

The teaching principles at YAA reflect our commitment to nurturing learners who are prepared to engage with and contribute to a diverse global community. Each principle plays a part in shaping the confident, knowledgeable, and passionate individuals our mission seeks to develop.
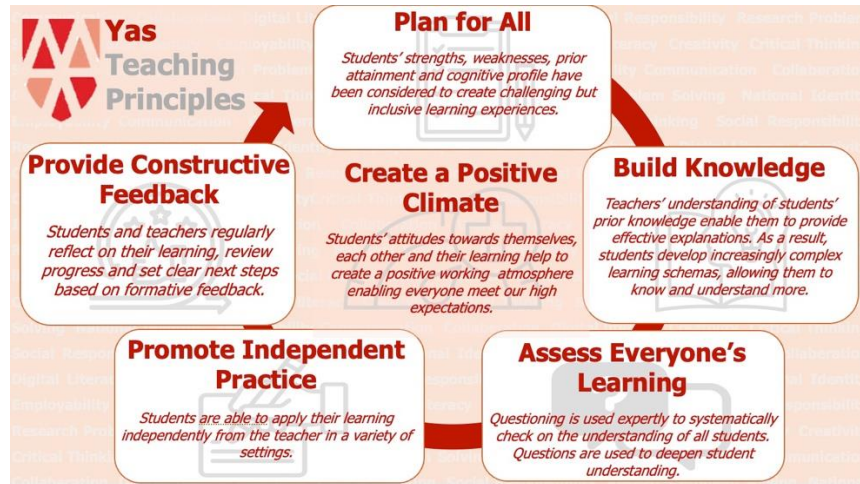
3.1 Create a Positive Climate *Summary Statement:* "Students' attitudes towards themselves, each other, and their learning help to create a positive working atmosphere, enabling everyone to meet our high expectations."

A positive climate is fundamental to students feeling secure, valued, and ready to learn. By establishing a supportive and encouraging environment, we help students develop the confidence to explore, take risks, and engage deeply with their learning.

- **Core Practices:**
    - *Positive Framing:* Encouraging students to focus on positive actions helps to build a constructive mindset and a culture of respect and collaboration, key aspects of becoming responsible members of our school and the broader global community.
    - *Meet and Greet:* Personal connections foster a sense of belonging, reinforcing that each student is an important part of our learning community and contributing to a climate where every voice is heard.
    - *Start Strong:* Setting a positive tone at the beginning of each lesson establishes an environment where students are eager to participate and learn, laying the foundation for a day of meaningful engagement.

3.2 Plan for All *Summary Statement:* "Students' strengths, weaknesses, prior attainment, and cognitive profile have been considered to create challenging but inclusive learning experiences."

Inclusion and differentiation are at the heart of our teaching approach. By recognizing and planning for the unique needs of each student, we create learning experiences that are both challenging and accessible, ensuring that all students can build on their strengths and grow.

- **Core Practices:**

- o *Begin with the End:* Clarity in learning objectives helps students understand their path, guiding them toward a purposeful learning journey where they can see the relevance of their efforts in real-world contexts.
- o *Seating Plans:* Thoughtful seating arrangements support an inclusive learning environment, helping all students to feel comfortable and engaged, which is crucial for a productive and collaborative classroom.
- o *Tiered Questions and Problems:* Differentiating challenges ensures that each student can stretch their thinking and deepen their understanding, fostering a growth mindset that is essential for lifelong learning.

3.3 Build Knowledge *Summary Statement:* "Teachers' understanding of students' prior knowledge enables them to provide effective explanations. As a result, students develop increasingly complex learning schemas, allowing them to know and understand more."

Learning is a cumulative process, and building on what students already know helps them connect new ideas to existing knowledge. This approach not only enhances understanding but also empowers students to apply their learning in diverse contexts, a key aspect of becoming informed global citizens.

- **Core Practices:**
    - o *I Do, We Do, You Do Modeling:* Guiding students from observation to collaboration and finally to independent application helps them gain confidence and mastery over new concepts, preparing them to use this knowledge effectively in the real world.
    - o *Review and Retrieve:* Regular reviews help solidify learning, ensuring that students retain and can build upon their knowledge, fostering a deeper and more sustainable understanding of key concepts.
    - o *Deliberate Vocabulary Development:* A strong grasp of subject-specific vocabulary enhances students' ability to articulate ideas clearly and confidently, an essential skill for effective communication and understanding in a global society.

3.4 Promote Independent Practice *Summary Statement:* "Students are able to apply their learning independently from the teacher in a variety of settings."

Independent practice encourages students to take charge of their own learning, fostering a sense of ownership and self-direction. This skill is crucial for their development as autonomous individuals who can think critically and solve problems, both in school and in life.

- **Core Practices:**
    - o *Set the Standards:* Understanding what excellence looks like helps students aim high and take pride in their work, developing the resilience and perseverance needed to tackle complex challenges.

- o *Scaffolding:* By gradually removing support as students gain confidence, we enable them to become self-sufficient learners who can apply their knowledge and skills in varied and unfamiliar situations.
- o *Independent Practice:* Providing opportunities for independent learning helps students develop their problem-solving skills and adapt their knowledge to new scenarios, essential abilities for contributing to a dynamic and ever-changing world.

3.5 Assess Everyone's Learning *Summary Statement:* "Questioning is used expertly to systematically check on the understanding of all students. Questions are used to deepen student understanding."

Effective assessment is about understanding where students are in their learning journey and guiding them forward. Through thoughtful questioning and feedback, we help students reflect on their progress, think more deeply, and take their learning to the next level.

- **Core Practices:**
  - o *Think-Pair-Share:* Encouraging students to discuss and share their thoughts helps them learn from each other, develop their ideas, and build communication skills that are valuable in any collaborative setting.
  - o *No Opt-Out:* Ensuring that every student has the opportunity to contribute reinforces the idea that every voice matters, fostering a learning environment where students feel empowered to participate.
  - o *Show Me Boards:* Instant feedback allows us to address misunderstandings quickly, ensuring that all students are on the right track and reinforcing their confidence in their abilities.

3.6 Provide Constructive Feedback *Summary Statement:* "Students and teachers regularly reflect on their learning, review progress, and set clear next steps based on formative feedback."

Constructive feedback is a powerful tool for growth. By helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, we guide them toward setting goals and taking ownership of their learning journey, developing the self-awareness and resilience needed to succeed in a complex world.

- **Core Practices:**
  - o *Feedback as an Action:* Encouraging students to act on feedback helps them see learning as a process of continuous improvement, where every step forward is a valuable part of their development.

- o *Feed Forward:* Using feedback to inform future actions helps students focus on what they can do to improve, fostering a proactive and positive approach to learning.
- o *Purple for Progress:* Allowing time for students to reflect and make improvements shows that growth is a key part of learning, reinforcing the idea that effort and perseverance lead to success.

4.0 Learning Support

Teachers should be aware of the specific learning needs of their pupils, they should consult with parents, Head of Inclusion and outside agencies about the specific needs of individuals when appropriate. Teachers should work with CAs and other adults to ensure the pupils are best supported in their learning and development.

5.0 Raising Attainment, Monitoring, and Evaluating

At YAA we;

- Use formative and summative assessments to monitor student progress, ensuring that all students are moving towards achieving their full potential.
- Regularly review student data to identify strengths and areas for improvement, using this information to guide instruction and provide individualized support.
- Engage students in self-assessment and peer assessment to promote reflection, encouraging them to take ownership of their learning and develop as reflective, self-aware individuals.

6.0 Monitor, Evaluation, and Review (MER).

- A well establish cycle of monitoring, evaluation, and review is used to ensure the effectiveness of our teaching and learning policy, continually refining our approach to meet the evolving needs of our students.
- Feedback is gathered from students, teachers, and parents to assess the impact of our teaching practices, using this input to make informed, data-driven decisions.
- Lesson observations, learning walks, Assessment data, book moderations to evaluate progress, making adjustments as necessary to enhance student outcomes and maintain alignment with our mission.

6.1 Lesson Observations

At YAA we;

- Conduct regular lesson observations (at least 3 per year) to ensure teaching practices align with our key principles and support our mission of nurturing confident and capable learners.
- Provide constructive feedback to teachers, focusing on the effective implementation of core practices and the creation of a positive, inclusive learning environment.
- Use observations to identify professional development needs and support continuous improvement in teaching practices.
- Provide timely formative feedback on lesson observations. This is recorded on BlueSky.

6.2 Learning Walks

At YAA we;

- Carry out ongoing learning walks to observe classroom environments and student engagement across all phases, ensuring consistency in the application of our teaching principles.
- Make the focus of the learning walks clear through the MER Schedule.
- Gather insights on the effectiveness of teaching strategies and learning environments, using these observations to inform future planning and share best practices.
- Use findings to support professional development, ensuring that all teachers have the tools and strategies needed to foster high-quality learning experiences.

6. 3 Book Moderations (Peer, Head of Department, SLT)

Book moderations ensure high standards of assessment, feedback, and student progress across the school. Conducted by peers, Heads of Department (HoDs), and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) against a shared rubric, these reviews provide consistency and accountability.

- **Peer Moderation:** Teachers regularly review each other's marking and feedback in departmental meetings, focusing on progress, curriculum alignment, and differentiation. Insights are shared in department meetings to enhance practice.
- **HoD Moderation:** Once per unit, HoDs lead formal moderations to ensure department-wide consistency. Feedback is shared with teachers to highlight areas for improvement and examples of best practice. These are carried out alongside other heads of department to support school wide consistancy.
- **SLT Moderation:** SLT conducts ongoing school-wide reviews, ensuring feedback and assessment align with whole-school priorities and support the mission to develop confident, skilled learners.

The moderation rubric assesses student presentation, marking regularity, feedback quality, The impact of feedback on student progress, as well as looking at curriculum alignment,

differentiation, and student engagement. Results guide professional development and instructional improvements across the school.

6.4 Monitoring of Assessment Data

Regular monitoring of assessment data, including MAP and internal assessments, ensures targeted support for student progress. Pupil progress meetings between teachers and Heads of Department (HoDs) are held to review data, identify learning gaps, and formulate teacher action plans. These meetings help tailor instruction to meet individual student needs and drive improvement.

HoDs present department data during calendared reviews, allowing for analysis of trends and the development of department action plans. These action plans are informed by teacher feedback and student performance, ensuring a cohesive approach to improving teaching and learning across the school.

7.0 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) To support the effective implementation of this policy, our CPD program will focus on phases where each teaching principle is emphasized. This includes both whole-school and departmental sessions that highlight the importance of a shared language of learning, ensuring consistency and clarity across the school. We will use a cross-grade/department triad model of peer observation and coaching to facilitate collaborative learning and reflection among teachers.

- **Phase Implementation:**
  - *Phase 1:* Focus on "Create a Positive Climate" and "Plan for All." Whole-school sessions explore strategies for establishing respectful relationships and creating inclusive learning environments. Departmental sessions will delve into practical approaches for differentiated instruction and positive behavior reinforcement.
  - *Phase 2:* Emphasize "Build Knowledge" and "Promote Independent Practice." Workshops will cover modeling techniques, scaffolding, and vocabulary development, with peer observations providing opportunities to share and reflect on best practices.
  - *Phase 3:* Center on "Assess Everyone's Learning" and "Provide Feedback to Advance Learning." Training will focus on effective questioning techniques, formative assessment strategies, and providing actionable feedback that guides student learning.
- **Triad Model:** Teachers will work in triads, observing and providing feedback to peers across different grades or departments. This collaborative model promotes the exchange of ideas, fostering a supportive professional community and encouraging the development of a shared language of learning.
- **Shared Language of Learning:** Establishing common terminology around teaching and learning practices is essential for effective communication and understanding among staff.

CPD sessions will focus on developing this shared language, ensuring that all teachers are aligned in their approach to implementing these principles.

This policy outlines a cohesive approach to teaching and learning at YAA, designed to foster a positive climate, inclusive planning, knowledge building, independent practice, systematic assessment, and constructive feedback. It aligns with our mission to develop well-rounded learners with the confidence, skills, and passion to contribute thoughtfully to a diverse and sustainable global society. Through continuous professional development and a focus on shared practices, we aim to provide a learning experience that empowers every student.