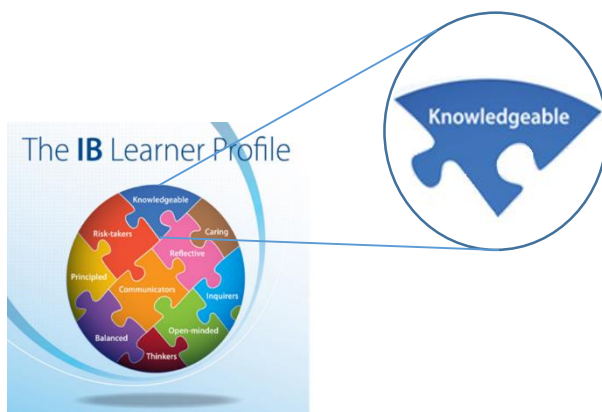


## Knowledge Organisers at Mascalls

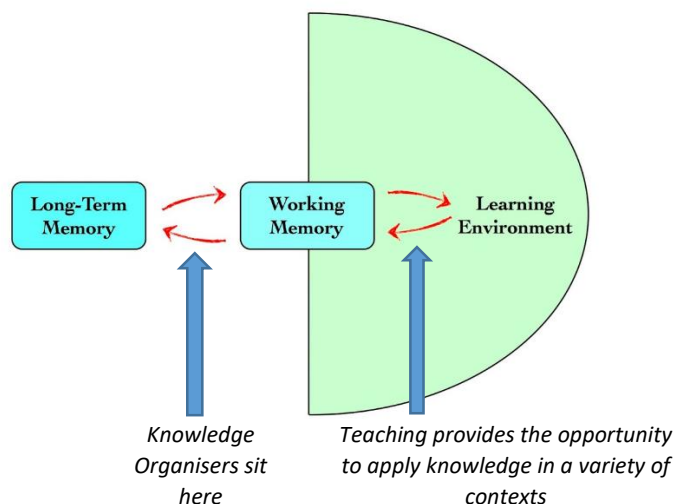


In order to process a text (let alone enjoy it) one must understand at least 90% of the vocabulary within it.

*Hattie, Visible Learning for Teachers, P51*

Knowledge organisers represent the knowledge that you need for later learning to make sense, in that essence a 'core knowledge'. They represent a raising of standards in what we expect the student to be able to retain, it underpins the 10 IB learner profile characteristics.

A common criticism of KOs is that memorising this information is pointless, as we can look it up and we should be concentrating on "21st century skills". Without fundamental knowledge the [attainment] gap could widen as the more knowledgeable exploit research more easily. The International Baccalaureate MYP provides a structure for demonstrating and developing "21<sup>st</sup> Century skills" through the Learner Profile. As for memorisation, the students are still foundational in their reading and writing skills. If the purpose is for them to write an information text, then you want them to have the knowledge at their fingertips, so all of their cognitive effort is focused on crafting a piece of writing. If they need to go and read a text each time they want to write a sentence, they will stumble each time they attempt to write something down.



KOs operate between the long term memory and the working memory, the content is to be committed to long term memory and drawn upon within the working memory. It is the job of the teacher, to create a learning environment that draws from the working memory to apply knowledge to changing scenarios and to draw the retention of information into the learning environment. This

connection becomes a physical neural pathway, hard wired into the hippocampus (the area of the brain responsible for memory), flexible and adaptable to new situations. This physical change following intense learning in the brain has been observed in Black Cab drivers, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-16086233>.

KOs provide a formative and summative assessment of what students have retained and contribute to one quarter of the assessment criteria for the 8 subject areas in the MYP. New specification GCSEs rely increasingly on the retention of key information. They are not the sole method of assessing knowledge and other methods are rooted within pedagogy but they are likely to give a key indication of future success when essential information is not retained. As a discrete source of information they also provide a tangible resource with which to address gaps in knowledge earlier on in the learning process.

At Mascalls, students will receive knowledge organisers at the start of each Semester for every subject that will make explicit the knowledge that will underpin future learning. Parents will be fully informed of and involved in what needs to be learned, how it could be learned and when it will be assessed through an assessment schedule.

Students will be assessed frequently on their knowledge in lessons and underperformance identified early. Testing in subsequent semesters will be cumulative. The results from all testing will be recorded centrally and form part of a knowledge checklist which can be referenced in parent's evenings, and reporting and used in supporting students to achieve their potential. Students will be provided support sessions in departments where underperformance occurs and opportunity to retest. Parents will be asked to support this learning, invited to meet with teachers where they can be directed to the exact content that needs to be addressed.

Detentions and some advisory time will be handed over as opportunities to continue learning the content required using Knowledge Organisers.

There have been several case studies during the current academic year that have provided enough anecdotal evidence alongside external research to make the decision to roll out the Knowledge Organiser strategy throughout Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 in an attempt to sustain improvement.



Year 10 English, Catherine Root

*GCSE English Literature students now require a significant increase in the amount of knowledge they are expected to remember for the exams. For example, students are expected to write a comparative poetry essay but without the poems in front for them. Although students find the essay formation challenging in itself, it quickly became clear to me that it was even more challenging if they could not remember anything about the poems. It was clear that by studying the poem in class and annotating them with endless notes was making no difference to their ability to be able to visualise and remember the poem long term.*

*I therefore devised a knowledge organiser for every poem. Each knowledge organiser covered aspects of key information such as context, language and structure. Students were set 1 poem to revise per week using the knowledge organiser. Every Monday there was then a test on the poem from the week. This was marked together in the lesson and each student had to give their mark aloud to the class whilst I recorded it on a spreadsheet. Students were expected to get 90% and if they did not, they were asked to come back for a lunchtime 'support' session.*

*Initially students complained about the threshold of 90% and in the first week, the majority fell below it. Having to give their mark aloud led to open conversations in the class about how some of the boys had achieved the 90%. They openly told their peers that they had revised and this began to change the culture. Once some realised that their peers were succeeding and that I was going to hold them to the lunchtime sessions, many more starting revising with many getting full marks.*

*Has it yet led to better exam answers? No because we have focused less on application and more on required knowledge. Do they know the poems better? Absolutely. I don't think I have had a Year 10 class before who can cite language and structure features about poems as successfully at this point in the course. They feel more confident and I feel that the unit that was taught is being strengthened rather than lost over time. The aim now is to give them plenty of time to apply their knowledge to an exam question but this should be much easier now that they are less worried about the anthology being taken away!*