

New Ideas

Thinking flexibly

New Ideas

Ethos of Learning

“In over a decade of teaching at the RGS I have not seen such a passionate staff. For that matter, I don’t think I’ve seen such a passionate student body either.”

Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster

We have a thirst for novelty, we are always changing, adapting, seeking new things. It might be designing a new recipe, adding a few extra feathers to that wedding hat, having a revolving door in your new house design. As a human race we are never prepared to settle. Whereas the sea squirt mollusk finds a place to attach itself and then eats its brain. The reason being, he no longer has a need for it. The brain’s job is complete, it has found somewhere to settle and now its nutrients can sustain its life!

We are not like the mollusk, although we are also not all going to be the next greatest inventor or indeed have a desire to be. But I do think it is important that we are all still prepared to question, to seek answers and be inquisitive.

How many of us have come up with a genuinely new idea? I am not sure I ever have. The only unique thing I have made are my three children and having spent the weekend in sole charge of them I am not sure it was one of my best ideas!

Most of the “new” initiatives I have been involved in at school have stemmed from someone else’s research. For example, the Ethos of Learning was all built around Guy Claxton’s work on Building Learning Power. Many of the teaching ideas

I share have stemmed from Doug Lemov (The American Educationalist) or Jim Smith (The “Lazy Teacher”).

I think I am reasonably adept at adapting ideas and concepts to suit the RGS, many of us in our busy working lives don't have the time or resources to conduct our own research but perhaps we can adapt the findings of others and maybe that is a skill that is also worth having. Henry Ford took his conveyer belt approach to building the Model T from the meatpacking industry in Chicago. He said, “I invented nothing new. I simply assembled into a car the discoveries of other men behind whom were centuries of work.”

For me the most important part of a new idea or flexible thinking is having a clear vision of what you want the end product to look like. Then the challenge of getting there begins and that might involve other people's research, support and guidance. Collaboration and teamwork are vital to any success, it is rare that great success is achieved by oneself or in isolation.

Failure is also one of the great fallouts of New Ideas. You will never get it right straight away. Thomas Edison famously claimed to have had 1,000 failed attempts when inventing the light bulb. Of course, when questioned he said the light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps! Henry Ford went broke 5 times before achieving success. He is known to have said, “Failure provides the opportunity to begin again, more intelligently.” If you're going to have new ideas, possibly buck the trend you need to be prepared to fail and crucially be resilient and possess courage.

As a teaching staff we try and provide pupils with as many opportunities as possible to come up with their own new ideas. This ranges from simple tasks, such as one of the boys being given the challenge of deciding how the teams should be picked or the students devising their own Maths Battle questions. Staff are often encouraged to give students freedom of how they want to present their findings, this often leads to their greatest work. I have seen amazing geographical landforms created which are entirely edible!



A final thought...

The RGS provides so many opportunities for new ideas to flourish and this is particularly evident in the co-curricular environment. Whether, it's the Young Chef of the Year Competition, Greenpower Club, Math Battles, Public Speaking etc. there is a wealth of opportunity to share and create new ideas. Please encourage your son to get involved in as much as possible.

Lessons often allow the creative juices to flow. I had the great pleasure of judging a recent Year 9 Art Project on stop animation, this was one of the winning groups. Please enjoy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfpImu1NE8s>

For further information on the Ethos of Learning please refer to the RGS website: www.rgshw.com or Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster, arw@rgshw.com.