



Developing Curious, Inquisitive Learners

Russell Pearson – Deputy Headteacher at Willowbrook School

Why this focus?

- Willowbrook's CPD focus on questioning.
- Curious learners = something is going well

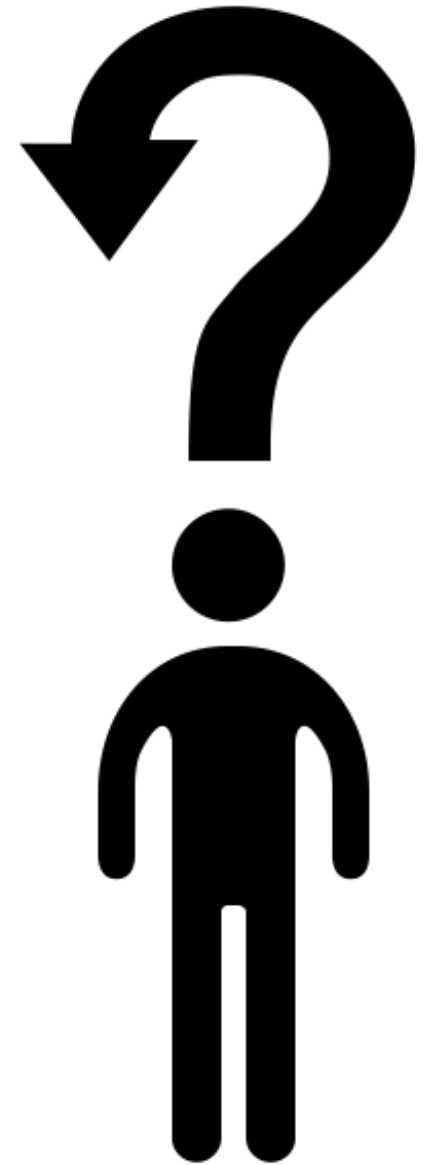
What's today based on?

Research + Experience

The curious learner...

- Is interested in learning new information.
- Makes links between prior knowledge and new learning.
- Asks appropriate, thoughtful questions.
- Has a positive learning attitude.

Can you think of a child who fits this description?



Ingredients I'll be discussing:



Psychological safety – what and why

1

<https://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/psychological-safety-in-the-classroom>

- “...having the belief that you will not be humiliated or teased for the ideas you offer, for asking questions and admitting to one’s mistakes.”
- “When the psychological safety of teachers was high, so too was students’ well-being - they demonstrated increased levels of self-confidence, which in turn led to enhanced student development.”

Psychological safety - how

<https://blog.innerdrive.co.uk/psychological-safety-in-the-classroom>



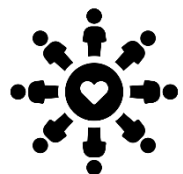
Engage in Active Listening



Develop an Open Mindset



Instill a belief that asking for help is positive



Create a Sense of Shared Identity

Psychological safety: summary

Children who feel safe are more likely to be curious, inquisitive and enthusiastic.



We can make children feel safe by:

1. Engaging in Active Listening.
2. Developing an Open Mindset.
3. Instilling a belief that asking for help is positive.
4. Create a Sense of Shared Identity.

Motivation



Peps Mccrea
@PepsMccrea



One of the rules that influences our motivation most is our anticipation of future success:

The likelihood that we will reap the benefits, for ourselves or for our communities, if we invest our attention in a particular direction.

1. Teach well

- Right levels of challenge
- Scaffold up
- Explain with precision
- Intervene at the right time
- Use appropriate images/resources

2. Frame success: what *is* success?

- Success is about learning, not about just completing tasks or being busy.
- Success is about personal progress. What can you do now that you couldn't before?

3. Support attribution

- What made me successful today?
- My success isn't just because of good fortune!
- What role did hard work/perseverance play in my success?
- What role did my attitude play in my success?

4. Mitigate failure

Pupils will fail. It is an inevitable part of learning.

- Communicate that failure is an expected part of learning.
- Celebrate failure as an opportunity to learn.
- Ensure a climate of psychological safety.

Motivation: summary

Motivated learners are more likely to be curious.



Success is a key aspect of motivation.



Children will feel more successful if we:

1. Teach well
2. Frame success
3. Support attribution
4. Mitigate failure

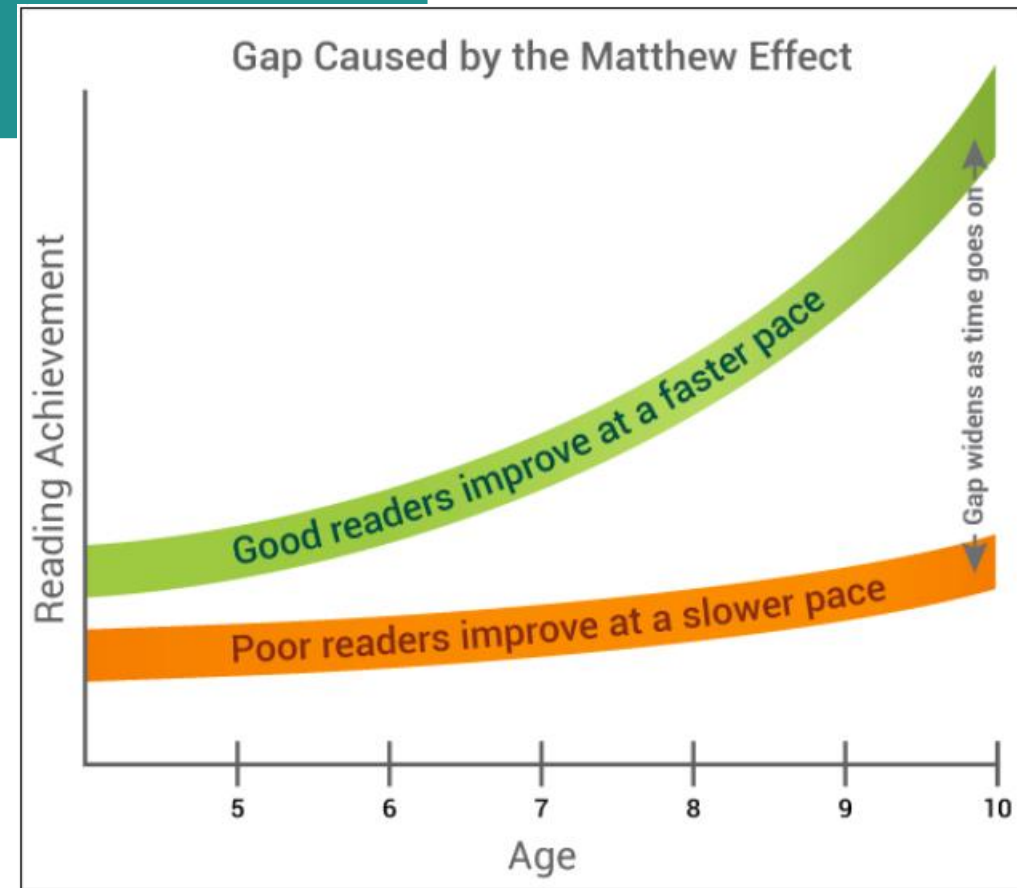
Knowledge and The Matthew Effect

3

Robert Merton (1968) popularised the term the Matthew Effect.

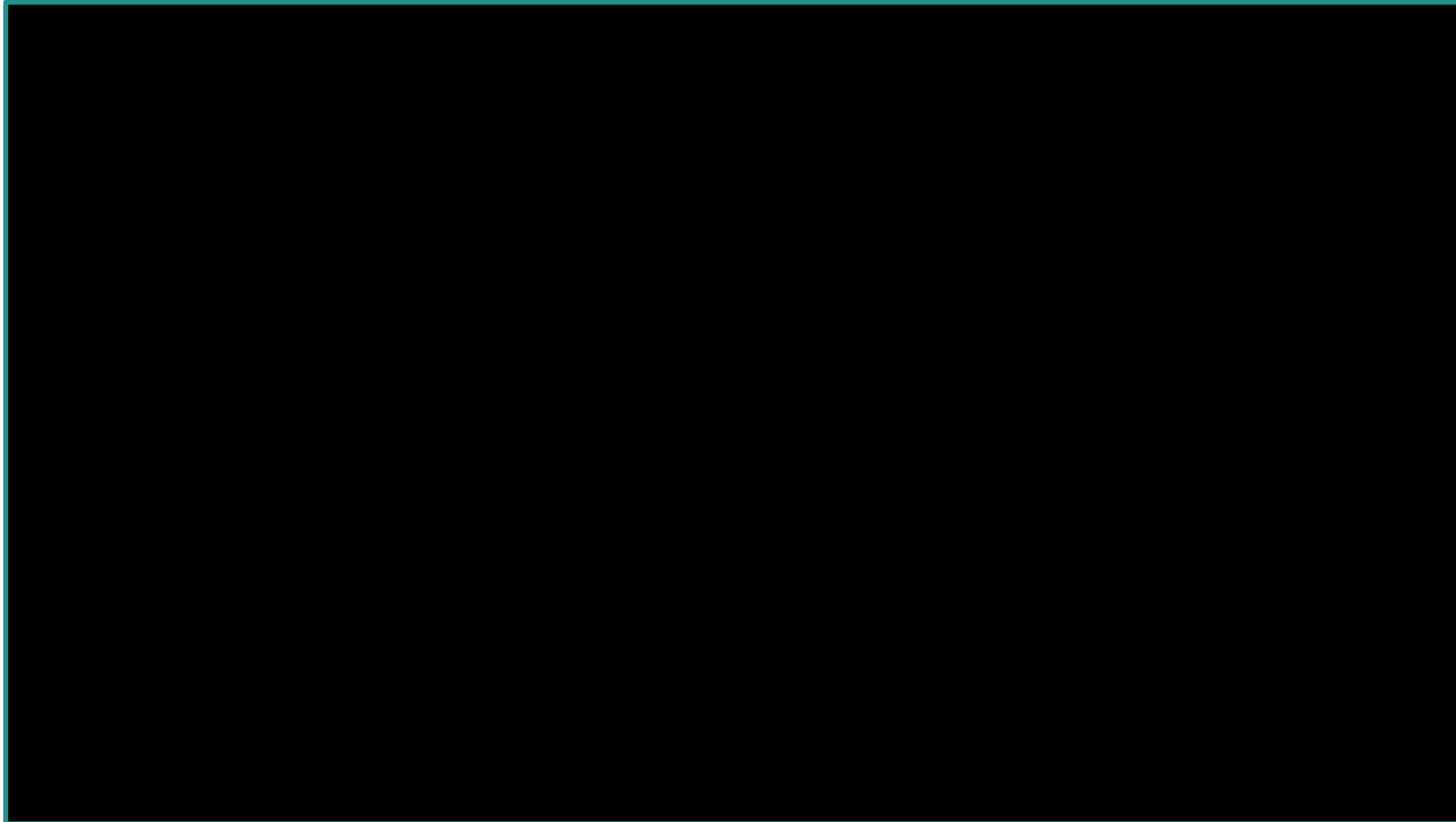
It comes from the Gospel Reading from Matthew 13:12 and refers to cumulative advantage.

"For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."



Keith Stanovich: children who learn to read in the first three years of their education become fluent readers. This early success accelerates their progress, causing a wider gap between them and their less proficient peers.

Schema development: curious learners have plenty of prior knowledge

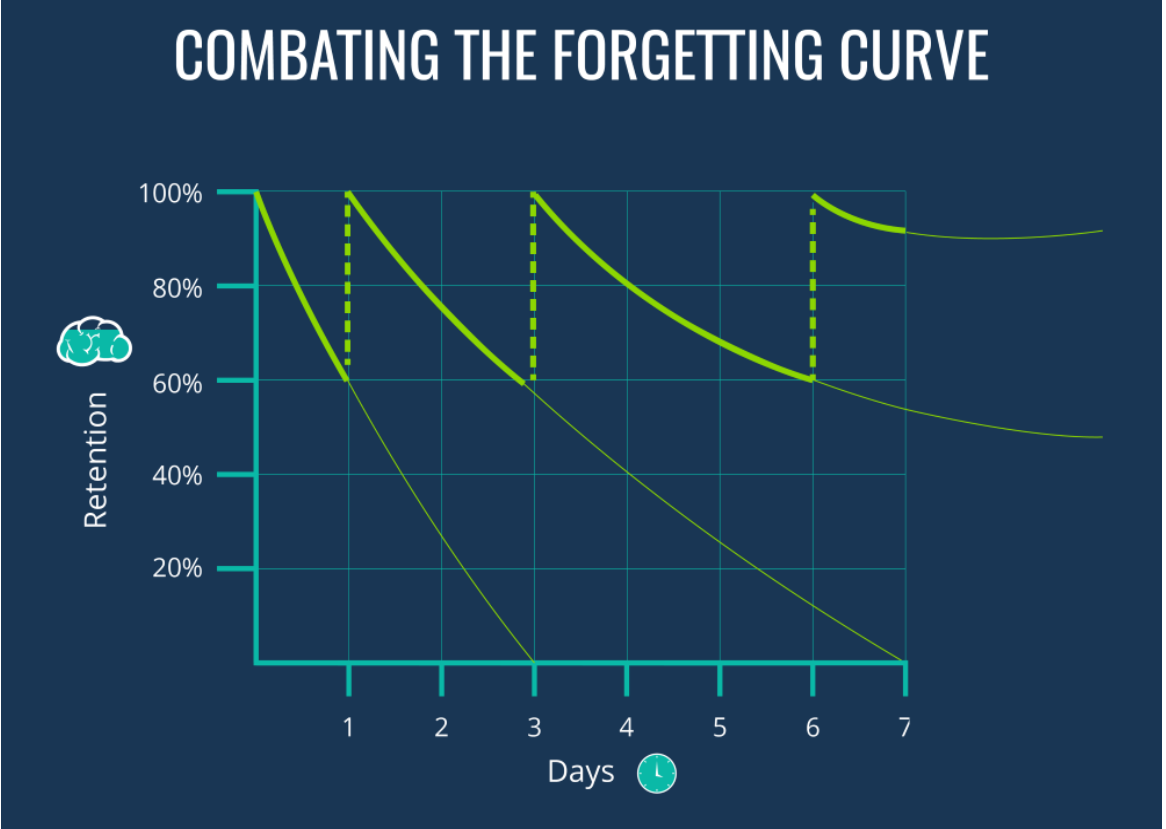
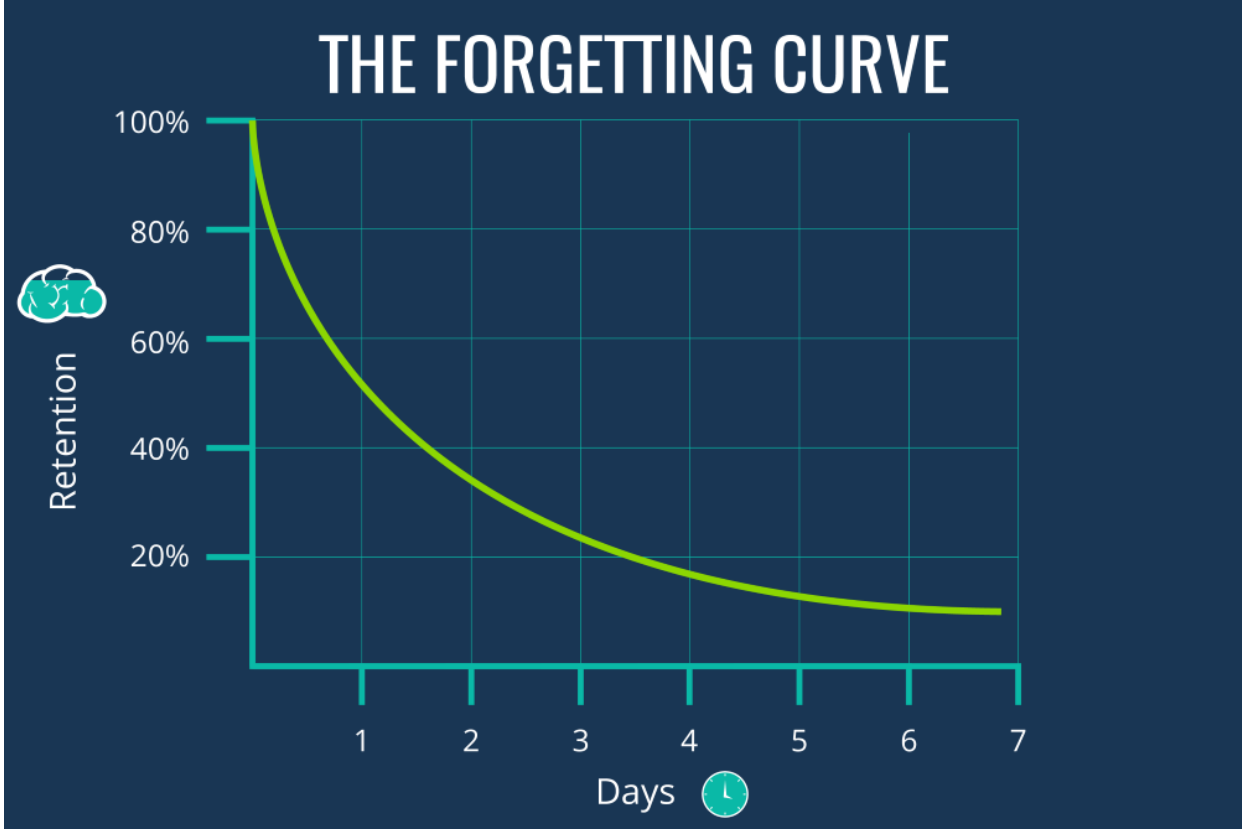


Children are more able to be curious when we activate prior learning

3



To support curiosity, we need to understand forgetting...



Knowledge: summary

Knowledgeable children are more likely to be curious
(Matthew Effect).




We need to support effective schema development.



We can support schema development by:

1. Valuing and teaching knowledge well.
2. Activating prior knowledge in lessons.
3. Prioritising retrieval practice.

Curious Inquisitive learners need:

- 
1. Psychological safety
2. Motivation
3. Knowledge