

Top Ten Tips for developing a Growth Mindset in your Classroom



1. **Be Critical.** Students should expect and welcome criticism. They must also be given the opportunity to act on any criticism or critique. This will allow students to realise that through improving their work and responding to feedback, they can be better than they were. For this to happen, the culture of improvement needs to feel completely normal. As teachers, we also need to think about how and when we give feedback. We should not always tell students how to improve. What if we gave them an exemplar piece of excellent work and asked them what changes they would make? Or get them to write a success criteria based on this to help students see what was missing? Or maybe just come back to the same piece later in the term and look at what improvements they would make. We need to make our students far more aware that they

can improve without us 'butting in' every five seconds.



**If it's not
EXCELLENT
It's not
FINISHED**

2. **Share the pain!** Encouraging discussion about what students in your class find difficult; what they are struggling with can be really helpful for students. It helps students realise that we can all be challenged, no matter our starting point. There may be ways in which students can find answers, but it's also incredibly healthy to listen to the nature of struggle. We can all overcome challenges or set backs, and together, we can all keep going. As the teacher, we need to let students struggle. Don't always offer the solution, this way students will realise they are capable of doing it for themselves, through perseverance, reflection and effort.

**To create work of excellence,
you need to be confident, have
a strong dedicated attitude,
willing to conquer and face
a challenge, no matter how long
it will take.**

A lot of focus is needed.

No Procrastination.

No distraction.

No "I'm too tired".

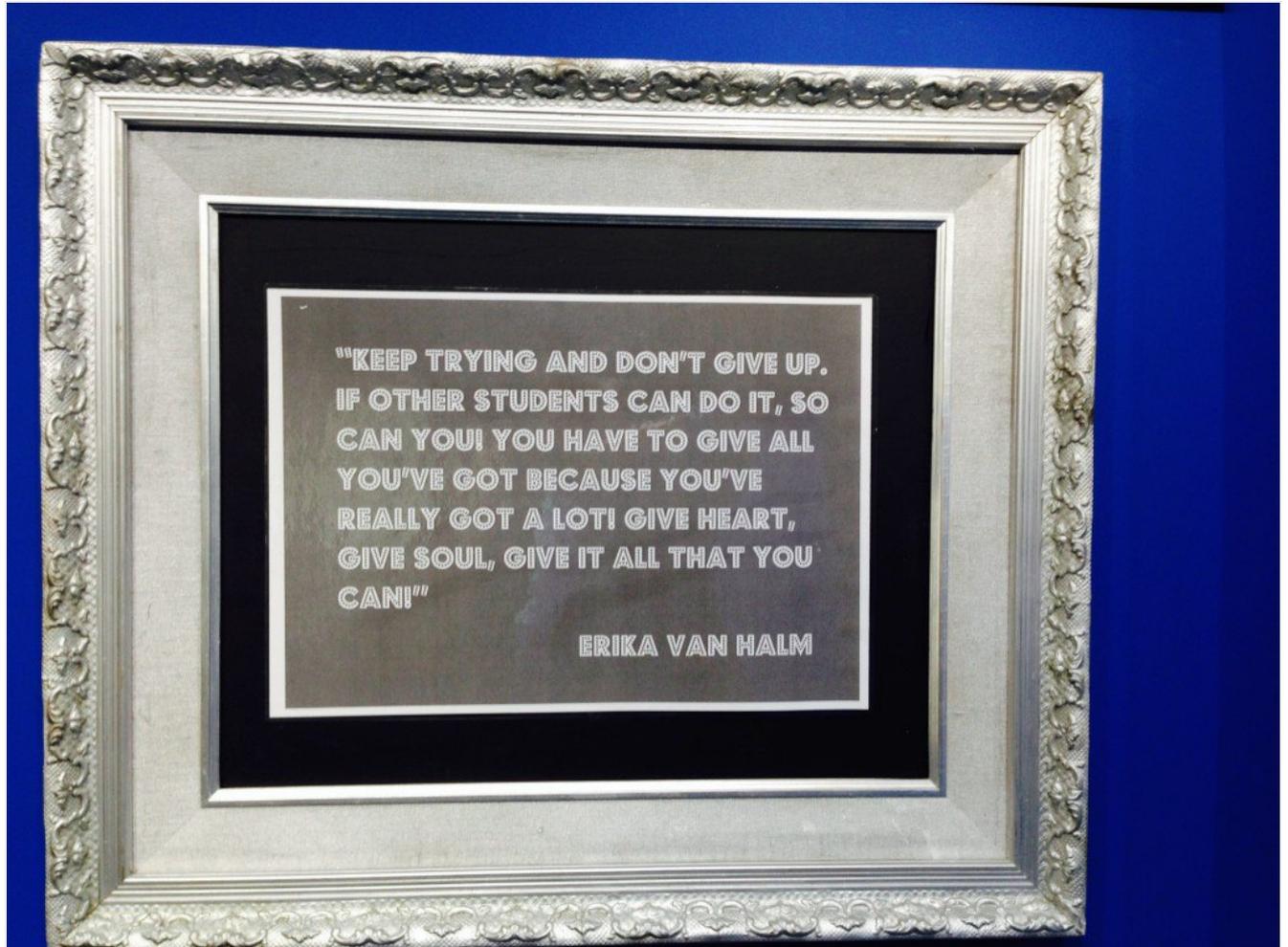
No "I don't have time".

MAKE TIME

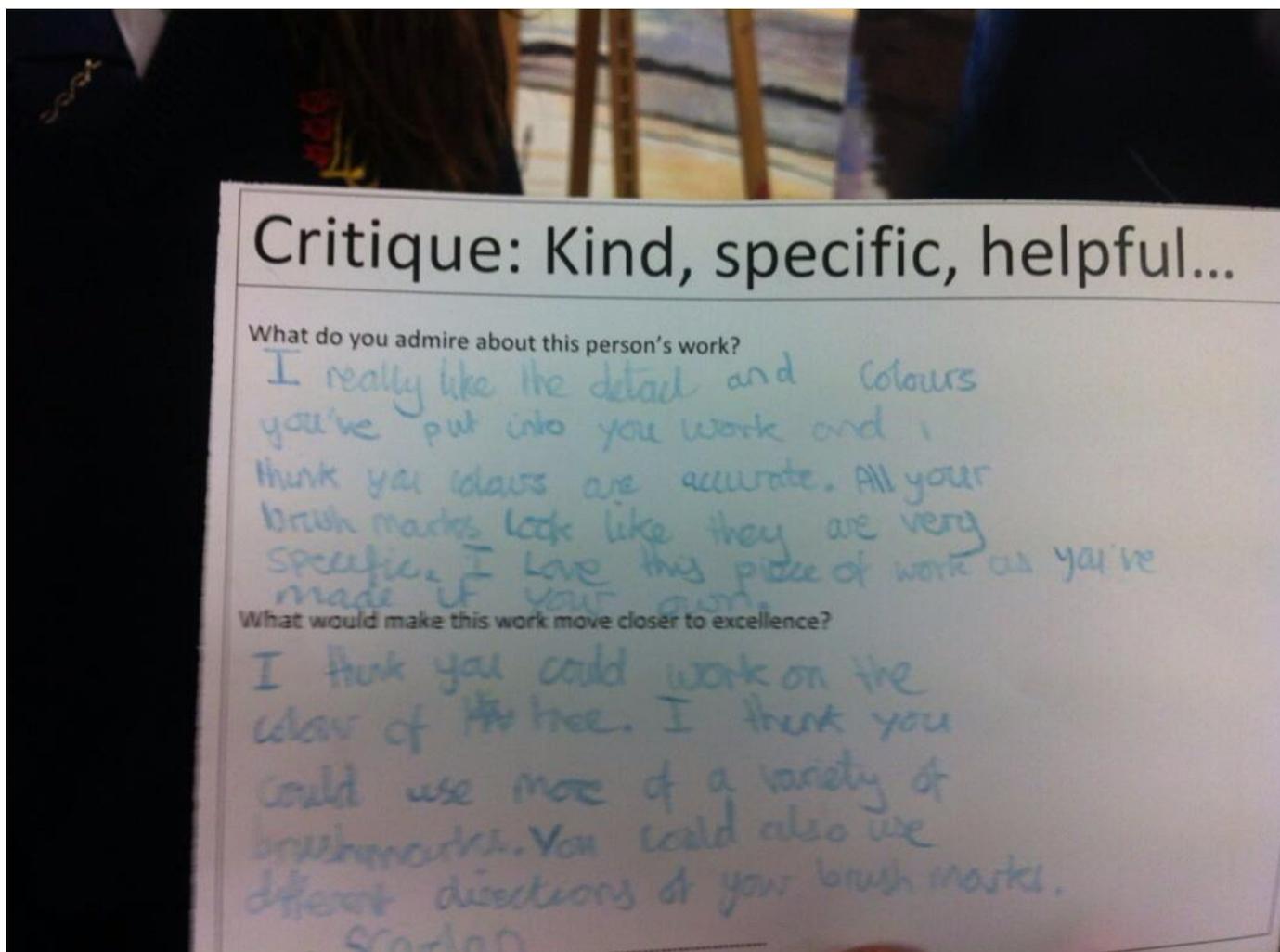
Jakub Michalak

3. **Question the effort.** Questioning serves a pivotal role in nurturing a growth mindset. How

could this be even better? What do you need to work hard at to improve on this? Is it time to adopt a different approach or do you need to just keep going? Are you putting in enough effort for you to make major improvements this time? Go and have a look at X's work. What can you tell me about the approach she has taken with this work? Getting the right answers is part of the battle; the other is insisting that students respond to what they know about how to improve. The proof being in the pudding so to speak.



4. **Make it difficult.** What about those students who are producing great work without struggle? Is this because they are working exceptionally hard? Putting in extraordinary effort or is it too easy? As designers of learning, we must ensure that everyone struggles. Without making mistakes, we don't learn. Without a real sense of challenge, the idea that you can grow as a learner is a fallacy. There is always a sense of struggle for almost every learner. As teachers, we need to help make those challenges explicit for every learner. Students cannot hide away from the things they always find a challenge. Whether that be presenting to the class, handwriting, spelling or something more subject specific. With hard work, every student can improve. They need to know that. They need to be given the chance to find out!



5. **Make a big deal about effort.** This starts with us posing the challenges, talking about the qualities required for excellence. “I know this is going to be exceptionally difficult”, “It’s going to take a lot of effort”. When those challenges are complete, we need to give space in our lessons to reflect and celebrate on the effort it has taken to get there. To celebrate the struggle, to ensure students realise that it was all worth it. They are now more intelligent and capable than they were at the start of this lesson, project or scheme of learning.

**"IF YOU DON'T
MAKE IT FIRST
TIME, JUST**

**KEEP TRYING.
YOU WILL GET
THERE
EVENTUALLY
AND BE REALLY
HAPPY WITH ALL
THE WORK YOU
HAVE PUT IN."**

ERIN CLOUGH

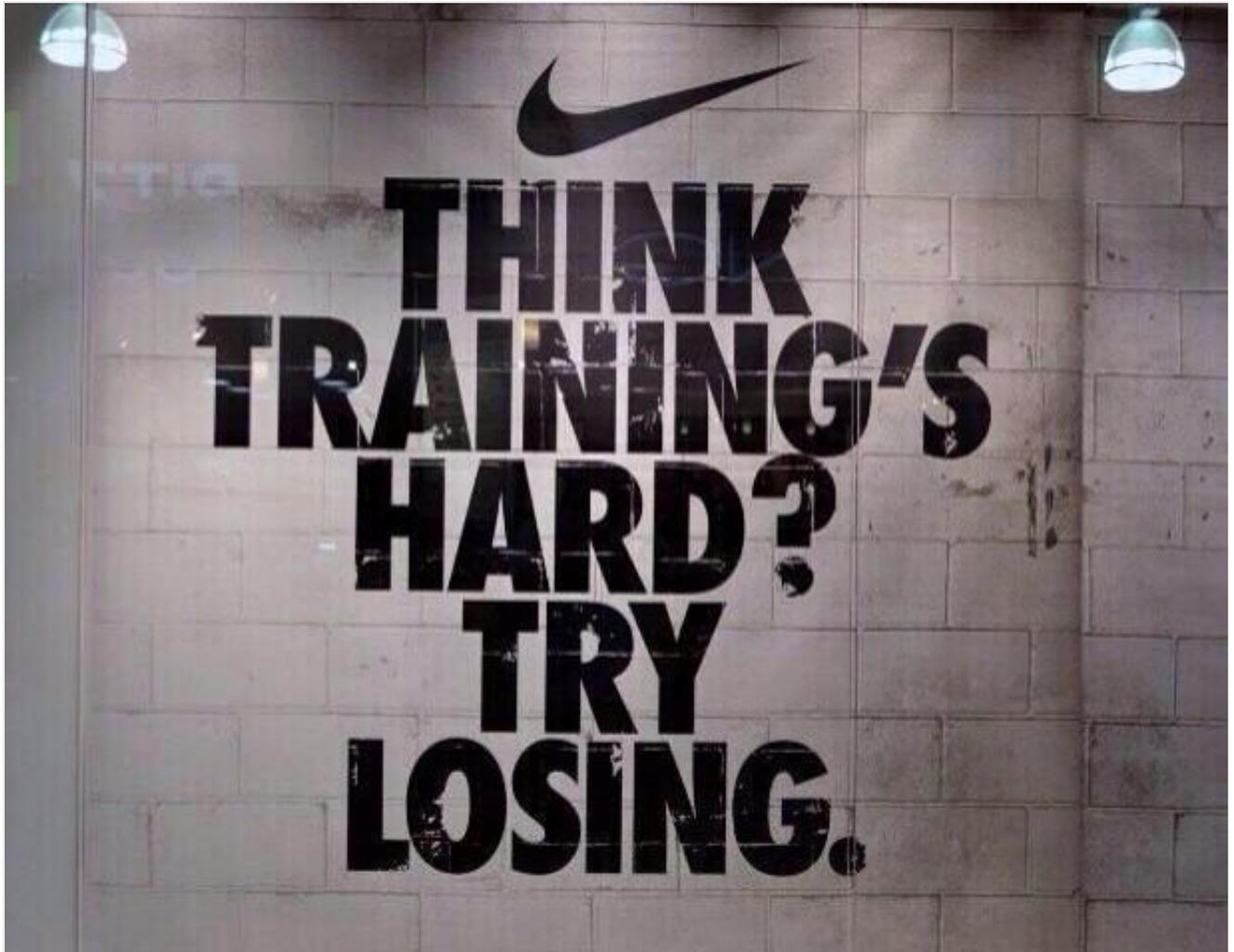
- 6. Acknowledge the effort.** Make a big deal of those who are putting in the effort. Those who are spending time on their homework. Talk about their work ethic in the class, and what effect it has on the quality of their work and understanding. Let those who are not putting in as much effort see what happens when you do. Keep persevering with those who aren't. The more they are surrounded by a strong work ethic and a persistent teacher, they will crumble!

“WHEN I CREATE WORK OF EXCELLENCE, I FEEL PROUD AND I GET A HAPPY, EXCITED FEELING INSIDE. WHEN I CREATE A WORK OF EXCELLENCE, I FEEL LIKE ALL MY HARD WORK HAS PAID OFF!”

JADE O'LEARY

7. **Demonstrate that work ethic yourself.** Be ready at the door, welcoming the students in for

another challenging lesson! Have their work marked when needed. Talk to students about their improvements as they enter the door. Make sure you embody the work ethic you want to see in your students.



- 8. Display a Growth Mindset.** Make your classroom a place where they can thrive as a learner. Have work of exceptional standard for them to see on your walls. Have examples of great learners in your subject. What did they do to get where they are now? How passionate about their work did they have to be become great? What would the greatest minds say about your work? If Steven King were going to mark your horror story, what would he say about how to improve the suspense in this passage? If Sir Dave Brailsford were to mark your long answer paper for GCSE PE, what marginal gains would he say you could do to improve? Who are your local heroes? Who are those amazing people who have kept going despite enormous challenge to make a name for themselves? The Catherine Granger's of this world.



9. **High expectations for every single student.** If you know about the Pygmalion effect, then you know about the exceptional power we have as teachers to affect students' lives through our own expectations for them. Know every student can work hard, can embrace challenge, can develop their understanding and can continually improve.



10. **Provide elements of choice.** Allow students opportunities for students to have periods of autonomy and choice. This will lead to greater persistence, productivity, well-being and ultimately better understanding through finding their own path, learning for themselves.

Imagine if every classroom, every teacher instilled this culture within your school. Every day, every hour, every minute. It would be transformational. Look to see how it affects the learning culture within your classroom and be prepared to share it with others. Teachers can be the very antithesis of a growth mindset. Having routines and expectations of 'that bottom set', which haven't changed in the last 20 years. This is your biggest challenge. Embrace it!

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I am primarily an Art teacher, but over the past 5 years have been co-developing an experienced-based learning programme in the school I work in called Pebble, (short for Project Based Learning). I read extensively on learning and education, and I intend to use this blog to record what is going on in my head as well as in the classroom. Hopefully I will be able to share resources and ideas with like-minded thinkers in the future. The Pebble course runs through the whole of Year 8 for 5 periods a week. I am desperate for our world wide education system to catch up with the way we live our lives.

Transformation of what we learn in schools and how we learn in schools is desperately overdue. Pebble is a skills centered curriculum with the focus very much on what students need to be successful learners, giving them valuable, deep learning experiences to boot.