**📘** ***From* The Hidden Lives of Learners, by Graham Nuthall**

**Extract 1**

In my experience, teaching is about sensitivity and adaptation. It is about adjusting to the here-and-now circumstances of particular students. It is about making moment-by-moment decisions as a lesson or activity progresses. Things that interest some students do not interest others. **Things that work one day may not work the next day**. What can be done quickly with one group has to be taken very slowly with another group. What one student finds easy to understand may confuse another student. In order to navigate the complexity of the circumstances in which a teacher works, **it is not possible just to follow a recipe**. As a teacher, you make adaptations. You must. The important question is: what adaptations do you make?

**Extract 2**

The problem is that teachers can become very sensitive to what their students are doing and feeling, but their focus is, as it must be, on managing the behaviour and motivation of their students. Changing what students think and believerequires more than just involvement and motivation. **Being sensitive to student learning requires something more**.

**Extract 3**

A busy, active classroom, in which all the students are enthusiastically engaged in projects or activities that require them to think and solve problems for themselves, looks like an effective classroom.

**🧠 Checking for Understanding**

**Thoughts**

* Checking for understanding helps us to make decisions about what to do next
* Those who teach broadly compliant and motivated students are likely to find it easier to do
* Students with a wide range of needs and dispositions can make you seem less competent
* The act of checking for understanding is relatively effortful and can be time-consuming
* The ‘cost’ of not doing it is low in the short-term because the consequences are delayed
* It’s the reason why we tend to get better more quickly at stuff like behaviour management
* Expert-induced blindness typically leads us to over-estimate what our students know

**Problems**

* It’s really easy to conflate performance with learning
* Students typically know what signs to look for and are good at showing them
* Superficially checking for understanding is simple to do and it can make everyone feel good
* It can be convenient to accept ‘incomplete’ answers rather than push for more depth
* It’s tempting to ‘finish-off’ incomplete or unsatisfactory answers
* Increasing the pace or ‘busyness’ of a lesson is a pretty effective way to manage behaviour
* It’s sometimes hard to provide individual feedback to students amidst everything else
* It can be embarrassing when it’s obvious that students haven’t understood something
* Some students aren’t really used to being asked to contribute or show their work (etc.)

**Solutions**

* Be crystal clear on what you want students to know
* Identify which words you want student to use and invest time in explicitly teaching them
* Brighten the lines between the transition points in your lessons
* Make the majority of your questions ‘cold call’
* Circulate whenever possible and read as much work as you can
* Occupy a position in the room that gives you the best possible view of the class
* Keep a tally of students you engage with (this is actually really interesting)
* Provide a reasonably generous amount of thinking time after you ask questions or set a task
* Check for understanding on content that you’ve covered in previous lessons
* Avoid teaching challenging students (ha-ha-only-joking)