

Report on **Dennis Pauli's** session:
'Multi-Sensory Strategies: Increasing Achievement in Reading and Writing'

This session centred on the idea of helping students to write effective paragraphs by using a colour scheme to make the writing process more neuron friendly. This in itself is not new, but the original aspect is the way that colours and codes can aid paragraph construction at all levels: from primary to A level.

As a English teacher, I am acutely aware of the incongruity between students' knowledge and ability to structure that knowledge into cursive and controlled pieces for academic assessment. As such, this session was extremely useful. The ideas can be summarised as follows:

- Paragraphed essay writing is analogous to building a house: plan, foundations, framing, trim work and decoration.
- Colour coding: blue (leads and introductions); green (main idea, topic sentence, point); amber (slow down, sub-topic); red (details, analysis, evaluation, explanation); green should then be used again to refocus the detail onto the topic (reference chains): particularly useful for key stage 4 and 5.

For example:

1. Holidays

2. Disney World

3. Shows

3.1 Character Show: who, when, what?

3.2 Dancing and Variety Show: value, fun

3. Hotel

3.1 Rooms: décor, style, comfort

3.2 Service: standard, politeness

3.3 Food: menu, choice, quality

- Strategies for writing conclusions were suggested, but these were nothing new.
- Many suggestions were made for extending the red sections: examples, elaboration, evidence, events, explanations: these increase in frequency and complexity throughout the key stages.
- Eventually, the piece will be colour coded (on strips for younger students) and put together; again, nothing new, but very useful for students, even at A level, to demystify the writing process.
- This process is also useful for argumentative writing (for and against)
- Process should be practised on a topic they know about (e.g. holidays, before they use it for say: Sassoon's use of tone in the poem 'Suicide in the Trenches'; always building on what students already know.)

I found the session to be of enormous significance to my practise: students need to practise the process with something they know: linking the familiar and the abstract together as brain science would suggest. It would not be an exaggeration to say that for me as a secondary school English teacher, this session was the most useful of the Brain Expo conference.

Mike Dore

Furthermore, I have used such approaches with year 8, 11 and 12. They have all responded well to the process and have been reassured by the logical approach that supports, rather than undermines, their confidence in their ability to use their knowledge. Dr Pauli's session allowed me to see how colour, theme and organisation can clarify the essay writing process by using multi-sensory ideas that appeal to students' concrete rather than abstract knowledge.

Also, the session has given me the knowledge and experience of how to disseminate such knowledge to other school colleagues across departments. Perhaps the most useful aspect of this process is that it works for all types of extended writing: expository, exploratory, discursive, narrative, analytical, advisory, informational, argumentative and anecdotal. Armed with the knowledge and skills to develop this process, I believe that teachers can make this model (built on Step Up To Writing an American intervention initiative) their own and enhance students' knowledge and experience of writing.

Michael Dore
2nd In English
Fallibroome High School