

Neil Mackay: ‘How to Create a Criminal’: Nine Steps to Failure

How to make a criminal	No student left behind
1. Teachers focus on reading accuracy at the expense of thinking and the other core skills of the National Curriculum	Teachers use the principles, philosophy and key competencies of the National Curriculum to develop thinking skills, effective use of language, symbols and texts, self management, the ability to relate to others and to participate and communicate.
2. Teachers fail to share any concerns with parents – dismiss parental concerns – tell them “S/he’s young/naughty/not ready yet”	Teachers “look for trouble” through data and assessment for learning evidence. Having identified stuck students, quickly share their concerns with parents to plan joint strategies. Poor behaviour and/or apparent lack of maturity are recognised as indicators of potential difficulty rather than reasons for inaction
3. Dismiss/ignore achievements/aptitudes in other subject areas (including, sports, the arts, drama, ICT etc) because of basic skill weaknesses	Commitment to the National Curriculum principles of high expectation, inclusion and learning how to learn ensures all achievements are sought out, recognised and celebrated, even in areas which schools may not traditionally value. How many more John Brittens are out there?
4. Put students in “remedial groups” despite average performance in subjects other than English	Students supported to function effectively in ability appropriate groups/sets despite basic skill weaknesses. Attainment and achievement monitored and celebrated through assessment for learning and alternative evidence of achievement. When, despite a range of high quality classroom interventions, the student is still not making expected progress, the school makes available specialist support.
5. Treat escalating bad behaviour as something “wrong” with the student, home, background, environment etc rather than looking for causes within his/her schooling (in the UK, school inspectors say the major cause of bad behaviour is an inflexible curriculum)	Escalating bad behaviour is recognised as having a range of possible causes, including inappropriate teaching, groupings and materials. Changes in methodology, materials, groups, approaches and materials put in place and monitored impact. “If students aren’t learning the way we teach them, we’ll teach them the way they learn”
6. On transfer to secondary school, ensure that s/he is labelled as naughty rather than in need of support and ensure that none of his/her teachers have any awareness of dyslexia or of how needs may have been identified/met in primary school	In secondary – subject heads are responsible for ensuring that all staff read and respond to information from primary school reading the learning needs of dyslexic students. Through training all staff are aware of inclusive strategies designed to meet the needs of dyslexic learners in particular and vulnerable learners in general. The impact of these strategies is monitored as part of a whole school commitment to quality first teaching as promoted through the DFNZ website. Primary schools work with secondaries to monitor the effectiveness of their recommendations as vulnerable learners move

	towards public exams
7. If, by some chance s/he gets any support, ensure it is focused on improving reading accuracy at the expense of functional reading with little or no emphasis on learning to learn, planning, organisation etc – “death by phonics” is essential, especially if the student prefers/needs to acquire literacy skills in other ways.	Mind friendly, personalised approaches to learning place appropriate emphasis and importance on learning how to learn and developing behaviour for learning. specific teaching of functional literacy skills, including skimming and scanning, the use of context to support decoding support “thinking students” with weak reading accuracy to make best use of their abilities in other areas. Remember that accurate readers who cannot think go nowhere – weak readers who can think have no boundaries
8. As attendance and punctuality decline, see it as a self-fulfilling prophecy rather than an institutional failure	Students who “vote with their feet” trigger a long, hard look at the appropriateness of methods, materials and approaches. In the UK, one clear indicator of the impact of dyslexia aware good practice is almost invariably a general improvement in attendance and punctuality.
9. Absolutely vital – make sure s/he leaves school with minimal/no qualifications, despite being of average ability	There is zero tolerance of students leaving without qualification with subject leaders being made accountable for 100% exam across a range of appropriate courses. Exam performance is cross referenced against expected progress data with a particular emphasis on the performance of students of average ability and above with weak basic skills.