



## Network Newsletter

Issue 1 Spring 1 2021

Website coming soon!

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## Coordinator's Comments

### Reflections on Being a TA During a Pandemic

The idioms 'wearing many hats' and 'spinning plates' are often used to describe the role of a teaching assistant, but this has never been more true than during the pandemic. Throughout the first lockdown, our TAs at Westbourne Academy offered support to students and their families in the form of regular welfare phone calls dealing with diverse issues, such as mental health, ICT and financial concerns. We delivered bespoke sessions to EHCP students and supported departments to differentiate resources.

As schools started to reopen, we facilitated transition by becoming year 7 form tutors to offer consistency at a time of great uncertainty. Break and lunch time clubs were established, much needed mentoring and SEMH provisions began and lessons were supported in a socially-distanced way.

I may be biased, but I believe that the teaching assistant profession is one of the most flexible, resilient and positive. Whatever the future holds, we will smash it because that's what we do best.



### We need you

An amazing opportunity has arisen for TAs in Suffolk to be instrumental in developing an induction training package for newly appointed teaching assistants.

The aim is to trial the training in Suffolk with plans to offer it nationally in the future. Members of the nasen Education Team will be joining us throughout the project.

For more information, please email me on the address at the top of this newsletter.

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## Reflections on the Network Launch

By Abi Joachim

Well, what an extraordinary journey it has been so far! I want to start by saying 'thank you' to everyone for making the launch events such a success. The enthusiasm and energy was infectious and I was overwhelmed by how many people attended each session.

My hope is that this is just the beginning. I want to create a network, which offers you what you need. I am passionate about raising the profile of this amazing profession and supporting you all to be the best TAs you can be. My aim is to offer a range of networking opportunities and training tailored to your requirements and for this to happen I would love your input.

“MY COLLEAGUE  
AND I ARE  
BUZZING WITH  
IDEAS...”

Please use this Microsoft Forms document to share your views and ideas to shape the Suffolk TA Network and to sign up and be part of this exciting venture.

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UyUudcf3sEGK8GkwZaFwfVhZAzV7zulGsO\\_6uPBfMz5UQkZBN0JRR0hUMehYMzFHOTdYTENHRIFDSi4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UyUudcf3sEGK8GkwZaFwfVhZAzV7zulGsO_6uPBfMz5UQkZBN0JRR0hUMehYMzFHOTdYTENHRIFDSi4u)

## In one word, what would you like training on?

Mentimeter



## THRIVE

By Colleen Chetty

My passion for supporting pupils socially and emotionally and helping them to be the best version of themselves was my incentive to train to become a Licensed Thrive Practitioner. I initially became interested in Thrive while shadowing an External Thrive Practitioner within the academy. I delivered sessions stipulated on the Action plans to a small number of pupils, using my mental health and nurture skills. I soon realised that Thrive was an excellent platform to support social and emotional development and I was very keen to know more, so I visited our local Primary School to find out how it could be implemented within a Secondary school.

As I felt it was important to maintain the same social and emotional support from Primary through to Secondary, I spoke to our SENCO who agreed that Thrive would be very beneficial for our pupils. We arranged to attend a Thrive Introduction session, where we were able to establish what was involved. Two months later, I started the Thrive Practitioner course and have never looked back. Now that I am qualified, I am able to identify, support and maintain positive progression with our pupils. I have been able to create an area where I can deliver sessions, either individually or in a group and this has been extremely successful; however, since Covid I have faced many barriers and am currently unable to use the space. I am still able to deliver 1:1, adapting sessions to suit the current situation we find ourselves in. The support from Thrive itself is outstanding and I have been able to join the local Thrive group via Facebook, which shares a wealth of knowledge and resources.



“TWO MONTHS LATER, I STARTED THE THRIVE PRACTITIONER COURSE AND HAVE NEVER LOOKED BACK.”

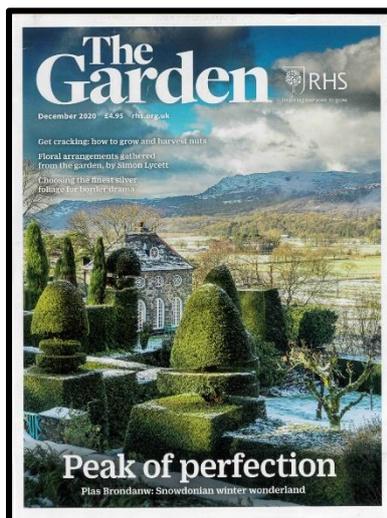
## Eco-therapy: The Social and Therapeutic Benefits of Horticulture

By Ian Hirst

Eco-therapy is a term used to describe a number of treatment programmes, which aim to improve the mental and physical health of an individual through doing outdoor activities in nature. Eco-therapy sessions should leave individuals feeling “grounded”, providing a reflexive perspective that can help reduce anger, depression, anxiety and stress. They can also improve your mood, self-esteem and emotional resilience.



The Westbourne wildlife group is entering its third consecutive year, delivering a bespoke nurture programme based around teaching students how to grow their own food. The sessions enable new skills to develop, providing physical



exercise, which in turn increases stamina and general fitness. Spending time outside increases energy levels in addition to helping use up excess stress hormones in the body, relaxing the nervous system by being in the calm, natural environment. Our nurture sessions also help develop social skills and team work, as students have to work together to achieve a common goal. Through overcoming new challenges, trying new activities and learning new skills, eco-therapy can also help build confidence by strengthening your connection with nature.

Within the past three years, the Westbourne wildlife group has completed all five levels attainable within the RHS gardening for schools' initiative, the Eco schools bronze award and created vital links with the local allotment field. The group also featured in the December 2020 issue of the RHS magazine "The Garden", highlighting their work in the community providing produce for the local food bank grown over the lockdown period. For more information please contact [ian.hirst@westbourne.atrust.org.uk](mailto:ian.hirst@westbourne.atrust.org.uk)



Becoming a Remote Learning  
Support Assistant (RLSA)

By Amanda Crichton

RLSA The Oaks Primary School,  
Ipswich

I was delighted to be offered a role as an RLSA within a primary school under the Ipswich Opportunity Area initiative. The virtual interview process was new to me and went very smoothly. When I was offered the post at The Oaks Primary School in Ipswich I was delighted.

As I write I have just completed my first week of being an RLSA and already I love it. There is lots to learn such as using Google Classroom, how the school works and the roles everyone does but they couldn't have made me feel more welcome. An achievement itself during lockdown! I have also completed some of the training offered by the IOA and it's nice to feel part of a wider team. I am looking forward to sharing experiences with these colleagues.

So far I have already been able to support families to overcome the problems they were facing, such as technical issues accessing the learning, misplaced passwords and have been coordinating the allocation and collection of Chromebooks.

“ IN THIS  
ROLE, I KNOW  
I CAN MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE. ”

There's plenty more for me to learn but I have never had such a rewarding job. There's nothing better than being able to assist someone struggling and offering some words of advice and encouragement. In this role, I know I can make a difference.

This opportunity has made me realise how much I want to embrace a change of career now my children are older. I am excited to see where this path will take me.

For more information about Remote Learning Support Assistants please email:

Hazel Weekes

Remote Learning Project  
Coordinator

[hazel.weekes@newanglia.co.uk](mailto:hazel.weekes@newanglia.co.uk)

## From TA to Teacher Training

By Michelle Duro

The plan was always to be a teacher. I needed to gain experience within a school to be able to embark upon the teacher training course that I desired. My experience as a TA for a year and a half was highly enjoyable and I met some amazing colleagues and students. I was able to help students with SEN across the curriculum, which was extremely rewarding. The experience I gained in the classroom was invaluable to my future career whilst carrying out a rewarding role within the school. The students who required assistance in the classroom had a wide range of SEN, which made my job interesting and informative and sometimes a real eye-opener! An opportunity arose for me to train to be a teacher in the school I worked at as a TA- needless to say I took the opportunity with both hands. I am currently a Trainee Teacher and I qualify in June this year. The current pandemic has been challenging, with all the changes in education, but this has made me a more resilient teacher. From my experience as a TA, I have vast classroom experience and it helps me to be able to deal with certain behaviour or scenarios when and if they arise. I feel that with the right communication between teacher and TA the outcome can have highly successful results for a variety of students across the school.

### Book Review

#### ***Teaching Assistant's Pocketbook 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by Dot Constable £9.99***

This little book is literally small enough to carry in your pocket. It covers the key aspects of a teaching assistant's role in easy to access, bite-sized chunks. The tone is often relaxed and light-hearted with comical illustrations. Although I feel this book contains plenty of useful information, it may be more relevant to TAs new to the profession.



**Content: 7/10**

**Accessibility: 9/10**

**Overall: 8/10**

### Do you have something to share?

Run a brilliant intervention? Offer excellent classroom support? Have an interesting remote learning story to tell? Read a TA related book you would like to review?

Email me with your idea and you could be in the next edition.