



# Lockdown learning stars – teachers going the extra mile

Since schools closed their doors in the spring, teachers across the country have been coping with unprecedented circumstances.

Some have been furloughed, some have been teaching online lessons via Zoom or Teams, some have been delivering packs of work to pupils by hand. Some sports staff have taken it a step further and have been brave enough to put themselves out there online and run livestreamed HIIT classes, yoga sessions, crazy dance classes, hockey skills videos and much more.

With many pupils missing out on school sport from March to September, PE departments across the country have been working out how to keep children physically healthy within the confines of their homes and gardens.

What has given these teachers the confidence to star onscreen and what have their students learned from it?

Rhianwen Moore, director of sport at Sherfield School, was keen to livestream fitness classes as soon as lockdown hit.

As soon as I heard we were going to be closing the school and delivering through virtual learning I said to SLT that I would like to lead

by Sarah Eversfield

a daily morning session to help all the pupils. I am an advocate of morning fitness to get the most out of my own day and I love to motivate others to be the best they can be so it seemed the best I could offer.

As soon as online learning began, 'Morning Motivation' became part of every day and remained a permanent feature in our pupils' curriculum. I had heard that Joe Wicks was offering something similar but I thought it was important to offer our pupils the opportunity to work out every morning with a familiar face from school to keep some normality and consistency.

"Each session comprised of two workouts to music with variations of exercises such as squats and lunges, a plank challenge, an ab workout to music and a quote for growth mindset which I would elaborate on for the pupils. I made the sessions personal through mentioning as many pupils' names as possible.

"We continued with it when we switched to blended learning and developed leaders from year 6 who created and led their own routines.

"The pupils learned how to stay fit

and healthy while at home. They learned to push and challenge themselves, to adapt and to create.

"Now the Sherfield pupils are back in school, the Monday Motivation workouts have continued. On the school field eight year groups from reception to year 10 have joined in the workout, all socially distanced in their bubbles outdoors – while pupils who remained at home still joined the workout online."

A consistent theme of teachers' motivation to become online fitness content creators is delivering a personal touch for their own pupils. Jamie Cullen, head of rugby and a PE teacher at Sevenoaks School in Kent, acknowledged that Joe Wicks workouts were out there but wanted to offer something more personalised and appropriate for his students.

"A lot of our students are very advanced in their technique and sport-specific movements. Joe Wicks workouts were not going to push them or help them. Many of our students spend a lot of time on strength and conditioning during the course of a week at school with our S&C coach and also work on developing exercise programmes as part of their PE curriculum. I wanted to provide workouts that would be hard work but also fun. "It took a bit of courage to get the

first video out there on social media – a HIIT session focused on a whole body workout. But actually, once I got it perfect. But actually, once I got it done that first one and put it out there, I felt more confident about using Instagram Live to offer the whole school community the opportunity to work hard and feel a sense of community.

"Yes it's a bit nerve-wracking putting yourself out there, sweating away but I think that seeing your teachers engaging in sport and working hard is really important. Students are more likely to get into it if they see their own teachers who they have positive relationships with, working 100%.

"Some of the students didn't always want to switch their cameras on in live Teams workouts, but I felt that by putting myself out there, sometimes out of my comfort zone and even with them having a bit of a laugh with me, I was helping them to feel more comfortable.

"I really enjoyed delivering my live HIIT sessions and keeping everyone mentally and physically fit in these difficult times. HIIT style sessions proved hugely popular during lockdown across all forms of social media as an easy way to keep fit and maintain strength levels where possible. I wasn't reinventing the wheel. I was just providing a

tailored, personal, interactive version for our specific community.

"It was clear from students' feedback that they mostly enjoyed the interaction aspect of the curriculum which first rolled out at the start of term.

"I took on the responsibility to throw myself in and attempt a recorded session of which proved to be a success and it would have been a travesty not to go the full distance and attempt a live session on Instagram. Luckily it went well with no bleeps required and I felt this then encouraged all of the department to throw themselves in.

"Other teachers in the PE department ran live sessions for their students – circuits in their gardens, yoga on the carpet and many more. All sessions would have been different but they all had a personal connection and that's what the students enjoy most, seeing their friends on the screen and having a sense of normality to what they were used to. In our profession we pride ourselves on contact time and developing relationships. The exercise sessions we delivered online were a fantastic component in helping us to keep to our ethos.

"Of course we all hope to be back to a normal programme eventually, but we will look back on our

learnings and sense of community from this period with pride."

Jimmy Culane is head of hockey at Surbiton High School as well as assistant coach to Surbiton men's team – one of the most successful clubs in the English National League. He is also part of the England Hockey coaching staff, working with the U18 boys national squad.

Early on he started a 30-day hockey challenge in response to the many hockey challenges – like the toilet roll challenge – that popped up on social media in the early moments of lockdown. Surbiton High's 30-day Hockey Challenge became viral hockey community viewing, with over 10,000 people watching some of the daily videos.

"I wanted to create something that could challenge the students to develop themselves and keep them occupied in a stressful time. I decided that it might be useful for a wider community too, so I just decided to start posting them online too. By the end of it I was also sending them to about 20 other schools, clubs and camp businesses. I was happy to share with everyone that asked.

"The videos were also on our internal school system and the students at school were a few days ahead of the game. I would upload

to our OneDrive and they would replicate or add their own spin.

"Implicitly we were teaching them to create their own content at the same time. I also think it's powerful for young athletes to see other young athletes demonstrate which is why I was keen for their work to be on Twitter too. It's one thing to see a coach or an international perform a skill but it can be as powerful to see someone their own age doing it too."

A recent study at the Education University of Hong Kong found that children are more active when their teachers are active.

Teachers being willing to engage with students in physical activity with their pupils during lockdown has been a successful feature of many schools.

All the teachers agreed that harnessing the power of technology was important. But most of all, it is clear that the power of their relationships with students allowed them to foster a strong sense of community and well-being – even at a distance.

As things return to normal after the COVID-19 pandemic, will the lessons learned in lockdown continue to resonate down the line? Will students still be playing netball against walls with their coach watching via Zoom in future

summer holidays?

Laurence Mead, resident hockey coach at Bryanston School in Dorset, is convinced that the lessons learned during the pandemic will change the way teachers deliver sports.

"I believe lockdown has taught us that creativity is the new cool. During lockdown, athletes were forced to adapt to 'training in lockdown.' They had to be resilient and creative, using whatever resources were available to continue training. From trying to not to break windows while training in small spaces, all the way to building a mini-sized hockey pitch in the garden, everyone has had to be creative.

"We must ensure that these skills are not lost when they return to formal education and regulated sport. I am interested in how we encourage young people to be interdependent and develop the independence they have learned during lockdown, to be creative in managing their learning, but to scaffold this appropriately as a teacher.

Despite all the challenges, this is an exciting time for teaching and coaching and one we will never forget."