Evidence-Informed Wisdom: Making Better Decisions in Education (2025)

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Part 1: The Key Ingredients of Evidence-Informed Wisdom **Intro: Necessary but not sufficient (or what makes evidence-informed wisdom)** Education can be evidence-informed like medicine but cannot replicate randomized trials. Evidence-informed practice = Context + Research + Experience (research not enough). **1. Blind villagers meet an elephant for the first time (or why research is important)** Interacting with research need curiosity and courage. Curiosity: Elephant can be tree/snake/fan/rope/wall + Courage to change our view. Learning isn't intuitive; students regularly choose ineffective strategies. **2. Dynamic memories and smashing cars (or why your experience is essential)** Attention is the gatekeeper, motivation allocates attention for the best investment based on value/ expectancy/ cost, is largely unconscious, they use heuristics e.g. availability heuristic. **3. Do parachutes make jumping out of a plane safer? (or why your context is king)** Motivation is situation-specific not a personality trait, needs building (not with fun/sweets), reducing cost/increasing value **Intermission: A Model for Change:** Identify Problem → Evidence-informed insight (research + context + experience) → Cycle: try/reflect/review	• When reading research check whether I need to update my view • Memories aren't static • Teach Ss activities that may *feel* effective for learning may not be so • Avoid learning styles/ hemispheres/ Yelp effect • Beware of the 'average' – remember individual differences • It's research + context + experience • Move from 'we should' to 'we might try' • Implementation is a cycle
Part 2: The Psychology of Changing Minds: Ours and Other People's: **4. This is a lighthouse and Santa isn't real (or why it is hard to change our minds, but important that we sometimes do)**: Expectancy = anticipation of success (and value of that success), potent but fragile, aim for av. success rate of 80%, precise pitching/chunking, help them frame/define success AND attribute to their efforts not luck AND be in their control, deal with failure (pre-empt, reframe, reattribute), aim for proficiency (agency, curiosity, awe, fluency) **5. The smoking ban and too much jam (or how to help others develop their evidence-informed wisdom)**: Cost = effort + attention needed for benefit, routines (behavioural AND instructional) reduce effort, are simple/clear cut/stepped, started with distinct/multi- modal/punchy cues, you can stack/nest them, have to train them (rehearse/ practice, stick with it! **6. The Cobra Effect (or traps to avoid along the way)**: Evolution – we refer to others, conforming is a quick and safe bet, nudge by changing the norm they see (go for all doing it, point out/ model positives), amplifying approval (peer shout-outs, catch being good, stand and share, focus on what we want NOT what we don't) [Cobra Effect = unintended consequences). **Epilogue: Chesterton's Fence (or why not all change is good)**: influence of norms mediated by belonging, which can be all-consuming in adolescents, we can signal status by recognizing/including /framing, use 'we', build affinity (purpose, identity, common ground), beware tribalism between groups, status is bestowed, trust is earned (credibility, care, consistency.	• Hard to change minds, switching is hard • People aren't (usually) rational • Can't know anything 100% • Be skeptical • Don't be afraid to be wrong • Seek people who will be honest with you • Be open to feedback • Conflicting evidence is *useful* • Focus on benefits to students • People need time and space for proper reflection • Beware too many choices • Talk about what won't change as well as what will • Beware extrapolation/lethal mutations/ • Beware Goodhart's Law – when a measure is a target it's no longer a good measure