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Welcome to **ATTACK!** a two-page occasional publication. Most of **ATTACK!** will be concerned with the holistic curriculum which, if acted on, is a fundamental way to undermine the present undemocratic education system. Don't be discouraged if opportunities to teach holistically are limited, do your best, be a guardian, and act as a witness to this culturally significant and inspiring way of teaching and learning. **ATTACK!** is a partner to <https://networkkonnet.wordpress.com>

Attack! 46 Reuben and WALTs Part 2

The rest of the class had filed out for morning interval, but Reuben worked on in exaggerated fashion, his nose almost touching the table.

'Playtime Reuben. Rule off now.'

Reuben carried on as if nothing had been said.

'Reuben ... Reuben!'

'Out!'

Reuben scrambled from his desk and raced off.

'Drives us to distraction,' his dad had said at the beginning-of-the-year parent interview.

She was then bombarded with anecdotes of Reuben's misbehaviour, his strangeness, and endless questions.

'Questions everything we say and do. Everything – isn't that right, dad?'

'Dad' had been clasp and unclasp his hands. As he spoke he spread his wrists open and made a facial expression that communicated 'the kid's beyond our comprehension'.

'He comes up with some beauties all right,' he shook his head.

'We just ignore him now,' the mother interjected. 'We found the best way was to turn a deaf ear to him.'

'The trouble is he answers his own questions then. He answers himself, doesn't he dad?' The latter phrase was heavily emphasised.

'Weird all right.'

She had counselled them not to worry, that Reuben was different, but very interesting, and he made the other children think. (She could have added that he also helped her to be the kind of teacher she wanted to be.)

She realised, though, that matters had come to a head. The principal with increasing intensity had made it clear to her that, in her considered view, teaching was a vocation which was now more more plotted; that teachers at her school planned what was to be learnt in precise terms, involved the children in advance, unfolded lessons according to plan (scaffolding where necessary), then ticked off or otherwise the success of that teaching. And Reuben would have to be brought into line; made more disciplined in his behaviour – for his own sake and the children's. Something had to be done. It had been building for some time. Her first skirmish with the principal was mainly over planning with the matter of Reuben only being brought up incidentally, or so it seemed. However, she was soon to realise her planning, and Reuben, were simply different parts of the same issue.

The principal had stayed behind her desk on that occasion; the green planning and evaluation book open before her. She projected what she obviously intended as an encouraging smile and asked her how she was settling down into life at her first school. After my murmured reply, she got down to business. 'I want to talk to you about the school's policy on planning.'

'Your WALTs are too general, the children will not understand them in the power-sharing discussion at the beginning of the lesson, and they will not be able to use them for success criteria at the conclusion. How could you measure the WALTs you have provided? Using these WALTs, the lesson could go in any direction.'



Realising she may have been overly brusque, her manner reduced in intensity and the line of her mouth relaxed a little.

'I'll show you what I mean.'

'Let us look at what you have written as WALTs for your expressive writing on signs of the season.'

She read from my green planning and evaluation book in a confidential voice: 'We Are Learning To: Write with sincerity (truthfulness) about some signs of the season; Write economically, choosing just the right word for the job; Think about where else we could take our writing about signs of the season; Think about other ways we could express our ideas about signs of the season.'

I have also noted other WALTs you sometimes use, for instance: Write with fluency and rhythm; Write with clarity.

'Those ideas are all well and good but they are too general, too abstract.'

'Could I suggest the following ideas for WALTs instead?'

She had gone to the trouble of compiling a list. A signal, surely, she wanted and would brook no argument.

This time she read more assertively as though bullet-pointing them: 'We Are Learning To:

- Write using adjectives and adverbs (Wow words)
- Write using paragraphs
- Write using full stops, commas, colons, and commas
- Write synonyms and alliterations.'

'Those are just the sort of WALTs that would suit the topic, the children could understand, and would make them feel part of the learning.'

Her mouth tightened, 'What do you think?'

She considered, briefly, saying something along the lines that she preferred getting the children motivated, getting them writing, then doing the teaching and learning from what they came up with, some of which would be in the WALTs, and some not. Also that WALTs can take the sense of exploration and discovery out of learning. And, she wanted to ask, was making children write emphasising adjectives and adverbs in the interest of good writing?

'It's all evidence based,' the principal said. 'And we're an evidence-based school.'

'I'd ask you to think about what I've said.'

Well, she had thought about it, and had tried it, but only half-heartedly as the principal's subsequent sniffy oversight of her planning made clear.

'And how are you getting on with Reuben?' she had asked. 'He needs to be on a tight rein.'

There was a pause.

'A very tight rein.'

When the children came back from interval, she decided to act with absolute resolve.

'Tell me some things about yourself,' she asked Reuben.

'I might have been a bird before I was born.'

She completely ignored this.

'Tell me about what you do when you get out of bed in the morning.'

'I have "Ricies".'

'Excellent! Well done! Good boy!'

Reuben would be rewarded with praise, attention, and treats when he kept on track; ignored or diverted when he strayed.

After about five minutes discussion, she said, 'Now that we've finished talking about your life, Reuben, it's time for you to write about it. Here, put your name at the top of the pad and use the words we've listed on the board to compose your story.'

