

## Extreme education

### Level 3 • Advanced

#### 1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words and phrases from the text.

zero tolerance    scrutinize    accountability    discrepancy    peer  
vehemently    mentor    disadvantaged    sponsor    needy

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an experienced person who helps someone with less experience.
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ is someone who belongs to the same social or professional group as another person or who is the same age as another person.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a person or business who pays money to support an event or programme.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a situation in which people are questioned or criticized for their actions.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is a situation in which all offences, even the most minor, are strictly punished in accordance with the law or a set of rules.
6. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a difference between two things that should be the same.
7. If you are \_\_\_\_\_, you do not have enough money for basic things such as food and clothing.
8. If you are \_\_\_\_\_, you do not have the same advantages as other people.
9. If you protest \_\_\_\_\_, you protest very strongly and with passionate feelings.
10. If you \_\_\_\_\_ something, you examine it very carefully.

#### 2 What do you know?

Decide whether you think these statements are *True (T)* or *False (F)*. Then check your answers in the text.

1. In the US, statistics show that 95% of parents want a better education for their children.
2. At small 200-pupil academies in the US, children attend class for 12 hours a day.
3. Academies like these have better test scores than private schools.
4. In one academy in a tough area of the South Bronx (the Kipp academy), all the children can read music.
5. More boys apply to join the academies than girls.
6. Some British educationalists believe the UK could learn a lot from the US small academies programme.

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#### Coming to an inner city near you, extreme education

*Small US academies with tough rules and excellent results are model for British*

**Polly Curtis, education editor**  
**October 22, 2007**

- 1 Some people call it extreme education: 10-hour days, parental contracts and zero tolerance behaviour policies in small, 200-pupil academies. The result, seen in an evolving breed of US school, is 100% college acceptance, test scores to rival private schools, and south Bronx teenagers who play the viola like their Manhattan neighbours.
- 2 James Verrilli, principal of the North Star Academy in Newark, America's second poorest city, said: "These kids know drugs. These kids know crime and violence. Their fathers are in jail. We have established a school culture which is very distinct from the attitude they walk in the door with. It's a college-bound culture."
- 3 At the North Star Academy children like Charism and Queen-Ama smile politely as they shake your hand and welcome you in. Some 85% of pupils are African-American and 90% get free school meals. Last year 80% were graded 'proficient or advanced' in maths, compared with 28% in the local neighbourhood school, and exceeding state averages. Pupils work in silence with a professionalism learned during a three-day process. From the beginning, pupils are taught to speak clearly, answer questions in full sentences and look the teacher in the eye.
- 4 Parents have to sign a three-way contract with their child and the principal, promising to pull their weight. When a child's homework isn't handed in by 8am there is a phone call home. When the parent doesn't turn up for a meeting, their child is not allowed back into school until they turn up. Signs telling them 'No excuses' line the walls. "I was working until 11 last night. I'm tired, but I know I've got to work," says one 11-year-old, as she finishes up a 'brain food' worksheet over breakfast. "Even my mother's gone back to school since I've been here." Pupils are tested every six weeks and their results scrutinized.
- 5 "As a principal of a small school I know what every child is up to in terms of their academic achievement and their behaviour," says Mr Verrilli. It's an accountability that is extended to teachers: Mr Verrilli will sit in on classes with a Blackberry, emailing the instructor his notes as they teach.
- 6 North Star and other small schools like it, have evolved out of the 3,500-strong charter school movement in the US. Charter schools are independent schools, funded by the state, and allowed more freedom to set policies, including their admissions procedures. It runs a lottery for admissions and has 1,800 children on the waiting list. Parents have to put their child's name into the lottery and there are discrepancies in who does so; three times more girls apply than boys.
- 7 Mr Verrilli vehemently denies any suggestion that his students might not be the most needy. "It's a prejudice to say that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds don't care about their kids' education. 95% of parents just want a better education for their children. "We're not creaming. I'm defensive about that. It's something we're accused of a lot. How hard is it to put your child's name down on a piece of paper?" he said.
- 8 Every child who attends the Kipp (Knowledge is Power Programme) academy in south Bronx, New York, plays in its orchestra, the best school ensemble in the city. Every child can read music. Shirley Lee, a director of the Kipp academy in the Bronx, says it works because there is a consistent approach across every part of the school. "The truth and reality is that kids like structure," she said. "It's about telling them what's appropriate and them learning when to use it. I wouldn't talk to you like I am now if I was out in some of these areas. But if we teach them to look in my eyes when I'm speaking to them, they will use that if they get stopped by the police and that will protect them."
- 9 In the UK, the political debate about the achievement gap between rich and poor in schools is gathering pace. The official body for inspecting schools, Ofsted, last week highlighted the 'stark divide' in achievement linked to social class and the government has set itself tough new targets on reducing the gap. Three London academies are experimenting with small

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school principles and last week a group of British teachers in training to run inner city schools visited the US looking for methods to tackle the dire state of 'complex urban education'.

- 10 Ark, a UK academy sponsor, is taking key components of the small school model into London academies. Lucy Heller, managing director of Ark, says: "There's something in the air: it's small schools, tough behaviour management and an adamant belief that inner city children can do just as well." The UK schools minister says small schools can teach disadvantaged children the skills that their middle class peers take for granted: "High ambition, zero tolerance of failure, an expectation that children will go to university and that schools will give them the education to do so."

- 11 Ark is also helping to fund the 30 'Future Leaders' group on the school leadership training scheme visiting the US. The trainees are expected to take some of the ideas they experience home to the UK. Many of them see limits in how translatable the model is to the UK, however. They talk about the fact that most of the US schools are middle schools, for 10–14 year-olds. The model has been tested less in the secondary school age group (11–18). They also ask how smaller schools can be afforded, though others point out the fact that in the US facilities are basic. "They don't even have interactive whiteboards," says one of the group's mentors. "They just teach. Small schools might not be practical in the UK, but what I really want these new school leaders to take back is the sense of culture in these schools."

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### 3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- What is the purpose of the three-way contract?
  - To enforce a zero tolerance policy.
  - To ensure that parents, children and the principal all work for each child's success.
  - To make sure that all homework is handed in by 8 am.
- What are the three basic components that UK schools will take from the US model?
  - Zero tolerance, homework handed in by 8am, and children excluded if their parents do not turn up for meetings.
  - Small schools, strict management of behaviour and a strong belief that children from disadvantaged backgrounds can do well.
  - High ambition, zero tolerance of failure and an expectation that children will go to university.
- How is accountability at the North Star Academy extended to teachers?
  - They have to work a 10-hour day, just like the pupils.
  - They have to scrutinize test results.
  - The principal observes their lessons and sends them notes about their lessons.
- Which statement best reflects the plans of UK educationalists?
  - They intend to use some of the US ideas.
  - They intend to copy the US model exactly and introduce small school academies to the UK.
  - They intend to copy the US model but have better facilities like interactive whiteboards.

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#### 4 Vocabulary 1: Find the word

Look in the text and find these words or expressions.

1. A participle meaning *gradually changing and developing*. (para 1)
2. A three-word expression meaning *to do your share of the work*. (para 3)
3. A verb used informally here meaning *to take the very best of something*. (para 6)
4. A noun meaning *a musical group*. (para 7)
5. A two-word expression meaning *becoming stronger and more successful*. (para 8)
6. A two-word expression meaning *obvious difference*. (para 8)
7. An adjective meaning *extremely bad*. (para 8)
8. An adjective meaning *very determined*. (para 9)

#### 5 Vocabulary 2: Phrasal verbs

Match these phrasal verbs from the text with their meanings.

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1. hand in     | a. highlight                                      |
| 2. turn up     | b. go to a class you are not directly involved in |
| 3. go back     | c. write something on a piece of paper            |
| 4. sit in (on) | d. arrive   |
| 5. put down    | e. give to a person in authority                  |
| 6. point out   | f. return   |

#### 6 Vocabulary 3: Verb and noun collocations

Use these verbs from the text to fill the gaps.

attend	take	set	look
establish	sign	gather	pull

1. \_\_\_\_\_ a target
2. \_\_\_\_\_ a culture
3. \_\_\_\_\_ someone in the eye
4. \_\_\_\_\_ a school, college or academy
5. \_\_\_\_\_ pace
6. \_\_\_\_\_ your weight
7. \_\_\_\_\_ something for granted
8. \_\_\_\_\_ a contract

#### 7 Discussion

Do you think there should be more or less discipline in schools? List the points for and against schools like the North Star Academy.