The Wilkie Way
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The Average Student

Something to think about as we head down the road of teaching all students in a year group the same content and new standardized testing.
We're so accustomed to using averages that we neglect to question whether they're actually useful. The **End of Average by Todd Rose** argues that, when we use averages to judge people, we typically arrive at inaccurate and harmful conclusions.
(Rose is a developmental psychologist, former Harvard professor)

Rose asserts that one of the areas of society in which judging individuals with averages has done the most damage is the modern education system. Rather than give each student what they individually need to learn the most, we give them a standardized experience that forces them to conform or fail. As a result, students and society both suffer.

Consider what is happening in New Zealand and the politics behind the changes.
"What is driving alot of what I'm doing - is that equity piece"(Listener Jan 31 - Feb 6 2026 - Educating Erica). The premise is that the changes being made are to ensure that everyone can live up to their full potential. There is no argument that knowledge is essential but is the knowledge the only aspect to be considered?

According to Rose, our education system is a deeply flawed sorting mechanism because it's founded on the false assumption that "general intelligence" exists. We use standardized tests because we assume that students who are better at quickly solving math problems or reasoning through logic puzzles are generally "smarter" than others. In other words, we think they'll be better at solving all problems than their less "gifted" counterparts. Instead of judging students based on individual skills, we average out their various skills into one-dimensional scores that supposedly reflect their general intelligence.

However, research shows that such scores of general intelligence are completely inaccurate. Rose argues that if you ever judge someone as "generally smart," you're probably mistaken. That's because someone who's good at one intellectual task is no more likely than anyone else to be good at another intellectual task. For this reason, a student's standardized test scores or grade point average don't reliably predict their performance at other tasks, or in their future career.
If a student is gifted in ways a standardized test can't measure, the system incentivizes them to struggle to succeed in the same way as everyone else instead of nurturing the talents they have. This is not only demoralizing for individuals, but also damaging to society at large, as it leaves the labour pool full of underutilized talent.

Second, according to Rose, our education system limits students' potential by teaching all students a fixed curriculum at a fixed pace. This disadvantages those who need more time to effectively learn.

We assume that students who learn more quickly are "smarter" in general, and they'll also excel at retaining skills and using them to solve problems. However, research suggests this is false: When given the freedom to progress through a curriculum at their own pace, almost any student can learn at a "gifted" level. Students benefit from spending more time on the ideas they struggle with and less time with those that come easily to them.

Our entire education system is based on the average learner, when there is no such thing. "So schools fail at what they're supposed to do - recognise and nurture talent," says Rose

In 2018 I attended the BCME conference in the UK at Warwick University and attended a session run by Ruth Merrtens (an academic, teacher and writer College of St Mark and St John Plymouth University) and these are the notes I took from her presentation.

The UK under the 2014 mastery curriculum is paying very little consideration to child development and focusing on a very prescriptive curriculum. Ruth Merrtens pointed out that transferring the Singapore and Chinese methods to UK schools in a bid to raise the UK in international league tables is simplistic. She cites the success of Singapore and Chinese methods in Singapore and China has more to do with high teacher knowledge and status. The amount of time students spend on mathematics is probably double the time spent in UK. Also parental support, no discipline issues in the classroom and the desire/need to be educated in order to make a living. (No welfare systems)

She also highlighted the lack of mathematical pedagogical knowledge in professional learning opportunities available for primary teachers. Continuing professional learning budgets are being focussed on generic topics like behaviour management, technology use etc.

Publishers are making a lot of money out this approach as UK government are insisting that every student has workbooks and textbooks to work from. One publisher has produced a 100 page workbook and 100 page textbook for each term from year 1 to year 6. Government are providing grants for schools to purchase books – approved by them. Currently there is only one text approved – a direct translation of a Shanghai text. The Education budget will actually bypass schools.

(Michael Gove former UK education secretary (2010 - 2014) has a major advisory role in Stanfords reform programme for NZ schools - See Listener article Educating Erica Jan 31 - Feb 6).

Another session attended at the same conference was a research presentation run over a school year by the Babcock Centre attached to Exeter University:
The question asked was:
How can we best support teachers to develop their own practice through action research?
Effective professional learning requires the following components:

1. Sustained - weeks and months
2. Subject specific
3. Pro-active – go and play, take a risk
4. Collaborative
5. Supported by an external specialist/credible facilitator
6. Evidence based – created a conflict as teachers engaged on reading research was not effective to PLD
7. Student focused

Barriers to learning identified:
1. Teachers who go through the motions – doing it for someone else, waiting to be told what to do, waiting for the facilitator to control any discussion.
2. Teachers needed to learn to examine their own thinking to move from what they are doing to what is their impact on student learning.
3. School leadership – this was by far the biggest barrier. Leaders signed their teachers up for the project then overloaded them with other professional learning contracts and administrative tasks. No consideration or interest is given to the learning needs of their teachers.

UK 2026 Curriculum changes: The UK is updating its national curriculum to modernize education, moving from a knowledge-heavy focus (2014) to one that emphasizes “applied knowledge,” practical life skills, and adaptability for a fast-changing, technology-driven world. The review aims to address educational inequalities and improve engagement for disadvantaged students.

New Zealand is 12 years behind what is being advertised here as drawing on “world leading curriculums” and is about to repeat what evidence shows is not the answer to inequity and the resulting inequalities.

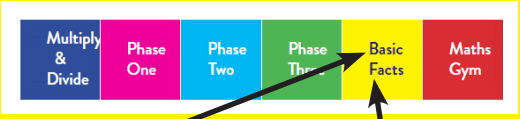
Wilkie Way Membership - annual subscriptions

School membership - via invoice

Under 30 students $65 + GST
31 to 100 students $180+GST
101 - 300 students $290 + GST
301- 500 students $400 +GST
501 - 700 students $520 + GST
701+ students $630 + GST
Non NZ School $750 - paid via paypal

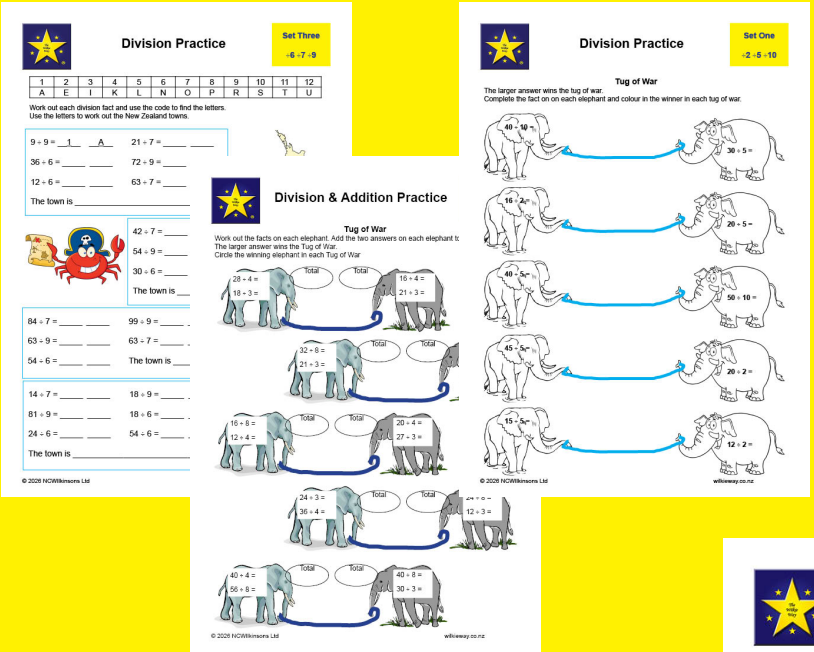
Individual Membership

$60.00
payable via Paypal

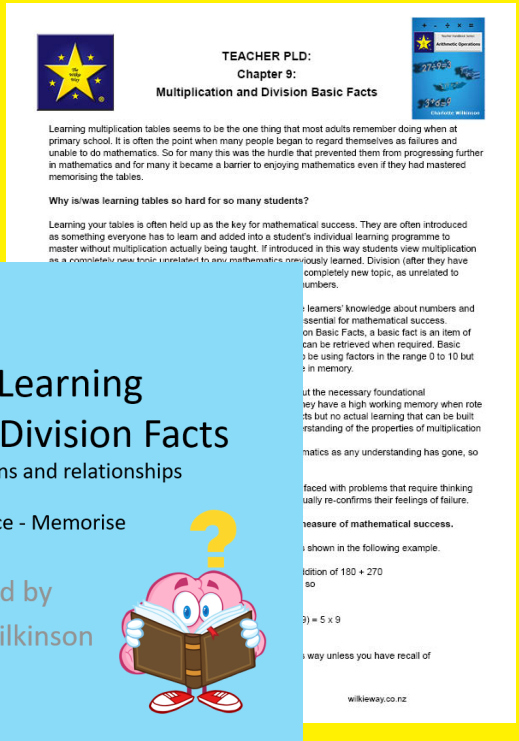


New Resources: Find them here on the Multiply & Divide bar on the directoy page

Folder: Practice Worksheets
Ppt. Teaching & Learning x & ÷
PLD short reading



Age appropriate practice sheets for assisting the memorisation of multiplication and division facts.



Professional upskilling

A short reading and a powerpoint. to assist the teaching for memorisation of multiplication and division facts

Join the Facebook group:

Wilkie Way & Maths Aotearoa - a place to share how you are using these resources and inspire other teachers or to ask questions about how you could use a resource.

Problems with Dogs

Jip had 8 puppies.
Some were black and some were white.
How many of each colour could she have?

A tin of dog food costs $3.00.
Sam's dog eats 3 tins every week.
How many tins does his dog eat in one year?
How much does it cost to feed the dog for one year?

Mark takes his dog for a 35 minute walk.
He left home at 5.35pm, what time did he get back from the walk?

If he walks his dog every day, how long does he spend dog walking in a week?
(Give your answer in hours and minutes)

Ratu has to feed 4 dogs. Two of the dogs eat 350g of dog roll every day and the other two eat 225g of dog roll every day.

If a dog roll weighs 1kg, how many dog rolls does Ratu have to buy each week?