



mena  
insights

advancing  
> learning

# MENA INSIGHTS REPORT 2023

YOUNG LEARNERS



PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
**ACADEMY**



macmillan  
education

Part of the **SPRINGER NATURE** group

## WELCOME TO OUR MENA INSIGHTS REPORT 2023

Our mission at Macmillan Education is to Advance Learning, and in order to achieve this to the best of our abilities we need to listen to your experiences, learn about your needs, and then act on this knowledge to provide the right tools and solutions to help you support and inspire your students. This is why we created the **Insights Index** programme.

You can learn more about, and join our global Insights Index programme [HERE](#)



## WELCOME TO OUR MENA INSIGHTS REPORT 2023

However, the MENA PD Academy by Macmillan Education team felt like we needed to dig a little bit deeper into the experiences and perspectives of teachers from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – i.e., how you are **Advancing Learning** in the MENA context – and then draw inspiration from these local, contextualized viewpoints as we create and develop our professional development plans and activities across the region for 2023 and beyond...

If you missed our MENA INSIGHTS 2022 survey, but would still like to provide your feedback, you can do so [HERE](#)

## WELCOME TO OUR MENA INSIGHTS REPORT 2023

The MENA PD Academy by Macmillan Education team would like to once again extend our deepest thanks to all those teachers who participated in our **MENA INSIGHTS 2022** Survey. It was a truly enlightening experience learning about you, your experiences and your ambitions!

We would also like to extend our gratitude to **NILE** (Norwich Institute of Language Education) – an official partner of Macmillan Education – for collaborating with us on this project, and especially to Thom Kiddle for his time and support.



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# MENA INSIGHTS REPORT 2023

YOUNG LEARNERS

## ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

We had almost 200 submissions, from all across the MENA region. These included a range of positions (teachers, senior teachers and heads of department) as well as a range of career experiences.

One area we feel is currently lacking in the research is an exploration and comparison of teaching experiences across different cultural contexts (within and beyond MENA) – so we asked about your wider experiences...

*"School systems, students and expectations of learning are different outside of MENA"*

*"despite better resources in MENA students find English more difficult to learn and use it less outside of the classroom"*

*"English as a medium of instruction is quite problematic here in MENA"*

*"We spoon-feed them [in MENA] too much, and do not challenge them enough"*

"Yes, learners from my native country can easily digest a concept since English is widely spoken, whereas in the ME, I have to deliver the lesson in a creative and more engaging way so the learners can grasp the concept while enjoying language learning"

"When you show an interest in students' lives they tend to show you the same love in any country. I've been a teacher in four different countries and each time the conclusion is the same. Students respect and love a teacher that shows them respect and love"

Many teachers noted the additional challenge of teaching English here in MENA, especially when compared to teaching in their home countries. It seems that better resources do not always lead to better outcomes, but what seems to be more important to you is:

- Whether there are real opportunities to use the language
- Setting the right level of challenge and expectations
- Being creative, to engage and motivate learners
- Getting to know your students (rapport) and creating a respectful and positive classroom environment



### NATHAN'S TAKEAWAY!!

Context has a big impact on teaching and learning... So we need to take this into account and give learners a reason to use that language in ways that are meaningful for them...

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Click [HERE](#) to visit our **MENA PD ACADEMY** website, and see how we are Advancing Learning here in MENA



# FOR THE LOVE OF TEACHING

The first thing we asked teachers was **WHY** they want to be teachers?  
(and why they wanted to become teachers...)

There are lots of reasons why we become educators in the first place: perhaps we're influenced by our parents – esp. if they were teachers – or our own teachers, maybe we want to pass on our knowledge to the next generation, or we feel like we can make a contribution – sharing our passions and creating positive change in the world.



*"Sometimes I think they teach me more than I teach them"*

*"Always worn-out but with full heart and soul"*

*"I can ignite the spark of learning"*

*"Some students get bored easily, I change this. I make learning fun and exciting. I inspire kids to think beyond their comfort zones and challenge them to reach their fullest potential"*



One thing was strikingly evident in all responses, and that is that teachers simply **LOVE** being teachers... spending time with young children, watching them grow, and being part of their early development.

Young learner teachers feel this great sense of purpose as teachers... They feel valuable, and that what they do 'makes a difference'. They say that being a part of young children's development is empowering, and contributes to a 'better world/future', even if it is hard work...

### NATHAN'S TAKEAWAY

Teaching is a passion!  
I know it can be stressful and overwhelming at times, but don't forget to pause every now and again and absorb all the good parts...

ROLE  
MODEL

INFLUENCE

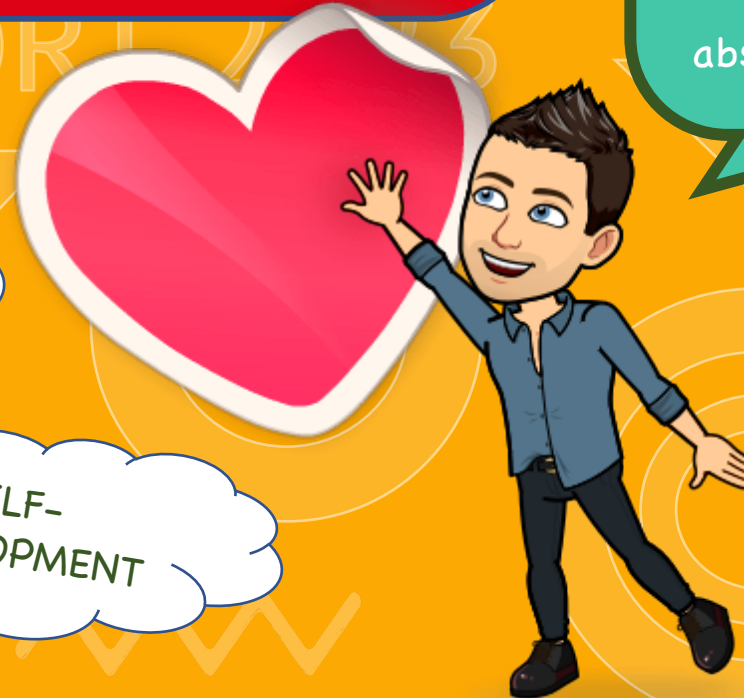
SHAPE

CHANGE  
MINDSETS

INSPIRE

SELF-  
DEVELOPMENT

CONTRIBUTE



### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Click [HERE](#) to view our  
**"I LOVE BEING A  
TEACHER BECAUSE..."**  
stories on our MENA PD  
Academy Instagram

# ADVANCING LEARNING

In the first section of the survey we wanted to get to know about you and your teaching... (i.e., how are you Advancing Learning in your context).

We wanted to know:

- in which areas teachers feel 'more confident' or 'less confident'
- what are their main challenges (and if these have changed over time)
- and what practical advice they might have for other teachers in terms of classroom management techniques & strategies

## MORE CONFIDENT

- (1) Teaching vocabulary
- (2) Teaching reading
- (3) Classroom management
- (4) Content knowledge
- (5) Approaches to teaching Young Learners

## LESS CONFIDENT

- (1) Teaching writing
- (2) Getting students to speak
- (3) Classroom management
- (4) Inclusivity: teaching students with SEN and differentiating for mixed ability classes

TOP CHALLENGES  
FROM 2021 INSIGHTS:

- Encouraging speaking
- Motivation
- Teaching online

In MENA most young-learner teaching has returned to face-to-face. Where we all struggled to get students engaged and using the language in that early-COVID period (and the rapid shift to online learning), now we are starting to see some of those more traditional classroom issues re-surfacing (namely: creating engaging, inclusive classroom environments and enhancing students' productive skills).

CHALLENGES

heavy workload  
discipline  
lack of class time  
teaching reading  
large class sizes  
professional development  
teaching writing  
teaching to communicate  
lesson preparation  
mixed ability classes  
teaching vocabulary  
amount of marking  
getting support from parents  
L1 usage  
students distracted  
student motivation  
gaps from Covid  
settling in at the start of the year  
teaching grammar  
transitioning between activities  
overactive students

Great teachers empower students to shape their futures and advance in life. At Macmillan Education we use our passion for understanding how learning happens to innovate and create solutions that help deliver great teaching everywhere.

Every classroom has its challenges (and opportunities). Sadly, we cannot affect much your large, mixed-ability classes, workload or how much time you have, but we can certainly support teachers with creating inclusive content & learning environments, using a variety of classroom management techniques and developing their students language skills...

Before we move on though, let's explore together some of your tips and recommendations for improving classroom management, and our top tip for engaging young learners with English...

SO, WHAT  
DOES ADVANCING  
LEARNING MEAN?

WHAT DOES  
IT MEAN  
TO YOU?



**WANT TO KNOW MORE?**

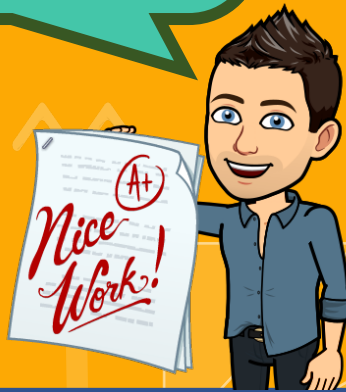
Click [HERE](#) and find out how

**MACMILLAN EDUCATION**

can help you with **Advancing Learning**  
in your classroom

## NATHAN'S TAKEAWAY

YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE  
BEACONS OF KNOWLEDGE...  
DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK  
FOR ADVICE!



## YOUR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR YOUNG LEARNERS



It is interesting to see that no matter how 'tech-developed' education becomes, motivating and engaging learners is still, mostly, about connecting with learners and their lives, being positive (yet structured), and making learning active....

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

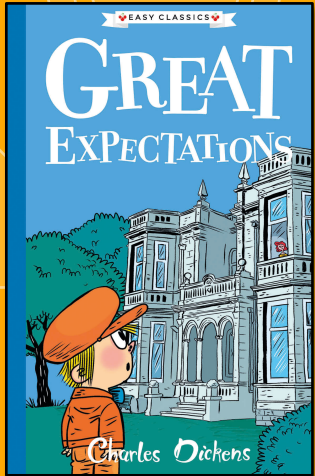
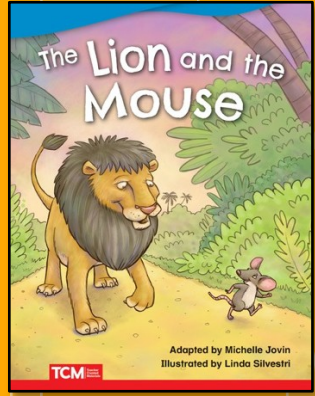
Click [HERE](#) to visit

**ONESTOPENGLISH**

...our PD website that is packed  
with ideas, lesson plans &  
teaching resources

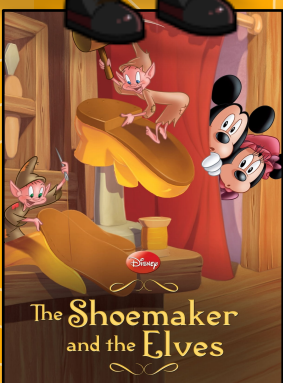
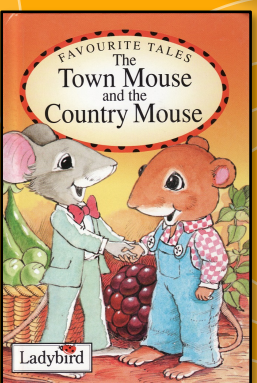
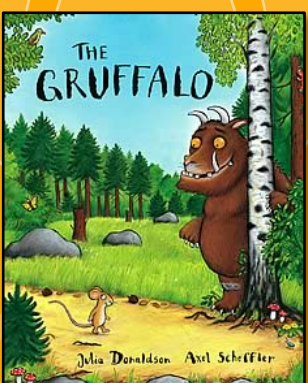
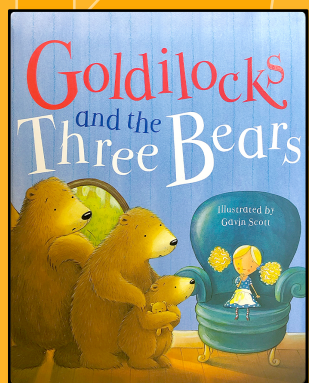
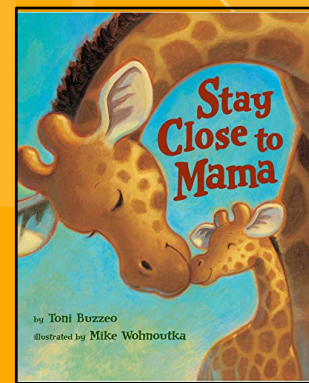
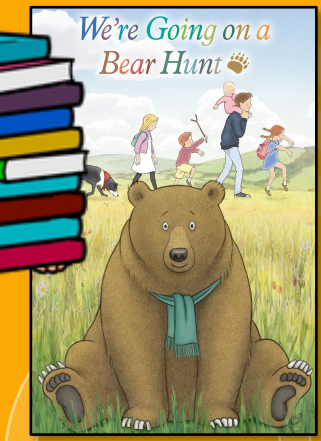
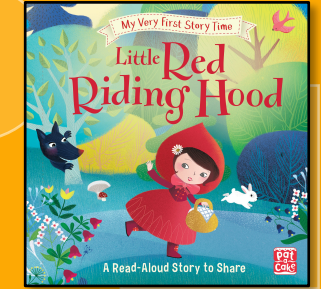


**NATHAN'S TAKEAWAY**  
 WANT TO USE MORE STORIES BUT NOT SURE WHERE TO START? CLICK [HERE](#) TO DO OUR FREE MINI-PD MODULE...



Perhaps our greatest tip when it comes to teaching English to young learners is to use **STORIES**. Teaching reading is already noted as a key challenge in MENA. Stories, therefore will help students see, think about, and understand all that language in context, in an enjoyable way. Read 'to them' as much as you can... working on comprehension as well as function.

And here are some of YOUR favourite classroom stories to inspire you...



# ADVANCING DIGITAL SKILLS

In the next section of the survey we wanted to learn more about how teachers in MENA access, feel about, and use digital resources.

We asked:

- What digital resources students had access to, both in class and at home?
- What challenges teachers were still facing with regards to accessing and using digital resources?
- And, how would teachers like to see digital resources develop in the future?

## AVAILABLE IN SCHOOL

- (1) Projector
- (2) Interactive whiteboards
- (3) The internet
- (4) Digital coursebook
- (5) Classera
- (6) Navio

## AVAILABLE AT HOME

- (1) Mobiles
- (2) YouTube
- (3) Zoom
- (4) online games and quizzes
- (5) Google Classroom
- (6) Digital coursebook



## CHALLENGES

- (1) Need to spend time learning new apps
- (2) Internet Speed
- (3) Mapping digital skills to existing curriculum
- (4) Digital isn't always good for YLs
- (5) Mostly connectivity issues
- (6) Students 'willingness' to do non-digital things now



MENA is such a huge, diverse region that naturally we see the whole spectrum when it comes to 'accessing digital learning tools'. What is perhaps clearer from the results though, is that having access doesn't mean much if students are: unable to use them properly, struggle with 'connectivity', and/or there are inadequate safety measures when using such tools.

Teachers also worry that there may be 'too much' emphasis on technology or online games now, and that this might stifle creativity or make students reluctant to engage in (or even ridicule) 'non-tech' activities.

### NATHAN'S TAKEAWAY

Technology should always be a tool (not a replacement) to help students engage with, and express themselves in, English...

### WANT TO SEE IN THE FUTURE

- (1) Digital become more 'user-friendly'
- (2) Easy access and instructions
- (3) More free resources
- (4) More reading activities
- (5) Offline availability (most requested)
- (6) Better tracking of progress
- (7) Better internet in schools

Contrary to (perhaps) initial hopes, our research suggests that a digital classroom 'revolution' may not really have come to fruition in MENA, and a lot of the feedback suggests that classroom teaching (of YLs) might have 'slipped back to the old ways of doing things' – i.e., traditional teaching and lots of worksheet-type practice.

Whether we like it or not, technology is an integral part of our students lives. If we can employ it safely and sensibly, it can add so much value to their learning experiences. Why not ask students how and when it might work best for them...

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Click [HERE](#) to explore **NAVIO** and bring gamification into your classroom



# ADVANCING HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Let's be honest, one of the most challenging aspects for teachers of young learners is home-school relationships.

Parental involvement exists on a full spectrum here in MENA – from 'zero-involvement' to (perhaps) slight 'over-involvement' (and either can be a major cause of frustration, often on both sides!).

The evidence is crystal clear on this one though, children whose parent(s) / carer(s) are actively involved in their education typically do better...

So, how can we strike that happy balance and see these benefits?



*"Parents are not involved at all"*

*"They watch YouTube videos together"*

*"We use WhatsApp groups to send information home"*

*"They do homework with Cor in some cases 'for' their child"*

*"They read stories with their child"*

What appears to be most frustrating, for teachers in MENA, is when parents (probably unwittingly) ‘demotivate’ their children – perhaps with very high or unrealistic expectations, or by trying to force the ways they themselves learned (or think learning should happen) onto their children (for example, expecting their child to do lots of memorization tasks).

Working well with parents is about clear and consistent communication. Setting expectations and boundaries is part of that (preferably with a policy that provides support at the administration level). Without support, parents will often ‘expect’ learning to happen much the same way it did when they were at school. Parents need ‘easy-to-digest’ information about the benefits of C21st skills, modern classroom management techniques (beyond the ‘carrot and stick’ methods they may have faced) and digital tools, as well as establishing clear communication pathways and support with how to support at home (for example, ‘how’ exactly to read stories or support with homework).

### NATHAN'S TAKEAWAY

Parents often want more support so they know ‘how’ to help support their child’s development. We are the experts, it’s our job to guide them.



### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Click [HERE](#) to view our  
**A SUCCESSFUL HOME-  
SCHOOL CONNECTION**  
Handbooks

# ADVANCING FUTURES

In the penultimate section of the survey we wanted to know what teachers in MENA think about – and how they engage with – the core themes within our new ADVANCING FUTURES programme.

These include:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Global Citizenship Education (GCE)
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

First we asked: what do you think are the main challenges that your students will face in their future(s)?

*"overwhelming technology in their lives"*

*"lack of job opportunities"*

*"internet safety"*

*"learning grit and determination"*

*"mental health issues"*

## SDGs

*Celebrating important 'days' (for example, Earth Day or National Days)*

*"Relating content to real life"*

*Getting students to think about 'our impact on the world'*

*"Discussing global issues"*

*"Integrating 21st Century skills"*

The Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs) are a collection of seventeen interlinked objectives designed to serve as a *"shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future"*. At Macmillan Education, we believe the language classroom is the perfect place for young people to develop their ideas around the SDGs and to inspire students towards positive action, for positive change.

First, we wanted to know whether teachers in MENA currently include the SDGs in their teaching. While there was an even balance between those who said 'yes', and those who said 'no', what was perhaps more interesting was that as many said 'maybe' – indicating that perhaps while teachers have developed a good understanding of the SDGs themselves (through webinars, internet research, etc), translating and integrating that into practical classroom activities might remain a challenge for many teachers...

So, to better understand, we also asked HOW teachers integrate the SDGS...?





# Global Citizenship Education (GCE)

## What?

*Exposure to diversity*

*"Morals / values"*

*Life Skills*

*Lifelong learning*

*Applying learning to their lives*

*Cultural Exchange*

While the SDGs are perhaps more abstract, integrating Global Citizenship Education (GCE) into your teaching appeared much clearer in the responses, with 3x more respondents saying 'YES, I include GCE in my teaching'. So, we asked them 'What is GCE?' and 'How do you integrate GCE into your lessons / content / classroom'. And we received lots of great examples (...and not just 'learning about other cultures', but gaining real-world skills and moving towards 'action/attitudes' as well)...

## How?

*Teaching Responsibility  
(like washing hands)*

*Creating a sense of  
community in the classroom*

*Connecting students around  
the world*

*Communicating with students  
around the world*

*Active Participation*

*Empowering Students*

*Respect*

*global days*

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

### CHALLENGE STRONGER STUDENTS

- (1) Doing projects
- (2) More reading
- (3) Extra practice
- (4) Extra responsibilities
- (5) Get them to create content to share
- (6) Get them to help weaker students
- (7) Praise and encouragement
- (8) More challenging tasks

Teachers in MENA, it seems, try their very best to be as supportive as possible (often with limited support or resources) – dedicating lots of extra time and resources to help students learn and make progress.

However, they often lack the support needed for full inclusion, and rely mostly on differentiation (providing different, or in many cases ‘extra’ (and predominantly worksheets) work depending on students’ abilities).

### SUPPORT STRUGGLING OR SEN STUDENTS

- (1) Give extra time
- (2) Extra worksheets
- (3) Extra sessions after class
- (4) Remedial classes
- (5) Asking parents to help at home
- (6) Explain in different ways



“EMPOWER YOUR STUDENTS TO BECOME THE CHANGE MAKERS THE WORLD NEEDS TO CREATE A BETTER FUTURE”

### NATHAN'S TAKEAWAY

Don't just teach them 'about' the world. Connect them to it and inspire them to be **Change Makers!**

Macmillan Education is fully on-board to help teachers in MENA support their students towards creating a better future. Through our Advancing Futures initiative, you can introduce, and advance, the topics of Global Citizenship Education, Sustainability, and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion into your classrooms.

Through Sharing Knowledge, Developing Skills and Promoting Positive Attitudes & Action, the programme engages students with key elements of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and empowers them to work towards a fairer, more sustainable future.



#### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Click [HERE](#) to explore our new

#### **ADVANCING FUTURES**

Programme. Advancing **GCE, DEI** and the **SDGs** in education, and empowering your students to become **CHANGE MAKERS**

In the final section of the survey we wanted to know about the professional development activities and ambitions of teachers in MENA.

We were happy to see that respondents were very satisfied learning through our Advancing Learning Academic Programme (ALAP) and MENA PD Academy activities.

Moving forward though, we wanted to know: what professional development (PD) topics / activities you need, and how you want to engage in them, so we can plan accordingly in 2023 and beyond...

# ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



*"It has helped me a lot in my professional growth. I can now differ how I approach my students [from before]"*

*"I get a lot of benefit from the fruitful webinars"*

*"fantastic and valuable"*

*"to be honest, this is where I developed further my professional growth as a teacher!"*





Finally, we would like to – once again – say **THANK YOU** to all of our respondents, for giving their valuable time to participate in last year's survey. Your insights really do help us to shape the future of education in MENA.

We hope you enjoyed our MENA INSIGHTS 2023 report. To finish up, here is a summary of our Top Tips (to think about as we head into the summer break and you start thinking about the next academic year) and some useful links to keep your PD moving forward...



## SUMMARY & LINKS



*Make learning active  
(with digital tools  
where suitable)...*

*Read as  
many stories  
as you can...*

*Inspire your  
students!*



*Enjoy what  
you do...*

*Work with colleagues  
and families to find the  
best ways of helping  
students learn...*

*Set realistic PD goals  
for the coming year...*



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Nathan Waller is the Marketing and Academic Services Manager, and a teacher trainer for Macmillan Education in the MENA region. With a background in child development and social and cultural anthropology, he has almost twenty years of experience in education. Starting in Early Years education and Special Educational Needs support in the UK, he left in 2009 to teach, train and conduct examinations in multiple countries around the world, before moving into educational publishing in 2016. He is currently based in Dubai.





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