

FOREWORD

As the UK's leading education recruiter we are committed to sharing meaningful insight and information with the education community. We are delighted to be working in partnership with Tim Brighouse and David Cameron on a number of nationwide breakfast forums. These sessions offer an opportunity for school leaders to network, share best practice, learn from Tim's and David's experiences and share ideas.

We hope you enjoy this booklet, produced to compliment the Creative Curriculum sessions. If you would like to discuss any recruiting needs or reserve a place at the next session, contact your local recruitment expert.

Paul Matthias
National Director, Hays Education





CHALLENGE ONE

Finding the right staff in the first place

“Without creative staff you stand no chance of giving pupils creative curricular experiences.”

We couldn't agree more. Staff can be divided into three groups:

Energy Creators – ‘What if?’ ‘How about?’ ‘Let's do’ people;

Energy Consumers – Who greet every idea with, ‘Yes but’ or ‘We tried that in so-and-so's time and it didn't work’;

These two battle over the souls of the third group, **Energy Neutrals** whose idealism and passion can be rekindled but who keep their heads down and do a mostly competent job.

For generations school leaders have tried to help the first group win that battle, unless of course – perish the thought! – they have become energy consumers too.

So appointing staff who are energy creators is crucial. A head teacher we knew, who was honest if a bit maverick, explained his methods. “When I get the applications I discard them unless they either play or are enthusiastic about sport or music. I know if they have or do, they will want to contribute to the wider school life.” Of course he assessed in some of the more conventional ways, but he was looking for staff who had a personal interest or enthusiasm so that the likelihood was that they would share it with pupils either in their teaching or in extra-curricular activities.

Among the more conventional ways, in which you can ensure you are appointing creative staff, are the following:

- Framing the further particulars of the job and the description of the school in such a way that any applicant can see it's that sort of school.
- Visiting shortlisted applicants to see how they perform.
- Asking shortlisted applicants on the day of the interview not just to teach a lesson but also to plan an ‘outside the classroom’ lesson as one of the tasks which can then be explored at interview.
- Involving pupils as one of the panels in the interviewing process.
- Roofing follow up questions in ‘what’ they have done in their existing or previous jobs to check that what it is they are claiming they will do is based on reality.
- Having a check list of qualities which characterise successful teachers. (See challenge nine for an example.)

And finally the first and last commandment ‘If in any doubt, however slight, don't appoint’. Many are the heads who will admit that to ignore that was the first and biggest mistake they ever made.

Better to appoint a temporary member of staff than to make a long-term mistake.

Seven questions to ask ourselves as school leaders:

When did you last check further particulars for job applicants?

Do they need an overhaul?

Are you clear about the role of the teacher or do they just do the things that promoted staff don't?

Do any of our own staff know of teacher friends elsewhere who might want to apply for the post?

What are the tasks we give at interview and how do these compare with other schools' processes?

Do we establish good links with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and teaching schools to make sure that we are aware of students who would work well in our schools?

Do we offer the sort of development opportunities that would attract good teachers to our schools?





CHALLENGE TWO

Creative leadership

The school leaders, especially the head, either crush or stimulate creativity in everything they say and do.

Creative leaders are predictable and unpredictable. They are predictable in that everyone knows what they stand for and that there's a match of values between what they say and what they do, and therefore who they are. But they are unpredictable in the sense that who they are includes being a learner and being welcoming of new ideas from staff. They ask more questions than provide answers, just as the teacher does in the classroom.

They know they have to exude energy and enthusiasm as well as hope and determination that the future will be a better place because of the collective efforts and the ingenuity and intellectual curiosity of each and every member of staff. They chronicle the successes and give the credit to others and when things go wrong take the blame even when it isn't really their fault.

Creative leaders know too that they have a 'shelf-life' as a creative leader. Stay too long without refreshing the vision or starting a new defining chapter of the school's life and you grow stale. Your impact on staff is lost.

It's a tricky business, in our fast-paced world and in the daily crisis which can be a feature of school life these days, to remain creative: you are trying to walk the tightrope of getting everybody to 'sing from the same song sheet' on the vital issues so the pupils get a consistent message.

It takes courage, as one head did at a staff briefing, to say, "You are not putting me at risk enough in the curriculum and teaching." What she meant was clear; she wanted to see some new ideas which carried the risk of not working out exactly as intended. The interesting thing about that school was the arrangements for staff development, review and the timetable were integral to what she called 'safe risk-taking'. (See challenges three, four and ten).

Our next series of Hays breakfasts will focus at greater length on successful and unsuccessful leadership in what we have called 'impossible times'.

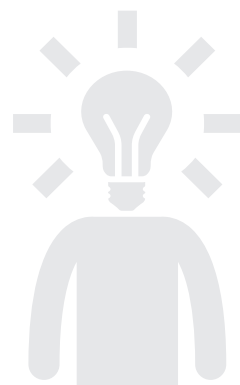
Our questions on creative leadership are:

Are we brave enough to let go and give genuine responsibility to other staff?

Do we delegate and check or do we micro-manage?

Are we open to proposals from others or do all ideas have to come from us?

Are we prepared to be surprised or do we want total reassurance that everything is as we planned it?



CHALLENGE THREE

Creative review

Reviews are something schools are used to.

Ofsted and a world of accountability ensure it, so schools engage in self-review with more, or less, external involvement: The external involvement is a way of avoiding complacency or being fooled by internally established standards which may be invalid.

Creative review lies in what you do at the end of the review cycle.

Mostly when people talk about review they are somewhat ambivalent in the sense that it can often be an exercise associated with more or less 'accountability' – clearly more, if it is heavily external, for example through Ofsted and less, if internally generated. Perhaps the best involves a mixture of the two.

The review process often involves the following sequence:

1. What is our policy on the matter being reviewed?
2. What are our practices and who leads on what?
3. What is the evidence (involving monitoring, data, people's views, research evidence)?
4. Speculating about what we should do as a result of considering the three above.
5. Deciding on changes in policy and practice and establishing an action plan.

It is in the fourth and fifth stage of this review process that schools – indeed any organisation – prove whether they are truly creative or not.

Creative schools then apply the CAT test

That is, do you then **confirm**, **adjust** or **totally transform** the policy and practices you have been reviewing?

It is our contention that if you confirm everything it is saying that you have learned nothing new since you last reviewed it. That would be a sad indictment of a group of staff committed to improvement – and would fly in the face of the rapidly increasing knowledge we have about what works.

If you totally transform everything it is saying that all that has been dysfunctional. Now that's a reasonable response where things really are hopeless but in even a moderately unsuccessful school or department, it is unlikely that total transformation is necessary.

Sadly we live in a political system where successive Secretaries of State all too often resort to the 'T' in the CAT test.

We think that nine times out of ten a creative school will seek to use the 'A' and adjust their policies and practices in the light of what they have learned from the evidence of observing other practice and from what they have learned from research. In fact 'A for adjust' stands as the logical consequence of being part of what once we called a 'learning organisation' which leads, we think, to a creative organisation.

It is also important to recognise the importance of reviewing practice; after all, that is what really makes a difference in terms of young people's achievements.

That sort of review needs to reflect the fact that there are lots of good teachers who are good in different ways. Ask your colleagues what makes a good teacher and you will have this reinforced. Keep the focus on the things that we know make a difference, like feedback and involving pupils. Think about a review based on four questions:

- Now that you have reviewed your practice, what is it that you are going to improve?
- What help or support will you need to make that improvement?
- What improvement in outcomes for your learners do you expect to come from the changes in your practice?
- What evidence will you look at to see if the improvement has been made?

Our questions on creative review are:

Do our reviews only mimic Ofsted?

What questions do we ask in review that Ofsted wouldn't?

How do we involve all of our staff in our reviews?

How do we involve students and the wider school community?

When we last reviewed, how much was confirmed, how much was adjusted and how much was transformed?





CHALLENGE FOUR

Creative staff development



Of our ten challenges we think that staff development is perhaps the most important. Ignore any one, of course and you are not going to be as creative as you might be, but ignore this and you are lost.

If you regard it in an uncreative way you are in trouble. Equating it to a budget for 'courses' and letting people go on courses alone would be uncreative.

Creative staff development is much more than that. It incorporates the following:

Creative induction including self-observation

Newcomers will not get a fast start unless they have a great induction. This means a good briefing before arrival. One head told us, "We send details of the some of the classes they will teach so they can learn names and know of progress". Another has IRIS, the computerised video camera based self-observation technique, so all are expected to use that so they can self-review privately their practice. One school we know has pedagogic 'coaches' for those who want them.

Another school involved in initial teacher training always uses 'triads' where a student plans a lesson helped by their school based mentor (usually a member of SLT) and by the teacher trainer and then each teaches it while the

other two observe. "We find it extends the creativity of us all" is how one school put it "and we are careful to ensure that anyone new to the school now does the same thing".

Allowances/honoraria for action research

We are hugely impressed by those schools who give staff an honorarium for what some call 'action research' and others, less grandly, a 'narrative inquiry'. Put simply it is paying staff who volunteer to look into a matter affecting the school – preferably a priority for improvement (e.g. questioning techniques, creative writing, tutor periods, transition, story-telling, peer tutoring, flipped lessons, fermi problems). Then they report back – ideally to SLT/governors/school improvement working party/staff conference after a period, having been given time to visit other schools to observe, as well as research what others have said and written on the issue. It needn't be intimidating though it can fit in with staff doing masters. It is especially powerful if pairs are involved: We even came across one school which had established sorcerers' apprentices from Year 12 students to help pairs of staff in their tasks.

We should also remember that one of the most important currencies in schools is time, so, if you can't find the funding, giving even small allocations of time can be a powerful incentive.

Sabbaticals, bursaries for masters

Time was when teachers could take a term or a year to study and refresh their expertise. Those days are long gone but it is possible to budget for shorter periods of time – a week or two – for staff who have served a number of years to apply and use the time for professional development. At the very least there should be some contribution through bursaries for those who decide to pursue a doctorate or masters.

Taking over the teaching so staff can take part in focused observation.

Leaders can promote staff development by taking over someone's teaching so they can observe some others teach or for example the progress of those pupils they taught the year before. Two examples from many would be:

- The primary head who gave up seven Tuesdays between November and the summer term so that, for example, the Year 2 teacher could visit Year 3 pupils and comment on those who appear to have made great strides and those who are becalmed in their learning.
- The secondary head and her two deputies who carefully timetable themselves off on Wednesdays and then give up six after Christmas so that, as they take over the teaching for the day, three faculty members can visit other similar schools to have a focused visit of enquiry.

Giving opportunities to lead on certain areas is a powerful strategy for development. This may be why primary schools often grow leadership qualities in staff more quickly. Being generalists, they are more likely to have a sequence of different curriculum responsibilities (English, maths, arts, humanities, etc) for say four or five years each before becoming heads.

TeachMeets and electronic staff development

We are in no doubt, 'TeachMeets' are a very exciting phenomenon in staff development. Each of us has attended many and even fronted one together. We have yet to attend one that hasn't been well attended by teachers, all of whom have left the event in high spirits and with more ideas and energy than when they arrived.

A TeachMeet is an organised but informal meeting for teachers to share good practice, practical innovations and personal insights in teaching with technology. Participants volunteer to demonstrate good practice they have delivered over the past year or discuss a product that enhances classroom practice.

They have evolved and multiplied and have ground rules. You don't have to present and most people go to listen and learn. Nor do you have to make it technology based, but most do. Presentations last between two and, at most, eight minutes. They originated in Scotland and are now world-wide. The ones we have attended have had a hundred or more attendees all of whom were by definition energy creators.

Now for our questions:

How many of our staff meetings are organised as TeachMeets?

How aware are we of blogs and online communities, like Pedagoo.org?

If we are, do we share links with our staff?

Are there ideas here that we have tried out?

Are there ideas here that we think would work for our staff?





CHALLENGE FIVE

Making the school environment creative



The environment can be creative visually, aurally and behaviourally.

Visually creative

Primary colleagues are clever about the environment. Their teacher training traditionally has focused on it. They, and support staff, are skilled at double mounting display, at using the walls to re-enforce in a positive way both individual pupils' work, questions they want pupils to think about and the rules by which we live. We were particularly impressed by a school which showed a whole school agreement about the importance of books through every teacher and support staff displaying an A3 sized poster on classroom doors showing which book they had most enjoyed and why.

We were impressed too by the south London secondary school which introduced 'Quid for a Quote' one year. The head claimed it was a way of transforming his down-at-heel 1960's building with its rotting window frames and dilapidated appearance. His idea involved the head and two deputies taking part in year assemblies at the start of the year where they reflected on the importance of quotations; this was followed by a tutorial to the same effect with every tutor explaining their favourite quote.

The first homework was to go home and collect five quotations that the family liked with the promise that one would be framed and displayed with the donor's name discreetly displayed. And £1 sent home for the family to donate to a charity of their choice. As the head said "1,203 quotations around the school all for the expenditure of around £2,500 and involvement of the family and pupils in the whole enterprise".

Some years ago schools, sometimes using the charity 'Learning through Landscapes', set out successfully to transform the often traditionally bleak external landscape with seas of tarmac or neglected greenery. The outside environment can so easily become a place for playing chess as well as ball games, for calm, for reflection, for conversation and for wonder – all constantly reinvented or extended by the school community.

Many primary schools have re-invigorated their environment by rotating staff meetings around the school for a couple of years, with the first item on the agenda being the host teacher and learning assistant explaining why the classroom is arranged as it is, and what plans they have for changes with everybody being encouraged to join in.

Aurally creative

Once we came across a school where lunchtime dining and indoor activities had a student created backdrop and students performed music, sponsored by the music department, who were adamant that its existence had increased the numbers of those either playing instruments or singing in a choir. The same school had lists of the favourite music pieces of every member of staff displayed on a board. We know another who boasts a team of 'musicians in residence' – music makers who live locally and ply their trade full or part-time and are more than willing to share their enthusiasm with any school student showing an interest.

Behaviourally creative

Clearly all schools are concerned to strike that happy balance between being an orderly place but not so orderly as to be oppressive. Otherwise they will stifle creativity.

Starting each year with a discussion among pupils and staff of the sets of rules we used the previous year and suggestions for change will help. So too will the way they are expressed – avoiding 'you' and using 'we' helps as does a commitment to strike the right balance between rewards, however expressed, and penalty points. It also helps to have rules about 'what we do', rather than a whole set of diktats based on 'what we don't'. Perhaps the time honoured three parts of appreciative enquiry for every one part of problem solving will help: appreciative enquiry certainly unlocks the energy to be creative.

We are convinced that creative environments are replete with questions rather than answers.

Finally, Hays held one of their breakfast events from which we derived this pamphlet, in a school which actually employed an 'Agent of Wonder' someone whose job was to make sure there were areas of the school environment which stimulated the pupils to wonder and speculate about how things work or solve puzzles or simply wonder at the ingenuity of humans.

And how about the staff?

The environment for the staff will affect their behaviour too. So the nature of the staff room(s), the style of staff briefing, starting the day with readily available toast and coffee, remembering birthdays and ensuring their welfare, all have an impact.

Our questions here are:

What have we changed in our school environment with significant financial investment?

What could we change without that investment?

Do we discuss how we use the school environment with all staff?

Do we have a policy/agreed approach about display?

How often do our lessons go beyond the classroom?





CHALLENGE SIX

Creative student involvement

It is not so long ago that having an elected school council with its own budget and a remit to debate and improve the school environment was regarded as being pretty creative and certainly a step on from head boys/girls and prefects and monitors.

Of course all those features, multiplied in schools with 'houses', are important. Creativity in this respect however has moved on. Those in the vanguard have considered the following two main aspects.

Students leading learning

The research summary from the Sutton Trust/Education Endowment Foundation has highlighted the efficacy of 'peer learning'. Certainly schools which have extensively built in older pupils tutoring younger pupils are convinced of the value of both. It used to be (and remains in small rural schools) a feature of mixed age classes in the primary age range.

Secondary schools using vertical tutor groups report success within those tutor groups on work by older students with Year 7 tutor group members around catch up on literacy and numeracy. Year 12 students intending to make a career in teaching can be given opportunities which both help younger pupils' learning and afford them valuable experience.

One of us is currently involved in an extensive scheme involving state and independent secondary schools in a medium-sized city: The gist of it is that Year 12 expectations include set periods of 'service to the local community' intended both to stimulate consideration of others and what might loosely be called 'citizenship'. All Year 12 students are expected to choose from a wide range of opportunities (including running after school clubs in the primary schools which they once attended) to volunteers knowing that the service they offer is both needed and will be appreciated.

Learning to lead

In Somerset, a movement has started which is designed to empower students to learn to lead. It runs at both primary and secondary level. In the Blue School in Wells and Chew Valley both comprehensive schools, more than half the students are involved. Students self-elect to one of a series of teams with intriguing titles, each of which has a clear purpose. So the 'book worm team' encourages keen readers to read, the 'we love science team' works with staff to improve the educational experiences offered, the 'chicken team' runs the school coop and the 'green team' predictably consists of those with a strong environmental mission.

Admittedly there are some more obscure and idiosyncratic examples such as the 'lizard team' which appears to be committed to creating a solarium in every classroom. It operates impressively in primary schools. To find out more go to www.learningtolead.org

Here are half a dozen tips:

- Using a 'buddy' system for new pupils.
- Using pupils to lead revision lessons in Years 10 and 11.
- Every year each faculty trains a group of pupils to be in charge of display and allows pupils to set up displays in corridors.
- Making 'pupil presentation' a planned part of lessons and establishing a rota whereby each student takes turns in leading parts of lessons.
- Pupils introducing all new topics; they are told what it will be and given free rein to present it however they like with teachers feeding back on how they have done and – vital point this – pupils making notes of the feedback.
- Pupils leading one lesson a half-term on 'computer uses' (they are usually ahead of us in ICT skills).

Our questions for this section are:

Has the School Council a bespoke budget and what may they spend it on?

Do we regularly use one of the well-known student/pupil surveys (e.g. Keele University, NFER, PASS) to keep track of a pupil commitment, engagement, habits and attitudes?

Do we use students in peer learning (tutoring, mentoring, counselling, buddying) and how could we extend that?

What is the role of students/pupils in management and leadership of school life and how could that be extended?

Do we involve students in our self-reviews by finding ways to gather their views?

Are students/pupils involved in staff appointments and are they asked to rate their lessons?

Have we considered the role of students/pupils in 'courts' as part of restorative justice?





CHALLENGE SEVEN

Creative parental and community involvement



The recent surge in the use of hand-held devices (iPhones and iPads etc) enabling digital access to the internet has had a powerful impact on many aspects of school life. But it has also transformed the involvement of parents.

Schools have become creative. Of course school websites (and e-learning platforms) are commonplace many enable parental access to information about their children's progress and successes as well as homework tasks. Increasing numbers of schools are using Twitter and have a Facebook page. The latter is a growing and impressive phenomenon of the last two years and primary heads report how it has enabled the involvement of 'hard to reach' parents and has even turned those who are anti-school in an anti-social way. Moreover, the expected inappropriate or unreasonable reaction from the odd parent has been instantly drowned out by reactions from the reasonable majority of supportive parents who are pleased by the work of the school and approve of its removal. As one pioneering brave head told us, 'It happened once, was immediately removed and has never happened again'.

One illustration of how time accelerates comes from another school: "We used to be proud of our beautifully illustrated subject 'good-work' postcards, which we posted home, celebrating pupils' growing success to be shared with proud parents. Now we are trying out a regular fortnightly mobile phone call home in Years 7 and 8 from tutors and it's going down well". That school has got to the point of parents asking for advice sessions for dealing with what they called 'adolescent eccentricities'.

Regular electronic letters home are now a common and appreciated feature of schools being creative in their communications with parents.

It is all a far cry from the 'No Parents beyond this Point' signs which used to be prominently displayed close to the school gate. And it is a creative step on from the typical parents' evening as the sole means of involving parents. These too have changed. Instead of the long queues where some parents and teachers hoped to avoid each other, they now have questionnaires so schools can ascertain the parent's concerns about school practices.

We haven't mentioned the PTAs or 'Friends of the school' activities where socially active parents cheerfully give up time to raise money and enjoy social events.

As for creativity in community involvement, schools which are valued by their community, consider the following:

- Links through work experience with all local businesses.
- Adopting local care homes for the elderly.
- Ensuring staff buy provisions from local shops.
- SLT members walking the community during lunch hours and actively seeking views of immediate local neighbours.
- Linking pupils with a sporting, or other, interest with local clubs.

We enjoyed two ideas we encountered

- A secondary school whose cumulative pupil credits earn a token which can be exchanged at a local shop on the estate on which the school is located.
- A primary school which each month awards a family meal entitlement at a local restaurant.

Our questions for this section are:

How do we communicate with our parents and when did we last review this and lay out options for improvement?

Are there enthusiasts/experts among our parents and community who could be asked to sessions intended to inspire and extend the horizons of our pupils/students?

How do we as a school act to show we are a good neighbour rather than one whom our neighbours have to suffer?

What is the nature of our school pupil/student report and how does it compare with those of other schools?

How do we use the technologies to communicate with parents and what are the next steps?





CHALLENGE EIGHT

Creative curriculum depends on the arts

We have spent long hours of our lives debating what sort of curriculum there should be. One of us has spent his career teaching and being a leader in Scotland. It has caused us both to reflect just how different the approaches to curriculum are in these two different countries in the supposedly United Kingdom. Each has so much to learn from the other. The curriculum for excellence in Scotland may have its detractors at home but most English eyes, used to excessive central direction, view it with envy.

However that may be, wherever you are in the UK, you have to make sense of what politicians may mandate for curriculum. Within the admittedly tight accountability constraints of exams and Ofsted, most schools think of their curriculum in three parts or dimensions:

- The national
- The local
- The international

Of course the stronger your subject knowledge and passion for learning, the more confident you will be in being creative in your interpretation of those three dimensions. Most secondary schools rely on the subject teachers to incorporate these through their interpretation of the prescribed national curriculum. Primary schools straddle the three dimensions through topics or research projects that last a term. But there's more.

Schools also wrestle with the challenge of incorporating not just knowledge but also the more advanced skills of thinking vertically and horizontally so that problems which either are interdisciplinary or are out of context can be solved. Schools know too that enabling pupils to encounter ideas and master concepts while espousing critically the values of our own and other cultures are part of the wider curriculum. What some call 'character building' is also the task of the school and an ingredient of the curriculum.

How to organise is a formidable challenge – especially within the confines of the traditional timetable at least at secondary level where teachers are not generalists and argue 'my subject needs' as a prelude to demands for more time. That's why we think the tenth issue which argues for two timetables and a set of experiences is so important.

Before we leave this section, and in order to underline the importance of a broad curriculum, we would remind you of a true story concerning Sir Alec Clegg.

Clegg was a famous English educator who ran the West Riding for more than 25 years after the second world war. He was a powerful advocate and promoter of the arts within and beyond the curriculum. He would tell how, as a teenager, he sometimes visited his aunt, a modern language teacher in Grantham. She took in private pupils, one of whom was Margaret Roberts (later Thatcher). They got on no better than they did later when he was the country's leading educationalist and she was Secretary of State. Clegg, so the story goes, puts this down to the fact that she never read or appreciated the sampler on his aunt's wall, which read as follows:

"If, of fortune thou be bereft, and of thine earthly store, have left two loaves. Sell one, and with the dole, buy hyacinths to feed the soul."

Clegg would argue that this meant the curriculum should be balanced, for what might be a hyacinth to one person might be a loaf to another and vice versa. Clegg justified the promotion of the arts on this basis.

Indeed it is arguable that it was his championing of the arts which led to the burgeoning arts scene and industry which is such a positive economic and social feature of Britain today.

Of course we also believe that any curriculum can be creative, if you feed the intellectual curiosity of the ever improving teachers; which is where we started.

And here are our curriculum starter questions:

Are we happy with the time we give to the arts in our school and how does it compare with that of other schools?

Can we supplement our staff by visiting part-time or occasional posts from creative artists in our local or regional community?

How can we successfully integrate that into our curriculum offer – possibly by reference to the tenth challenge below?

Have we asked our staff how they have promoted creativity within what they teach and how they teach it?

Do we think in terms of 'big learning pathways' which endure progression, or do we plan backwards from the assessments that students have to do?

How do we deploy our staff's personal hyacinths in the life of the school?





CHALLENGE NINE

Creative teaching, learning and assessing



Teachers at the top of their game are naturally creative and their creativity makes pupils think.

Challenges one and two focused on getting creative teachers in the first place and then keeping them creative once you've got them.

Here we speculate about some of the circumstances that go towards making creative learning experiences in and beyond the classroom.

We have both been impressed for years with Judith Little's description of the outstanding school. "You know you are in one when..."

- Teachers TALK about teaching.
- Teachers OBSERVE each other teaching.
- Teachers plan organise and evaluate TOGETHER and
- Teachers teach EACH OTHER.

We have put in the emphasis. We like it because you can easily see how you can increase the likelihood of it happening – the nature and agenda of meetings, the chance to see each other teach, TeachMeets – and perhaps this set of four points ought to have been the scene setting of the second issue on creative staff development.

We have put it here however to emphasise the importance of avoiding teacher isolation, if your aim is creativity.

There are many qualities, characteristics and habits that are essential to successful teaching and pupil learning. There is no shortage of lists of these and we supply one here:

- Good understanding of self and of inter-personal relationships.
- Generosity of spirit.
- Cheerful with a sense of humour.
- Sharp observational powers.
- Interest in and concern for others.

- Infectious enthusiasm for what is taught or being learned.
- Imagination.
- Energy.
- Intellectual curiosity.
- Good professional training and understanding of how pupils/students learn.
- Ability to plan programmes of learning appropriate to the particular groups of pupils/students.
- Understanding of their curriculum in the context of the school as a whole.

There are of course others but we would expect creative teachers to meet on this list. Indeed as a reminder it is probably worth having it at one's side when seeking new staff.

Whatever the validity of this or other lists, we think creative teachers are committed to learning themselves and are not afraid to try out new ways of engaging and developing their students' interests, minds and creativity.

We have noticed how the time-honoured debate about the 'sage on the stage' versus the 'guide on the side' has moved on to incorporate the 'meddler in the middle'. We are sure that the creative teacher is keenly aware at least intuitively of these various guises.

Like their creative leaders, creative teachers prefer not to give answers but to ask good questions and speculate. We can't do better than Robert Fried's description of the passionate teacher:

"Of some of our teachers, we remember their foibles and mannerisms, of others, their kindness and encouragement, or their fierce devotion to standards of work that we probably did not share at the time. And of those who inspired us most, we remember what they cared about, and that they cared about us, and the person we might become. It is the quality of caring about ideas and values, this fascination with the potential for growth within people, this depth and fervour about doing things well and striving for excellence, that comes closest to what I mean in describing a passionate teacher."

Our questions are:

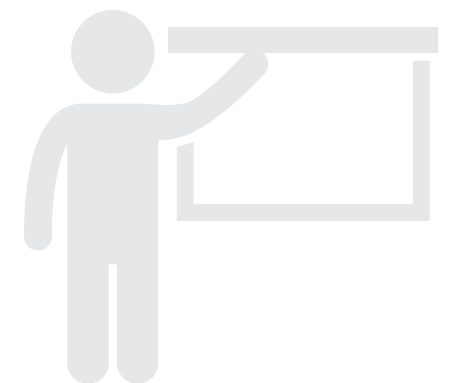
How, and how often, are our meetings devoted to discussing teaching learning and assessing?

What entitlements per annum have our teachers to observe another colleague in our or another school teach?

Is at least one departmental/phase meeting each year devoted to discussing a script/piece of work from another anonymous school, and marked by two anonymous other teachers either from our own school or elsewhere?

How do we extend our knowledge of successful teaching?

Have we an agreed policy and practice for teaching learning and assessing and has every member of staff got a copy – as well as it being on our website/e-learning platform?





CHALLENGE TEN

Creative timetables enable creative experiences



Primary and secondary schools are different but both have what might be called 'metronomic' timetables. That is to say a weekly or fortnightly predictable sequence for each day such as English followed by maths followed by science and so on.

In secondary schools the vital person in how the daily round of school feels for both student and teacher is the timetabler. They usually operate alone and typically get to work in May and reappear in July just close enough to the end of term to discourage too much discussion and distribute the next year's timetable. In September, the timetabler returns praying that there are no glitches and that the complex combination of rooms, pupils and teachers works out. Most teachers silently think the timetabler is very clever and they are glad they haven't got the task.

Learning within that metronomic timetable will be creative according to the skill of the teacher and the curriculum offered. And in our other issues, especially the one on teaching and learning, we have tried to show how you can optimise the chances of being creative. And of course such a timetable is vital to assist that.

Many primary schools have a defining theme which lasts a term or more; sometimes called a topic or research with individual teachers or pairs organising time for this on certain days or half days. In some schools it is a pervading theme informing all that they do.

Nevertheless schools – primary, secondary and special – know that the metronomic timetable, while essential is not enough. They organise trips for field work, for visits to theatres, art galleries or places of interest. There are residentials and sometimes the timetable is suspended for super learning days or intensive work on particular aspects of the curriculum. There are 'work experiences' and careers and enterprise events among others.

Now we would argue that these add up to the 'non-metronomic' timetable.

What we are arguing for is that such arrangements are less ad-hoc or serendipitous and more clearly thought through with a written rationale, which the whole school justifies.

Some schools going down this path have argued that the rationale is better justified when the school has thought through and declared the sorts of 'experiences' which every student might be entitled to have.

In primary schools that might include

- All children taking part in a public performance at least three times in their primary career.
- Finding out what each child is keen on, in either the expressive or performing arts, by the time they are seven and ensuring that they have expert coaching so that it has a chance to be established as a life-fulfilling activity.
- Children taking part in at least one residential experience.
- Working in a group in KS2 to create, design, make and present a book/multi-media work for another age group; and then engaging in a critique of their efforts.
- In Year 6, after SATs, engaging in a review/research of an environmental issue of concern to the local community and presenting the findings with recommendations for action.

Now our list is illustrative and, as we said, provides a primary example. Schools we know which have made similar initiatives have found it a good way to involve staff, parents and pupils. The outcome is often different and examples of their short list include looking after animals, growing a garden, visiting local places of interest and preparing and eating a meal. As one head said, "It has involved everyone and we shall review the list every three or four years to ensure it remains alive". For another school it provides the beginnings of a rationale of the non-metronomic timetable.

Secondary schools are even more convinced of the need for something like this, as they are more in thrall to the metronomic timetable and see the experiences and the rationale for them as a powerful means of providing an engine for creativity within the school.

Our questions for this section are:

Do we have a team rather than just one individual as timetabler?

Do we agree as SLT, and share with the staff as a whole, the priorities we have asked the timetabling team to be guided by?

Have we a rationale for the occasional days and weeks when the regular timetable is suspended? What is it and has our governing body approved it? Is it in a state to show and explain to Ofsted?

Who was involved in determining our school's guaranteed set of pupil/student experiences and are these set out in the school prospectus?



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