



# Just a TEACHER?

This issue's educator doesn't want to duck out of the responsibility of a promotion, but is in need of some wise words from **Eileen Field** to help with the transition...

## Q

After six happy years teaching triple science, I have been offered a second in department leadership position. I'm excited, but also worried – especially about how I will balance professional support and development for my colleagues with continuing to deliver the best possible teaching for my students (my classroom hours are remaining the same). Do you have any advice to help me on my leadership journey?

**A** Pause, breathe out for longer than you breathe in. Plan. Focus.

You've been in a fundamental role, key to the success of your school, for six years; no doubt you have worked really hard at creating and maintaining good and outstanding lessons – you will have built up enormous reserves of teaching intellectual property. Now it's payback time, and you'll be relying on what you've accumulated to balance the wider responsibilities in your new role.

In middle leadership, it's your job to create colleagues who are as competent as you. Teaching is a stewardship profession. It's time for you to hand on your expertise to those NQTs, developing teachers and teaching assistants following in your footsteps.

You *can* do this – you already have the capacity to do this – that's why you've been recognised with this new post. But you've asked for some tips:

- Don't take it personally – just like working with that challenging youngster, who presses all your buttons and drives you nuts; 99.999% of the time – it's not you. It's the same when you have to take on a leadership role. You can be in the cross hairs with colleagues, who know that some areas of responsibility are now 'in your payscale.' Be authentic and true to your word. If you say you are going to do something, do it. Follow up and follow through (but that doesn't have to be immediately). Clarity of your message and your expectations is important, too.

- Remember what it's like to be new in the school, challenged in the classroom or unsure of the latest interpretation of policy. Now you are stepping up, folks will be looking to you for help finding solutions and how to make the good that they already do, really great. Don't lose your empathy. Get organised and keep organised. Meeting agendas, minutes and



## ABOUT THE EXPERT

EILEEN FIELD IS DIRECTOR OF ACHIEVEMENT, ONLINE AND VIRTUAL LEARNING, AT EDISONLEARNING (EDISONLEARNING.NET). SHE HAS HELD A NUMBER OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP ROLES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND IN 2004 WAS INVITED TO DESIGN A NATIONWIDE INTERNET SCHOOL TO SERVE OUT-OF-SCHOOL-LEARNERS, EVENTUALLY BECOMING THE HEAD TEACHER OF THE ONLY VIRTUAL SECONDARY SCHOOL IN THE UK. YOU CAN CONTACT HER DIRECTLY AT EILEEN.FIELD@EDISONLEARNING.COM

action points filed neatly and electronically will make your life so much easier and help you to keep up to speed on things. Spending ten minutes each morning reviewing your day is worthwhile. I set alarms on my phone to remind me to pack up and move to meetings. I hate being late! Being on time, prepped and ready communicates that you take the agenda and others in the room seriously.

- Keep a brief reflective journal about what you've done with colleagues and the outcomes. Reflect on the entries once a week – what's worked? What's worked less well? What could be improved upon? Take a peek at this infographic, this is what I use for my journal: [coursehero.com/blog/2011/10/19/infographic-write-it-down](http://coursehero.com/blog/2011/10/19/infographic-write-it-down).

- Whom in SLT do you respect and trust? Ask that person to supervise you and take the journal along for discussion. Don't forget, it's now his or her role to support and develop you.

- Get some coaching training – it's invaluable. You'll learn about yourself and will be able to use the techniques to learn about others and how to influence and work alongside them.

- Everything is data and research driven, so again, get some training. I am astonished by the number of middle leader colleagues who have no idea what RaiseOnline says about their department, let alone what it is! Find out and learn to interpret it. What can you do to make a difference to those outcomes? All other promotions from now to headship will have data high on the agenda.

- Don't forget to see if your school has an in-house 'Leading from the Middle' course, or if it subscribes to the NCTL's National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML). Whilst this is the next step, there's no harm getting a feel for the skills it addresses now.

You mention that this new role includes a priority for professional support and development of colleagues. I'm sure you know what great teaching and learning looks like for you – progress for all in class, personalised learning, differentiation, development of core learning skills – but it can be difficult to explain to others, particularly when you first start.

To help frame these conversations, I use EdisonLearning's Quality Framework for Teaching and Learning. Within a coaching model, it helps identify and evaluate the specific behaviours that teachers and teaching assistants use to create effective learning, all aligned to our friend Ofsted's own evaluation schedule. By working at this level of detail, it's easier to coach colleagues in how to adapt their professional behaviours to increase impact on learners' learning, and thus secure consistently outstanding delivery throughout the department.

Enjoy the journey!

