

Just a TEACHER?

This issue, our regular guest consultant Eileen Field has some inspiring advice for an educator who's starting to feel more than a little jaded...

Q

I started teaching five years ago (history, to A level) – and I have to be honest, it feels like 20. I was so excited when I got my first permanent job, but somehow, it seems like the passion has been sucked out of me. It's not the kids. They're as funny and interesting

and 'challenging' as ever. And I have great relationships with my colleagues, including the SLT. I'm just not enjoying lessons any more. They're a chore, not an adventure. Is this to be expected once the novelty of being in a classroom has worn off? And if not, what can I do about it?

A Your mojo has taken a hike! It's said that it takes 10,000 hours to achieve mastery – so around six years for a classroom teacher. It sounds as though you've hit that.

So, where next for the adventure you seek? Working with kids is fantastic – but this doesn't always mean you must stay in a classroom. For some, moving up curriculum leadership gives them that 'kick'. Pastoral leadership will keep you grounded with youngsters – you have to make critical decisions quickly and it's essential to have a strong sense of self and humour. But the rewards are wonderful. Could a move like one of these be a springboard to other things for you? Working in SLT is amazing – your impact is whole school. Is this pathway for you?

Does your school have the opportunity to 'Act Up!', and get a taste of what goes on outside your classroom? If not – ask at your next PM meeting. I've built successful wider MLT and SLT opportunities into staffing structures with mentored and coached roles for teachers looking for something extra/more.

Another idea to moot – what of Teacher Led Development Workgroups (TLDW)? Often associated with a local University for accreditation, these are classroom based action research projects of around 60 guided study hours and a small-scale project. Assessment is by evidence portfolio (so no essay writing!) It's designed for busy teachers looking for challenge – Building Learning Power? Strategies for closing the learning gap? Primary and Secondary liaison? What interests you?

One school I'm working with experimented with EdisonLearning's four modes of learning in their MFL faculty. The research project triggered such stunning results; year 7s hitting level 6, year 8s hitting

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

GETTING SMART: HOW DIGITAL LEARNING IS CHANGING THE WORLD, TOM VANDER ARK (JOSSEY-BASS)



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.

level 7, that the whole department now uses the techniques, has convinced maths to join them, and restructured the whole school timetable. They've also just completed a KS2 MFL scheme for their non-specialist feeder primary colleagues incorporating the same pedagogy and introducing Blended Learning; using their A-level language students to deliver live, over the internet, speaking and listening activities straight into the primary classrooms. The expectation is that in the next academic year, the majority of incoming year 7s will arrive with secure level 4-6 skills. C'est magnifique!

Another suggestion that might inspire you is coaching. Ask around in your school to find out if anyone is trained in coaching techniques and if they've been effective.

Or you could try self-coaching. At EdisonLearning, our coaching approach is underpinned by the model: T-GROW (a variation of the GROW model, adapted by Myles Downey and explained in his book Effective Coaching).

Put the coffee on, no distractions, and try scribbling or just having a conversation with your 'inner teacher':

T	Topic	What's the issue/ challenge?
G	Goal	What do you want/ hope to achieve/ happen? What do others expect of you? [What do you expect of yourself?] What are your expectations of others? Who else needs to know your goal/ plan?
R	Reality	What is happening now? What is it like now? What's stopping you reaching your goal? What effect does this have on you/ the goal? How do you feel at the moment?
O	Options	What could you do? What are your options? What would happen if you did nothing? What else could you do? Think of three things you could do ... what else... what else... what else? <i>I don't know?</i> What if you did know? What would a reliable friend advise you to do? Who do you know who has achieved this goal? What do they do that works?
W	Will do/ Wrap up	What will you commit to doing? Which option will you go with? What are the benefits/ downsides of each option? How will you know when you have achieved this? What could stop you moving forward? How can you deal with this? On a scale of 1 to 10; how committed are you to achieve this? What will it take to move you up that scale by one extra point? When will you start?

You know what's best for you. Give it a go and see where it takes you. Let me know how you get on. Best of luck!

