

Rewarding 'effective' Teachers

BUDGET, curriculum, class size—none has a greater effect on a student than his or her teacher. Given this, politicians might be expected to do all in their power to ensure that America's teachers are good ones. For decades, they have done the opposite. In Singapore, which recently came second in an international ranking of 15-year-olds' skill in maths (America was 31st), the teacher-training programme accepts only students in the top 30% of their academic cohort. In America, most teachers were mediocre students. Only 23% of new teachers were in the top third of college graduates.

Union rules make it extremely hard to fire teachers who turn out to be bad at their jobs. Younger teachers are usually the first to be let go, even though seniority does not necessarily ensure quality. In 2009 Indiana and Florida fired young staff who had been nominated for "teacher of the year". The debate over bad teachers ignores an equally big problem: there has been little effort to identify good ones, let alone reward them. A survey by the New Teacher Project, a non-profit organisation, found that school districts labelled more than 99% of their teachers "satisfactory".

"When inflexible seniority and rigid tenure rules that we designed put adults ahead of children," Barack Obama's education secretary insisted, "then we are not only putting kids at risk, we're also putting the entire education system at risk." But how do you go about finding ways to evaluate teachers, rewarding the good and dismissing the bad? 'Race to the Top', a \$4.3 billion programme includes rewards for states that evaluate teachers in new ways? As a result, some states have removed their ban on using test scores to judge teachers. Others have gone much further. Tennessee now requires districts to create new evaluation systems with at least half of the score based on students' progress. In Colorado, Delaware and Rhode Island, teachers rated "ineffective" for two consecutive years can be sacked.

Despite a brewing battle with the Unions, America has at least one model of peaceful change. In 2009 Florida, won a grant from the Gates Foundation to transform its way of evaluating, developing and rewarding teachers. Notably, the district is working productively with its union. "I want to be fair to my employees," explains one superintendent "I also want to have only good teachers in my classrooms." Teachers will be judged on their pupils' progress, as well as evaluations by a principal and by a peer. Teachers with high ratings, based on three years of data, will have higher salaries. Bad teachers will see their salaries shrink. A struggling teacher will receive further training. If he continues to be ineffective they will be removed.

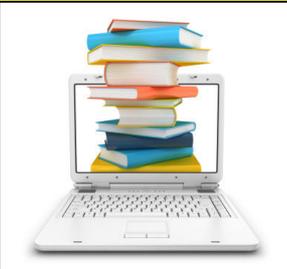
The Gates Foundation hopes that further research will see such reforms replicated elsewhere but researchers are trying to answer teachers' questions about whether such reforms are possible—are observations biased, for example, and can one isolate a teacher's effect on a students' progress?

No Child Left Behind, requires that all teachers be "highly qualified", state-certified and competent in the subjects they teach. In order to value effective teachers, not "qualified" ones, there are plans to coerce states into improving their evaluation systems; grants would go to states and districts that develop innovative ways to train or reward good teachers. A fight over these plans is inevitable. **RD**;

Adapted from *The Economist*.



RESOURCE BANK



As the pace picks up on SE2, I am sure we will all be grateful of any time-saving initiative. I suggest we adopt Amanda's solution through Google. Please try to upload at least one resource that you think the rest of us will find useful this week, and hopefully we will all be able to save some time trawling for resources. In order to access the site please e-mail:

bown.amanda@googlemail.com

TRIED AND TESTED

The most effective single thing to raise standards of behaviour in secondary schools is to have an effective seating plan.

Sir Alan Steer, Steer Review

LATEST JOBS:

- Bower Park School
- Oasis Academy Enfield
- Lilian Baylis Tech. School
- Ark Secondary School, Brent
- Eltham College
- Mossbourne Com. Academy
- Highgate School, Haringey

Surviving your first school trip: A rough guide

By Xina Moss



I helped to organise a trip for a group of Year 9 students from Morpeth School to visit Cambridge for the day. We visited the Centre for Mathematical Sciences and the pupils took part in a variety of NRich workshops, including the Enigma Coding session similar to that described in the last newsletter. Aside from reporting that the pupils really enjoyed the day, were definitely engaged with the Maths, and as ever, the countryside viewed from the train was one of the features of the day that stood out most for them, I thought it might be useful to pick out a few pointers of vague guidance if you're thinking of planning a school visit anywhere...

Risk Assessment

Although there may be a generic one to cover most visits, make sure that you include anything specific to yours: the danger of the 'silent bicycle' always features in a visit to Cambridge! Check the school's own policy/procedure for organising a visit (I found that the Bursar was very helpful in guiding me through the various forms that needed filling in aside from the risk assessment).

Goodbye to Golden Hello

The government is phasing out the £5,000 'Golden Hello' awarded to teachers of mathematics, and other shortage subjects, in the state sector after the successful completion of their NQT year. Those who completed their Initial Teacher Training (ITT) during or before the academic year 2010/11 will remain eligible for the award. RD

Letters Home

Inform parents/carers of arrangements (especially departure and return times if these are different to normal school hours) – and make sure that the school office has a copy of the information on the day as it will be them that receive the phone calls

Allow Plenty of time

...and don't panic if it looks like you will miss the scheduled train/bus...it's better to arrive late than never! On public transport especially, ensure that everyone is at the departure point (e.g. platform) before departing – it's best not to have half the class disappearing into the tunnel and the others left on the platform (make sure you've got a procedure in place for if something like this does accidentally happen though!)

Snake Walking

I've always found that the easiest method to get a group of students from one place to another without losing any en-route is, as long as you have at least 2 members of staff to tell them to make sure that they're always BEHIND person A and IN FRONT OF person B at the back (and any additional staff can float alongside/chivey them along...I'm unfaithfully amazed at how slow school parties walk!)

Obviously my visit was just for the day and procedures for a residential trip would be a little bit more involved...although hopefully not matching up with the 120 page (no joke!) risk assessment I once received as just part of a residential summer school in a previous job!

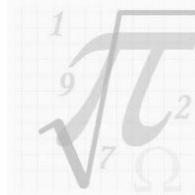
PUZZLE

$$IX = I + X$$

How is this possible?

ISSUE 2 SOLUTION: 6 Minutes.

NOTES:



Recruitment Day - What Can I Expect?

By Philip Walker



I am moving to Kent in the summer so when I saw a job offered only 7 miles from where I plan to live, I had to apply. I thought my application was rushed and not very good but it got me in the door. Besides the usual stuff, you had to include a personal statement. I simply took the headings from their person specification and wrote my own words under those headings describing why I thought I fitted the spec. I repeated much of this in a cover letter. It worked and I was invited to the recruitment day. I later found out that there had been 21 applicants and 6 were invited.

The day comprised giving a 25 minute lesson and a panel interview. I understand that this is typical. We had been told the lesson should be on and what class it would be taught to (year 10 revision for volume of cuboids in my case). I recommend asking the recruiter as much as possible about the lesson (seating plans, SEN etc) which may be of no use except to show that you are thinking about the lesson. The lesson was observed by the head of maths and a deputy head. During initial deliberations we were given a tour of the school and met the maths department.

Half the candidates were then retained for the afternoon panel interviews with the Head Teacher / Head of Maths and the Deputy. I was asked how I could have improved my lesson, so I strongly recommend taking notes immediately after the interview including what went well. I was also asked what differentiation techniques I had used in my lessons, and how I had made my lessons fascinating (a term I used in my application!).

I understand that many jobs are offered on the same day. In my case the Head Teacher phoned me the following day to offer me one of the two jobs they had decided to offer. Good luck! **PW**

If people do not believe that mathematics is simple, it is only because they do not realize how complicated life is.

~John Louis von Neumann