

My Favourite... ICT Lesson

Find out what goes on in **Dan Lea's** classroom, Teaching Award winner 2009...



A bit about Dan...

WHY DID YOU BECOME A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER?

Dan Lea: At school I did two weeks work experience in a Reception class and I absolutely loved it. After it'd finished I did some voluntary work – working for a playgroup in the summer and a youth club in the evening – and at Sixth form I had a very good tutor who spoke to me and said, "If you enjoy it that much, follow it through!"

WHO INSPIRED YOUR CHILD-LED APPROACH?

DL: I always remember one teacher from infant school, a French lady – the whole year was hands-on. We were always cooking, singing or dancing. We were six and seven, and she asked us what we wanted to do for a class show. He-man was the big thing at the time, so we asked to do a He-man show and she said yes! We wrote it and performed it in front of the whole school. It really stuck with me and influenced me throughout my career.

What's good?

Gearies [Infant School, Essex] is the only school I've worked in and the head has always been supportive. If a projects fails spectacularly, there's no "In my office now, explain yourself!"; instead it's "What did we learn from that, what do we need to do next." When they work it's, "Brilliant. How can we support you; where do we take this?"

What's tough?

Because we get so engaged with the projects we do with the kids, it's easy to forget that some prefer directed input, and to get carried away with the child-led learning. We have to step back to find a balance. Striking a work/life balance can be tough too – when you're doing pupil voice-led work you do have to commit to make sure it happens!

The lesson

TP: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ICT LESSON?

DL: Most of my stuff is about pupil voice – about really listening to the kids and creating a curriculum experience around their input and ideas. I did a project with quite a challenging class based on a poem I really enjoyed, *The Highwayman*. I shared it with the children and they got really into it too. So, I wondered whether could we study the poem and publish the work on blogs, so all the parents could see what we were doing. Then they could get involved too.

TP: HOW DID THE PROJECT WORK?

DL: We read a couple of pages each day, and the kids wrote their responses to them online. We had parents and other kids commenting. At the same time one of the girls asked to do a project on whether reading poetry would help her to become a better writer. So, we got a group of 15 kids together and they created a mini project for themselves. They got every teacher in school to write a poem and judged them all. The winning teacher then had to visit every class and explain what they were thinking of when they wrote their poem.

We also tried something else called 'poems in my pocket', which is done elsewhere too – you write a poem down on a small piece of paper and put them in boxes around the school. If you took one you had to write a new one and put it back in. That really took off – the kids loved it. They had other ideas too – like each teacher having to read a poem each day – all year round. We documented it online at listen2poems.blogspot.com. The project went on for five weeks in the end – we thought "Sod the curriculum, the children are really into this, they're really engaged in their learning!"

TP: DID USING ICT HELP ENGAGE PARENTS IN THE PROJECT?

DL: Yes! We did a big questionnaire for parents, asking how many of them read poems, and we got over 170 hits in one weekend – that was the moment when it dawned on me that technology could really break down the boundaries between school and home.

