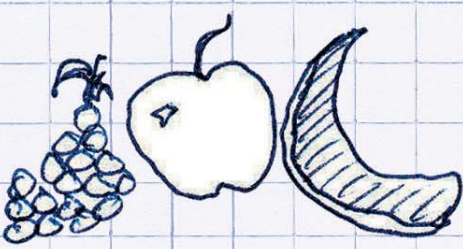


WHY do we bother?

Chris Quigley



looks at how to prevent children becoming disengaged with school by designing a relevant curriculum that makes them feel clever...



At the beginning of the 21st Century, Britain is falling behind many other countries in the education league tables. Whilst no one would dispute the need to raise standards, the way in which we do this has the potential to both enthuse and inspire our children or to disengage them from the whole school process. The challenge is to find a curriculum that achieves the former, and helps pupils to understand the purpose of their education.

When most of us were at school, the point of education was to do well academically and to get a good job. Most of the jobs that were available had been so for many years and they usually fitted into two broad types: academic and non-academic. It was fairly certain that if you did well at school and passed exams then academic jobs would be available to you. The problem is that children see the news and no longer necessarily believe that passing exams and staying at school is a guarantee of either a university place or a job. They also see other people in business who, despite a lack of academic qualifications, have done very well. Of course, one is better off with an exam pass than without one, but the decreasing certainty that this guarantees success is

causing many youngsters to question the whole point of school. Worse still, the journey to pass exams is narrowing the curriculum. As a result, many clever and brilliant children do not feel inspired by learning as they are not getting the chance to awaken the talents within them.

A history lesson

It is not because teachers want it to be like this, it is just the way it is. To understand why, we need to look back to the dawn of state education. Prior to the 1800s there were no forms of public education. It was not economically or culturally necessary due to a largely agricultural economy and a culture of basic subsistence. Two factors brought about the need and the desire for public education. First was the industrial revolution. Suddenly a workforce was required that was educated, skilled and available in cities and towns. This gave rise to the need for compulsory and free education for all. The second factor was a remarkable intellectual and cultural shift in thinking that began in the 18th Century, known as the

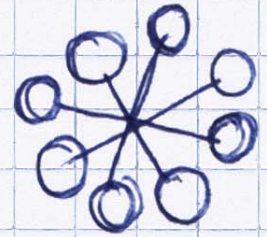
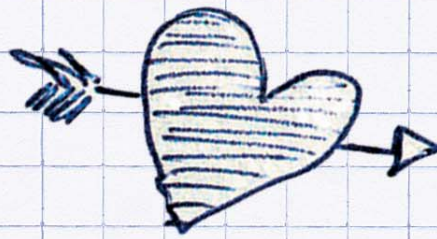
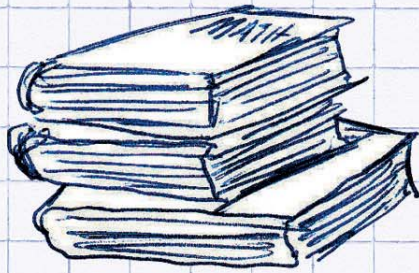


Chris Quigley is an inspirational, international speaker on educational issues. He provides training courses for the teaching profession as well as publications which are widely used in schools. Chris has trained Ofsted inspectors and Ofsted called him an inspirational leader with exceptional vision. You can contact Chris Quigley Education Ltd on 01207 279 500, at enquiries@chrisquigley.co.uk or by visiting chrisquigley.co.uk

enlightenment. At its core was a critical questioning of traditional institutions, customs, and morals, and a strong belief in rationality and science. This gave rise to the desire for public education – a definitive end to the dark ages.

Public education as we know it, therefore, was born in a time when our economy was industrial and our culture enlightened. The curriculum was designed with these twin pillars and it served us well. Britain became one of the world's economic and intellectual success stories. Basic skills was the pillar supporting our economy. For those who passed basic skills





exams, (for example the eleven-plus) the second pillar was available. This involved the essentials for the age of enlightenment: science, languages, humanities and the classics. This system gave rise to two types of people: academic and non-academic. Unfortunately, this also translated into clever and not clever people.

Help children discover their talents

The result was, and still is, that many very clever and talented people didn't know that they were. We still equate success with either financial or academic ability and this makes many people unhappy in school and unfulfilled in their adult lives. Some, of course, do well in later life despite their failings at school. Take Gillian Lynne, for example. In her long career as a choreographer and director, she has worked on many productions including those from the Royal Opera House, Royal Shakespeare Company and English National Opera, as well as many West End and Broadway shows (*Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Aspects of Love*). She is also a prolific television choreographer and director. At school, however, Lynne had been underperforming, so her mother took her to the doctor and explained about her fidgeting and lack of focus. After hearing everything she had to say, the doctor told Lynne that he needed to talk to her mother privately for a moment. He turned on the radio and walked out. He then encouraged her mother to look

at Lynne, who was spontaneously dancing to the radio. The doctor 'diagnosed' her as a dancer, and encouraged Lynne's mother to take her to dance school. Whilst many now would diagnose Gillian with attention deficit, perhaps it was more likely to be interest deficit.

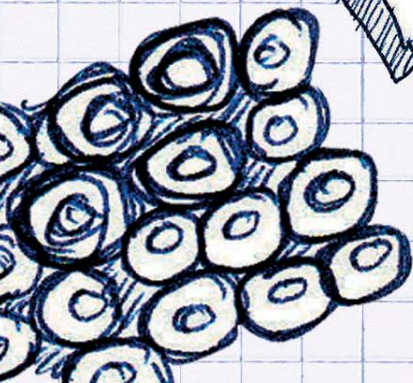
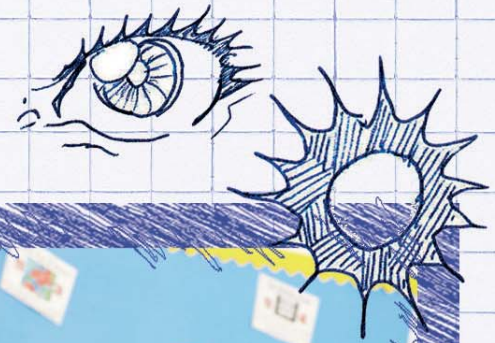
If we narrow the curriculum to the point where only basic skills are taught and assessed with any real commitment, then we run the risk of alienating thousands of children just like Gillian.

Planning for personal development

That is not to say that basic skills standards are not important. They are, but not if attaining them is at the expense of finding your talents and awakening a love of learning. This approach may get children through the tests but what will happen to them in later life? The world is changing so rapidly that most of the 'in demand' jobs over the last five years did not

exist ten years ago. The age of the enlightenment has been replaced by the age of information. Communities do not have the same values as they did in the past. This means that the way we view the curriculum needs also to move on. Areas such as the arts, humanities, sport, physical activity and ICT are all areas where, in the 21st Century, children see their relevance in the real world. They are real things that they can engage with and find real accomplishment in.

In the last issue, I wrote about a creative curriculum that engages and enthuses children but also gives them the skills they need to be successful. It is my belief that we need to plan for both academic and personal development,



The secrets to success



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOW CHRIS QUIGLEY CAN HELP YOU TO MOTIVATE YOUR PUPILS...

- Chris is an inspirational worldwide speaker and is best known for his innovative work on curriculum development, key skills and learning and assessment. He has been a Primary school headteacher, an Ofsted inspector and a trainer of inspectors.
- Chris is also a successful author in the UK and internationally. His most successful publications to date include: *Key Skills*, *Key Skills in the Early Years*, *Creative Themes for Learning* and *How to Observe a Lesson*.
- If you would like more information about Chris' new publication, *Secrets of Success*, you can download sample pages at chrisquigley.co.uk. Readers interested in purchasing the publication may call 01207 279 500 and quote code 'SOS01' for a £5 discount.

SCHOOL ROCKS!

6 IMPROVE

The curriculum is often more concerned with coverage than accomplishment. Real accomplishment does not come from doing something once and moving on. It comes from lots of tweaks and refinements. Not only does the curriculum need to provide lots of opportunity to do this, children need to realise that greatness does not happen immediately. Successful people are always trying to improve what they do.

7 UNDERSTAND OTHERS

No one has experienced success by thinking about themselves. Successful people understand others. They communicate in a way that helps others to understand and they present things in a way that others value. The curriculum needs to help children to realise that collaboration is what the real world is about, and that financial success, community harmony and peace are all about understanding each other.

8 DON'T GIVE UP

All successful people experience set backs, rejection, criticism and failure. However, they all manage to bounce back. The curriculum needs a certain degree of danger and risk if children are to experience the real world. They need opportunities to fail in a safe environment and learn to have another go.

and that we can revolutionise the curriculum by teaching children these development skills explicitly, alongside academic skills.

The way forward

These eight 'secrets of success' can help all children to feel clever and to experience success for themselves.

1 TRY NEW THINGS

If children are willing to try new things, they may just find something they are good at. Even better than this, they may find something that they love doing. Most successful people love what they are doing. This gives them energy and motivation. Instead of enduring life they enjoy it. If the curriculum gives lots of opportunity for children to try lots of new things, they may just find something that gives them energy.

2 WORK HARD

Although it may seem attractive to design a curriculum that is fun for children, it is also important to plan activities that will make children work hard. No real success comes without hard work. Successful people work hard, but they also have a great deal of fun working hard. We need to be careful that we do not separate work and fun into two separate categories.

3 CONCENTRATE

Successful people learn to give their full attention to whatever they are doing. However, the curriculum usually flits from one thing to the next. A curriculum that is not too over-crowded with content is very important in helping children to learn the

skills of concentration. Allowing children to focus on things that interest them, whilst at the same time learning all of the content that is required, is a great way to secure engagement.

4 PUSH YOURSELF

Successful people need to push themselves. They need to push past doubts, fears and laziness. A great curriculum needs to push children and teach them about the need to push themselves. Of course, it is much easier to push yourself if you see the point to what you are doing. That is why the curriculum needs to be engaging and relevant for children.

5 IMAGINE

Successful people have ideas. They use their imagination and are prepared to be wrong. The curriculum needs lots of opportunities for children to use their imagination. This is the keystone to creativity. After all, everything we now see as brilliant, began with an idea.



Young Einsteins

THREE WAYS TO MAKE CHILDREN FEEL CLEVER...

- Give them a wide variety of experiences – they just might find something they are good at. Avoid the temptation to narrow the curriculum to just basic skills.
- Let children fail. It is only then that they will work out how to have another idea.
- Work hard. Don't create a curriculum that is fun; let children have fun working hard at things that interest and motivate them.

