

Leadership Report 2017



Conclusions from The Prince's Teaching Institute's Primary and Secondary Leadership Conferences and Leadership Programme members' days, held in October 2016, January 2017 and February 2017.

Contents

This report summarises the talks by our conference contributors and subsequent discussions among headteachers, executive principals and other school leaders at our leadership conferences in 2016/17. Pupils also provided their perspectives on the various issues raised, and delegates presented their conclusions to panels of educationalists, whose responses are also summarised here.

1 Introduction from the course director

Bernice McCabe, Headmistress, North London Collegiate School and Co-Director of The Prince's Teaching Institute

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PTI Headteachers' Conferences 2017



"Meeting with like-minded school leaders who are committed to delivering high-quality teaching and learning has inspired me at a time when it is easy to feel demoralised". This comment from a headteacher who attended the first Primary Leadership Residential in 2015 illustrates the purpose and value of the PTI's Leadership Programmes.

This report reflects the common principles, shared by primary, secondary and executive head leaders who attended our conferences in 2017, and summarises their reflections on how to build a rich learning culture for both pupils and teachers. I hope it will act as a useful reminder of what matters in leadership for those who attended, and also as an invitation to their colleagues to participate in the PTI's Leadership Programmes, which will give them the opportunity to meet inspiring people and re-energise.

For all these leaders, the promotion of inspirational, engaging and expert teaching and learning is central to their purpose. Both primary and secondary conferences heard from pupils, who were united in reminding the heads that their best teachers are those who are knowledgeable, passionate and who take learning into deeper and creative ways of working, beyond the classroom and the demands of assessment.

Whilst recognising the high accountabilities placed on school leaders, delegates believed that the solution was to have the courage to think and plan long-term, the ability to set and articulate the strategic direction for high performance and the necessity to build a climate of collegiate responsibility with teachers, pupils and governors. They reminded each other that taking time to engage in professional matters beyond school empowers teachers and leaders, improves the quality of learning and builds a culture of success.

In this era of rapid change, it is refreshing to have this re-affirmation of core leadership values that have stood the test of time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bernice McCabe".

Bernice McCabe, Course Director
Co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute
Headmistress, North London Collegiate School

Ethos, identity and collaboration

"Schools should create citizens that not only act well, but also think well"

Ethos, culture and practice:

Headteachers' and panel discussions

The panel comprised Dame Alison Peacock DBE, Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, Kim Johnson, President of NAHT, Sarah Burns, Headteacher of Sandbach School and Jack Jackson, Executive Principal of Launceston College MAT.

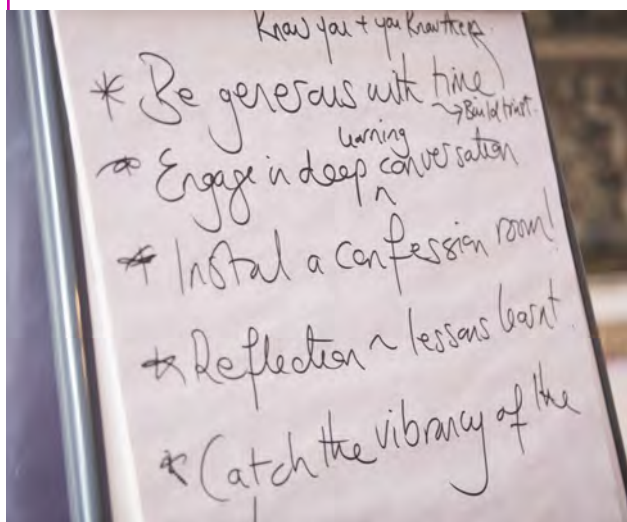
Headteachers and panellists had the following advice:

Defining a successful school ethos:

- The way that we assess pupil progress should be rooted in values and moral purpose.
- Tensions may exist, e.g. between 'happiness' and 'attainment'. Schools should maintain the centrality of their core values (the 'why'), even when the 'how' and 'what' need flexibility.

Challenging, changing and implementing a school's culture:

- You are never finished building a culture. Maintaining it requires constant work.
- Ethos should be reflected back to you as actions, not just words. This is an indication that what you believe to be the school ethos is an internalised reality and not just a performance.
- People matter:
 - Be inclusive and work with everyone, not just the convenient majority.
 - Hiring staff who can ignite enthusiasm in others, and maintaining quality relationships with them, are key.
 - Give people voice and agency; create a trusting environment where people know their opinions are valued.
 - Use new staff to give you fresh perspective; encourage them to question everything.



How do you get the energy to keep challenging people?

- Have a place to go to recharge your batteries and remind yourself why you are here - this could be the area of the school you are most proud of.
- Get out of school and send your colleagues out of school to meet inspiring people and re-energise.

How identity can be enhanced through strong connections with other schools

Paul Luxmoore, Executive Headteacher, Coastal Academies Trust

With collectivity comes clout, and through clout schools can gain courage to enhance collective identity.

A multi-academy trust (MAT) takes collective responsibility. This is not the same as collaboration; if one school sinks, the group is responsible, educationally and financially.

For the Coastal Academies Trust, beliefs include:

- Offering a curriculum that also engages the minority of students who lack the skills to access the national curriculum, even if this means they can only engage with one subject.
- A focus on literacy and numeracy until students have the skills to access the curriculum - a 'stage not age' approach.
- Focus on developing students' personal qualities like tolerance and friendship, which are not featured in any measures of accountability.
- Giving all children access to British culture - e.g. one school is a Shakespeare school.



To achieve these aims, the Trust's key identity must be *courage*, and with many schools working together with collective responsibility, there is increased clout to follow your convictions when they go against the orthodoxy.

Questions to ask about your school's ethos:

1. What does the overarching image of our school say about us?
2. Does the outer reflect the inner?
3. Are we sharing rather than dictating our ethos?
4. Does the ethos stand the test of time?
5. Do we do as we say - is the ethos modelled around the school?
6. Is everyone involved, is it accessible to everyone?
7. Is our ethos aspirational enough to encapsulate more than what we already are?
8. Do we reward people for positively reflecting our ethos?

Leadership focus on teaching and learning

"Keep the main thing the main thing"

How can we promote inspirational teaching and learning in our schools?

Headteachers' discussion

1. Demonstrate that teaching and learning is the priority:

- When the headteacher is the driver of teaching and learning, this demonstrates its centrality.
- Keep T&L as the first item on meeting agendas, whatever else follows.
- Be outward facing; put up articles from TES or the news that people can read and comment on.

2. Provide support for teachers:

- Students should understand that their teachers are learners as well. Instil a culture of ongoing development of teachers' subject knowledge to build their confidence and empower them to be brave in what they teach.
- Have the courage to think long-term when deciding where to invest your strongest talent. This may be at the top of the school, or in Year 7 for impact in the future.
- Make everybody responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, and generate honest dialogue around the subject.

3. Involve learners:

- Provide opportunities that will inspire students, even if they don't take them up.
- Find ways to gather feedback from pupils, for example, pupils could write a newsletter to staff.

Putting aside performance measures and other 'distractions' to ensure that teaching and learning is prioritised

Panel discussion

- **A school is only as good as its teachers**, so this is where we need to put the most energy. Being clear about T&L as our priority will help to create space to focus on the quality of students' learning experiences.
- **Focus on the study of teaching**; allow colleagues to observe with the goal of watching the learning, not the teacher, and follow up with a dialogue about learning to be even better. In Shanghai, it's a badge of honour to be observed because it's a privilege to have that dialogue.
- When you become a head you are accountable for your school, but you also become a **guardian of the profession with a responsibility to look beyond your school**. Encourage your staff to also look beyond school and engage with something within the profession, for example sitting on a national subject council. This mutually benefits the profession and your school.

Putting teaching and learning at the heart of leadership: Facing challenging circumstances with confidence

Jack Jackson, Executive Principal, Launceston College MAT, and his pupils

Have courage to keep the main thing the main thing: maintain unapologetic focus on teaching and learning.

Launceston College is a genuinely comprehensive school, as the only secondary school in an area with attainment at KS2 slightly below average.

The curriculum is 80% core (EBacc) subjects, 20% free choice. In KS4 this means one day a week is spent on the Applied Curriculum, which includes Professional Cooking, Hair and Beauty, Construction, Childcare and the Motor Vehicle Unit. Students who have previously struggled academically can be transformed by these opportunities, and bring their new learning skills back into the academic classroom.

The focus is on meeting the needs of pupils, not on chasing accountability measures. This is maintained by:

- Having courage to hold yourself to account based on your outcomes and nothing else.
- Allowing teachers to run with their particular passions.
- Having students as associate governors, which quickly shifts the focus of meetings from functional issues to student progress, faculties and helping students get the most out of the college.

"It is unlikely that any of us will have our Progress 8 score carved on our gravestone, but when we have an impact on a child's education we change the world."



Pupils' perspectives

- Students are motivated by opportunities to engage with their subjects beyond school and see the benefits beyond exams, e.g. attending an Oxford Summer School or learning a language
- The school culture means students are comfortable talking to teachers about their learning, and there's recognition that teaching should be geared towards supporting students in their learning.

Effective school leadership

The importance of courage and encouragement:

Headteachers' and panel discussions

When talking to staff:

- Be aware of your use of language and the impact this has: "I want to see you at the end of the day" will cause trepidation.
- Give praise, show them you have confidence in them and reinforce this often so they do not begin to feel undervalued
- Get to know them personally - "How was your holiday?"

Be wary of:

- Isolation - very few people will talk to you on equal terms. Those who do are useful allies; find out who they are and seek out their opinions.
- Deviating from your moral purpose when making decisions - people will spot inconsistencies.
- Following the path of least resistance for short-term ease. Taking on those loud, obstructive people could reap huge long-term benefits.
- Becoming too far removed from day-to-day teaching staff and the pressures they face. Sensitivity can enhance your credibility.

Ensure that you:

- Listen - knowing when to listen, how to listen, hearing beyond presented issues and unpicking the issues can unlock people's potential and motivation.
- Know your team and your pupils, learn how they will respond.
- Admit your mistakes; apologising can build trust.
- Keep your promises - this runs both ways.



Being an effective leader

Lord Wilson of Dinton, Former Cabinet Secretary

Leadership is:

- Different to 'management' - it requires that spark that makes people want to give their very best.
- Increasingly important in these uncertain times - people want to be confident that their leader knows where they are steering the organisation, and will constantly upwardly appraise this.

Leadership requires:

- A clear idea of what you stand for and where you are going.
- A degree of passion, to convince others that you are taking them in the right direction. This does not, however, require a loud personality.

To be an effective leader:

- Recognise your weaknesses and build a team who have strengths that you lack.
- Operate with 5% of your energy in reserve to deal with the unexpected. You need the capacity, whatever is going on, to drop it if something happens or somebody needs you.
- Be wary of overload. Get enough sleep and remain good humoured. If you appear stressed and tired, people will think something dreadful is happening.
- Value those few who will tell you the truth. Old friends are important and will help prevent you getting out of touch.



Leadership evolves from the classroom upwards

Sir David Carter, National Schools Commissioner

Strong leadership in the classroom: A consistently good teacher who delivers strong outcomes, understands and contributes to the school vision and takes ownership of their personal development.

Strong middle leadership: A consistently good teacher improving the performance of others, translating the school vision to the team level and holding the team to account.

Being a great school leader: Translating the vision to plan to execution. Builds the confidence of the school community, develops others and is able to move between strategy and on-the-ground presence.

Being a great executive leader: Clear strategic vision for school improvement on more than one site, able to lead accountability at a distance, build strong teams and deliver change that takes staff with them.

Recruiting and retaining high-quality subject teachers

"Look beyond 'traditional' advertising and be more creative in engaging your communities. No other industry relies so heavily on a single, expensive method of advertising."

Attracting and retaining the best teachers

Panel discussion

- **Taking the long-term view**, if the College of Teaching is successful in building scholarship, creating chartered teacher status and professionalising the profession, there will be an excitement and innovation around schools and the culture will shift towards teaching being seen as an exciting profession.
- By **creating a sharing culture** where teachers are respected as specialists in their area, and when they feel a part of something bigger than themselves, their self-esteem will grow and they are more likely to want to remain in the job.



Innovation, collaboration and excellence in school recruitment

David Cobb, School Recruitment Specialist

Increased school-to-school movement and competition for talent means that traditional national job advertising (like TES) has become very expensive and is often unsuccessful. The millennials now beginning their careers also have very different attitudes to previous generations. How can schools respond to the changing market?

What are the key characteristics of 'millennials'?

- **They are connected** - they won't just believe what you tell them about working at your school, they will check through other sources like Glassdoor.
- They don't want a job for life in a single school, but **crave richness of experience**.
- They are **less motivated by money** and extremely socially responsible. They also want their employers to be socially responsible.
- They **demand more continuous feedback** and constant dialogue about their progression.
- They don't want to be told what to do, they **want to be inspired**.

How can your school respond?

- **Look beyond 'traditional' advertising** and be more creative in engaging your communities. No other industry relies so heavily on a single, expensive method of advertising. Consider appointing a millennial to help with this.
- **Build local talent pipelines** - take a five-year view by engaging your Sixth Formers with ideas of coming back to teach and getting out to talk to local university students and graduates.
- **Create a reciprocal network** of recruitment partners with other schools - work together to widen the talent pool and compete with other professions rather than narrowly competing with each other over a small pool.

Ideas for retaining talented staff:

- Develop a **professional learning journey** for every teacher. If a great teacher is blocked from progression by a sitting head of department, consider other options, such as a two-year secondment at a different type of school.
- Orient the culture of the school, and all its stakeholders, towards **supporting teaching and learning**. This support builds safety, trust and cooperation.
- **Focus on staff wellbeing**; recruit and deploy creatively to decrease workloads and improve morale.



Creating an inspiring learning culture

"In a strong learning culture, pupils have agency and see themselves as learners."

Enhancing the classroom experience beyond the text

Headteachers' discussions



- We need to create a culture where learning is irresistible and **teachers develop their passions** and model good learning. This will ignite and direct passion in students.
- We need to **recalibrate what is important** to overcome tensions between teacher overload and pupil enjoyment. Prioritising engagement will drive better learning.
- Space needs to be given for teachers to take risks and pupils need the **time and freedom** to develop their ideas.

Pupils' perspectives

A panel of Year 7 pupils from The John Warner School spoke about their experiences at different primary schools.

- The **lessons pupils most looked forward to** involved developing skills, doing projects, being active, creative writing, and science experiments. One student found making a volcano especially memorable.
- Their **favourite teachers** were knowledgeable and went into greater depth, introducing practical and outdoor elements into the learning.
- They **enjoyed being stretched** and felt better prepared for secondary school when material was more challenging.



Leadership for curriculum excellence

Dame Alison Peacock DBE, Chief Executive, Chartered College of Teaching

- In a **strong learning culture**, pupils have agency and see themselves as learners. They take inspiration from those around them, including each other.
- A culture of learning needs to be modelled by teachers (and headteachers) to **generate excitement for learning** and become embedded across a school. All staff need to keep developing their own expertise and sharing their passions with students.
- When we lack knowledge in a subject **we limit our pupils**. For our expectations to be as high as they can be, we need to recognise the need to bring in or build expertise.
- Creating an **open culture of trust** means that teachers can ask for help without feeling they aren't 'good enough' at a subject.



How can we manage the tension between accountability and creative approaches in the primary sector?

Panel discussion

Panelists: - Sir Andrew Carter OBE, Executive Headteacher of South Farnham School
 - Anne Heavey, Education Policy Adviser at ATL
 - Jo Penn, an experienced School Governor and National Leader of Governance

- **Review your ethos with governors regularly** and show them how a creative curriculum is aligned with your values. Keep in mind what school you want to run and what the children need. Accountability will follow.
- In the current climate, **schools have more opportunity to lead themselves**. It is the job of the profession to explain that it isn't either/or (standards vs. creativity), but that the two should go hand-in-hand. If the profession says that it's either/or, the government will tell us which to pick.
- A school needs to be a **learning environment for everyone, not just pupils**. Negotiate with governors to get time and space for teacher CPD, and convince them of the benefits of this.
- **How far are governing bodies aware of classroom practice?** Develop them so they can go beyond tick-box exercises and ensure they are engaged with the educational spectrum, rather than getting bogged down in governance. For example, bring them into your classrooms to show them the worth of creative practices.

Specialist subject teaching in the primary sector

"When we lack knowledge in a subject we limit our pupils"

Pupils' perspectives



- Pupils wished that they could have done more Technology, Art, and Design in primary school, and felt that the teaching of these subjects were sporadic rather than regular.
- They wanted **more active participation**, for example Drama to liven up English lessons and engineering projects to give a focus to Science.
- They felt that they **hadn't spent enough time** learning Modern Languages at primary school.

How can we work better to harness specialist teaching?

Panel discussion

- **Collaborate with other schools** – you may not need certain specialists in your school all of the time
- Create an environment where **teachers can ask** when they don't know
- **Recruit beyond the sector** to share talent across the phases, e.g. by bringing secondary teachers into primary schools
- **Primary teachers are specialists**, and this is often forgotten. Every school is likely to have teachers with a range of degree subjects that may not be being utilised to their full potential.
- Often secondary schools assume that children have no prior knowledge, which leads to them being unengaged. **Be proactive about interphase collaboration**, e.g. by sending a whole folder of the children's work to their secondary school so that they know the whole child, beyond English and Maths results
- **Subject pedagogy and Early-Years pedagogy are both important**. Very young children will not sit and be bored, so teachers are very good at teaching in the way children naturally want to learn- later phases of education could learn from this.



Leadership through subject teaching

Sir Andrew Carter OBE, Executive Headteacher, South Farnham School

How can you have a specialist teacher in a primary school context?

- **Innovative approaches can be implemented** to allow the best specialists to teach subjects while keeping costs manageable. Specialists do not have to be full time, they could be visiting or float within a MAT. Classrooms could be rethought, e.g. bigger classes with one experienced, qualified teacher, a couple of junior teachers and a couple of TAs.
- Teaching multiple subjects in one day is a lot of work for a class teacher. Having specialists take over certain subjects can **free up planning time**.
- **What does 'qualified' mean?** A qualified teacher may not know French or read music. Teaching these subjects leaves them exposed if they are unsupported.
- **Schools have an institutional memory**, but there is a culture of not writing down 'what works' because it isn't seen as creative. Textbooks can be useful when used well.

Leadership and new initiatives

- **Maintaining your core philosophical basis is crucial when considering new initiatives.** It is important to ask how they fit in with your existing approach, and to have these conversations with governors and trustees, e.g. mastery – the essence of the concept must be distilled to see how it is applicable in your school.



Putting ideas into action

Why do we record learning?

Anne Goldsworthy, Primary Science Educator

- Do we record learning... 1. To help children learn?
2. To let them tell others about science?
Or is it primarily... 3. To provide evidence of what's been happening in the classroom?

If we record learning without being certain that it helps learning, we are doing it for the wrong reasons. Instead of always asking children to write, you can devise memorable, communicative activities which help learning, e.g. do a mime, devise a lesson for younger pupils, conduct a radio or TV interview.

Developing reading for pleasure

Professor Teresa Cremin, The Open University

Nationally there are challenges with sustaining reader engagement, especially among boys, and those on free school meals. Reading for pleasure is easy to mandate but more difficult to implement, and it is often deprioritised for other tasks.

At its core are choice, volition and agency for the reader – it cannot be forced. Children benefit from increased independence, getting lost in a book, changing their perspective and the connections and conversations that emerge from shared love of reading.

To foster reading for pleasure, we need:



- **A rich understanding of reading.** We need to engage children by sharing our favourite books and modelling diverse ways of talking about our own reading.
- **A good knowledge of children's literature.** To broaden pupils' horizons we need to know a range of authors and be able to recommend material (not only books) to suit a wide variety of interests.
- **Knowledge of the children's reading practices.** Documenting their reading, including everything from books to magazines to Twitter and beyond, helps bring diversity into the classroom.
- **An interactive reading for pleasure pedagogy.** This includes having social and independent opportunities around reading, reading aloud and sharing recommendations and opinions. It's about generating engagement and exploring texts for their own sake, not only to meet objectives.

A new research-informed website supports schools as they develop children's reading for pleasure: researchrichpedagogies.org/research/reading-for-pleasure

How can we promote and support high-quality Maths teaching?

Shahed Ahmed OBE, Executive Headteacher, Elmhurst Primary School

The mind-set of 'I can' or 'I can't' does not exist for other subjects as it does for Maths, and this fear factor can lead students to disengage with Maths as they get older. How can we use ideas from Shanghai to improve the way Maths is taught in the UK?

Tips from Shanghai Maths:

- **Focus on concepts, not just procedures:** Break things down into much smaller, systematic steps. Students who are confident about the fundamental ideas can work out how to solve problems.
- **Focus on the concrete, then pictorial, then the abstract:** Is $\frac{1}{2}$ bigger than $\frac{1}{4}$? Well, half of what?
- **Give teachers time to prepare:** By planning for misconceptions, they can be turned into learning opportunities.
- **Recognise the need for subject specialism:** Pedagogical subject knowledge and technical language are necessary for teaching complex mathematical concepts.
- **Differentiate through depth:** Slow down the pace to ensure that the whole class moves together. Challenge more able students by going into more depth on the same topic.



Teaching Science in the primary classroom

Anne Goldsworthy, Primary Science Educator

Teaching Science well

- Find out children's starting points – see what they know, what they think they know, and where their misconceptions lie
- Use fun teaching activities to develop their scientific knowledge and skills. Your questions to ask come out of their misconceptions
- Ask them what they've learnt. By looking back at their original ideas what they've learnt is tangible – everyone feels positive

How to spot good learning in science:

- Children talking to each other and thinking.
- Children who can't wait to tell you the new things they've learnt.
- Children who see the point of science skills.
- Children who show what they know in science in a variety of interesting ways.



Should schools be run as businesses?

Chris Pope was in conversation with Ian Davis, Chairman of Rolls Royce, at our Schools Leadership Programme Day, 2017.

Do you think schools should be run as businesses?

No, schools are not businesses and shouldn't run with a business-type mentality. The output from a business is easier to measure, and will usually be customer satisfaction and profitability. However, 'good GCSEs' is a very narrow view of output when you're talking about human beings, potentially with difficult backgrounds.

Businesses are very different from each other in terms of their different views on quality vs. sales. A school may be 'high sales' (good results) but with 'low quality' (unhappy students). Is there a problem between us getting the 'sales' and the 'quality' mixed up in education, on a school and government level?

Yes, absolutely. Performance measures and using the language of business in schools is so dangerous. It's hard to know which quality measures are good, and also hard not to get too fluffy if we do away with all of them.

What would you say are the top best practices in leadership that would particularly benefit schools?

A good leader, at whatever level, is always able to set and articulate a direction. This is more than a 'vision', which can be just words; the key factors that will achieve the aims are identified, as are the blockages and how to overcome them.

Leaders are also good at understanding what will motivate people, whether it be through inspiration, fear, incentives or threats, and can motivate people to make that direction real.

People say 'it's all about the head'. In business, is it 'all about the CEO'? What are the defining characteristics of a good CEO?

A really good leader institutionalises leadership and creates good leaders throughout the organisation. Well-led institutions have leadership embedded right through them, which can help them to survive a bad CEO. Leadership starts in the classroom; it's all about the teacher.

Restructuring around MATs is throwing up weaknesses in the governing bodies. Not many governors have strategic capabilities. Is there something the system can learn from the business model of non-executive directorship?

The role of school governing bodies isn't very clearly defined. In board rooms there's a common idea of what we're trying to do, but governors often have very different impressions of their roles and they often talk in a way that's based on passion, which they would never do in a business environment.

There's an argument for paying governors, if it would attract a higher quality of person. Payment might be an investment or it might be a cost, and you have to decide how much that is worth.

There are also psychological issues at play - if people do something for nothing, they can be sloppy, and pro bono work can actually be bad for both sides. When somebody is paid they can be held to account rather than you having to adopt a thankful attitude; it should be asked, who is holding governors to account?

England suffers one of the worst in-school departmental variation of all OECD countries. Does significant departmental variation in effectiveness happen in businesses, and if so what strategies do leaders adopt to address this, or stop it happening in the first place?

It's very common to get differences in performance in business. The question is what do you do about it? It's easy to even down, and less easy to even up. But how much variation could be a good thing? A bit of competition and peer pressure can be helpful.

Usually a really good department goes back ten years to a brilliant appointment, and the role of the head is important here. Solving a problem department is likely to take more than two years and usually involves changes in people and visible focus from the leader - so the leader has to decide whether it's a department that really matters (you can't do everything). Real discussions must be had about what they need - is it more money, more training? Encourage them to intermingle with high-performing departments from which you think they could learn, but in a way that doesn't demotivate them. *"Why don't you look at what they're doing over there", or "let's go and look together"*.

How can we best equip children to be part of tomorrow's workforce?

STEM are hugely important foundational subjects, even for those not wanting to be engineers, but I am not a believer that it is *all* about STEM and technical skills. What we think is new and exciting now will be old and boring in ten years, and trying to predict what skills children will need is a fool's errand. I'm a big believer in teaching problem solving skills and collaboration. Collaboration is the absolute trend in business and social, team-work skills make people good employees. Most things in business come out of basic mathematics and physics principles, and History is also a very good way of amassing large amounts of data into conclusions. Technology, on the other hand, is just a trend.

I would challenge the view that there's only one chance at education and it's all over with school. You can be educated at home, at school and at work.

What would you change about the leadership structure of schools?

The last thing a business would do would be to promote its best research and development people into an executive role, but in schools the best teachers are promoted and then leave the classroom. Sometimes in business the highest salaries go to the very valuable people on the ground.






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