Vision

The E-Newsletter of Vision for Learning Ltd

December 2007 © Vision for Learning Ltd 2007

Welcome to the Christmas edition of Vision.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS - wishing you a well deserved and restful holiday!!! Everyone at Vision for Learning wishes you a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

In this magazine you will find:

- Further information about the Coach Accreditation Programme
- An article from a teacher who has moved on to a new career
- The first article in a 4 part series on **creativity in the classroom**
- Our Courses schedule for Spring and Summer 2008
- Latest charity news from Nepal

If you know someone else who might like to read this newsletter why not get them to sign up at www.visionforlearning.co.uk.

Will Thomas, Director, Vision for Learning

An introduction to NLP

"*Excellent two days, interesting, proactive and very enjoyable*" SW, Herts

Open Course with Will Thomas

14th and 15th March 2008

LONDON VENUE

A course specifically designed for education professionals to give you the best in NLP change strategies, without having to attend a one month NLP course!

NLP is a cutting edge communication and change approach ideal for classrooms, leadership and one-to-one coaching situations.

Take your coaching, teaching and leadership to the next level

For info: **info@visionforlearning.co.uk**

"Empowering, unlocking creativity and moving my self -awareness forward..so experiential"

Lesley Smith W. Sussex, Feb 07

JUNE WHITTLE TAKES THE PLUNGE!

Have you ever considered making a career change? Do you dream of being your own boss and changing the world whilst running your own business? Well June Whittle has done just that. Here she outlines some of the work she is doing now after resigning from her teaching post to provide training and coaching freelance. June is an approved trainer for Vision for Learning and an accredited coach.

A Change in the Career Path of a Primary School Coach

by June Whittle

'If we did all the things we are capable of doing we would truly astound ourselves.'

Thomas Edison.

A Head Teacher wrote to tell me that this Edison quote had inspired her to finally take action on something that she had been avoiding. Her self-confidence had let her down but these words triggered something which led to decision and action. I have recently done just this myself and taken the bold and liberating step to resign my teaching post and become a freelance coach, facilitator and trainer.

We can sometimes put up barriers to change for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes the smallest of nudges or suggestions will prompt a new way of thinking which takes us forward. Coaching has opened up new avenues of thinking for me through powerful, pertinent, positive questions. These

Introductory and Advanced

CoachTraining

27th-29th Feb 2008—London

6th-8th March 2008—West Midlands

with Will Thomas

Take your coaching to advanced levels

the secrets of building great rapport

how to use the right question at precisely the right time

how people create problems and how to unlock them

strategies for dealing with challenging people

part of the certification as an Accredited Coach

Why not refresh your coaching skills— 20% discount for returners

"Truly moving and awesome. This has been the most effective piece of training I have ever done"

Richard Woodfin, Headteacher, London

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info@visionforlearning.co.uk

questions often work on various levels and can stay with us 'in the back of our mind' for days, weeks and even months as our unconscious evaluates them and decides what to do. Those 'aha'!/ wow!/ 'light-bulb going on' moments often occur, and change can happen! It can be exhilarating!

Coaching has become a way of life for me now that extends beyond my teaching. In the first article I wrote for the Vision for Learning e-newsletter I closed with the words 'Through coaching I am energized to new levels of personal growth.' This energy comes from doing something I love and has spurred me on to take this career progression.

I have a passion for learning, growing, communication, people and connection. I started using coaching and found that it slotted in perfectly with all of these values, as did classroom teaching. The more I studied and used coaching at various levels, the more my focus moved in this direction. The more I did, the more I wanted to do!! The more I learned, the more I wanted to know. In addition to the training I had completed in educational coaching and the experience I had gained, I went on to widen my learning and studied for a diploma in personal performance coaching.

As a job-sharing teacher and part-time teaching consultant I was able to put all of the skills I learnt to effective use in schools. I used a coaching approach with children, teachers, teaching assistants, parents, head teachers and leadership teams. There were rewards and successes, great and small. However – I wanted to give even more focus to the coaching.

Slowly and surely I sought opportunities to broaden my use of coaching further. Over the last 12 months I have 'walked the talk' and am following my ambitions. Sometimes making a choice is hard. Letting go of an opportunity can be even harder. During the year I have had to make many choices and have turned down three big career opportunities in teaching. I was only able to do this because I had identified what I really wanted and was determined to pursue it. It would have been unthinkable to turn down any one of those opportunities a year ago – instead I would have embraced them and celebrated their arrival in style. However, I trusted that other opportunities would arise more suited to my focus on coaching. So, with a deep breath and a little sigh, I waved a fond farewell to my job as a teacher and set up an educational and life coaching practice.

My practice grows and evolves continually. It is interesting and multi-faceted with continuing, strong links in education, eg trainer for the Institute of Educational Coaching, provision of twilight and INSET sessions on coaching for schools and 1:1 telephone coaching with teachers, head teachers and others. New opportunities present themselves as clients come to me with their requests. Outside of the world of education I run a life coaching practice with private clients and run workshops on topics such as confidence building, motivation and personal performance. Again, clients bring new ideas and invitations for work. The service is bespoke.

The effect that coaching has had on my personal life has also been significant in positive and dynamic ways. Relationships are stronger, communication is better, solutions are always found, decisions are made, action is taken, negative thinking is rarely noticed, life is balanced and - change is expected and greeted rather than dwelt on and worried about.

Coaching has helped me to move to a much higher level of self-awareness and self responsibility. And it's been a real win/win in my classroom, my school my home and now my business.
Good luck with your journey—what do you really want?

June Whittle

If you are considering a career shift, June is available for face-to-face and telephone coaching. She can also be booked for coach training in your institution. To find out more about Coaching Accreditation and coaching and training with June email us on:

info@visionforlearning.co.uk

Accreditation and The Institute of Educational Coaching

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BECOME AN ACCREDITED COACH? CONSIDERING A CAREER MOVE?

The Coach Accreditation Package is here, in association with The Institute of Educational Coaching and University of Worcester. You can work towards the award of Accredited Coach Practitioner with a whole range of starting points depending upon your background and experience. Whether you've already done some training with us in coaching , or you're just starting out, there's a path for you. The great news is that prior coach training done with Will Thomas in 2004 or later, already counts as part of your accreditation.

The Accreditation is a three in one outcome, as upon successful completion of the award criteria you will receive:

- A Postgraduate Certificate of Professional Development from the University of Worcester which certifies your theoretical knowledge and application of coaching to your work
- Certification of your practical coaching skills through The Institute of Educational Coaching
- An over-arching Award of Accredited Coach Practitioner through The IEC

When you successfully complete a negotiated learning module through The University of Worcester, in addition you can be awarded 20 credits towards a Masters or other postgraduate qualification which you can cash in at any University.

Why get accredited?

- Become an even higher performing coach, teacher and leader
- Gain credibility in the theory and the practice of coaching
- Be recognised for accredited skills and knowledge
- Enhance your coaching practice and confidently lead other coaches
- Utilise past coach training to gain the accreditation or begin afresh
- Have access to, and support in developing another full or part-time career in coaching within a sector you know and understand.

For full details of the accreditation process, the routes available to you and fees visit:

www.instituteofeducationalcoaching.co.uk

and sign up for free as a basic member to receive your accreditation information pack!

Vision for Learning
Course Listings
for
2007/ 2008 Academic Year

Coaching (part of accreditation)

Introduction to Coaching (one day programme)
With Will Thomas
27th February 08— London
25th September 08— Leeds

Advanced Coaching (two day programme)
With Will Thomas
28th and 29th February 08— London
26th and 27th September 08— Leeds

Coaching Accreditation Seminars
With Will Thomas and Shaun Hughes
1st March 08—London

Neuro-linguistic Programming

Introduction to NLP for teachers
With Will Thomas

14th and 15th March 08— London

Creativity

The Creative Classroom
With Brin Best and Will Thomas
15th April 08— London

Managing Workload

Managing Workload
With Will Thomas
4th April— Birmingham

Email us for details:
info@visionforlearning.co.uk

FEATURE ARTICLE

Creativity in the Classroom

In this edition of Vision we begin one of four articles on creativity in education.

Introducing Creativity

This series of articles draws on four years of research by Brin Best and Will Thomas that culminated in the writing of the book "The Creative Teaching and Learning Toolkit."

In this article we

- **introduce the concept of creativity**
- **define creativity**
- **outline some of the reasons why it is useful to education settings**
- **define creative teachers and creative learners**

I remember so vividly the first few sessions Brin and I had together when we began our quest to uncover the truth about creativity. We both regarded ourselves as possessing creative thinking capabilities, though with some reservations. Similarly, we had both enjoyed what we might describe as "flashes of creative inspiration". One of our earliest meetings, as I recall, expressed excitement about the research project, and at the same time concerns. Would we in some way diminish our own creativity if we were to discover how the process works? Would we take away the magic of something very special by reducing it to its component parts? Our concerns were unfounded. Firstly because, whilst we have constructed a deep understanding of how creativity works, we have equally uncovered how much we don't know about how our brains create generative, original and spontaneous thought. In this sense we have gained in two ways, we now understand how to be

more creative and support others to be, as well as having deepened the sense of mystery about this hallowed subject. Above all else, however, we have discovered some not-so-startling truths:

- **creativity has a recognisable process**
- **everyone has the capacity for creativity - it is their beliefs that determine whether or not they can be**
- **creativity is enabled by a state of mind**
- **there are techniques that can enhance creativity**

So how does one define creativity?

Creativity can be sidelined and reduced to an activity which is used purely for amusement, however we discovered that it has much more gravitas than this when applied to situations where there are genuine problems to solve.

Creativity is …

Most simply:

'The process of finding and implementing new and appropriate ways of doing things'.

More technically:

'The intentional and purposeful search for innovation in problem solving'.

Creativity is expressed through actions, and ultimately outcomes, which themselves are seen as *creative*. Those of us who are able to continually express our creativity successfully are sometimes called *creative* people. Note that creativity is different to *talent* which is about being able to perform well within a specific domain without necessarily the ability to innovate.

How different people are creative

- *Artists* are creative by making works of art which express themselves and affect
- how others think or feel.
- *Car designers* are creative by imagining ingenious interior features and novel
- external car designs that appeal to customers.
- *Physicists* are creative by calculating new ways of understanding the universe.
- *Athletes* are creative by finding new ways to gain a competitive edge.
- *Teachers* are creative by finding effective ways to teach that engage learners.
- All the above have a *purpose* in mind for their creativity – what was the purpose
- of your last creative act?

Creative people - behaviours or processes?

Is there such a thing as a creative person, or are there just creative behaviours or a creative process? There is a growing belief that creativity is available to anyone who wishes to utilise it, and although it has been traditionally defined within the so-called creative arts of painting, sculpture, music and dance, these are surely just domains in which it is easier to demonstrate creativity for others to see. We believe that creativity relates to every facet of human study and learning. Clearly, some people seem to be able to be creative much more readily than others

– Mozart, Einstein and Picasso are just three examples of exceptionally creative people whose creativity *seems* effortless. But even these legendary figures used a *creative process* to achieve their success that can be used by everyone one of us. Perhaps their trick was to be able to stay in the zone of creativity for longer than most us are able to?

Why is creativity important?

Creativity is important on many levels:

- **Individuals:** a human trait which defines the human species and provides a sense of completeness and purpose.
- **Society:** encourages diversity, connection and energy in human culture, through the entire range of endeavour, as well as in human relationships.
- **Economy:** provides the competitive edge in generating wealth, improving standards of living and arguably quality of life.
- **Environment:** preserving and enhancing the natural and built environment, as well as seeking the balance when conflicts of interest arise.
- **Education:** enabling individuals to find solutions, solve problems and develop the resourcefulness that will be required throughout their lives in a world of change.

So what does all this mean for the classroom?

Creative teachers, creative learners

Creative teachers . . .

- Use a wide range of teaching and learning methods to engage and inspire learners.
- Try to nurture creative thinking in their students in everything they do.
- Are open to experimentation and are curious about novel techniques.
- See connections between different areas and use these to bring learning to life.
- Are equally interested in the process and the outcome.
- Benefit from good self-esteem and a positive state of mind.
- Model creativity to their students.
- Understand that effort is needed to be creative.
- Look to bring examples from outside their immediate subject and from the real world to enrich lessons.
- Have a 'can-do' attitude.
- *And they actively practise their creative skills.*

Creative learners . . .

- Use a wide range of strategies to carry out tasks and solve problems.
- Are prepared to take risks, experiment and look for alternatives.
- Do not mind being stuck – and look for ways to get round the problem if they are.
- Benefit from good self-esteem and a positive state of mind.
- Understand that effort is needed to be creative.
- Benefit from a classroom climate that values creativity and everything that goes with it.
- Help their teacher to develop in their role.
- *And they actively practise their creative skills.*
- Both creative teachers and creative learners tend to occur in schools which themselves nurture a climate of creativity, supporting others in being creative.

Questions to consider:

- To what extent do you possess the qualities of a creative teacher?
- Which area would you like to focus on first as you try to improve your creative abilities?
- In what ways are your students creative?

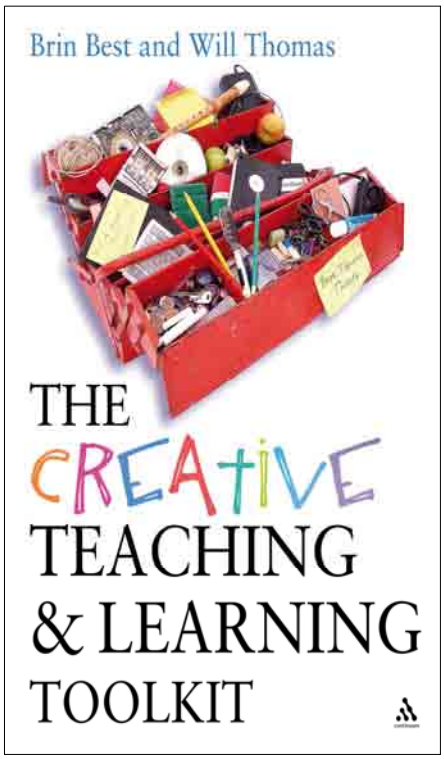
'The principle goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done – men who are creative, inventive and discoverers.'
Jean Piaget

You can read more about Creativity in schools in The Creative Teaching and Learning Toolkit *by Brin Best and Will Thomas*

The authors are running a highly practical training course based on the book:

The Creative Classroom
15th April 2008 in London

Email us for details: info@visionforlearning.co.uk



The Creative Teaching and Learning Toolkit
is available now

The ***Creative Teaching and Learning Toolkit*** is available to order now.
The book offers an holistic view of **learning and teaching with creativity in mind**
plus **over 200 strategies** *for creative activities and approaches to encourage learner creativity and problem-solving*
including a
CD ROM of printable resources all for only £16.99

Visit: www.visionforlearning.co.uk
and click the online shop button

Charity News

The Manisha Child Welfare Foundation Nepal
Our adopted charity for 2007/08

Since our last newsletter where we announced our newly adopted charity, MCWFN, things have positively moved on! Funds raised by us in the autumn of 2007 have already improved the communication systems in the region which helps to support the children and the teachers, in the schools built and improved by the charity. The MCWFN has been able to develop the control centre in Kathmandu and from January 2008 we are very excited to announce that Vision for Learning will be supporting the appointment of two teachers at schools in Nepal. One a general teacher and one an ICT teacher. We hope to be able to introduce the new teachers to you via the newsletter in one of the forthcoming issues of this e-magazine. Other work carried out by the charity has seen children (in photo right) at Basantapur School, receive water systems to collect and hold water in their schools. We are doing what we can to support the work in Nepal, but more money is needed to provide basic educational infrastructure and teachers.

If you can support in any way, large or small, please make a Christmas donation to MCWFN at **www.mcwfn.org**
Thank you.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF VISION .....

The second of the articles on creativity in the classroom—Creativity Cycles and Models in Classrooms
New courses for the new year
Update on Nepal