



Our reviewer of the week is Harry Fletcher-Wood, a secondary history teacher and head of teacher professional development

It is only our perception

By Anonymous, @calamityteacher

In this insightful reflection on an interview from which she (or he) was sent home at lunchtime, Calamity Teacher asks: "Why was an outstanding school right to not hire a formerly outstanding teacher?" She explains that while her teaching style is light-hearted and may occasionally include "standing on chairs to teach and using books with swear words in as stimulus material", the school was "refined, traditional, reserved". Seeing through a degree of disappointment, she recognises the decision was right: "They would have kept trying to make me teach in a manner I didn't enjoy and I would've been pushing against them to do something completely different." She heeds a wise moral from the tale: "Forget Ofsted judgments and apply to schools or hire teachers that fit in with your ethic because happy staff are as important as happy students."

Aha!

By Danny Brown

I'm delighted that Brown, an erstwhile colleague, has returned to blogging. He begins this post with descriptions of the emotions of exceptional mathematicians on completing hitherto unsolved problems, such as Maryam Mirzakhani's analogy of going on "a long hike with no trail and no end in sight," then reaching the "Aha" moment, the excitement of discovery and enjoyment of understanding something new.' He acknowledges the importance of practising the building blocks of maths, but believes 'It is essential that we give students the chance

to feel the emotions that come from solving difficult problems if we want them to become motivated and persevere when doing maths.' He offers an example of the solution to a STEP question (which I couldn't follow) to support his argument that: "We need to get the dopamine flowing!"

Being the teacher Year 10 deserve

By Jo Facer, @readingthebooks

Ever-inspirational Jo Facer reviews her role with a year 10 intervention group. Asking a series of telling questions as to how she balances their needs with the responsibilities of a leadership role and year 11 classes, she identifies their needs and her actions meeting them. The section beginning "These children need to be nurtured," for example, concludes by wondering: "Can I care for each and every child individually?" Self-critical and dedicated, she concludes upliftingly that: "Things are improving, but I'm not the teacher they deserve. Yet."

Who's afraid of the special school? (part one of three)

By Nancy Gedge, @NancyGedge

In a gripping three-part series, Nancy Gedge considers the promise (and reality) of inclusion from the dual perspective of a teacher and mother of a son with Down's syndrome. Having begun from a belief in the importance of inclusion and the power of teaching, she finds herself forced to re-examine her ideas, by recognising that inclusion is something for every section of the community, not just schools, and identifying the many barriers that are leading parents who fought for inclusion to seek places for their children in special schools instead. The third part explains exactly what she wants for her son, concluding: "I want my child, my children, to be educated and grow in a system that is flexible enough to give him the education that he needs".

Three teaching techniques that made 2014

By David Thomas, @dmthomas90

In a delightful bit of reflective practice, David Thomas examines three techniques he tested in 2014 and intends to keep using and refine this year. Thomas has begun "interleaving" content (teaching each topic little and often to improve retention) and explains this "made the questions I write far richer and more interesting than ever". He has also introduced regular low-stakes quizzes to reinforce what students have learned, and he discusses using the Quick Key app to assess all students' understanding rapidly in class: "The laser-like precision with which I can adapt during a lesson or plan the next one is having a big impact".