

## Gifts & Talents In Education, Claire Formby, September 2009

**How can I improve my practice as an educator to offer learners a creative and challenging curriculum which enables everyone to identify and develop their own talents and which also makes space for the nurturing of relationships to enable individual growth in understanding and self esteem?**

*I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. I possess tremendous power to make life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration; I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis is escalated or de-escalated, and a person humanized or de-humanized. (Ginott, 1972, p.15/16)*

### Introduction

The tension within my title question may not be immediately apparent. I think however that many educators will identify with the feelings of frustration which result from a loaded, sometimes imposed curriculum, which can appear to reduce the time available for building loving relationships of mutual trust with each child, which makes space for children to feel nurtured, which helps them to identify and discuss their talents and acquire an excitement for learning. Ginott's powerful words above remind me of the huge responsibility I have therefore as a teacher, for the way I speak, plan lessons, make space for each child and in the way I interact, both with the children and also with other adults in school.

In this assignment I will consider the following questions in response to this tension:

- Why have I chosen a narrative approach as the basis for my research? The beginning of the story.
- What is my understanding of *Gifts and Talents in Education* and what theories, practice and experiences with children and colleagues have informed this understanding and development in my practice?

- How have I tried to have an influence in my practice which enables children to understand and be excited by their own learning and which helps them to begin to identify and work on their talents?
- How can I continue to develop and improve this in my practice?

Why have I chosen a narrative approach as the basis for my research?

*The procedures for implementing this research consist of focusing on studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences and chronologically ordering ... the meaning of these experiences. (Cresswell, 2007 p.53-54)*

I recognize the potential weaknesses of the methodology, understanding the possibility that:

*personal knowledge would provide a basis for rejecting personal anecdotes as a basis for either policy or practice.'* (Snow, 2001 p.9)

However, as I seek to create my living educational theory (Whitehead, 2009).

I am using narrative to research precisely because it:

*... privileges individual lived experience as a source of insights useful not only to the person himself or herself but also to the wider field of social science scholarship generally... and it takes the immediacy of lived experiences, specially its narrative qualities, as a fundamental reality to be examined and acted on. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, pp. 49-50)*

Stories, as fiction or biography, help me to make sense of situations and people in a more comprehensible way than an explanation of attitudes and beliefs ever could. When reading or listening to a story I am quickly engaged, forget to worry about whether I understand everything I'm hearing and just let the words, pictures and feelings evoked by the story fill me because:

*Telling stories helps people make sense of their lives. Locating the stories they tell in wider social and political contexts helps us to understand the deeper social constructions that shape their lives. (Watts, 2008, p.100)*

So I want to use stories in my research as a teacher and learner to encourage thinking, questioning and debate with those around me. I want to share both my own stories and those from other people because their reality will be different from mine and I think this will challenge and stimulate my own and other people's thinking and learning. Using stories to try to improve my practice can only help me and those reading my work if I can reflect on,

interpret and engage with those stories honestly, not portraying myself as some epic hero, (Rhodes, 1996) with a happy ending to conclude every story, but rather as a voice in a much bigger tale because how I approach setbacks and difficulty perhaps, most significantly, helps me to define my values and motivation to improve my practice as an educator. From other researchers I am beginning to understand that the crux of a living educational theory form of action research is ... *why do I improve what I am doing ... because ... why questions deal with our being/invisible part of us often hidden in our actions.* (Singh-Punia, 2009)

In this assignment then, I want to write the story of how I have been helped by colleagues to identify and work on my own talents. I will attempt to interpret my reactions to this and then explain my influence on others as my understanding of the potential for improvement began to develop. I will also use video and stills to record the stories of children and colleagues who are part of the bigger story in which I play a part and in using narrative I hope to get to the heart of our collective meanings as we each strive to make sense of our individual realities during a time of change, (Stephens & Eizen, 1984). I will reflect on the children's journeys as I try to listen to their needs and respond to them in my desire to help them recognize, identify and develop their own talents. In using video and digital camera and including it in this assignment I have followed BERA guidelines and spoken to parents about my research. I have their full permission and cooperation.

### The Beginning Of My Story About Gifts and Talents

*Our vulnerability ..... is the source of our creative spirit. It is an aspect of our nature that enables us to love and feel love.* (Rayner, 2007, p.9-10).

I don't like acknowledging my talents. I shy away from recognizing them in my own head, let alone talking about them with someone else. As a child I was brought up to consider modesty a virtue and talking about something I did well was showing off. As a young adult my values and understanding of what was important to me were not developed so for some years I had unrealistic ideas about what I wanted my talents to be and I suffered from a real lack of confidence which blocked me from seeing that actually I did have talents, even if they weren't the ones I thought I should have. Further on in this writing I make reference to someone who has helped me to overcome this reticence and to see the sharing of my talents as gifts ... *for*

*the benefit of the whole community* (p.27). I have come to understand that in writing my story about this I am expressing and evolving my talent for originality in bringing my embodied knowledge as an educator into the Academy as a gift for others to share.

To continue my story, there were people in my life in my twenties and thirties who not only saw my talents but talked to me about them and asked me to use them to help others. I owe these people gratitude. Firstly there was the Health Visitor who asked me to help her teach other young mums how to play with their children and to show them some of the activities I did with my little daughters. Then there were the friends who asked me to chair the Playgroup committee - they would be on the committee only if I agreed to be Chair "because you would be good at it" they said. I was apprehensive but agreed and in fact it was an enjoyable if challenging experience. There was also the teacher twelve years ago who, when my six year old son broke his leg, asked me to accompany him into school every day for a month until he was mobile again. That teacher encouraged me to join in the life of the class, firstly helping children with reading, then working with a group and as my confidence grew, reading home time stories to the whole class. I loved it and it was partly his suggestion that encouraged me to apply to do a PGCE.

As I write about the experiences above I see some of the influence those people had on my view of myself and on what my talents really could be. They had an influence on the development of my values and on the person I am today in my relationships with the children in my class as I try to create a positive, caring environment, encouraging children to believe in themselves and in one another and much of my educational research so far has focused on how I try to achieve this. I have written previously about trying to develop what I have called *a loving receptively responsive educational relationship* (Formby, 2007, p.5) with the children and I continue to believe for the children and for myself that:

*Our relationships offer us the very context in which we understand our progress and realize the usefulness of what we're learning.* (Goleman, 2002, p. 209)

Eleven years into my teaching career, increasingly I want to ... *shift my practice in the direction of my values*, (Hymer, 2007, p.65) and as a Christian teacher what I try to give the children is in response to God's love for me

when I read: *Freely you have received, freely give.* (Matthew 10:v8) My developing understanding of a gift is that it is given out of love, again and again, hoping for a response but not condemning or judging if there is none. The reason that I find it difficult to talk about my own talents is because I believe that I have been given them as gifts from God, often through other people in a wide range of learning situations, both formal and informal and that to fulfill the values I claim to hold, I want to accept and give others the gift of these talents. It is in this context therefore that I have learnt to listen to those learners I work with and to use my talents to create a space for a learner to share with me something that is important to them. In the classroom I have learned to use my talents to give children the gift of recognizing when someone's comment about their learning is significant, both to their own learning and that of others. Two years ago I wrote about a comment from Oscar in the middle of an NFER maths test which I can honestly say transformed my approach to the teaching of maths. (Oscar's story, Appendix 2)

This had a profound influence on my teaching and encouraged me to develop my talents as an educator to enhance the educational gifts I can offer my pupils. Following the incident I was challenged to plan maths lessons more creatively, using stories, elements of play and varied resources to stimulate the children's imagination, engage them in a task and then to give them follow-up work in mixed ability pairs, small same ability groups or individually using concrete resources, dice, dominoes and a range of games as often as possible. (See lesson plan, Appendix 4). The children responded well as I understood that I could develop my talent of listening to the children to enable the gift of an educational space to be created for them as learners of all abilities. When a maths lesson was observed last year by my headteacher I felt affirmed in my decision and encouraged to continue this style of teaching by his comments about the:

*... very good learning outcome ... excellent activities ... very imaginative, interesting lesson.* (Lesson Observation, 2008, Appendix 1)

Similarly, in Science I was influenced by the children's lack of excitement towards my teaching of what should be an exciting subject. I knew that many of the children were fascinated by finding out things, by enormous insects and magnets and I wanted to tap into that, to help each of them to discover a passion for something that they would really like to learn more

about. How could I help them? I went on a course to enthuse me then in the classroom I started to use a TASC wheel (Wallace, 2000) approach to planning investigations with the children. I began to use a floorbook to record some of their questions & learning and we recorded comments with annotated photographs. This took much pressure off written recording by the children in their books but more importantly made space for them to talk, think out loud, to listen to each other and for me to listen to them to help me to know how to help them next. The children responded with enthusiasm. The collaborative nature of the tasks enabled them to learn key skills of communication, leadership, listening and taking turns as well as learning Science skills & facts. I have explained ... *how* ... I tried to achieve this and in terms of ... *why..?* (Singh-Punia, 2009), I knew that I wanted to improve my practice as an educator. I also like the following suggestion, but would include Science in it too:

*Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human. (Ginott, 1972, p.317)*

Science lessons have become exciting for the children and also for me.

What is my understanding of *Gifts and Talents in Education* and what theories, practice and experiences with children and colleagues have informed this understanding and development in my practice?

I am confused by some of the mixed messages about this given by the DfCSF as guidance for schools. In response to "What do we mean by gifted and talented?" the DfCSF replies:

*Gifted and talented learners are defined as those children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with potential to develop those abilities). This does not mean just the infant Mozart or the child Einstein, but rather refers to the upper end of the ability range in most classes. (DfCSF, 2008, p.6)*

I question this definition if it is based on:

*... identification drawing on the usual test-and-place criteria - with learners seen as the passive recipients of a label awarded on the basis of a test score, exceptional performance, or similar criterion. (Hymer, 2007 p.60)*

In my experience many more children than the government-assumed statistic of 5 - 10% can recognize and improve their skills and talents through a combination of challenging, creative curriculum & teaching, hard work by pupils with sustained effort and the opportunity to talk and

understand more about their own learning and progress. On the other hand however, I also have experience of teaching children whose literacy & numeracy test scores were incredibly high yet who were unable or unwilling to talk about their learning and potentially improve further and who in fact seemed stressed because of some sort of unspecified fear, perhaps of failure in a "test" sense. Is their learning being adversely affected by a culture of testing, by pressure either self-imposed or imposed by parents? That possibility makes me feel very uncomfortable, especially as these children would certainly be defined as *gifted and talented learners* (DfCSF, 2008, p.6) in the traditional sense.

Conversely I am encouraged to read in the DfCSF guidance that it promotes enriching learning opportunities for all and:

*... that identification and provision are inseparable, because identification includes spotting potential through participation in learning opportunities;* (DfCSF, 2008, p.1) which requires an exciting and challenging curriculum.

This feels much closer to my own approach as does the DfCSF thinking that personalized learning for gifted and talented learners should include

- *learning activities in the classroom which offer additional stretch through a combination of acceleration, enrichment and extension;*
- *opportunities for independent learning, and use of a range of learning styles;* (DfCSF, 2008, p.7)

My own thinking about intelligence and ability has been influenced by the research of Dweck, in particular in terms of the way people approach their learning and how they can improve with effort and a positive understanding of challenge and setbacks as a normal part of learning (Dweck, 2000). I also relate to Hymer's thinking that in order for children to grow their talents they must be given the space to reflect on their learning and progress so far. He writes that implicit in schools' definitions of gifted and talented learners:

*... is a clear requirement for schools rigorously to discharge their responsibilities - e.g. to provide metacognitive learning opportunities to support the child's self-reflection ... and to focus their energies on creating enriched, challenging, stimulating learning environments.* (Hymer, 2009, p.61)

I know that children do not all have the same skills and strengths but in order for each learner to develop his or her own special talent, as an educator I must offer that *enriched, challenging, stimulating learning environment* (p.60) in the classroom wherever possible.

On a visit to a London girl's school earlier this year Michelle Obama said to the teenagers:

*If you want to know the reason why I am standing here, it's because of education ... "I never cut class. I loved getting A's, I liked being smart.*

Her comment provoked much support, including an open letter to Obama from the authors of *Being Smart about Gifted Education (2009)*, in which they wrote about the role of educators as follows:

*Parents and educators can nurture competencies that are already evident by understanding and supporting children's high-level development (the conventional role of gifted education). However, it is equally important that we use what we know about learning and teaching processes to foster heightened development in all children. Indeed, every one of us has a responsibility to give our youth the tools with which to become proactive, guiding them in the habits of perseverance and persistence that you talked about with the children in London. (Matthews, & Foster, 2009)*

The reason that this resonates so strongly with me is because I want to develop inclusive gifted and talented theory, practice and provision as an educator. I believe that we need to ask:

*... big, philosophical questions fundamental to educational research and practice. (Heng, 2003, p.47)*

because education should be:

*... invigorating and inclusive, working to support the optimal development of every child, and helping learners to find a ... passion to excel. (Matthews, & Foster, 2009)*

Heng also asks *... Do schools educate for life? (p.47)*. I ask myself if I am helping all learners to search for *... deeper meaning (p.47)* and to find the *... unique self ... that is the central point of their lives" (p.142)*

### My Understanding of Gifts and Talents Informed by Discussions with Colleagues

*Learning in the setting where you work ... is the learning with the greatest payoff because it is more specific (customized to the situation) and because it is social (involves the group). Learning in context is developing leadership and improving the organization as you go. Such learning changes the individual and the context simultaneously. (Fullan, 2001, p.126)*

To broaden my understanding of how we, as educators try to identify and grow our own talents for the benefit of the school I asked my headteacher

and a teaching colleague if they would let me video each of them in conversation with me. I could tell that they were a little unsure but would agree to do it because it was me asking them (and I'm making assumptions about our relationships there!) to help with my thinking and learning as part of my Masters. I was deliberately vague about what we would talk about because I wanted the conversations to evolve. Our shared starting point was a leadership course that Tracey and I had completed together, both of us having been coached by Bob, our headteacher, as an important part of the learning for this course.

When the video afternoon arrived Tracey went first and our conversation felt good. Bob seemed nervous which made me feel nervous and the conversation didn't flow as easily as with Tracey. However, during the video session I knew that Bob was revealing quite a lot about his values and motivation for helping others to realize and improve their talents. I was looking forward to viewing the video clips. (enclosed on DVD with this assignment)

**Commentary and photographs from the video are in Appendix 5**

How have I tried to have an influence in my practice which enables children to understand and be excited by their own learning and which helps them to begin to identify and work on their talents?

I try to give all the children in my class the best teaching that I can and as I wrote earlier I thought that I did listen to them in planning appropriate and stimulating lessons. So I was taken by surprise when a few months ago a boy in my class asked me a question. Felix said:

*... Mrs Formby, When am I going to be able to find out more about the things I want to learn about?*

His question stopped me in my tracks and I thought about what it must feel like to be a six year old child and often have to learn about things that your teacher says you are going to learn, especially when you want to learn about gemstones and lego, as Felix did! That question challenged my use of a predominantly teacher led curriculum and I decided to start a lunchtime club for children like Felix who wanted to find out about topics which interested them. Initially it was an informal club running at lunchtimes once a week when a group of eight or ten children used computers or the library to

research what they wanted to. I chose the children based on a first come first served basis - not ability. They decided to call it "The Friday Club" and I stayed in the background, there if they needed me but not directing their time. They asked for help with Google searches and printed off relevant photos and information.

Through studying for the Masters qualification I have recognized that in using insider participative research (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006):  
*Issues of validity are important because when we engage in reflective processes that focus on ourselves (as in the construction of autobiographical narratives), we cannot be sure of the accuracy of what we see.*  
(Feldman, 2007, P27)

As I consider what could be seen as a weakness of my methodology I recognize the need to strengthen the justification for my research method through validation by others of my approach. I knew that what was happening in The Friday Club was significant and that through it I was beginning to have a different sort of influence on the children's learning. I realized that I could help each of them to perhaps discover a passion for something that they would really like to learn more about. To validate this I asked my colleague and fellow researcher, Marie, to come to talk with the children and me on several occasions at lunchtimes. Suddenly the children became researchers as I listened to them sharing what they had learned, wanted still to learn, talking about what their motivation was for coming to the club and why/how this learning was different from the normal school day in general. They spoke up without shyness and the conversations energized them - by the end of term Friday Club was happening on Mondays as well, the children had produced posters showing what they had learned and all of them took their learning to other classes who were very interested (and impressed) by what had been achieved. I was particularly interested to watch the development in one boy, Lucas, who showed me a wonderfully enthusiastic side to his nature. Full of potential, Lucas was hard on himself in lessons, often becoming unnecessarily downhearted in the face of setbacks. So to watch him smile, hear the excitement in his voice as he shared his learning about spiders was a real joy.



Lucas talking to me about spiders

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NBaJQsiD3s>

How can I continue to develop and improve my practice?

*A curriculum pitched only at the average, in the hope that it can be differentiated 'up' is unambitious and unlikely to serve anyone's interests very well. What able children can do is a good guide to what, in appropriately differentiated forms, should be an entitlement for everyone. (Stannard, J, 2009, p.1)*

I am very excited by this quote because I agree with it 100% with the proviso that *able* is not defined as that top 5 - 10 %. Maybe "fast learners" would be more appropriate. As KS1 leader for three mixed Year 1/2 classes of children this creative and upward looking curriculum will be my challenge and responsibility. Friday Club will continue in my class and even more excitingly each KS1 class will have one timetabled hour each week for "Discovery Time", (Harker, 2009), during which the children can begin their research journeys both into topics which interest them and also into their own learning.

In preparation for the new Primary Curriculum I will be ... *building stronger links between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1* (Rose, 2009) as we plan a more creative, play based curriculum which will connect and use the independent skills that the Year 1 children bring with them from

Foundation Stage whilst challenging the Year 2 children to lead the way as they develop their skills and understanding of their own learning.

I conclude with this:

*The touchstone of an excellent curriculum is that it instils in children a love of learning for its own sake. This means that primary children must not only learn **what** to study, they must also learn **how** to study, and thus become confident, self-disciplined individuals capable of engaging in a lifelong process of learning. (DfCSF, 2009, p.10)*

Through my research I have begun to truly understand that I have a responsibility to share my own talents as gifts and encourage those I work with, adults and children alike, to do the same ... *for the benefit of the whole community* (Appendix 5, p.26)

*It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be?* (Appendix 3)

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Appendix 1



BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Much more opportunity for child directed learning rather than teacher led learning than in past. Thank you.

CONFIDENTIAL

LESSON OBSERVATION

SCHOOL/SETTING	2F	DATE:	22/1/08	ADVISER/CONSULTANT	RDC
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PURPOSE:	Raising girls' achievement focus.	Very unimagative, uninteresting lesson. Thank you.
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CONTEXT	Solving maths puzzles, using systematic approach
Year:	2
Pupils Present:	27
Duration:	1 hour
Learning objective/curricular target:	
Lesson shape and content:	- Can I guess a number? 9.35/9.45 5min (change over)
	- Discussed previous learning main teaching 9.50
	- Plenary 10.20

STRENGTHS	DEVELOPMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* calm, clear start to the lesson</li> <li>* clear guidance on starter (talk partners (girl + boy pairs))</li> <li>* very well organised movement</li> <li>* use of ball / noisy idea number on back. FUN.</li> <li>* PRAISE</li> <li>* Speaking and listening skills</li> <li>* I can statements used in plenary</li> <li>* Clear guidance on disengagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* open ended questions (used by children during discussion)</li> <li>* very noisy environment, (behaviour → activity after starter)</li> <li>Children very excited (Almost 5 min)</li> </ul>

TEACHER COMMENTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Good plenary after starter.</li> <li>* Praised good behaviour</li> <li>* Very clear planning</li> <li>* EAL input (knight) Maths</li> <li>* Use of A4 (char li) - checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* worked out more than needed?</li> <li>* Get all to focus when feeding back</li> </ul>

NEXT STEPS AGREED WITH	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* problem solve</li> <li>* Excellent activities, well supported + differentiated</li> <li>* Very good learning outcome</li> <li>* Good use of adult support</li> <li>* clear plenary</li> </ul>	
What does your summative assessment show compared with <del>summative</del> formative assessment from the lesson?	

## Appendix 2

### Oscar

*I am in the middle of an NFER numeracy test with my class of Year 2 children. We are working under test conditions, children spread out between tables, hard back books forming screens between them. A small group of special needs children is working through the test with an LSA outside the classroom. It is very quiet as I read out each question to the children and they then think about it and write their answers in the test booklet. It is not exactly fun but we are making the best of it!*

*Then out of the blue comes an unexpected moment of creativity. The question asks,*

*"The opposite sides on a dice add up to seven. The first picture shows one side of a dice (picture of one side of dice with 3 spots). The second picture shows the opposite side of a dice. Draw the missing dots on the second picture."*

*Oscar's hand shoots up and I can see he is desperate for my attention. "Yes Oscar?" I say. "All opposite sides on a dice add up to 7 Mrs Formby," he informs me confidently.*

*All sorts of thoughts flash through my mind, such as "I didn't know that and I'm 48, but then I never really bothered to look." And "I'm beginning to glimpse what makes you tick, Oscar, and why you are so good at maths." Later, when Oscar has shown the whole class that opposite sides on a dice do indeed add up to 7, I ask Oscar how he discovered this. "Well" he said solemnly, "Sometimes I make dice out of blu tac with my brother (who is 10) and we put the spots on with the end of a pencil. Then we play with them."*

*I know I have hit on something really crucial here, something that is missing from much of my numeracy teaching - the fun and pleasure to be enjoyed when playing with numbers. The Year 2 curriculum is huge, the pressure is heavy to push children to reach the next SATS level but the sacrifice is perhaps even greater. Isn't it better to know that opposite sides on a dice add up to 7? (Formby, 2006, Reflective Diary)*

### Appendix 3

#### Moving Beyond Fear

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.*  
(Used by Nelson Mandela in his 1994 inaugural speech)

## Appendix 4 - lesson plan of King Arthur maths lesson

Term: Spring 1		Teacher: Mrs Formby	
Subject: Numeracy - <b>Block A, Units 1 and 2</b>	Year Group: 2	No. of pupils: 29	Date: 22/01/08
<p><b>LEARNING CONTEXT:</b> Build on yesterday's learning about solving mathematical puzzles by taking a systematic approach and beginning to organise all possibilities in an ordered list</p> <p><b>LEARNING INTENTIONS</b></p> <p><b>MENTAL STARTER:</b> I can ask relevant questions using mathematical language to guess a hidden number</p> <p><b>MAIN TEACHING:</b> I can solve a mathematical puzzle I can present solutions to puzzles and problems in an organised way I can explain my methods and results</p> <p><b>Additional focus</b> - consider how to raise girl's attainment by trialling and observing how they work in same gender pairs, noting comments, use of video as appropriate</p> <p><b>Introduction</b> - on the carpet then at their tables (10 minutes) "Can I guess my number?" game in <b>same gender pairs</b> with sticky label on their backs. <b>Differentiation</b> - 1,2,3 digit numbers</p> <p><b>Assessment focus</b> - use of words such as <i>odd, even, more than, less than, between, multiple, digit</i>. <b>Mrs Pearce-Circle group, Miss Battson-Triangle group, noting children's comments &amp; any observations re same gender pairs</b></p> <p><b>Main Teaching/Differentiation (15 minutes)</b> Discuss briefly previous learning about how to solve mathematical puzzles and how the children began to see patterns as they recorded in a list in an organised way</p> <p>Look at today's puzzle with King Arthur and his knights of the round table (show 3 initially). Sit in a circle, make it exciting(!) - <b>EAL focus</b> - <b>use props to show Weronika, Krislin, Robert what knights are</b></p> <p>Use questioning and talk partners to draw out their ideas for recording the different ways the 3 knights can sit, then look at electronic whiteboard which will have the beginning of the list already drawn.</p> <p>Look briefly again at the task, written on electronic whiteboard, to make sure all children are clear. <b>AFL</b> - Discuss success criteria - Mathematician's Checklist</p> <p><b>Groupwork/differentiation (20 minutes)</b> All groups work on the puzzle with 3 knights. <b>Differentiation</b> will be partly by outcome, adult support (Mrs Pearce-Circle, Miss Battson-Triangle), use of cubes for Circle/Triangle groups to rehearse their list patterns and discuss them before colouring. <b>Formative assessment</b> suggests that only 4 children in Pentagon, Hexagon, &amp; Rectangle were beginning to organise their recording in a systematic way yesterday, so using the puzzle with 3 knights first enables them to practise this developing skill before moving onto the more challenging 4 knight seating puzzle as <b>extension</b>. <b>All children will work in same gender pairs as previously.</b></p> <p><b>Plenary (10 minutes)</b> "Accessory Investigation" (girl friendly) on electronic whiteboard to practise the "ordered list" strategy in a slightly different context</p> <p><b>FUTURE LEARNING</b> Present and compare problems of different types to demonstrate why one approach is more effective than another</p> <p><b>RESOURCES:</b> clipboards                      labels                      crown, table, knights, shields                      differentiated worksheets video camera                      electronic whiteboard resources</p>			

## Appendix 5

### What do I see in the videos?

#### Tracey

I am learning much from Jack Whitehead about the importance of non verbal communication so first I watched the video of me with my fellow TLR colleague Tracey without sound and looked at our body language. We both seem relaxed, sat facing each other with a generally open posture and I notice that we mirror each other's actions by smiling, sitting up taller or on my part shrinking down a little lower in my seat so that I am about the same height as Tracey, even though I am several inches taller than her when standing up. I think I do this unconsciously because I want Tracey to feel comfortable in this situation, I recognize that she might feel vulnerable and I want to make it okay to feel that way by affirming her physically through my body language. When I watched the video again, this time with sound, I also notice that we affirm each other by agreeing or commenting positively on what the other person has said. We seem keen to maintain the supportive relationship of which we have both spoken during the video. I love the moment right at the start when Bob forgot that we were videoing in his office and walked in (unseen on camera) then remembered we were there and quickly left. Tracey and I both explode into laughter like a pair of school girls. These are the stills of the moments where we are laughing together. I can't imagine life without shared laughter!





I wanted to talk with Tracey because I knew that one of the reasons I had learned so much from the Leadership Pathways course was due to the coaching from Bob which had helped me to identify and plan the improvement and best use of my talents in the school and I was therefore interested in Tracey's story about the coaching process too. Tracey told me that ... *coaching was really very useful* ... and as she explained more about her initial low self confidence as a leader at the beginning of the process, I began to understand how much she too had valued the coaching conversations with Bob as part of her development. She explained:

*... he brought that out in me (talking about strengths)*

*... very cleverly he took me to those places where I didn't expect to go and that worked so well because of the element of trust ...*

This links directly with what I wrote earlier in this assignment about my own research into the importance of building:

*... a loving receptively responsive educational relationship (Formby, 2007, p.5) with the children.*

When I asked Tracey about her own talents and whether the coaching sessions with Bob had helped her to begin to identify these, she was hesitant in using those words, preferring to talk about "*strengths*", saying that she saw gifts as exceptional artistic or musical skills and also that she

recognized the Christian meaning of gifts, as I do. I sensed that Tracey felt uncomfortable acknowledging her many areas of strength as she said:  
*I don't really think that doing your job is being gifted or talented .... I see the fact that I have a very privileged position in the job that I do and in the relationships that I can have with children and adults, certainly working in this school I feel that's very privileged ... so therefore I have gifts but my talents are not particularly strong.*

I know that Tracey actually offers her many talents as gifts to the children - she is loved by them, they make wonderful progress in her class and her talents are recognized by colleagues and parents alike. I think that Tracey is constrained by a sort of embarrassment that she may be seen to be boasting if she acknowledges her talents publicly. Yet I also know that through her work as an educator Tracey helps the children to name and explain their talents and how they are developing them through their learning.

### **Bob**

When I look at the video of Bob and me without sound I seem less relaxed, slightly vulnerable and anxious I think. I notice also that I listen without moving for longer periods.

When I watch the video with the sound I notice that the video is "framed" in a way by what happens at the beginning and end, with laughter from me and teasing from Bob, (explained fully below). I think this somehow enables the deeper and potentially revealing conversation about what really matters to take place in between, secure in this relationship of mutual trust and affection. The video starts with me laughingly apologising for putting to one side the verse *Moving Beyond Fear* (Appendix 3), which Bob had blutacked on the table in front of me. We enjoy a few moments of banter before Bob suddenly seems almost to regret having got *Moving Beyond Fear* out to talk about and he tries to move on but I sense that this is significant to his values about making the most of people's abilities and I ask him to tell me why, earlier in the year he had given all the staff a copy of those words.

Bob replies:

*I am convinced that all of us have capacity beyond our understanding* (1:11 on video) and he then quotes the following words in particular to explain his motivation to help others in the school:

*... And as we let our own light shine  
We unconsciously give other people*

*permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our own fear,  
Our presence automatically liberates others.*

In the video with Tracey, minutes earlier, in response to a comment from her about the benefits of the coaching relationship I had said that:

*Bob believed in me and I didn't necessarily believe in myself (9:54)*

So it was an affirming moment when Bob said in our video conversation:

*I could see in you far more than you could see in yourself and going back to this (as we are liberated from our own fears) you wouldn't allow it to come out because you were frightened, which .... is understandable but doesn't make it right. (6:00)*

I am reminded of the following words:

*Mr Jacobs won our hearts, because he treated us as though we were already what we could only hope to become. Through his eyes we saw ourselves as capable and decent and destined for greatness. He gave direction to our longings and left us with the conviction that our fate can be forged by our hopes and deeds; that our lives need not be shaped by accident; that our happiness does not depend upon happenstance. Mr Jacobs introduced us to ourselves. We learned who we were and what we wanted to be. No longer strangers to ourselves, we felt at home in the world. (Ginott, 1972, p.315)*

After our conversation the "framing" is completed. I get up to switch the camera off and Bob says: *All done then? Can we argue again now?* As with Tracey in the conversation above, Bob and I affirm each other by this shared laughter because as I wrote about my relationship with Tracey, Bob and I also want to maintain the supportive relationship of which we have both spoken during the video. So I laugh and reply: *Yes we can.* As I move to switch off the camera Bob gives a huge sigh, like a sigh of relief that it's over and then he waves, grinning at the camera. I'm really touched by that moment at the end because it speaks to me of Bob's vulnerability and once again I am reminded of Rayner's view of that when he writes:

*There is ... very good intellectual reason for feeling compassionately that what we might deem ... to be a flaw in human nature, our vulnerability ... is actually vital. It ... enables us to love and feel love and so work co-creatively ... celebrating and respecting rather than decrying our diversity of competencies .... (Rayner, 2007, p.9-10).*

I hope the following stills give a glimpse of that framing.



Laughter at the beginning



We get serious.



I relax at the end!



Bob relaxes at the end!

I know that the video is important because Bob talks explicitly about his own values and motivation as a headteacher for sharing his gifts with others. Some of it is a powerful affirmation and explanation of his own and some of my own learning about gifts and talents. Early on in the video I remember feeling quite emotional when listening to Bob speak about *Moving Beyond Fear*.

He said:

*... the reason that it states to me what is so important is it allows us to free ourselves, it stops us being ashamed of showing/sharing our gifts, our love and our strengths. It almost validates showing those and makes us ashamed not too. When you link that with the Christian aspect of the school, the potential in all of us has to be released for the benefit of the whole community. (1:44 - 2:25 on video)*

That speaks to me of an inclusive loving, learning community where talent is fostered and nurtured and gifts are shared. Yet when I wanted to acknowledge the gift Bob had shared with me in spite of what he had said in the above, when I told him how much I valued what he had given me he said:  
*... I feel almost embarrassed when people do the same for me, I find that difficult, (3:24)*

Perhaps it really is easier to give than to receive.