

Managing the retention of good teachers...or not by Sandra Mahaffey

I have been a teacher for over 40 years and can honestly say there is no other job I would rather do. There is nothing more rewarding than having the privilege of sharing knowledge and watching a young person grow and watching their knowledge outgrow mine.

Sadly, today schools in the state sector find it hard to retain good teachers due to the poor management of a lot of our schools and the discipline problems in them. Management teams often have only a few year's experience in the classroom so they gain little respect from their staff. I have always been in the classroom and never wanted a position in management as I knew my talents lay in the interaction with children. However, I received little financial gain for this as more was to be gained by joining the management. We should be giving good salary incentives to keep good teachers in the classroom where they can share their expertise.

I have recently spoken to 3 or 4 graduates who lasted only 2 years in the state sector before leaving. Two went to the private sector and have vowed to give up teaching before going back to the state sector. This must change or the gap between those who have and those who have not will continue to widen dramatically and that never ends with a good outcome for a society anywhere.

As a supply teacher for many years, I blacklisted schools where the management were inadequate as those schools were a nightmare to work in... I have lots of experience of teaching in difficult schools and my behaviour management skills are very good but in the schools I blacklisted I felt I was just "child minding" so saw no point in it. We do not respect the teaching profession enough in U.K. Everybody thinks they can teach.... but sadly they cannot and it is the next generation who suffer for that misconception. Good teachers are born not made. When I worked abroad, I found the respect for the teaching profession was much higher and much better paid. This led to happier schools!! Not rocket science just good old "Common Sense"!!

Good teachers are vital if a society is to move forward. We are the foundation and if we build our society on sand it will end in tears....just like the Biblical parable. I am going to end with a quote from the late Chief Rabbi "Jonathan Sacks", a man whose wisdom I admire:

"Teachers open our eyes to the world. They give us curiosity and confidence. They teach us to ask questions. They connect us to our past and future. They are the guardians of our social heritage. We have lots of heroes today....sportsmen, supermodels ,media personalities. They come, they have their fifteen minutes of fame, and they go. BUT the influence of good teachers stays with us. They are the people who really shape our life." This should be read out at graduation to all those entering the profession.

Have you got a rant? Then send us yours to Robert Young, General Secretary

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