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talk2learn highlights

Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

Issue 2b

In case you missed it...

Recent highlights from NCSL in Dialogue, talk2learn's
online community for national education debate

Also available as a podcast

What does learning look like in my school?

**"It is a bizarre phenomenon that what is, by
common consent, the central purpose of education
is so elusive and difficult to define"**

...a sentiment shared by many school leaders taking part in this debate, who welcomed the opportunity to think and reflect on the nature of learning: what it looks like and how they can be sure it is taking place in their own schools.

A common theme was the need for effective lesson observations, both formal and informal. There was much agreement with one head's view that it is important to observe how well children are learning as opposed to how hard they are working: "I have had many upset teachers when I've told them a lesson is unsatisfactory due to a lack of learning. The usual response I get back is 'but they were all working!' I have introduced staff meetings looking at learning. We are looking at what kinaesthetic learners, auditory learners and visual learners are and have discussed strategies to aid these learners. I find the whole debate very interesting and key to my children's success."

One head of a fresh start school described how they handled the issue:

***"Every lesson has clear learning objectives
which are shared verbally and written down
for children... the success criteria are also
shared and displayed so they know what
is expected of them"***

Whilst there was some support for this approach, other school leaders did not agree. "Sometimes we need to let them lead us to where they want to go", one commented. "I love it when there is spontaneity in the classroom; when excitement takes over and teaching and learning goes in a different direction... children learn a



great deal in these situations and one of the most important lessons is surely the clear message about the joy of learning."

Sue Attard, Head of Lark Rise Lower School in Bedfordshire said: "All we need to do is to offer young people the vocabulary to talk about their learning and they will help us to unlock the issues for them. Sounds simple but it can be very difficult when pressures from a top-down system insist on us tweeking percentages rather than working with individual human beings." Another head described his approach to empowering pupils: "I have introduced a Learning to Learn policy and spend time showing pupils how their brain works and how they can help to make it work better".

**If you are not yet a member of talk2learn and would like to join, more information is available
at www.ncsl.org.uk/onlinecommunities**