

Festival of Education

20th June 2014

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What a brilliant occasion! This was my first visit to the festival of education at Wellington and will hopefully be the first of many. I have visited Wellington College often on rugby fixtures and I am always impressed by the fantastic buildings and surroundings. It is the perfect environment to run such a festival.

The first workshop I attended was in the "Spiritual Room". Chris Waugh was the presenter and he spoke with incredible passion about increasingly giving students ownership of their learning. I was quite inspired by the amount of responsibility he allows his students to take. It seemed like a very novel approach, ideas included allowing students to pick their teacher, teachers "pitching" their trade to the students, students posting much of their work on a blog. There are lots of potential barriers to his ideas and I can already imagine staff being concerned about posting work on social media, but I think they will be more concerned about no students picking them as a teacher! Lots of good thought provoking ideas.

The second seminar I went to was Tom Sherrington (Headguru teacher). I always enjoy reading Tom's blogs, they are always very interesting and have provided me with many ideas for my own teaching and learning group. Tom was as ever talking about teaching pedagogy. The session was very insightful and reminded me I need to go back and read through his 10 great lessons again. They are an excellent read.

After a nice break for an ice cream and cup of tea with my colleague David Gallagher we attended Guy Claxton's talk about learning habits. I have heard Guy talk before but I felt this session was better than previous. This might just be because we are looking to launch our own culture of learning at the moment so I had a vested interest. I loved his analogy of school's containing three types of people- fairies, trolls and hobbits. He talked about fairies being romantics who are very laissez faire. Trolls are the people who spoil the party, they are against change they enjoy challenging things but do not provide solutions. They think children are running wild due to the fairies! Finally, hobbits, these are the people that school needs. They work hard for the common good of the school. They are adventurous but still cautious and certainly determined. The pleasing thing is that most people working in our school are hobbits. I think that if we didn't have the variety of people working in schools it would be a dull place and too easy!! We are working with a lot of Guy's ideas at the moment. You can read more on this on our Ethos of Learning page.

I then attended a talk on exam reform. It was an interesting seminar but much of the information I was already aware of. However, the most pleasing aspect was that I happened to sit next to my old Geography teacher from when I was at school, David Hymer, who is currently Deputy Headteacher at West Buckland School. David is definitely the reason I became a Geography teacher. He is a real inspiration and it was wonderful to see him after about 15 years. I actually emailed him about 5 years previously to thank him for his inspiration.

Lunch was a delicious pork roll in the sunshine, I had the chance to catch up with a family friend who now teaches and thoroughly enjoys her time at Wellington. Lunch got extended and I had the chance to catch up with Andy Wright (John Hampden GS) and Dan Edwards (ex-JHGS and now Stephen Perse School). It's always great to hear the views from other local teachers, so we can compare notes and hopefully the odd good idea.

The final workshop I attended was a panel discussing what the future of education may well look like. It was very interesting to hear the experts view. Graham Brown-Martin had been travelling the world looking at different approaches to education and hearing him speak certainly made me realise how fortunate we are to have such a good and free education system but part of it made me think should I not be teaching in one of these totally deprived schools. Food for thought indeed. I also had the chance at the end of the session to have 5 minutes with Tricia Kelleher, the Headteacher at The Stephen Perse School. She was lovely to chat to as we reflected on the previous discussion.

In summary, would I say I came away with loads of new ideas that I want to try? Probably not, but I did not stay for the Gove talk! However, I did really value the opportunity to have a bit of time to think about education and all the different facets of it. I really hope to attend again next year and I will certainly try to encourage far more of our staff to attend.