



Learning to Lead, Leading to Learn

Editorial by Róisín McCreesh

Martin Luther King, when addressing the need for structural change in the US education system in the US, stressed the need for a very specific leadership: “courageous, intelligent, and dedicated leadership...leaders who somehow understand the issues. Leaders of sound integrity. Leaders not in love with publicity, but in love with justice. Leaders not in love with money, but in love with humanity. Leaders who can subject their particular egos to the greatness of the cause. A time like this demands great souls with pure hearts and ready hands.”

Luckily, such leaders exist in classrooms up and down the country. In the DE strategy, Learning Leaders, teachers are encouraged to seize their right to be regarded as leaders, understanding that the influence of teachers stretches to encompass the society, environment and economy of the future. The influence of a teacher is a genuinely unmeasurable quantity. However, this idealistic view of teaching can be dulled by exposure to the reality of school life.

“I was drawn to education because the constant cycle of accountability without power was so appealing,” said no teacher ever. Teaching for a few years can bring out the cynic in us all – we know what needs to happen, but the system won’t allow us, we are only small cogs, and it feels like every new effort is blighted with more agendas than the town hall. The agenda for this website is simple and transparent: to give teachers voice, to enable them to take their place as the leaders of education, leading from the front (of the classroom), putting learning at the heart of our profession. Our purpose here is to refocus education on...well... education.

There is some debate as to the etymology of the word ‘education’. One root for the word is the Latin *educare*, meaning ‘to train or mould’. Another argument can be made that it is derived from *educere*, meaning ‘to draw out’. Both are relevant to the theory of education, but if we have a system that is too closely aligned to ‘training’, it risks missing that which is within our pupils, that which makes them individual, and that which only they can contribute to the society, environment and economy that unites us all.

While we are known as the teaching profession, it may be more accurate to call us the learning profession. Learning is our business. Learning is our *modus operandi*. In prioritising learning, for both our pupils and ourselves, we can truly be successful in this most noble of professions. Every day that teachers go to work, they have the potential to make a real difference, but only if they do not allow themselves to be burnt out by the corporatisation of education. In short, we need to keep our eye on the doughnut, not on the hole.

With the newfound inspiration of the *Learning Leaders* strategy, we are, perhaps, marking the start of a new age in our own profession? In this inaugural editorial of *WeLearn*, then, it feels pertinent to recall the words of Nelson Mandela in a speech marking a new era in his society:

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 most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?'

Actually, who are you not to be? It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. 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.

We are not inadequate. We are up to the task. This website, by and for the teachers of Northern Ireland, be they in nursery, primary, post-primary, special or alternative settings, will liberate us all to work together in a spirit of cooperation and trust, in a better way, for the sake of all our children.

WeLearn will certainly not be perfect in any way; it will only improve with the power of your input and guidance. The current plan is for this site to be in place for the next two years, when it will be taken down -- unless demand requires it to continue.

So please get in touch with stories, analyses and research that will empower others. We want to hear and share accounts of heroism and leadership from the front; we want to reconnect to the optimism that has to characterise the teaching profession, the belief that we can change the world. As Steve Jobs said, 'the people who are crazy enough to believe they can change the world are the people who do.'

You can read the DE strategy, Learning Leaders [here](#). Note that there is a ten year timescale for implementation. We can do this!

To submit an article, please [email us](mailto:info@WeLearnNI.com) at info@WeLearnNI.com

Get involved on twitter: @WeLearnNI

How would you like this publication to develop?

It belongs to you, the teachers of Northern Ireland.

Feedback now: #learningprofession

