



Autumn 2013 Enewsletter

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It has been a manic but exciting Autumn at CUREE and, as far as we can see, in the schools and colleges we have been working with too. We have particularly enjoyed exciting days facilitating shared planning for the new curriculum, and preparing for R&D rooted in video observation, across dynamic primary Teaching School Alliances.

What has struck me forcibly is how profoundly the balance has shifted towards asking schools to lead and take responsibility for big changes such as the 780 school strong CTG Test and learn programme - and how well many Teaching Schools are rising to the challenges despite the unfamiliar disciplines of establishing control groups and truly exacting timelines. The response has been awe-inspiring. My sense is that, for the most part, the glue holding all of this together is the depth of everyone's commitment to closing the gap for vulnerable pupils and the sense that, although there are lots of good things going on in schools, financial austerity is concentrating minds on working out which ones are most likely to work most efficiently and at scale.

Talking about big changes, the steady stream of curriculum and assessment announcements is affecting colleges, schools, teachers and everyone who supports or represents them profoundly. Some of the proposals arrive unannounced, others arrive with short consultation phases and social networks around

with people wondering why there is so little debate or objection.

Perhaps for the colleges, funding changes and the pace of change in employment needs and practices dwarf government driven reforms. Perhaps schools feel that changes that concern [about](#) them can be counterbalanced by the school curriculum and effective pedagogy- it is more important to keep focused on improving the quality of the teaching and learning process.

In any case, there are pluses and minuses to most changes. All these positions have a lot to recommend them. They help us feel we can still make a difference in the face of a barrage of hasty and often ill-evidenced interventions. But I think, ASCL's launch of the [Great Debate](#) is an important reminder that together we can all make more difference than we can if we work alone and that silence is usually read as consent.

Philippa Cordingley - Chief Executive

Spring Term CPD Programme

We know that more and more schools and colleges look for bespoke CPD programmes, recognising the importance of contextualising professional learning. We offer a wide range of evidence-based CPD workshops which we are happy to deliver in your school or college. However we understand that sometimes it is more convenient for one or two colleagues to attend an external course, so we run these too. Our workshops are carefully designed to equip you and your colleagues with the knowledge, skills and resources needed to develop and embed your learning back in school or college. Why not [click here](#) to look at our Spring term menu?

NEW!

Facilitation of Research-based CPD and Professional Learning

This workshop will:

- explore key elements of effective and efficient CPD offered to and enabled by schools;
- identify specific research-informed facilitation strategies and skills;
- help you identify your current strengths and evidence-based next steps in development;
- explore tools and resources to scaffold participants' professional learning and



- evaluate the impact of your training programmes; and
- provide an opportunity to network.

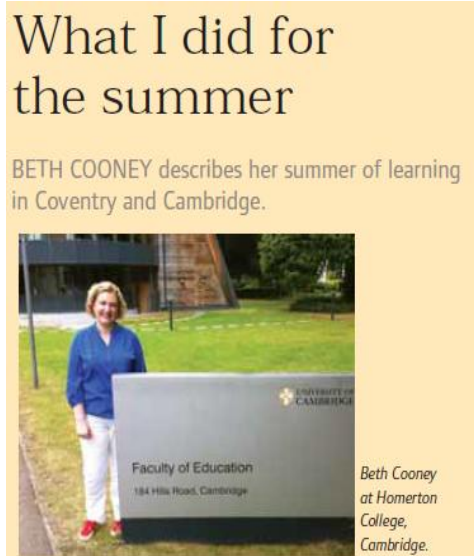
This workshop is designed for:

- Senior Leaders with responsibility for leading CPD and professional learning in their own and other schools and colleges; and
- independent and LA based CPD facilitators and trainers.

Optimus conference

Don't forget that Philippa Cordingley and Lisa Bradbury will be providing input at the Optimus conference *Evidence High-Impact In-House CPD* in London on 12th November in Central London. Click [here](#) for more information. Philippa will be in the chair, and we will be offering two of our most popular workshops, 'Evaluating the Impact of CPD' and 'Making the most of Coaching and Mentoring' as well as running a stand. Why not come along and meet us? We will be offering surgery slots if you have a particular CPD issue you would like to explore. Contact sian.bravington@curee.co.uk for more details.

Beth Cooney's summer of learning with CUREE



We were pleased to have Beth Cooney, a teacher from Cork who, as part of her PhD, came to work shadow Philippa to learn more about teachers' experience of research-informed professional learning, and explore CUREE's work in this area. Here are some of her thoughts from the visit:

"What did I learn from all this? Well, there are benefits in reconceptualising the teacher as learner and, in doing so, ensuring that the school environment is a learning one for both teachers and students. Continuing professional development (CPD), transmitted by an expert outsider (and perhaps unsustainable) gives way to learning that is context specific and enables those who engage in it. Philippa Cordingley challenges us to make our "professional learning visible at structural, operational and practical levels". Learning

the skills of evidence-based research and sustained collaboration, with specialist scaffolding and positive leadership, can create a dynamic learning environment where we practise what we preach."

This is an extract from her article in the *Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland* journal. You can read the full article on page 15 here: http://www.asti.ie/uploads/media/Final_proof_for_web.pdf

Closing the Gap: Test and Learn

The Closing the Gap project continues to move forward at its usual blistering pace. In the past two months the project has had its official launch, bringing the R&D leads from the Teaching Schools taking part together at four different venues around the country to give them a helicopter view of the project's goals, the approximate aims, and the beginnings of an understanding of how it's all going to come together.



The launch events were a great success: we had plenty of questions, but once people got a chance to get to grips with what the project is trying to do we got plenty of positive reactions as well, with R&D leads demonstrating enthusiasm for such a large and concerted effort to target vulnerable learners. We

are very excited to be involved in a research project of this scope and with this focus, and with people who shared that enthusiasm.

The next stage after the launch events was the first round of training for Teaching School representatives in randomised controlled trials. This training was run by members of the Faculty of Education at Oxford University, who were in turn trained by CUREE in the design of the programme. Our goal with this training was to try and develop an understanding of the core principles of RCTs for those taking part, as well as securing buy-in to the core aims of the programme, and of course making sure the training was at least moderately enjoyable!

Exceptional Schools Evaluation

We have been fascinated by a project we completed recently where we had chance to compare the work of 8 quite exceptional schools serving very deprived communities with 6 strong schools serving similar communities. We were doing this for an organisation seeking to fine tune their own approach to

supporting and working with such schools so the report is not in the public domain. Publishing would require some adaptation because the research had a very specific development purpose. However, I think you will be as fascinated as we were to learn that there were actually some very clear differences between the two groups of schools. In a nutshell, very exceptional schools:

- invested more heavily in mentoring and cross-school training;
- had a stronger focus on formal coaching and ensuring coaches are properly trained;
- had a more direct focus on explicit pedagogical strategies linked to student achievement;
- focused systematically on collaborative learning, whilst approaches to collaboration were inconsistent in the strong schools;
- made more use of Advanced Skills Teachers and of carefully identified, internal expertise;
- gave a higher priority to specialist subject knowledge; and
- were more consistent in emphasising how teachers need to take responsibility for their own professional development.

There were a variety of other distinctions, including approaches of exceptional schools to Leadership, teaching and learning and their approach to working with their community. Please e-mail Philippa if you would like to find out more.

Making your research visible

Do you have a practitioner friendly research archive you would like to make more accessible? CUREE has worked with both the Institute for Learning and for LSIS to make academic and teacher research accessible and easily searchable by creating summaries, identifying links and organising them in interactive route maps. Here is a partial screen shot of our latest version, which we submitted as evidence to CAVTL.

If you are interested in bringing your research together in a graphical representation which will help you visualise your key areas/direction, please contact Suzanne at suzanne.wood@curee.co.uk

CUREE in Abu Dhabi

One of the more exciting things to happen to CUREE recently was the opportunity extended to Philippa to give a keynote speech at the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) annual education conference in Abu Dhabi. In total about 900 delegates were in attendance, including a broad mix of representatives from schools and colleges, but also employers and members of the public with an interest in the present and future of education in the United Arab Emirates.

Philippa's experience was a powerful and eye-opening one, providing much to learn from as well as an opportunity to feel proud of what we do well. One thing that stuck out in particular was the highly

specified nature of the curriculum in use in state-operated schools and the effect of rote learning in state funded schools (in English no less). But despite the many obstacles presented by this, there is a powerful commitment to innovation and change in the curriculum, which Philippa found deeply inspiring.



Best of all was the opening motif for the conference, a speech by Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development for Abu Dhabi, who spoke eloquently about learners as “sons and daughters of our nations”. Shaikh Nahyan said that to be a teacher means to be a learner, something underpinned by the evidence but insufficiently frequently recognized! But what was really

striking was his personal and passionate belief.

You can view a view of her presentation by [clicking here](#)

Out and About

CUREE have been very busy this term, travelling all around England and Wales. Fourteen schools and colleges have participated in CPD mainly focusing on mentoring and coaching, and enquiry based practice. Work with Teaching School Alliances has also increased - our highly valued workshop “Sauce for the Goose” has been helping different Alliances to build more effective learning communities and to prepare for the new curriculum.

See some of their quotes:

“I am looking forward to use the resources made available when mentoring and to look at research evidence available to guide advice” Delegate from Neath Port Talbot who took part in their LA’s coaching programme.

“Once again thank you for the training on Friday, we all took away a lot away from this in our quest to drive improvements in teaching and learning!” Ann Murray, Assistant Director of Quality from South and City College Birmingham

CUREE also presented 6 papers at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference. You can click [here](#) to see the presentations. Philippa was also involved in the 'BERA/RSA Research and Teacher Inquiry' which will be published on the BERA website shortly. After BERA we stopped off in London for the Research ED conference where Philippa presented 'Understanding, using and developing evidence about what works where: strategies that work for both pupils and teachers', to view the presentation click

[here](#).

Lastly we had the chance to run a Symposium with Professor Viviane Robinson in September exploring her latest intervention focused on challenging conversations. We'll have a lot more to say about this in future news

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