

# Vision

The E-Newsletter of Vision for Learning Ltd

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Welcome to the second edition of Vision and as the first early signs of spring emerge it's good to consider your goals for the year. What do you want from 2007 and what new skills and knowledge do you need to achieve your goals? Excited feedback from our recent "Introduction to NLP" programme in Malvern shows that the New Year's learning has begun. One goal I set in 2006 for 2007 was to finally do the London Marathon, I run on 22nd April for MIND, the mental health charity. There's a good deal of excitement tinged with trepidation, but I am going for it big time! What are *you* searching for this year? How are you making 2007 your best year yet?

In this edition you will find:

- A feature article on **happiness**
- Two regular columns from teachers who are coaching in their schools " **A day in the life of a coaching teacher**"
- Information on **professional development opportunities** of interest to you



## *Coaching Skills: Foundations for Change*

*"The best thing about the course was the practical skills and the opportunity to work with a trained coach who is passionate about coaching" YF, London*

With Will Thomas

2nd March 2007

*The definitive 1 day introduction to coaching for anyone new to the concept*

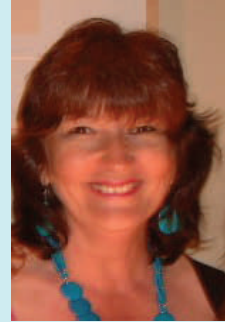
Learn what coaching is, why it is an essential tool in motivating others, how to do it and what you can expect. The day qualifies you to move to the advanced training.

For info: [info@visionforlearning.co.uk](mailto:info@visionforlearning.co.uk)

**Places limited** GET COLLEAGUES ON YOUR WAVELENGTH  
**BOOK NOW!!**

*"This is probably the best CPD I have ever received" JD, Birmingham*

## **A day in the life of a Coaching Secondary School Teacher**



### **Beginnings ...or here we go again!**

You find me in the clutches of the school production. This year our offering is to be 'West Side Story'. Spurred on by our success last year with 'Romeo and Juliet' and my developing coaching skills, I naively thought Bernstein would be easier than the Bard.

The school production is the perfect model for coaching. You start with the end in mind .So for us that's the upsurge of emotion we all get at the end of the production when, by the usual miracle, it is all right on the night. The students are immensely proud of themselves as are the audience of parents, grandparents, friends and family. During the rehearsal period, you challenge all the limiting beliefs: 'I'll never be able to reach that note'; reframe them and help them to the positive: 'With all that extra rehearsal at lunchtime, you'll easily be able to reach the notes.' Problems are described and we find creative solutions together. The young people arrive at an end point but they have ownership of the process and the positive outcome. Win: win for everyone. The highlight this year has been the return of several of last year's cast to help as part of their community service at their new sixth form. We must be doing something right to have nurtured such loyalty and thoughtfulness.

Implicit and explicit within the production are the problem-solving approaches of the coaching model, building on their strengths, knowing where we are going, dealing with the challenges, coming up with the creative  
**Coaching Secondary School Teacher continued overleaf...**

## ***An introduction to NLP*** ***Further dates***

*"Excellent two days, interesting, proactive and very enjoyable"* SW,  
Herts

**With Will Thomas**

**21st and 22nd September 2007**

*A course specifically designed for education professionals to give you the best in NLP change strategies, without having to attend a one month NLP course!*

NLP is a cutting edge communication and change approach ideal for classrooms, leadership and one-to-one coaching situations

For info: [info@visionforlearning.co.uk](mailto:info@visionforlearning.co.uk)

**Places limited    BOOK NOW!!**

**"Empowering, unlocking creativity and moving my self -awareness forward..so experiential" Lesley Smith W. Sussex, Feb 07**

### Coaching Secondary School Teacher continued..

ideas and taking action to achieve the target....

Here are five great tips for getting through a production with a coaching approach:

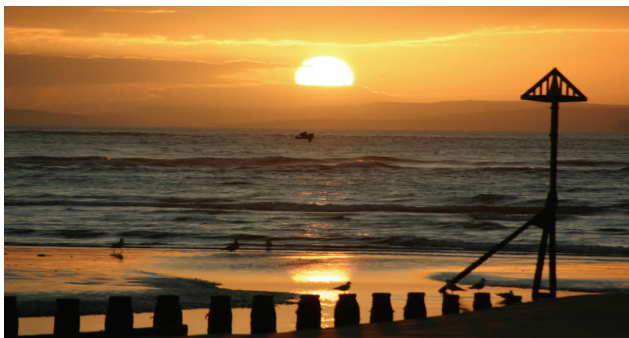
- Where there is doubt in a student that they can learn their lines, pace them with “yes that’s right, up until now, you’ve not been able to learn your lines, so going forward, how will you make certain you know them all?”
- Get them really excited about what it’s like to be successfully performing their role on the opening night— have them rehearse this in their head from the very beginning of rehearsing
- Turn disasters and mistakes into learning opportunities by asking: what’s the positive learning from this?
- If you have any doubts, catch your own pessimism and challenge it: who says we can’t pull this off?!
- For stage frightened youngsters, find out whether they see themselves on stage in their head or whether they are seeing the audience through their own eyes. Get them to change to the opposite ie from seeing the audience to seeing themselves on stage, and ask them how much better they feel when they have change this in their head.

Of course staging a play is just like preparing for exams, so the metaphor and the tips work just the same for your students in the run up to major exams.

Hoping this has been useful, and in the interests of my mental health, after long hard rehearsals, I’m off for a long soak in a hot tub and the only decision I want to make is which delicious bubble bath to choose!

Jean Ramsey, Feb’ 07

**Jean Ramsey** is a successful Head of Creative Arts, Coach and Mum in Oxfordshire.



New Dawn, © S Thomas 2005

### Upcoming Courses: Advanced Coach Training

8th and 9th June 2007

Take your coaching skills to advanced levels with this experiential programme with Will Thomas

- Learn the secrets of building great rapport
- Learn how to use precisely the right question at precisely the right time to motivate and energise others
- Understand how people create problem states of mind and how to unlock them conversationally
- Pick up the best tips, tools and strategies for dealing with challenging people

*“Truly moving and awesome. This has been the most reflective piece of training I have ever done” Richard Woodfin, Headteacher, London*

Booking now for June— limited places

### Personal Retreat 3rd and 4th November 2007

*Find out what you really want!*

Personal development retreats are weekends away from it all.

A real investment in your future:

- Focus on your purpose
- Reconnect to what’s important to you
- Work through confusions about your life, your work and your future
- Energise, and recharge yourself

For info: [info@visionforlearning.co.uk](mailto:info@visionforlearning.co.uk)

# A Day in the Life of a Primary Coaching Teacher...

**June Whittle**, 'Leading Teacher' and literacy consultant in Surrey, talks about her approaches to coaching with young children and colleagues in the second of her four articles on coaching in school.



## A day in the life of a primary school coach - 2

A school colleague recently came to me for some advice on applying for another job. After showing me the advertisement he explained that although he felt excited, he was completely stumped by the request for his 'vision' for the school and his 'role-to-be' in the school. It seemed so simple to launch in and offer all my own ideas. (Its even hard to stop myself launching into them again now! ... BECAUSE THEY ARE MY IDEAS AND I REALLY AM EXCITED ABOUT THEM!!)

Instead, with complete belief, on my part, that he did have a vision that merely needed igniting, we went through some questions to elicit ideas and options. However, my colleague remained stuck. I asked if he would like me to suggest an overnight coaching tool to assist in his thinking. He accepted and went home that evening feeling as though he was on 'Mission Impossible!' These were the steps he agreed to take:

- To create a resourceful state of mind (in whatever way he preferred eg. through movement/ listening to a favourite, upbeat piece of music).
- To go on a 'negativity fast'. To ban any negative thoughts regarding this application and replace them with positive thoughts 'as if' all was naturally and easily falling into place. No more 'I can't ...' / 'I don't ...' / 'I haven't ...' thoughts.
- To ask questions of himself and to leave them hanging. Eg. What is my vision for the school? What motivates me and how do I see my role in that school developing?

To create a colourful mind map of things to include in his application (even if no vision comes along!). Then to put it away and think about something else.

The next morning I received an elated text to say that it had worked! He'd gone to bed - still devoid of ideas and allowing only positive thoughts and calm questions. On waking there was still no change! Then,

driving to work, he played some music and suddenly the ideas started to come! He described it as a real 'WOW' moment.

In my experience, coaching is a way of supporting someone to be the best that they can be – it's a form of 'championing' another person. I feel the coaching process goes hand-in-hand with teaching. It can be explicit or it can have impact **through developing self-esteem, independence and positive thinking in children and adults.**

In a coaching session or conversation in school, I have found that it is paramount that we 'believe' in that person. This means remaining non-judgmental and maintaining the firm belief that this person will have their own unique solution to their own particular issue.

With children, as with adults it is so very tempting to jump straight in with ... **THE** answer. However, that would be our answer, not theirs. Because it's our answer and matches the way we think, it won't have the same relevance for them. It may appear to help and may even stimulate action, but will it be effective and **sustained** action? Without sustained, committed action towards a goal, change is unlikely to happen.

Children's approaches and solutions can be very direct and 'black and white'. Often we need to unpack their thought processes through gentle, challenging questioning. Coaching techniques and tools can help to open thinking and to see situations from a broader perspective.

My school has a Year 2 coaching club in which I am trying to develop an awareness of strengths and how to generate optimistic thoughts.

**Continued overleaf...**

### A day in the life of a primary school coach..continued

A useful tool comes from Will Thomas' excellent 'Coaching Solutions Resource Book' (Network Educational Press). It's called 'Posi-flip'. Through the activity, children develop a greater sense of balance regarding their perceived and identified strengths and weaknesses. It's a 'flip the coin' activity. Instead of heads and tails the coin sides are labeled 'advantages' and 'disadvantages'.

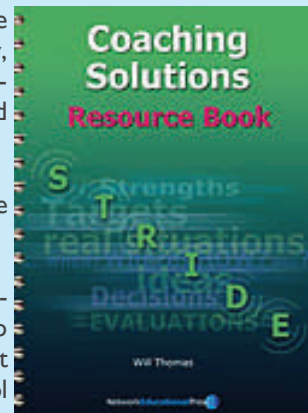
Over a number of sessions children listed their strengths and weaknesses. We then looked at how each attribute could be an advantage or a disadvantage.

This has yielded some insightful thinking which has grown with each contribution. Many of the children listed 'being helpful' as a strength. We easily came up with circumstances where this would be an advantage. We also found that it could be a disadvantage – eg. if we always helped other people with their school work instead of doing our own! Another example was how being talkative might be an advantage in social situations but not when we are meant to be listening in class.

I have noticed a shift in perceptions and an opening up to new ideas as a direct result of some of the conversations we've had, with children and with adults.

Coaching is a powerful learning tool which effects changes on many different levels. As coaches we can recognise and develop strengths in ourselves and others, identify what we really want, explore options creatively, build confidence, find solutions and seek to maintain a positive and resourceful mindset in ourselves and those around us.

June Whittle 29.1.07



## FEATURE ARTICLE

### Managing Workload

#### Happiness and Attitude

Have we got it so wrong? What a shocking report in last week's newspapers about the UNICEF Child Well-being Survey conducted in 21 industrialised countries. The United Kingdom and USA came out bottom and penultimate, respectively, in an extensive study of child well-being. The study looked at 40 separate indicators of well-being from relative poverty and child safety to educational achievement, relationships and substance misuse. There is little disagreement that the factors affecting the outcome of the survey are complex and entangled, yet there are some common threads which experts see running through the outcomes. One of the main factors is "Relative Poverty". The sense of being able to compare oneself to others more fortunate than ourselves seems to be a factor in generating dissatisfaction. In Britain and The US, wider gaps between the "haves" and the "have not's" seems to be driving this. The jury is considering its verdict on the complex issues underlying the findings of the report, but it seemed a fitting opening to this article on happiness and attitude in our managing workload series.

Picture: "Where now?" © Sal Thomas 2005

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In this article we seek to explore what makes us happy and how we can have more happiness, more of the time.

A fundamental principle of the work we do at Vision for Learning is that rapport is essential for achievement and progression. This rapport can be both between people who are working to the common goals of learning and also within ourselves in relation to what we are striving for, and what we really want. Some might argue that internal rapport is also about a relationship of openness and dialogue between that which is conscious and that which is unconscious, in our own minds. There are numerous definitions of happiness to draw on, and these range from the emotional to the analytical. Here are a couple to consider:

**From the field of coaching:**

Happiness is living in line with your values and developing resolution in those areas where there is conflict

Happiness is the absence of internal conflict

**So what does it mean to be happy?**

## ACTIVITY

You might like to try this activity.

Consider a time when you have been happy, it may be now, a past moment, an experience or a period. Dependent upon your current state of mind you may need to block out contradictory self talk like "I can't remember a time" and stay with the process of looking.

As you recall that event, moment, period, what were the features of it that caused you to choose to be happy?

Now relate these findings to the definitions of happiness above, which definitions fit your experience? What additional ways of defining happiness come to mind?

Tal Ben-Shahar, a positive psychologist from Harvard University suggests that happiness comes from: "not moving from one immediate gratification to the next, but **purposeful, meaningful and fulfilling** experience in life which feeds the emotional, the spiritual and the intellectual". He goes on to suggest that "Happiness is mostly contingent in our state of mind brought about by our sense of purpose and direction".

It leads us to consider to what extent we are currently finding purpose, meaning and fulfilment in what we do. Thought-provoking stuff and most useful in bringing us to tweak our lives in order that we find our true direction.

Here are a series of ideas that could help you to **further enhance your sense of happiness:**

- Get clear about your purpose and direction, consider getting a coach or buddy to explore this further
- Do something each day that moves you forward with your purpose
- Divide your free time between social activity and quiet time for yourself
- Get the amount of sleep you need
- Raise your pulse and breathing rate three times a week with some vigorous exercise



- Give to and allow yourself to receive kindness from others
- Laugh as often as you can
- Be curious and seek opportunities to learn
- Take time to resolve conflict as soon as possible
- Be clear about your needs
- Do something regularly that brings a sense of the spiritual into your life eg notice something awe inspiring in nature, watch your children flourish, draw on religion, make time for creativity

Like work-life balance, happiness may be something that needs to be worked at. There is a personal benefit to being happy more of the time. But what about influencing the happiness of others? How possible is that?

The emphasis of the coaching process that Vision for Learning believes in, is one of taking control and taking action in areas where one can have an influence. Maybe political will is hard to influence directly, yet there are some simple ways you might be able to bring more happiness to those around you.

**Consider:**

- Smiling more - you get back what you give out
- Give more to charities which seek to even-out inequality or take direct action through giving
- Gently challenging children and adults who make unfavourable comparisons with others more (eg, what's the purpose of wishing you had that toy? How does wishing for it make you happy?)
- Modelling "out loud" in classrooms, trainings and meetings, with adults and youngsters, how you resolve conflicts positively in your mind
- Consider a "six steps to contentment" charter like Wellington College\* (See below)
- Encourage others to keep success journals for their own personal review
- Provide frameworks for problem-solving in classrooms, training rooms, meetings etc.

eg **Step one:** what has been going well? **Step two:** What has been challenging? **Step 3:** What are opportunities in each of the challenges?

- Creating time for play – whatever the age of those around you.

\*Wellington College in Berkshire has taken significant steps to promote happiness and well-being amongst its students. The headteacher, Anthony Seldon has put happiness on the curriculum. Students are taught the six steps to contentment:

1. Join social activities
2. Get eight hours sleep a night
3. Exercise vigorously
4. Ask for and offer help
5. Laugh, sing, spend time in the natural world
6. Learn from the lives of other people

Ghandi once said (it's probably been paraphrased slightly by now!) "Be the change you want to see in the world". **So when is now a good time to continue doing that?**

*In the next newsletter we explore Great Habits which when adopted create big gains in managing work-load. You might like some help with the process of developing your life purpose, defining your values or identifying ways to be more in line with your values and resolve conflict. Our Weekend Retreat programmes provide a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere for some quality self-review and life-planning. Email us for more details of this and personal coaching: [info@visionforlearning.co.uk](mailto:info@visionforlearning.co.uk) .*

**Next issue: May 2007**

*Including:*

***More insights, tips and tools from our resident coaching teachers***  
***Work-life balance and Great Habits for Organisation***  
***Online shopping for resources***  
***More CPD opportunities***

# Could you sponsor Will Thomas to run the Flora London Marathon 2007 for MIND?



Will, still smiling after the Acorn Children's Hospice  
Half Marathon Fundraiser in 2006

He's been training hard for the toughest physical challenge he has undertaken to date!

**In aid of MIND, the mental health charity....**

*1 in 4 people will suffer mental illness in their life time*

If you can sponsor him go to:

[www.justgiving.com/willthomasformind](http://www.justgiving.com/willthomasformind) and you can make a pledge, or send a cheque made payable to MIND, writing Will Thomas, 2007 London Marathon on the reverse and post it to:

121 Old Hollow, West Malvern, WR14 4NW

**THANK YOU**