

designing the future

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Member of the D&T Association

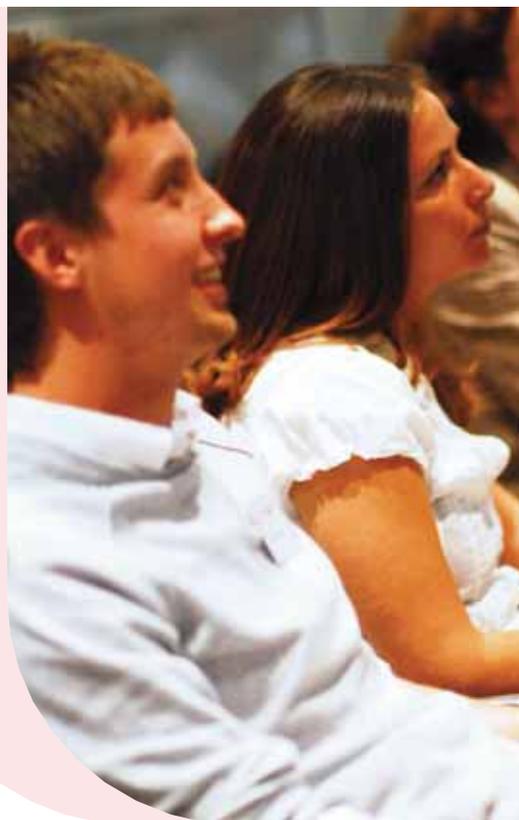
Audi Design Foundation New Talent Group

I was intrigued when I received a letter in the post from the Design and Technology Association back at the start of 2007 urging me to apply to be part of the Audi sponsored 'New Talent Group' (NTG). I later realised that my PGCE tutor Dean Hackett, who works at Brighton University, had put my name forward for the group.

make a difference to the future of the subject

I applied to be part of the group because the future of 'design and technology' is extremely important to me and I would like to have an impact, however small, upon the way in which the subject is taught.

When I met the group members for the first time at the Audi Forum in London I was excited by the dynamic of the group and relieved to find that everyone was as open minded and passionate as I am about design and technology. The group is made up of ten creative people, all relatively new teachers, all with ambition and determination.



To give you a bit of background information about myself, I am a joint Subject Leader at Littlehampton Community School (LCS) in West Sussex and my subject specialism is product design.

I strongly believe that it is imperative for teachers to do their own work so that their teaching can be informed by the skills that they use in the real world and so that their own creative needs can be satisfied. How can we really expect to inspire young people without undertaking the processes that they go through ourselves? Perhaps controversially I believe that without continued personal development that we are not truly able to teach; instead we merely offer an overview of the subject without a true understanding of the reality or the application of the subject in the real world.

Becoming a member of the New Talent Group has made me feel that I am contributing my ideas to something tangible, that could make a difference to the future of the subject. One of the perks of being part of the group has been the countless number of subject experts that we have been introduced to. We have also been put in touch with personal mentors as well as countless other people that have been involved in this project including all the staff at the Design and Technology Association. I have felt privileged to be a part of this exciting opportunity!

The group (with the support of Tony Wheeler of the Technology Education Research Unit (TERU) at Goldsmiths) has had the chance to work with the General Teaching Council (GTC) in developing the use of learning platforms in relation to the submission process and assessment of digital portfolios for the Teacher Learning Academy (TLA) stages. I have contributed my views about how well I believe the system of assessment currently works and have offered ideas about how I think that it could be further developed in the future to incorporate the learning platform as a tool for assessment. Currently I feel that if a learning platform were able to automatically gather

evidence as an 'electronic footprint' created by a teacher e.g. through e-mails sent, comments made as part of forum discussions etc. that the learning platform could be very useful for accreditation purposes. Assessors at the GTC would then need to be able to appropriately navigate the platform so that they could analyse the electronic evidence gathered. I am certain that the 'testing out' of the platforms that we have already done as a group will become very useful for the professional development of teachers. Tony has also organised live virtual meetings for the group via use of the platform and it has been exciting to have the opportunity to be involved in the research work that he is carrying out.

The NTG group was introduced to Wayne Hemingway at the Design and Technology Association Education and International Research Conference in July 2007 and at this point, led by Paul Anderson (a member of the NTG), the group began to develop a new teaching resource for schools inspired by the existing resource recently launched by Hemingway Design 'Land of Lost Content' (www.lolc.co.uk). The Association is currently in discussions with Wayne regarding the possibility of using the resource in schools.

The meetings that we have had as a group and the sessions that we have taken part in have been inspiring and our discussions and debates have informed my teaching and supported me in my role at Littlehampton Community School.

I feel as though I have been a subject leader for ten years but in reality I have been in the post since September 2007. I have been lucky enough to find a like-minded colleague with which to share the post and we began to plan for 07/08 at the start of the spring term 2007. Since then we have implemented a series of changes that we believe will be necessary if we are to make our department special. My involvement with the group came at a perfect time as I took over my new role and began to develop the department.

The design and technology department at LCS has been neglected in recent years and when we took over, staff moral was at an all time low. The management has been unstable over the last five years and the subject areas of food, textiles and product design have been steadily drifting apart. As a new subject leader I have had the determination to try and unite the teaching staff across these three areas and undoubtedly I have drawn strength from my involvement with the NTG.

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On the product design side of things we have entirely re-written the scheme of work for product design at Key Stage 3 and we will review it again before the end of the year. Our new Year 8 unit of work sees students working in small design teams that simulate industry as they work towards making card board furniture to satisfy a brief which includes an environmental element. We use recycled card for the project, which encourages our pupils to think about environmental issues and limited resources and to become informed designers.

In Year 9 the project is linked to the Business and Enterprise specialist status of the school and students make pewter products that can be batch produced and sold at the Business and Enterprise fair in July. We have also started to develop links with feeder primary schools to offer one-day workshops for Year 5 and 6 pupils who will be mentored by Year 9 students to create pewter products.

In recent months we have been able to get together with 'Greenpower' and our Year 10 entry level students have been involved in taking apart sets of Goblin Car kits for local primary schools, they have also had the opportunity to mentor primary students in the Goblin teams.

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We are working to improve the grades at GCSE level (primarily in Product Design) and we have begun to put a series of interventions in place. We are working to change staff and student perception about the subject and, as gender balance is an issue in both Product Design and Textiles one of my interventions has included trying to remedy this. I have started to look at this as a research topic and have initially been investigating ways of encouraging more girls in to Product Design as part of my TLA stage one and our work with Tony Wheeler and the GTC. Prior to the option choices this year I ran a series of GCSE taster sessions for and these proved very successful. The units of work have also been revised to give girls better opportunity to achieve and I intend to look at encouraging more boys in to textiles at some point. Following a session arranged for the NTG with Richard Kimbell of Goldsmiths/TERU we have also decided to change to OCR's innovative Product Design Specification at GCSE level and the product design staff are looking forward to working to the specification from September 2008.

Our next step will be to look closely at food and textiles at LCS and as a team we will work together to better deliver the three areas in relation to each other. We have already started to adapt our units to better provide for the students and we will continue to make changes to our teaching styles and methods.

I believe that students at GCSE and A-Level should be working to 'live' briefs set by companies and so I intend to work to improve the departmental industry links that we have at LCS. I would eventually like to have a Designer in Residence. I would like the environment of our department to change and I would like to have a hand in designing our department as part of a possible new school build. I would like the rooms to be design studios with stimulating areas that will inspire and for our students to interact with university students and industry specialists.



Ultimately I believe that design and technology should be a core subject in every school. Where would we be without food, clothes and products, all basic human needs! Where will we be in the future if our designers are not educated properly? I wanted to be part of the New Talent Group so that I could express my ideas and discuss them with people who were willing to listen and who care about the way in which the subject is taught. I wanted to meet and liaise with people who are visionary in their ideas for the future and who can share and test out ideas without fear of failure and I have not been disappointed.

The New Talent Group members met again in July at the D&T Association Education and International Research Conference 2008 and this was the last meeting of the group in its current format. Watch this space!

For further information about any of the subjects raised in this article please e-mail Charlotte:
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