



Cambridge Primary Review: government would do well to heed these child-centred recommendations

Letters | Published in The TES on 23 October, 2009 | By: Nigel Taylor

Section: Letters

I appreciated Michael Shaw's editorial in The TES as a first step into reading more of the Cambridge Primary Review ("Intrepid prof takes on The Primary Code", October 16). I did wonder, however, whether the sub-headline "Politicians may dismiss the Cambridge Review, but it is a must-read for teachers" may indeed add encouragement for politicians to do just that. We should push our elected representatives to consider the difficult options, and not just the easy ones.

Nigel Taylor, Head of Staffordshire Performing Arts, Stafford, Staffordshire.

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It was quite salutary that on the day the Cambridge Primary Review was published, the Government was already rubbishing it on BBC News, describing it, astonishingly, as "disappointing" and "out of date".

Robin Alexander's review may hark back to Plowden in some respects, but many of us would consider that no bad thing. What I suspect sticks in the craw of government is that the review has children at its centre. It stands up against the systems-obsessed, test-laden, target-driven and punitive mechanics of our education system, in which children and those who strive to educate them are increasingly subservient to the process and the need for votes.

Having worked for 35 years in the public education sector, I was saddened and ashamed on Friday that the political party I have supported for 50 years cannot even acknowledge that this review has real merit.

Tony Roberts, Lancashire NAHT admin and membership secretary, Preston.

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Letters | Published in The TES on 23 October, 2009 | By: **Stan Labovitch**,

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The Alexander Review bristles with intellectual gravitas - an endangered species in the current world of educational thinking.

I agree we should move away from a compliance culture that encourages conformity rather than originality, that experienced teachers need autonomy to be effective, and that centralised reform has gone too far in relation to curriculum and pedagogy.

The actor Patrick Stewart was inspired by a charismatic English teacher ("My English teacher propelled me beyond the final frontier", October 16), not a drone slavishly implementing the "state theory of learning".

Stan Labovitch, Secondary teacher, Windsor.

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Letters | Published in The TES on 23 October, 2009 | By: **Sally Goddard Blythe**

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There has been considerable coverage of the recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review since its release last week ("Alexander Review: give us back our schools," October 16). But there has been little in-depth examination of why it has recommended that formal learning should not start until age 6, why boys are falling further behind under the current system and why a less centralised prescriptive curriculum is advised.

The key to learning success at every stage of education is developmental readiness. Although some children are ready to read at four-and-a-half, others will not be ready until 6 or later.

Boys are generally later than girls at developing the fine motor skills needed for writing and the control of gross motor skills needed to be able to sit still. These motor skills are developed through physical action and interaction with the environment in the early years.

Developmentally and neurologically, a child's brain is primed to learn in different ways at different stages in development. When education seeks to attain targets without going through the necessary building procedures first, it results in gaps or weaknesses in the system that can undermine higher aspects of learning later.

Learning is a biological as well as an educational process. Until education takes individual developmental readiness into account, we will continue to see an unacceptably high proportion of children in the British school system who underachieve. The Cambridge Review - if governments can only heed its recommendations - is a ray of hope for children and education in the future.

Sally Goddard Blythe, Director, Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology, Chester.

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