

Curiosity

It is the name of the Mars rover, it is what killed the cat (and if this is true then the cat, in my view, had a very noble death) and Einstein said 'It is important not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing'. But to what extent is it really allowed to exist in the classroom?

Children are naturally curious: they explore, they touch, they feel, they sniff and, to most parents' disgust at some point, they taste. I am still somewhat traumatised by my two feeling the need to taste the snail that they had found in the garden and then share it between them.

As children reach school age, they are no less curious: they just manage it in better ways most of the time! Children ask amazing questions. They want to know why, they have a thirst for knowing more and, although not always linked with the National Curriculum and what they 'should' be being taught, harnessing that inquisitive nature is something for which we should be striving. Let them tinker and let's give them access to activities and opportunities that inspire sparks of imagination.

I wonder what happens as children get older – do they become less curious or does the education system give them fewer opportunities to display it? I would love to think it is a natural culling of this characteristic but I cannot help but feel that the system slowly squeezes it out of them as they move towards the exams that determine many futures. Many teachers I know teach in very inspirational and imaginative ways but they are also constrained by a necessity to prepare those children to succeed in an assessment process that is not about how curious the learner is. I understand why this cannot be the case; to be able to run with what children are really curious about and foster this as an approach throughout all of their education is an unrealistic dream. However, wouldn't it be wonderful if the time for teachers to be more creative and promote curiosity was greater and they were not being held to account by the need to jump through all of the hoops currently demanded of them?

We have seen in recent issues of *Primary Science* that science capital is one of the keys for more learners engaging with science as they grow. In part, this is about maintaining their curiosity in and with science. If they are not seeing science as something of interest and relevance and worthy of further exploration they won't take their studies further.

I had the absolute delight of attending a conference recently and seeing the impact of developing children's curiosity and engagement through drama. When I asked the

keynote speaker, Hywel Roberts, about the importance of curiosity in children's learning he said '*curiosity helps children navigate the complexities of their world and the world of others*'. The navigation of the world through science or the navigation of the world through curiosity? Perhaps they amount to much the same? Hywel's book *Uncharted territories: adventures in learning* (authored with Debra Kidd) has become one of my 'go to' resources. Although not science specific, the curriculum coverage within this publication is thorough and there are oodles of science ideas to be unpicked and explored.

This book piqued my own pedagogical curiosity and interest and, within my role as a PGCE leader, it has given me an accessible way to shift and improve my teaching.

So, as you go into the new calendar year I wonder how you will promote curiosity in your classroom? How will you encourage the children to maintain their curiosity streak throughout their education and beyond? What do you do to maintain your own curiosity?

And just maybe there will be a fairy-tale ending with this since even Walt Disney saw the value of curiosity:

We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths. (Walt Disney)

How will you encourage the children to maintain their curiosity streak throughout their education and beyond?