

There is much promise in classrooms

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It's the stuff of popular magazines. Interview a famous person about their childhood influences, their treasured moments and possessions, their faith, their biggest extravagance, who and what they find most irritating.

I liked a recent interview with a Formula 1 racing driver. When asked what his childhood ambition was he replied: 'To be a farmer – I thought tractors were just brilliant. Then greenkeeper at a golf course, because of all the different lawnmowers. Then I realised you could go a lot faster.'

Another interviewee, a distinguished mathematician answered: 'To be a professional ten-pin bowler. Then an astronaut.' And a third admitted: 'To make friends with a wolf'.

One question invariably elicits thoughtful responses. Which matters more to success: **ambition** or **talent**? One person will observe that both are ingredients to success but that luck is even more important. Another will suggest that passion makes the chances of success greater. And other key words come up in interviews on this question: opportunity, confidence, inner gift, discipline.

For the Formula 1 driver above: 'In sport, you've got to have the right body to do what you want to do, but then it's down to hard work.' In the words of one of our leading scientists and vaccine developers: 'So many talented people don't have an idea what they're capable of.'

At the start of every academic year one primary teacher I know displays in her classroom this extract from Miroslav Holub's poem 'A boy's head':

*In it there is a space-ship
and a project
for doing away with piano lessons.*

*There is a river
that flows upwards.*

There is a multiplication table.

There is anti-matter.

And it just cannot be trimmed.

*I believe
that only what cannot be trimmed
is a head.*

*There is much promise
in the circumstance
that so many people have heads.*

It is a reminder to her of the endless possibilities which rest inside the minds of the children who sit in front of her – and that it is her challenge to unlock those possibilities.

The Education Policy Institute's recently published [Annual Report](#) offers its usual sober scrutiny of the gaps that exist between the advantaged and the disadvantaged in our classrooms. The analyses by geographical region, ethnicity and GCSE subject make for arresting reading and should be the focus of discussion in every staffroom across the country.

So what can we all do in our own classrooms to realise the ambitions and talents of those who look to us for guidance and inspiration?

Let us take every opportunity to spot the inner gift of a child. Let us nurture confidence in the shy student. Let us help young people to believe in their abilities and develop a latent talent. How a young person feels about themselves – their personal dignity and self-esteem – lies at the heart of a good education.

This September, as never before, teachers everywhere will recommit themselves to their craft: to teaching their subjects with invention, rigour and fun. Whether in the early years or in A Level classes, teachers will relish afresh the wonderful opportunity to take young minds on journeys of discovery.

The teacher's optimistic, long-established trade is one of talent spotting and helping children realise their ambitions - enabling all young people to attain well and achieve with pride.

There is always much promise in our classrooms.

Roy Blatchford's recent books are '[*The Three Minute Leader*](#)' and '[*The Forgotten Third*](#)', published by John Catt Education.