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FACING THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Matthew MacIver and Fiona Hyslop
spell out their priorities for teachers

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Going the extra mile

Thinking outside the box is essential in education, says Mike Stevenson.

Is anything more rewarding than seeing young people win through and achieve something? When I invited a band from Craigroyston Community High School to perform at a sponsorship event for a Leith radio station, I experienced just that pleasure.

Having spoken at GTCS's staff conference recently, I had been acutely aware of the need to pay more heed to the work going on in Scottish schools and to bring their achievements into wider view. That's what prompted the invite to the school.

I can't describe my pride when the youngsters, fresh from victory in the Edinburgh schools Battle of the Bands competition, stepped up on stage to a rousing reception. Heaven knows what their music teacher must have felt – she had encouraged them since they formed just a few months ago.

Craigroyston is a school that's changing fast. The headteacher and staff are mapping out wonderful things and real ambitions for the children.

That they do so against a backdrop of social difficulty makes their achievements all the more remarkable. The revolutionary approach comes in acknowledging the reality and then focusing on the opportunities.

The world of work needs to learn from, work with and be inspired by developments in schools. I have been inspired by the energy and commitment I have seen and have sought to bring it back to my own business. After all, my work as a marketing and communications specialist is all about creating change and shifts in thinking.

Children think outside the box – any business owner will tell you that's a valued asset in the cut and thrust of commerce. How I can keep that energy and imagination in my business remains a constant challenge. Thank you



Mike Stevenson believes we should look beyond schools to seek inspiration for youngsters

schools for reinvigorating me.

I firmly believe schools should be more "visible" in their community. Parents, along with people from business, sport, the arts, technology and public services agencies, should take pride and support their efforts in any way that adds value to the schools' efforts. Take the message out there and tell people what you are doing – you have some great practice models.

But inspiration, like communication, is a two-way street. Schools should not be

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the only influences on children. It is a realisation that has driven schools such as Craigroyston to create real dialogue with people from across the immediate community and way beyond.

I want to see more ideas about the workplace brought into schools so that young people get the chance to formulate new possibilities for themselves – an idea of what is out there in the otherwise amorphous and strange world of work. It is about creating a sense of the future – why not set up displays showing what former pupils have

achieved ("This could be you!")?

We all need this sense of being allowed aspirations. Today's achievement needs to be celebrated too in the way that companies such as BP and BSkyB use internal communications to consistently show staff how valuable their contribution is to the organisation.

I am ambitious for Scotland and want us to move away from the "you cannae dae that" culture we have inherited. That means stepping outside our zone of influence and encouraging youngsters to do the same.

There is a huge opportunity for all of us to work together, communicate and learn from each other as we produce real social and economic results for Scotland.

We can all step beyond where we are now by encouraging and supporting people to try something new and step outside their sphere.

That's why I urge teachers to look for inspiration in other environments. We all need to take a sideways look and remind ourselves that we can "expand our taste buds", discover new ways of doing things and succeed by going beyond the here and now.

Mike Stevenson is Managing Director of Design Links (www.designlinks.co.uk), an Edinburgh and Glasgow design and communications agency.