

# Moving into Junior Courses

Jim Chirm

# Jim who?

Worked in EFL since 1997

Started as a teacher and became a Centre Manager in summer schools. I became a multicentre company's Operations Manager in 2003 and have worked at a Head Office level ever since.

I'm not a DOS but I've been a senior manager in junior courses for 14 years and I can give a different perspective on teaching.

# The aim of the session

In the changing EFL market many schools that have relied on adult business for many years are making the move towards junior courses.

Since our main resource is people – teachers, office staff, activity leaders – we need to look at how to change the way the whole team views younger learners so that everyone is working towards the same goal.

# Change Management

Moving to Junior courses is a big change within the organisation, so we need to think in terms of a formal process of change management – we can't just treat it as just another course and hope that it will go well.

# How do we manage change?

Change management can be broken down into several steps - these 6 come from MindTools.com:

1. Sponsorship – Finding people within senior management to champion the change. As managers we have to ‘manage upwards’ to get our own managers to buy-in, as they have the power to allocate resources/staff to the course.
2. Getting Buy-In from staff. This will be the main focus of the presentation but remember that you need senior sponsorship (not just approval) it will be harder to overcome resistance. In this presentation we will also talk about the support we need to give people when the course starts so that we don’t lose that hard-earned buy-in.

# Cont.....

3. Involvement – getting the right people involved in the planning/implementation process from the start e.g. Senior teachers can help with course design, the welfare officer needs to look at safeguarding issues. This involvement is also part of getting buy-in.

4. Impact assessment – finding out how the change will affect the people involved

5. Communication – explaining how the change will affect people and what their own role will be in the new course

6. Readiness – Providing the training needed to ensure that everyone is ready to play an active part

# What is different about working with juniors?

For the purposes of this training session, consider the differences in these few, specific areas. The answers given are just examples of the many possible.

**Lesson Planning** – Need for more active lessons; build classroom management into the lesson; might not be a coursebook to rely therefore more of an effort to find materials/activities; on short courses we don't plan far ahead; planning might have to fit in around other duties e.g. activities.....

**Student motivation** – Students not studying towards a clear short-term goal; summer students on holiday therefore enjoyment is key; communication with other students more important than any grammar.....

**How staff/students relate to each other** – Easier to have a friendly relationship with adult students; students have a very different relationship with our teachers than with state school teacher, who can exert more power – control by consent on a short course.....

**Staff duties/roles** – Supervisor, disciplinarian, entertainer.....

These are just 12 differences brainstormed in a couple of minutes, so it's safe to say that there are lots of differences between junior and adult courses, so it's safe to say that it's not just another course! Don't treat it as one!

# Things to think about

1. Teachers often have additional duties (e.g. leading activities, supervision) that are at least as important as teaching
2. Juniors respond to staff in a different way, which is often difficult for the staff to deal with
3. Simple things – like class registers – take on a whole new meaning



# Lego School of English



## **Vitruvius**

Been here for ages

DELTA, MA

Last taught YL while travelling in the 1980s



## **Lucy**

Started about 3 years ago but taught abroad for 4 years

Permanent contract last year

DELTA and keen to do other courses

Taught YL at summer school in her first year here



## **Emmet**

Started 6 months ago having taught abroad for a couple of years

Not on a permanent contract yet

CELTA

# How will people react to being assigned to junior courses?

Their possible emotions include:

- Shock
- Suspicion
- Betrayal
- Injustice
- Anger
- Demotion
- Alienation
- Fear.....

# Why are they worrying?

Everyone knows younger learners can be 'difficult'

They haven't taught juniors much since they first started teaching

Their whole career path has been taking them away from juniors – going back to juniors at this stage is a demotion

You might be taking them (literally) out of their comfort zone e.g. different building, staffroom, materials, procedures, schedule, brand of coffee

The support they get from colleagues might not be there

They don't want to be pigeon-holed as someone who can teach juniors regularly

They have a lot to lose. They've worked for years to reach this level and a bad report could upset their place in the school.

# Getting Buy-in from existing Staff

The initial reaction staff might have to Junior Courses might be negative. Step 1 has to be addressing those negative emotions:

- Plan the change – don't just drop it on people
- It's not 'just another course' so don't treat it as one! People know better!
- Have an honest and open discussion with staff about the courses and their role
- Listen to the worries they might have
- Stop negative comments
- Stop the rumour mill – and don't start it
- Present it positively – explain what you are going to do to make it work
- People need time to adjust

# Ask yourself this...

Have you ever been part of a major change at work?

What made you and your colleagues feel more positive about the change?

# Buy-in Step 2: Build Confidence

We've started dealing with the negative emotions, now we can start building on the positive ones:

People fear the unknown. Extra training will improve understanding.

Don't ghettoise Junior Courses – don't just put newer teachers in your staffroom

Involve people in pre-course planning e.g. identifying materials. If they are involved at this level they will definitely know what's happening!

If possible, arrange for a gentle introduction e.g. peer observations, introductory lessons

Be positive. Talk about making progress and being prepared

# Staff induction day

This isn't just for new staff because:

- What staff do on junior courses is different to what they do the rest of the year – this sets the boundary
- You need all staff to know how things are going to work (and not how they have always worked)
- You need to introduce existing and new staff so that they can start working together and bonding
- Reinforcing the message – some people are slower to accept new habits

# Providing ongoing support

We can't afford to lose that precious buy-in, so we need to have a plan to support people when the new students arrive. Instead of looking at it from a purely academic standpoint, consider these key questions:

What type of things stress staff??

How can you reduce that stress?



# Things that stress people out

- Being observed. Plan your observations so that teachers aren't observed as soon as the course starts when they are still getting used to the change.
- Lesson planning – if you can schedule people to teach two classes with the same lesson plan you will halve their planning time
- Doing things they aren't personally comfortable with
- Noise and crowds e.g. walking through a reception unavoidably full of noisy teenagers can be a bad start to a stressful. Maybe ask staff to come in through a different entrance?
- Not knowing what to do for the best – people may need to bounce ideas off you
- Not knowing what is happening
- Clutter
- Classroom management
- Other people being stressed e.g. if everyone is observed in the same week you will have a staffroom full of exhausted/stressed out people!
- Last minute lesson planning/photocopying
- Tiredness

# Will you be?

## **Coach?**

Short- term help, support, advice. This might be a better role for your senior teachers as they might have more recent, relevant experience and they might relish the role. It would also save you from getting involved in time-consuming issues about lesson plans/activity choices

## **Mentor?**

Longer-term help aiming to improve the person's performance overall. This is difficult to do on a short/summer course as time is crucial. If you are going to mentor anyone, it should be the people who your staff rely on the most i.e. senior teachers, ADOS'

## **Manager?**

You will have a far greater impact on people's lives through good management – before during and after the course – than through any personal support you can give, simply because you probably won't have much time to get involved with your whole team on an individual basis. Save your time for making the programme work and helping those who need it most.

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