

Teach First: A case study

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I am currently in my second year of the Teach First programme teaching French and Spanish. I graduated from Cardiff University in 2003 with a 2:1 in English Literature and French and worked as a language assistant during my year abroad in France. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and it made me eager to pursue a career using my languages. I was initially keen to work in international business and, although I loved being an assistant and working with young people, I had not seriously considered a career in teaching.

However, I read an article about Teach First on the Internet and was excited to read about the prestigious graduate scheme. It seemed to offer a challenging career teaching in an inner-city London school, while also offering excellent business training and keeping my options open for the future.

As part of the recruitment process, we had to teach a lesson to people from business and teaching backgrounds and also had to spend a week observing in a school beforehand. We were taken out to dinner with Teach First recruiters, other successful Teach First participants and former participants of Teach for America to find out more about what awaited us. I was matched with my school in May and spent two weeks there after my finals.

The initial training consisted of a six-week summer institute at Canterbury Christchurch University College in Kent. The 180-strong cohort attended professional and subject studies lectures and small tutorials, and were given talks and training from a wealth of education experts. We also had to write four assignments during our first year and produce

presentations and speeches during the summer. The support I have received during my time with Teach First has been exemplary. During the first year, this was mainly educational support, with frequent visits and observations by my Canterbury tutor.

In school, we all had subject and professional mentors and weekly discussion meetings, and my school

I have had a fantastic experience on Teach First and at the moment I still have so much enthusiasm for education in London that I am staying for a third year at my school. I think I will always work in education in some way. However, the business and leadership training this year has made me confident that I can do anything in this field.

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certainly had an 'open-door' policy for help and advice. We also had subject study days throughout the year which were welcome opportunities to offload together and share best practice. Teach First has its own extranet that has been invaluable for support and facilitating e-mail contact.

The second year of Teach First focuses on the business element of the scheme. We have just completed a Foundations of Leadership qualification at Tanaka Business School at Imperial College, London and each had an individual 'coach' from the world of business to guide us through our career choices. We have also had the opportunity to listen to speakers from the many sponsors of Teach First, all of whom were interesting and helpful.

