



"I've finally found something I like doing. And the teachers are wicked."

Seventeen year old Sarra Selcuk is bright, personable and engaging – and thanks to Lawrence and Simon, she's finally learning to learn.

The teachers' preference for group learning, discussion and encouraging communication suits Sarra's style.

"After school I started A' levels in English, Law and Media, but really didn't enjoy the work," she said. "I went to Connexions for some advice, picked up the leaflet for this course on media skills and really liked the look of everything on the list of subjects it covered. So I gave up the A' levels and waited to start."

Sarra's only a couple of weeks into the course run by DV8 at the City Learning Centre in East London – but has already formed some very firm opinions about her teachers.

"They're not like anyone who's ever taught me before – there's always been a real gap between the teachers and the students but that's just not

there. They're firm – really firm about things like not leaving your mobile on in class, not wearing headphones and other things that'll stop us learning – but they're fair as well. They'll sit and talk, and you know they're really listening."

Just before her interview, Sarra had done her first 'vox pop' on the streets of Walthamstow – asking members of the public who their ideal celebrity date would be. And she was buzzing.

"I was working with someone I hadn't spoken to on the course before, but we bounced off each other for support and help – and it was great in the end," she said. "Tonight the whole group of us are out to the theatre, so we can learn and 'bond' at the same time! Simon and Lawrence have already made me realise I can do much more than I thought. I've got so much respect for them. And they're wicked."

Lawrence Lartey and Simon Das **Teachers** at DV8

Case study 1

"I've got mates working in the city earning 10 times as much as me. But they haven't got what I've got at the end of the day."



Lawrence Lartey – provenance Hertfordshire, Channel 4, Channel 5, KISS FM, the BBC.

Simon Das – provenance south London, i-D magazine, The Face, Arena, editor of Touch, Britain's first urban music magazine.

When two highly-successful working journalists decide to give something back to young students the result is electric.

Lawrence, 28, and Simon, 33, would be the first to admit they're not your usual basic skills teachers. They're both surprised at how they came to teaching. Their students are surprised when they meet for the first time. And everyone benefits.

Both are employed by DV8 Training – renowned for its remit of putting appropriate teachers into local communities. Both work part time, to maintain good media careers – but their commitment is tangible. That's why they themselves have chosen to go back into the classroom to study for their own professional teaching qualifications. And that's why, despite their world-class contacts in the UK's club and music scene, both were out on a Friday night theatre trip with their students instead, most of whom had never seen a live production before.

Simon and Lawrence are dealing with young adults, often disaffected, sometimes youth offenders, many with social issues. But the media skills course they run at City Learning Centre in Walthamstow also equates to four GCSEs – which can open the door to a wider world of opportunity most of them are keen to experience. Course members produce two issues of Fusion magazine a year, embedding English with the obvious journal-

ism, maths with advertising rate cards and layout techniques.

"We know we're walking a fine line, so it's really important we remain professional at all times," Lawrence explained. "Initially, it can be confusing for the students. We talk a bit like them. We look a bit like them. We dress a bit like them. But we also need to be firm so we always have to set boundaries. I never imagined myself teaching – but got a phone call from DV8 saying someone has recommended me. I've been supported throughout – and the benefits are enormous. Without wanting to sound 'holier than thou' I can give something to these young people. And that's good for me too."

For Simon the benefits are the same, with some added professional extras. "For three days a week I edit a magazine – and my students are part of my core target audience," he added. "From a personal perspective, this gives me the chance to do something really meaningful, to make a difference to lives. And I'm working with my magazine's readers too, so it brings me closer to my audience. "I've got mates working in the city earning 10 times as much as me. But they haven't got what I've got at the end of the day."