

Engagement Day for Teachers - Mull and Iona

Tobermory High School

Monday 20 November 2006



Planning for the roll out days for A Curriculum for Excellence in Argyll and Bute began early in 2006. The intention was to engage all staff in a collaborative enquiry into the values, principles and purposes of A Curriculum for Excellence. The logistics of this were considerable considering that all areas of Argyll and Bute would be involved. The Quality Improvement Team would have to travel by land, sea and air to facilitate the programme and sometimes in two venues in the one day. It soon became apparent that the team needed reinforcements so some willing staff were invited to become involved as facilitators.

Each venue was the local secondary school who were very supportive as the team swooped in and took over the hall/dining room and set up for the day. The room was set up with tables at which sat ten staff from across the sectors and was facilitated by a member of the team, frequently involving staff from other schools who had completed the engagement day.

The tantalizing smell of cooking bacon hung in the air as bacon rolls were served and the craic with colleagues enjoyed. Curiosity about the meaning of the day was soon satisfied when the event led off with the “big picture” for the “Curriculum for Excellence Programme in Argyll and Bute” presented by either Ronnie Gould Head of Service Secondary Education or Carol Walker Head of Service Primary and Early years Education.

The first sessions were devoted to exploring current practice around the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence and identifying the considerable good examples currently being undertaken in schools.

The following was identified as current good practice taking place in the schools present which contributed to the four capacities

Responsible Citizens

- ◆ Environmental awareness –kayaking, cross country, use of materials
- ◆ S6 planning Halloween party for S1. Total control of project & budgeting
- ◆ Needs of other pupils
- ◆ New project on local charities P3/4
- ◆ Children made aware of how to contribute other than monetary donations
- ◆ P7 looking after P1. P7 less focused on self & P1s felt welcome had someone to rely on
- ◆ Senior pupils peer mediation. Increased responsibility /improved relationships
- ◆ Pupils involved in making up school/ class/playground rules
- ◆ Whole school rules, rewards and sanctions improves behaviour
- ◆ Circle time – whole school – brought everyone together
- ◆ School council - shared responsibility
- ◆ Fund raising - whole school supporting communities in the developing world
- ◆ Global citizenship activities
- ◆ Shoe box appeals
- ◆ Equal futures-whole school awareness/tolerance/acceptance of difference
- ◆ Eco schools-whole school awareness of environmental concerns
- ◆ Paper recycling /composting-whole school awareness of environment
- ◆ Plant bulbs-whole school improves care of plants and respect
- ◆ Organising whole school events-whole school responsible for budgeting and choice of events
- ◆ Senior citizens lunch - improves community relationships

Confident Individuals

- ◆ Teach the power of positive thinking (*The Learning Game* activities)
- ◆ Starting from what pupils know helps them believe they can learn the next step
- ◆ Find something to praise every child about
- ◆ Give pupils the responsibility of being the expert
- ◆ P5/6 topic: British Empire debate – researched topic, made informed decisions – discussions, reformed groups
- ◆ Children who are not normally confident, came out of their shells and were not afraid to speak their minds
- ◆ Increasing sense of responsibility
- ◆ Both the teachers and the pupils had the confidence to model themselves as learners
- ◆ Whole school co-ordinated approach to Circle Time and linked to buddy system
- ◆ Buddy skills developed through teachers interviews conducted by pupils
- ◆ Use of drama to build understanding of sequencing skills
- ◆ S6 pupils planning a whole school Eco Futures assembly
- ◆ ACE certificates
- ◆ Pupil presentations at assemblies, etc out with class
- ◆ Enterprise competitions
- ◆ Developing life skills through supporting others and working together to run additional activities
- ◆ Project presentations with pupil feedback
- ◆ S6 trip-organise own budget, food ,visits etc
- ◆ Weekly oral news-helping each other to become more confident speakers, through positive feedback on the principles of public speaking
- ◆ Working in small groups then reporting back gives confidence to the naturally introverted and hopefully encourages the extroverted to listen

Effective Contributors

- ◆ Group work including 90% of class sharing knowledge –learning some and sharing all collaborative learning task
- ◆ Using outside experts (e.g. artists in residence) off premises environment out with SQA straight jacket.
- ◆ School council: re-introduced representatives from each of the 5 classes resulted in improved self-esteem, self awareness and awareness of school issues and needs
- ◆ The mystery of the box - to open or not to open!
- ◆ Pupils working in teams identifying and addressing areas of difficulty in maths - sharing the solutions
- ◆ Whole school Circle Time on co-ordinated theme
- ◆ Problem solving challenge: designing and constructing suspension bridge to move pupil across the room

Successful Learners

- ◆ Target setting: teacher and pupils setting achievable targets based on previous experience
- ◆ Higher pupils marking previous pupils exam scripts –greater appreciation of expected standard of answer
- ◆ Letting the children know what the learning intentions are
- ◆ If pupils see the relevance, they want to learn
- ◆ Successful learning comes from both teacher and student involvement
- ◆ Pupils take responsibility for their own learning and encouraging and helping their peers
- ◆ Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own learning
- ◆ Working co-operatively in groups
- ◆ Demonstrate their understanding by “taking” the lesson for teacher
- ◆ What is success and how do we measure it?

- ◆ Making healthy choices e.g choosing milk instead of Coke
- ◆ Personal target setting and planning next steps (responsible for own learning)
- ◆ Self and peer assessment e.g traffic lights, fist of 5
- ◆ Sharing criteria with pupils
- ◆ “expert role” scenarios
- ◆ Using interactive whiteboards
- ◆ Pupils creating their own Power Points
- ◆ Using PRUs (primary and secondary) personal choice
- ◆ Pupils leading workshops
- ◆ Home learning
- ◆ Recognising how to fix mistakes
- ◆ Choosing appropriate resources to access information
- ◆ “Pairing” pupils to support each other (e.g younger/older) paired reading/buddying
- ◆ Rich questioning
- ◆ Differentiation-e.g pop up boards for infants more able within the class re-wrote stories for their peer group
- ◆ Plenary- in order to review the learning -could use “think pair share”
- ◆ ICT-use interactive games at the end of a block of learning (e.g Who Wants to be a Millionaire theme)

After coffee and scones the discussion deepened into the values, principles and purposes of a Curriculum for Excellence with the focus on the recommendations contained in “Progress and Proposals” document. A wealth of discussion then took place between colleagues from all sectors leading to the production of the “key question” from each table.

During the excellent buffet lunch staff were able to read and sign up for their chosen question for the afternoon session. This led to a stimulating debate at each group as the key question was fully discussed, often raising more questions than answers. Feedback was taken from the tables and served to illustrate the range of debate which had taken place. This was followed by staff breaking into school and departmental groups to discuss and feedback the “way forward for us”. This information was copied on the day and taken away by each school or department.

The following are the questions raised and a summary of the points made during the afternoon discussion

Key Questions

How prescriptive is it going to be? How prescriptive do we want it to be? If it is too prescriptive how can we make it different /better than what we have now?

Everybody likes the idea of creativity but there does need to be some prescription for levels. Does the prescription need to be skilled based or does it need to be content based? Core skills should be embedded for all children. If there is a lot of freedom then we need to know what has been covered and there is a need to pass on information. Change of focus on what skills are being taught rather than content driven. Skill transference needs to grow and move with the children, this needs to begin with pre school and primary and grow and this should be reflected into SQA. Be careful not to have only those who speak out rewarded.

How are the 4 capacities to be measured or evaluated effectively?

- ◆ Tobermory-assemblies –certificates to recognise the 4 capacities
- ◆ Do we need to measure it?
- ◆ Pupils themselves being responsible for recognising them (then even if some staff don't take it on, pupils will!!)
- ◆ Raised importance of "life skills" which have always been there
- ◆ What assessment will relate to this or to content?
- ◆ Important thing is what matters for the children not HMIE or management
- ◆ Effectiveness should be measured by talking to the children
- ◆ Need to share good practice across schools
- ◆ 4 capacities become integral to the ethos of the school from P1 to S6.

- ◆ Feel it rather than measure it
- ◆ If you don't evaluate it ,how do you know whether they are more confident
- ◆ Teachers role is to create opportunities for pupils to demonstrate the 4 capacities
- ◆ It shouldn't be an add on and should permeate everything

How can/do we move away from SQA assessment and national assessments

- ◆ Initial discussion on SQA and how SQA has made the curriculum more rigid
- ◆ State and share your vision with the pupils –ensuring they recognise the 4 capacities – ensure effective links between primary and secondary
- ◆ General happiness to get rid of 5-14 and be more creative with timetabling and reorganising the school day
- ◆ Use success of day conferences – use of rich tasks
- ◆ The SQA hit man!

The final session saw staff returning to their “home” groups to share what they intended to take forward in the next 6 weeks. There was considerable enthusiasm expressed that the day had helped to clarify where aCfE was going and had allowed for a good exchange of ideas between staff.

A Head of Service ended the day by summarising the day's events and explained the novel evaluation process

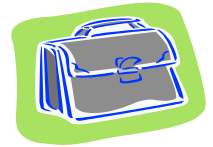
The evaluation – something I liked about the day



- ◆ Great group discussions
- ◆ The way this day was presented
- ◆ Wider experiences through using other experts
- ◆ Meeting others and sharing experience
- ◆ Share the discussion
- ◆ Different activities
- ◆ Sharing good ideas and hearing peoples opinions
- ◆ Good to have time to reflect on current practice and discuss ACfE with colleagues
- ◆ Chance to find out what is going on and to look at the different approaches one can use
- ◆ Good opportunity to discuss ACfE with colleagues to see where we are in comparison with other schools and to get a guide from authority level
- ◆ Well structured day
- ◆ Hearing from others about examples of good practice
- ◆ The chance to discuss a wide range of issues with colleagues
- ◆ Expressing and hearing new ideas, especially with secondary colleagues
- ◆ Opportunity to share good practice and learn from others
- ◆ Discussion with secondary staff and ANST and Carol re rich tasks and lunch and coffee
- ◆ Opportunity to discuss and share across primary/secondary over whole island
- ◆ The opportunity to talk to colleagues from other schools
- ◆ The craic with others!
- ◆ The organisation of the day, facilitators in each group motivated response within group
- ◆ A course I felt I was involved in all day
- ◆ Sharing experiences with others
- ◆ Talking to primary and secondary colleagues
- ◆ Seeing the whole child not just academic success

- ◆ Spending a day sharing ideas
- ◆ How the facilitators interacted with everyone during the discussion sessions
- ◆ Being together as a group
- ◆ Bacon rolls
- ◆ The food
- ◆ The discussions
- ◆ Listening to everyone's opinions
- ◆ The congenial atmosphere
- ◆ Sharing my limited knowledge with colleagues to arrive at a personal action plan
- ◆ Having time to discuss with colleagues
- ◆ Talking to colleagues both primary and secondary about ACfE
- ◆ Talking to colleagues primary and secondary to share ideas
- ◆ The opportunity to discuss ACfE with others
- ◆ Finding out more about it
- ◆ Having a target to work towards
- ◆ Getting to talk to other teachers about ACfE
- ◆ Meeting and talking with others
- ◆ Being able to share ideas with different people and having different presenters
- ◆ Getting together with secondary colleagues and working together
- ◆ Working and talking with other teachers and being able to discuss "key questions"
- ◆ Powerpoint photos and quotes at end

The evaluation – something you have taken away from today



- ◆ Constructive ideas to begin to implement in my classroom
- ◆ Development of rich tasks
- ◆ What others are doing
- ◆ Change/flexibility of school day to allow external visits etc
- ◆ Courage to link more fully with other faculties
- ◆ Achieving the 4 capacities within existing courses
- ◆ Ideas on how to take ACfE forward in the school
- ◆ Use the language of the 4 capacities in day to day classroom activities
- ◆ New ideas for the way forward
- ◆ The importance of cross-curricular/rich tasks
- ◆ Ideas to take forward
- ◆ Ideas how to promote the 4 capacities
- ◆ What is happening on Islay regarding vocational courses
- ◆ I like the idea of more flexibility in the curriculum
- ◆ Practical ways in which to implement the ideas
- ◆ Look for the 4 capacities in the pupils
- ◆ Practical ideas for co-operative learning
- ◆ Implement primary department initiatives
- ◆ Fresh ideas and approaches
- ◆ Enthusiasm to develop some of my own ideas
- ◆ Listening to examples of good practice
- ◆ Practical action to follow up in school and a review date set to meet with team
- ◆ I will take away the 4 capacities and incorporate them into the pupils learning as best I can
- ◆ Good practical ideas I can try straight away
- ◆ New ideas
- ◆ Action points for the schools
- ◆ Ideas from sharing with others
- ◆ Fresh ideas
- ◆ Better understanding of curriculum for excellence



The evaluation – something I want to know more about

- ◆ Information and support as ACfE is implemented
- ◆ So many questions – looking forward now to finding some answers
- ◆ More examples of what other teachers are doing
- ◆ Can I help?
- ◆ How are we going to involve/educate parents
- ◆ When can I retire?
- ◆ More details about the practical classroom implications of ACfE
- ◆ What form of assessment will there be?
- ◆ Will we get subject –specific guidelines on what is good practice?
- ◆ When will we actually get in depth guidance on what is required of us?
- ◆ What will the new levels look like?
- ◆ How do we deliver this effectively- as most seem to embrace these ideas?
- ◆ Am not sure about when these capacities will be assessed?
- ◆ Timescale for implementation?
- ◆ What will happen in physics regarding what will be covered in the curriculum?
- ◆ Still the question of how this is given the quality time it needs over SQA and HMIE demands
- ◆ What will be in the curriculum?
- ◆ Planning
- ◆ How do we involve the parents?
- ◆ When will the next changes come?
- ◆ Really keen to hear how ‘powers that be’ are going to take this all forward especially in terms of exams and vocational training
- ◆ When will we get answers to some more of the questions?
- ◆ What’s the plan; authority level, school level, faculty level, personal level?

- ◆ Help/guidance for teachers/managers as planning will inevitably change
- ◆ What form of assessment will there be?

The evaluation – something I want to put in the bin



- ◆ Barriers to collegiate meetings and co-operation
- ◆ Discussion was a little controlled by our group's facilitator
- ◆ More jargon to learn!
- ◆ Nothing!
- ◆ Nothing - it was all wonderful!!
- ◆ Don't assume a common starting point for all
- ◆ Having to come up with a question on some things I was already clear on
- ◆ Afternoon session could have been shorter
- ◆ SQA
- ◆ Faculty group session - too much on what were already doing
- ◆ Can't think of anything!
- ◆ Any unnecessary jargon
- ◆ More jargon!