

## **COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

### **KS3 REGIONAL PILOT**

Name of school      Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School

Name of teacher    Eugene Leneghan

Name of collaborative project

“Environment Matters” – Year 10 Animation Project

What did pupils do?

- In Geography, pupils discussed environmental issues. These ranged from Global Warming to local litter problems and recycling.
- In English, pupils wrote their own pieces of creative writing on an environmental theme. In their groups, the pupils chose the most effective and appropriate piece of written work.  
They then discussed this story, storyboarded it and scripted it.
- In Art and Design, pupils made models of their characters using plasticine and wire. They also constructed sets.
- The timetable was collapsed to facilitate filming using stop-motion technology. Film editing continued after this.
- In Music, the groups composed pieces of music that could be used as backing music and/or theme music. This music was then edited into the final film.

What did teachers do?

- Large amounts of time needed for planning by teachers involved in the project.
- Teachers who were not involved in the project had to be understanding and accommodating in allowing pupils out of regular timetabled classes to facilitate filming and editing. These two aspects of the process proved to be the most demanding of time.

- Deciding upon groups and group members was difficult because the groups had to be based on option blocks so that group integrity could be retained when moving from subject to subject.
- Supervising pupils during filming and editing, in other orders we were facilitators, allowing pupils to get on with it. Classroom Assistants were invaluable at this point in the project.

### Challenges

- The biggest challenge was not having enough time, despite being granted three days of collapsed timetable time. This problem was further complicated by the fact that we had only five Macs at our disposal. However, the *Northern Ireland Television and Film Commission* helped us by lending equipment to the school.
- Computer know-how was never really a problem, however snags arose from time to time! Pupils were able to resolve many of these issues quickly thanks to a technician being on hand.
- Using plasticine had its advantages in terms of ease of movement of the characters, but there were many hassles as well. Small specks of plasticine often fell on our carpeted floors. It was virtually impossible to remove with the result that our cleaners were rather annoyed!
- There was not enough time to finish filming in one day, meaning that sets had to be moved around. This resulted in discrepancies in film continuity.
- Pupils got impatient with the fact that the stop-motion animation made character movement jagged and less smooth than they would have intended.

### Benefits/positive observations

- The celebration day gave the pupils a very real target to focus on. Having parents present made it even more worthwhile.
- ICT skills have improved amongst the pupils involved.
- The pupils have learned about film making and may be able to 'deconstruct' film media in the future.

- This project gave pupils opportunities to develop a first-hand understanding of the importance of teamwork in the workplace. They saw how the quality of the work suffered when members of the group did not gel. From a teaching point of view, it was also very interesting to observe how well groups got on with each other, or not!
- A number of pupils have spoken about the fact that the experience that they have gained by undertaking this animation project has given them enough interest in this area to consider following a degree or career in media.

#### Things we will do differently next time around

- It will be necessary to create more collapsed timetable time in order for all groups to finish their filming. This year, filming had to be finished during classtime and this was awkward.
- A material other than plasticine will be used.
- It will be necessary to have more Apple Mac computers available for the pupils.
- It was ambitious having a whole year group engaged in this activity and at times it was difficult to keep everyone on track. Next year it is possible that there may only be five or six groups involved in the project instead of 24!
- Another possibility might be to have just one film that the whole year group works on. Each group would have a different role, for example, one group would engage in the creative writing, another would carry out the filming, another would undertake the editing and so on.

#### How did/can you share this practice within your school?

- The school felt that it was important to celebrate the pupils' efforts by having an 'Oscar Day' event at which all the animations were screened. This was a good idea for the following reasons:
  - parents had the opportunity to see the children's work;
  - the teachers involved in the project got a chance to see the final products;

- it brought the project to a definite conclusion and celebrated everyone's achievements; and
- it gave everyone a target to aim at in terms of getting the project completed with a given timespan.
- This event was also character building because each group had to get up in front of the audience and introduce their film. A panel of external judges (BELB officers and NIFTC representatives) was present on the day, as well as about 40 parents and guests from other schools and CCEA. After the screening and much deliberation the judges made the decisions on Best Overall Film, Best Music, Best Set Design, Best Models, Best Effects and Best Story.

How could this type of work contribute to accreditation?

Assessment wasn't a given much emphasis because of the experimental nature of the initiative. Next year, as we embark on the project again, we intend to focus on the following:

- Group cohesion – during collapsed timetable sessions, groups will be told that teachers will observe and mark how well group members participate and synergise
- Pupils will receive marks for the following criteria:
  - Explore (research, select and investigate different film techniques, stories and styles);
  - Express;
  - Exchange (sharing through communication e.g. upload film to school website);
  - Evaluate (indicate through online questionnaire their own personal contribution to the project – these could be emailed back to teachers); and
  - Exhibit (presentation of their film to their peers and other invited guests).
- Pupils will begin this task in Halloween and finish it by Easter.