

BANGOR ACADEMY COLLABORATIVE UNIT EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

Bangor Academy is a co-educational non-selective school which is located on a split site. Years 8 and 9 are taught on the junior campus. There are approximately 180 pupils in Year 8. These pupils are divided across four broad ability bands of 8 classes.

The school decided to deliver the "It's a Wrap" collaborative unit to Year 8 pupils. This unit was written by Arts specialists from CCEA and CASS, and challenged pupils to create an advertisement for a product aimed at the teenage market.

It is recommended that this evaluation of "It's a Wrap" be read alongside

www.nicurriculum.org.uk/docs/connected_learning/guidance/ArtsCollaborativeUnit20061101.pdf

FIRST STEPS

A team of teachers came together to develop and lead the unit of work. These members of staff were drawn mainly from the Arts Area of Learning and there was a balance between youth and experience. The team included an ICT specialist and a member of SMT. This proved useful when negotiating issues such as timetabling and resources.

The teachers involved participated in the CCEA awareness raising day at 'Studio ON' and this allowed them to consider the various approaches that they might adopt when planning and delivering the unit.

Following initial planning for the unit, the Mathematics and Home Economics departments were invited to get involved and one representative from each department joined the team. The team held two further half-day planning sessions and subject representatives were responsible for sharing information with their own department or Head of Department (HOD).

During the planning meetings it was agreed that the unit would be delivered over a 10-week period culminating in an Oscars-style awards ceremony. The process and the timeline for the unit were mapped out. It was decided that the most appropriate time to deliver the unit

was during the spring term. Other schools may find the summer term more suitable, but on the junior campus of Bangor Academy, teaching staff do not benefit from having a reduced timetable during the third term.

Departments involved in this unit reported that the planning, preparation and delivery of this unit generated a considerable workload for teachers. These are issues which should be given consideration by those planning for this type of unit in the future.

WHAT BANGOR ACADEMY HAD TO WORK AROUND TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Timetabling: Split Classes

Forward planning was necessary as Maths, English and Music were taught in whole classes but Art, Home Economics and ICT were taught in split classes. Splits had to be looked at closely to ensure that all the pupils involved were working together in the same groups across all of the six subjects. Sometimes it was the case that the size of groups had to be altered to achieve this. Thus some groups had three or five pupils as opposed to four.

Timetabling: Collapsed Timetable

Learning for Life and Work for all Year 8 classes was timetabled on Wednesday afternoons. This provided flexibility as it was possible to suspend the timetable to facilitate the launch of the 'It's a Wrap' unit and subsequent rehearsals.

However, some Year 9 classes were disrupted because a few teachers required cover due to their involvement with the delivery of the Year 8 collaborative unit. It is possible that the disruption to learning and teaching in other year groups could present a greater problem for schools which operate on a single campus.

Time for Preparation and Planning

The Senior Management Team in Bangor Academy made time available for teachers to meet and plan together before undertaking work for this collaborative unit. Three formal meetings were held and the teachers involved also met informally on a regular basis. Considerable time was spent on sourcing, designing and making resources. Use of technicians in ICT, Art and Design and Home Economics was maximised throughout the unit and the experience and expertise of these people was of great benefit to the pupils.

Communication

Roles and responsibilities were clearly assigned and articulated at the outset of this piece of work and proved essential to the success of this unit. The school caretaker, classroom assistants, librarian and office staff all played an important part in the smooth-running of "It's a Wrap!"

All of the teaching staff in the school were kept informed about the collaborative unit right from the outset of the academic year. Updates were made during the weekly staff briefing and via internal memos. This ensured the continued cooperation and goodwill of those not involved when pupils were 'off timetable' or out of class in connection with the unit. Form tutors ensured regular and accurate information was passed on to the pupils.

Associated Costs

Bangor Academy largely met the cost of materials through normal departmental budgets, however there was additional expenditure which the Senior Management Team of the school agreed to fund.

This included:

- Staff cover
- 240 manilla folders (1 per subject for every group= 6 x 40)
- Hire of 40 display boards for round robin day
- Cost of fresh fruit and ingredients for making drinks on the round robin day
- Prizes for Oscars ceremony
- Photocopying

Some of the costs were off-set by securing sponsorship from a local supermarket.

Sourcing Equipment

Staff in Bangor Academy had access to two digital camcorders within the school but were unable to gain access to/borrow sufficient additional camcorders. As a result, the collaborative unit was modified. The pupils learned the basic principles of film-making using a fixed shot, single camera and tripod, but did not actually get the 'hands-on' experience of recording that was originally planned for them. The ICT technician recorded the final advertisements for all of the groups.

Storyboard Display

Early in the process of this collaborative unit, staff in Bangor Academy identified certain concerns about how to keep the pupils involved fully occupied during the first seven weeks. For example:

- in Art and Design, it was anticipated that it would be difficult for all four pupils in each group to work on the final label or package once they had reached agreement on the design;
- in ICT, only one pupil from each group would be actively involved in keying-up/word processing the script.

The staff involved overcame this problem by deciding that each group would have to produce a storyboard display. This storyboard was required to show evidence of the research and planning for the advertisement. This was very worthwhile in terms of developing the pupils' skills of Managing Information while keeping in their minds the audience and purpose of the information. Pupils evaluated the displays and selected the most effective. These were used on the evening of the parent/teacher consultation to inform parents about the work completed during the collaborative unit.

POSITIVES/BENEFITS OF PROJECT

Enjoyment

One of the main challenges of the Revised Curriculum is to move away from a curriculum which is fragmented into subject strands which are always taught in parallel towards one which is more connected, enjoyable, motivating and relevant.

At the end of the "It's a Wrap" unit, pupils evaluated the whole experience and a selection of their comments have been listed below. It is evident both from observing the pupils during the project and from reading their comments that pupils shared a great sense of enjoyment, motivation and excitement which empowered them and gave them control over their own learning. As a result, their self-esteem was raised and confidence was instilled.

Pupils' Comments:

- *'The best thing was winning an Oscar.'*
- *'I liked having a big part in the video.'*
- *'Working in a team was good fun.'*

- *'The best thing I liked was when we did it last two periods on a Wednesday.'*
- *'The best thing was when we got the prizes.'*
- *'It was good when we got to have loads of responsibilities.'*
- *'tasting other people's drinks was fun.'*
- *'I enjoyed getting to know other people and working together.'*
- *'It was cool performing your advert in front of the camera.'*
- *'I liked designing our display board.'*
- *'It was good coming off timetable to rehearse.'*
- *'It was exciting acting in front of other people and getting dressed up for the advert.'*
- *'I really liked doing the advert because I really like acting.'*
- *'I enjoyed designing the label and would like to become a graphic designer.'*
- *'I enjoyed getting ideas for the script and putting them together to make one script.'*
- *'It was good watching the Oscars ceremony and seeing the adverts.'*
- *'It was good fun making up the name for our drink.'*
- *'It was really funny performing our jingle.'*
- *'I don't like my voice on video.'*
- *'I didn't like having only three people in my group.'*
- *'I didn't like it when people argued.'*
- *It would have be better if we had had more Wednesdays to practise.'*
- *'I didn't like it when I was sometimes not being included.'*
- *'It was embarrassing when I forgot my lines.'*
- *'It annoyed me when people didn't pull their weight.'*
- *'I think we should have been doing the filming on the same day we set up our board.'*

Skills Development

Throughout the project, pupils had opportunities to work towards specific outcomes to develop the skills of:

- Communication

- Being Creative
- Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making
- Working with Others

Pupils were provided with a variety of different activities to stimulate their thinking. These included:

- reviewing the work of professionals
- brainstorming
- planning
- comparing and evaluating ideas
- dealing with conflicting ideas
- seeing things from other people's points of view
- having the time and space to be creative

This was achieved in a learning environment which supported thinking. Pupils were given opportunities to talk and ask questions, to act out their ideas, to generate possible solutions, to try out different approaches and to reflect on their thinking and learning at various stages during the process of the unit.

Pupils also had opportunities to develop various aspects of the cross-curricular skills of Using Mathematics and Using ICT, and the remaining Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities of Managing Information and Self-Management.

Knowledge and Understanding

Pupils developed their knowledge and understanding of:

- factors which influence consumer choices and decisions when buying a soft drink
- what constitutes a healthy balanced diet
- what it is like to make a healthy drink
- net diagrams and how to transfer/adapt that knowledge to designing a package
- how to design and make packaging and labels that will effectively sell a healthy drink
- how to write a script
- how to write music that is going to be used to sell something
- how to take part in an advert and have the advert filmed

Other Benefits

- o Teachers working and planning together.

- Pupils taking greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils learning to work cooperatively to achieve common goals.
- Pupils having more control over their own learning
- Pupils made connections and understood relevance thanks to a central theme and a common finishing point across a number of subjects.
- Links with Employability.
- Informal feedback from parents was very supportive.

WHAT BANGOR ACADEMY WILL DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME

Market Research

In creating a healthy drink and advertising campaign for the teenage market, pupils' choices should be influenced by market research. This did not happen because:

- it was not made clear who had responsibility for each of the different aspects of market research right at the outset;
- communication between the Maths and Home Economics departments did not always result in clearly defined action planning.

Next year, Bangor Academy plan to carry out market research related to the collaborative unit before Christmas. Research will vary from subject to subject, for example:

- in English, pupils will look at ambiguity in wording questionnaires;
- in Maths, pupils will devise questions and carry out a survey;
- in ICT, pupils will present the data using Microsoft Excel, analyse it and word process a report for their story boards.

Duration of Unit

This year, the timetabled elements of the "It's a Wrap" unit were delivered over a period of seven weeks. Some pupils found this a long time over which to sustain their interest.

Next year, Bangor Academy plan to reduce the duration of this unit to six weeks and to set the pupils weekly targets in each subject. This will help to focus pupils and to develop their time management skills by encouraging them to consider the importance of working to deadlines.

Improving Pupil Connections between ICT and Art

In ICT pupils learned how to use fonts creatively in the run-up to Christmas. However, they did not actually get to apply this knowledge to their package design work in Art until February, by which stage, some had forgotten what they had learned.

Bangor Academy has decided that the two subjects need to communicate more regularly and to try to synchronise their delivery of these topics in order that pupils find it easier to make connections and transfer knowledge and skills.

Pupil Groups – Size and Make-up

Four pupils was agreed to be the optimum group size and this worked very well. There were sufficient tasks and responsibilities to keep everyone in the group fully occupied, and thus, quiet individuals did not feel intimidated or left out.

Groups of three had to double up on some of the roles and responsibilities within the groups, and these small groups often found it more frustrating and problematic when a member of their group was absent.

Next year, it has been decided that the group size will be increased to five for logistical reasons.

The English teachers decided on the groups and tried out a number of permutations.

Some of the observations that they made were that:

- single sex groups of girls generally worked better than single sex groups of boys who tended to distract each other;
- it was preferable not to have a single girl in a group of boys/ one boy in a group of girls because the individual can end up being ignored/left out;
- it was preferable to have a cross-section of different personalities working together;
- the groups decided by teachers gave pupils the opportunity to get to know a range of their peers and helped to avoid anyone feeling “left out;”

We made a conscious effort to avoid grouping together pupils who could potentially unsettle each other.

Drama Workshops

In Bangor Academy, the two specialist Drama teachers from the senior campus worked with the pupil groups during the rehearsals on the round-robin day. This proved very beneficial.

Next year, Bangor Academy plans to build in a Drama workshop afternoon at an earlier stage in the unit to give additional support to the pupils. More general voice work and awareness of audience/camera during a performance would be of benefit to the advertisements that the pupils are producing.

Round-Robin Day

- **Discretionary Period**

While planning for the "It's a Wrap" unit, Bangor Academy had built in an extra period that pupils could use at their own discretion during the round-robin day. It had been thought that pupils might have wanted to use the additional time for rehearsing or for mounting their storyboard displays. However, this proved unnecessary as there had been ample preparation time.

Next year, Bangor Academy plan to run the round-robin day as two half-days, with half of the year group participating on each day. With an increased Year 8 intake next year, this should make the activities more manageable.

- **Evaluation of storyboard display**

All of the storyboards were displayed in the sports hall. Viewing and evaluation took place at the same time. Pupils found it difficult to concentrate because of the large number of people present.

Next year, teachers will bring the pupils to the sports hall two classes at a time. They will be given an evaluation sheet to complete and the environment will be more conducive to constructive evaluation and reasoned decision-making.

- **Teamwork assessment**

Each group was given a six-minute slot in which to organise their props, position their instruments and perform their advertisement. An external assessor marked them on teamwork

and one of the success criteria was linked to time management, requiring the group to complete the performance of the advertisement within the six minutes.

Next year, this will be made more challenging by stipulating that they must make optimum use of this time by rehearsing the advert at least once, as well as performing it within the given six minutes.

- **Filming**

Those who wanted to dress up and use make-up during the round-robin assessment day were unable to do so due the pressurised schedule on the day. Filming took place during the following week.

Next year, Bangor Academy will endeavour to film groups on the same day as the assessment as far as is possible.

Pupil Assessment

The SMT in Bangor Academy had agreed not to make assessment a priority in the first year of running this collaborative unit.

Next year, assessment development will be a priority and the "It's a Wrap unit" will be used as a means of assessing aspects of the cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT.

Links with Parents

Bangor Academy mounted the winning storyboard displays at the Year 8 parent teacher consultation meeting which took place immediately after the Easter holidays.

Next year, the school intends to send a letter home with pupils before the delivery of "It's a Wrap" giving clear information about the aims of the collaborative unit. Hopefully parents will be encouraged to get involved in discussing ideas with their children and in helping them with costumes and props.