

Connected Learning

Case Study

Christ the Redeemer Primary School,
Belfast

Year 5 ICL Pilot

Background

Christ the Redeemer Primary School is located on the outskirts of Belfast. Approximately 25% of the children receive free school meals. We are a new school, established in 1999 and moved into a new build in September 2003. We have currently 524 boys and girls in the school with 2/3 form entry. Over recent years we have tried to take on board new initiatives within the school such as thinking skills and activity based learning.

ICL

We chose The Blue Planet – The main reason we chose this ICL was because the majority of our topics in P5 had been history based (Hunters and Gatherers, History of Belfast) therefore the focus on 'The World Around Us' was refreshing. It immediately appealed to us as teachers, which was important to us in trialling new material. The ICL itself provided lots of scope across all areas of the curriculum. It also seemed very relevant and not as abstract as previous topics. We thought the children would really enjoy it.

Planning

To start, we looked through the ICL and chose the learning we wanted to focus on and took time to specify our success criteria. Then, we decided on the activities that might appeal to our children most. Within the Learning Areas (The Arts, Personal Development and The World around Us) we added our own ideas and the additional ideas generated by the children from the planning board. We decided to focus on 'Working with Others' from the skills and capabilities strand. We planned the first two weeks of our topic in detail and an outline for the next four weeks. We kept to our timetable of Literacy and Numeracy in the morning and worked on the Blue Planet in the afternoon. Within that, we kept our school focus of having activity based learning groups working throughout the day on the Blue Planet and incorporated our Literacy and Numeracy where

appropriate. Although the ICLs did not have ideas for connecting PE to the theme we could see excellent opportunities and so we added in our own PE, based on creative dance to water music.

Starting Points

Our starting point, as normal, was the planning board. We gathered the children around to discuss our topic under the headings 'What we know', 'What we want to find out' and 'What we would like to do'. We used our new interactive white boards to stimulate enthusiasm with PowerPoint presentations, internet research, pictures and videos. As a result of our planning board the children came up with the idea of a trip to a beach. We allowed them to develop this idea and they planned the trip in terms of what we would do, why we would do it and put together a feasibility study to put to the principal. They were delighted when the trip was approved and this gave them ownership of the whole topic. We went to the beach on a glorious day and the children completed all the activities they suggested. We collected water samples, sorted shells and pebbles, took digital video and pictures using the 'digital blue' camera, made sketches, recorded sounds and carried out a scavenger hunt.

Development

We used the samples we collected in all our work when we got back to school. We created our own sea-scape in the resource area, used the sand in our science experiments and made power points with the pictures and videos. All our work came from the trip. Taking the trip at the start of the topic rather than as usual at the end of the topic made it much more relevant for the children as they could relate back to their experience as the topic progressed.

Evaluation

- The trip at the start of the topic was essential.
- Taking time to come up with success criteria at the planning stage helped us to focus as the topic progressed.
- The planning board helped to give the children ownership of the overall topic especially their idea of the beach trip.

- The children were generally very enthusiastic toward the topic as were the teachers.
- Displaying the success criteria during individual lessons helped focus the children's learning and enabled them to self/peer evaluate. We used the '2 stars and a wish' idea from the ICL training.
- We got parents involved by holding a 'Blue Planet Day'. The children dressed up and we held 'Water' events!
- We would make more use of the listed resources within the ICL as we tended to create/find our own.
- We would plan less content next time.