

# Connected Learning

## Case Study

St Mary's Primary School, Dunsford

# Year 5 ICL Pilot

## Background

St. Mary's Primary school, Dunsford is a small rural school and our current enrolment is 86: 42 boys and 44 girls.

## ICL

We chose 'The Blue Planet' mainly because our school is located very close to the coast and I felt that we could utilise areas from our locality.

## Planning

I was aware of the process of planning for the ICL as our school was involved in the Primary Four ICL Pilot last year.

As Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities are central components of the revised curriculum, we decided to focus on 'Working with others' and 'Self Management'. We felt it was important that I encouraged children to develop their skills of collaborating, sharing and co-operating whilst working as part of a group as well as creating opportunities for children to talk about their learning and equip them with the language for suggesting methods of improvement. One of the methods we adopted was 'two stars and a wish' (a strategy of Assessment for Learning).

Clear learning intentions were outlined using 'We Are Learning To' (W.A.L.T) at the start of each session and children's input was used to derive appropriate success criteria. The ICLs provided helpful learning intentions that we adapted for our own specific needs when planning.

## Starting Points

Our first question was, 'What does the 'Blue Planet' mean?' Most children could make the connection between 'Blue Planet' and water. We devised some key questions, which we could explore over the six-week period:

- Why do we need water?
- How do we use water?
- Do we always appreciate water?

Using the planning board gave the children an opportunity to share their ideas and have an input into their learning. We put the key questions onto large water drops and placed them on to the planning board. (*'What we know?', 'What we want to find out?', 'What we need?', 'How can we find out more?', 'How are we going to arrange our classroom?' and 'How will we show our learning?'*). It was important at this stage to guide the children's ideas and make the link between what the teacher wanted from the ICL and what the children wanted to find out.

## Development

Within The Arts section of the ICL the book Robinson Crusoe, written by Daniel Defoe, is suggested so we ordered the children's version and it proved a great source of inspiration for everyone involved. A writing sack was created with activities for each chapter. The children created a story box and retold the story in their own words. As an extension to this we came up with the idea of building a shack similar to Robinson Crusoe's. The children were very enthusiastic and loved the idea of bringing the classroom outside. Parents helped gather a supply of willow to start the build. The children chose willow because they thought it might grow and become a living structure. The Ecos-Centre in Ballymena supplied the rest of the willow required at a small cost. After the holes were dug, we were ready for action. The children worked in groups to weave the willow through the posts, this provided rich opportunities to discuss and practice sharing, collaborating and working together to achieve their goal. We recorded the development of the shack using the digital camera and reflected on our skills of 'working with others'.

Throughout the six week topic the children were able to refer to the planning board, which allowed them to plan ahead and set targets. It also allowed them to reflect on tasks completed and to celebrate success.

The children were very interested in pollution, so we discussed their ideas on pollution and how it affects the world around us. The 'WWW UK Focus On Coasts' Pack, suggested within the ICLs, a very useful resource. We then concentrated our research on the case study of the Exxon Valdez Disaster. Working in groups the children carried out studies and produced a poster displaying interesting facts they discovered.

Continuing on the theme of water we then arranged a visit to Ballyhornan Beach. The children carried out a beach survey, which included sketching the coastline, gathering samples and recording their day using the digital camera. On return to the school the children used the ICT facilities to produce a slideshow presentation of the days events which was premiered to other classes in the school using our Interactive White Board. The children used the digital microscopes to look closely at the shells, sand and kelp. Working in groups they designed a wall hanging/collage about their visit to the beach.

The children enjoyed having an overall topic that involved so many curriculum areas. Each child brought their own skills and experiences to the project enhancing their sense of belonging with the group while at the same time, increasing confidence and self-esteem. This was evident in the active participation of the children in all aspects of the task and the obvious sense of pride and achievement at the end of the task.

If I were to teach this topic again I would consider inviting external speakers into the classroom to speak on topics such as pollution and recycling.

## **Pilot Involvement to Date**

The Enriched Curriculum Pilot was introduced into Primary One in September 2003 and extended to Primary Two. Since then it has been successfully introduced into Primary Three and Primary Four.

The first 'Ideas for Connecting Learning' (ICL) trial was introduced to Primary Four in 2004/2005.  
We are also involved in the Assessment for Learning Pilot-This began in September 2004.

The Foundation Stage Pupil Profile Trial (ICT version) is currently in progress in the Primary One/Two classroom.