

Au Café – A Curriculum for Excellence Project

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Introduction

In April 2007 I had been asked by a *Curriculum for Excellence* Modern Foreign Language (MFL) local authority working group to trial the following MFL draft outcome:

I have worked with others using ICT where appropriate and can contribute successfully to a presentation in English supported by the use of the language I am learning on an aspect of life in the country where the language I am learning is spoken.

After discussion with both Primary 7 (P7) teachers we decided that the trial would centre on the cross-cutting theme of food. This was already part of our French P7 curriculum. We decided to take what was already good, build upon it and enhance it by developing the four capacities. We decided also to work in an 'interdisciplinary' manner. (All outcomes and activities undertaken are detailed in the planning document attached to this report). This was to be done with both P7 classes from April to June 2008.

GLOW¹

We knew that at this time GLOW would be introduced to our school. We decided to create our own GLOW group, and to use this group innovatively to enhance learning and teaching. Activities and opportunities to develop skills and knowledge were set up in GLOW to develop the Au Café theme.

The GLOW group was really a mini virtual learning environment. The children were able to access GLOW at home (with their parents, on occasion) as well as at school to work independently and collaboratively with their peers. There were three children who did not have home access. They were given access to the computer suite in school to complete homework activities which were set. Everyone completed the work in the trial MFL outcome as well as others from Language, Technology and Expressive Arts.

¹ Glow is the world's first national intranet for education, benefitting teachers, learners, parents, school administrators, managers and local authorities. It is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by Learning & Teaching Scotland. For further information visit the website <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/glowscotland/>

ICT

Children were asked to produce reports digitally in English supported by French. They did this by accessing web sites from web links created by teachers in GLOW. They also used search engines, books, leaflets etc. about French Café Culture. They were asked to enhance their work by adding images and captions. Some children completed this task independently; others worked with learning partners to produce reports. Children were given freedom as to which software they would use to complete this work e.g. Word, Textease, PowerPoint, Photostory.

French Conversations

The children were then asked to create in groups, French Café conversations using as much French as they could. They were encouraged to use language from work they had completed not only in P7 but also P6. They were asked to include 'Greetings', 'The Weather', 'Family' elements, 'Numbers and colours' and anything else they felt was relevant to their conversation.

We enlisted the help of two of our French-speaking parents to help the children with their pronunciation and also with 'is this what they would really say' in France?

Children developed their ICT and drama skills by recording their conversations. They used either Audacity (a free download from the internet) together with microphones attached to PCs or web cams and Moviemaker to create short videos. Children particularly enjoyed this part of the project. They knew that their conversations would be heard and seen by a wide audience because they were to be uploaded to GLOW. They were therefore motivated to create work of a high standard.

They were also free to work on their conversations and record them with only their group peers present. This gave them confidence. What may have previously been 'embarrassing' for them to do, i.e. give a live presentation of their French conversations, simply became 'fun'. Many groups added elements of drama which I am sure would never have surfaced during live performances. The finished recordings were of a high standard and the children were all extremely proud of what they had achieved.

Collaborative Presentations

The children then worked collaboratively to pull together what they had learned and create presentations to showcase their combined knowledge. The finished presentations were in English but again supported by the use of French and were presented to their peers and also at school gatherings.

Links to CfE

The children successfully learned by completing homework about French Café Culture using the internet in GLOW. They completed other activities and took on board other opportunities which had been created around the theme. They learned as they worked about internet protocol, procedures and safety, thus becoming responsible citizens. The French conversation activities were contributed to effectively with small groups of their peers as well as two of our French speaking parents. The children worked independently to create reports in Textease, Office – Word and PowerPoint, Notepad, Paint and Photostory. They then used the work they had completed independently to contribute effectively to group presentations for the completion of the main outcome.

Assessment

The children used the tools available in the 'GLOW discussion forum' and 'GLOW meet' (a live web conferencing tool) to get feedback and reflect on their work. The feedback was given not only from their peers within Barnhill but also from the P7 children from Forthill Primary School in Dundee and Lairdsland in East Dunbartonshire. The feedback from the children at Forthill, we all agreed, was very objective and informative. It was therefore more useful than that provided by peers at Barnhill to allow the children to improve their work and their performance.

Our work was given positive feedback at the Scottish CLT conference in June and was sent to the cabinet minister by LTS as an example of good CfE practice in Scottish schools.

2008-2009 Developments

During the current session (at time of writing), our P7 pupils have used the GLOW group set-up around this theme to complete the project.

We have added extra elements to enhance the learning and teaching taking place. Our French-speaking parents have recorded their own short movie of a typical French café conversation. This has been uploaded to GLOW to allow children to carry out a listening activity. They have to answer various questions in English about what they have heard in French. They record their answers digitally and upload their work to GLOW. Formative feedback is then given by teachers via the GLOW discussion tool.

Children have also been asked to design their own French café by browsing web links which show pictures of various pieces of French café furniture and typical French cafés. They can draw their cafés or use software to create them. Finished designs will be incorporated into their final presentations.

At the end of the project children will be asked to take part in a GLOW survey about their perceived success of this project. The results of this survey will inform future development.

New technology has added an ease of use to the project. We 'bought' with Computer for School vouchers Easi-Speak voice recorders which can be uploaded automatically as MP3 files to any PC. We also 'bought' two digital cameras which record short video clips and these give children greater flexibility to record their café conversations.

Not only have the children thoroughly enjoyed working in this way – it has been a real pleasure for teachers to watch the independent learning which it has encouraged in them. The project has motivated children with behavioural issues as well as those who sometimes appear disaffected with other teaching methods. It has provided teachers with motivation to go on to create other cross-cutting Curriculum for Excellence projects. We hope to extend our use of GLOW to enhance the learning and teaching at Barnhill Primary School.



Children recording their scripts