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'Those who have the special privilege of educating the young have an obligation to be reflective about their stance toward teaching...'

**Howard Gardner – Harvard University Graduate School of Education**

As a school, we believe it is important to provide opportunities for all staff to operate as reflective professionals in all areas of their work. In our approaches to development planning, planning for school improvement and 'Standards & Quality' reporting we use the indicators in HGIOS 3 and The Journey to Excellence and they have become central to our work on school review and to our monitoring strategies when gauging progress in taking forward priorities in school and department plans. Our senior management team, within the faculty structure, adopt a very supportive role in the whole process of review through scrutinies, conducted with the head of department, of the department development plan and PRD documentation and, crucially, through classroom observations. We are constantly looking for ways to present staff with a range of contexts in which they can reflect upon matters pedagogical, 'their stance toward teaching', in short, their craft.

The four capacities which are the cornerstones of *Curriculum for Excellence* and, more especially the development of these capacities in all, provided us with a welcome opportunity and challenge to reflect upon our approaches to learning and teaching. As a school, we have always given the highest priority to learning and teaching when drawing up our School and Department Development Plans and have also been at pains to ensure that the areas which we have highlighted for development and improvement will impact directly and positively, of course, upon learning and teaching. Furthermore, these planning documents feature prominently in the annual Professional Review discussion that takes place at all levels within the school, being used to set the agenda for these meetings. It is from these discussions that all staff identify the activities in which they would wish to become involved in order to take forward their own continuing professional development.

Having all staff trained in Co-operative Learning strategies is a major school priority and this is always included in the Professional Review and Development discussion. As a result of this, we now have a large number of staff who have been trained in Co-operative Learning approaches and they are enthusiastic about the scope that it presents for making teaching and learning more enjoyable as it places the learner very much at the centre of the learning activity. Also, with its emphasis on the teaching of social skills as well as on 'academic goals' or 'learning intentions', it is an approach to learning and teaching which is ideally suited to developing the four capacities. To help staff to maintain the momentum of taking this area of learning and teaching forward, we have Co-operative Learning as a focus when we undertake classroom observation activities as a part of our school and department review and our Learning & Teaching Working Group is looking at ways of

raising the profile of Co-operative Learning strategies throughout the school by creative use of display areas.

Bearing in mind that we are in the business of lifelong learning, which necessarily involves the development of the four capacities in all of us, Co-operative Learning is an approach which is as valuable in working with groups of adults, including teachers, as it is with children. In organising our in-service days we have begun to use co-operative learning strategies. Our awareness raising launch of Assessment is for Learning saw our staff working in both cross-departmental and departmental groups and playing a very active part in taking forward their understanding of the key principles of AifL. We also used this opportunity to 'model' not only Co-operative Learning strategies but also some of the elements of AifL, particularly 'sharing the learning intentions' by following the guidance in AifL in designing the 'worksheets' which would guide staff through the activities. The activities were designed not only to raise staff awareness of the guiding principles of AifL but also to provide them with opportunities to share good practice with colleagues from other departments.

From this very active approach to in-service, the staff certainly were successful learners as they explored important areas of AifL: within their small groups they confidently shared their experiences of using assessment to take forward pupils' learning, they made very effective contributions to the activities that they were asked to be involved in and they took very seriously their responsibility to reflect upon the challenges which were presented to them. In short, the four capacities were writ large in our preparations for this staff development activity. From the feedback we received, many staff felt that the morning was particularly successful and said how much they had enjoyed the participative nature of the programme.

Staff are also presented with opportunities to reflect upon the craft of learning and teaching by becoming involved in a team-based learning opportunity (paralleling the pupil experience in Co-operative Learning activities) offered by Harvard Graduate School of Education and The Tapestry Partnership – *Teaching for Understanding 1*. In working through their sessions, the staff work with the Teaching for Understanding Framework, which has four interacting elements that inform the teachers' thinking about fundamental questions. The four questions, which are taken from Dave Perkins' own Overview, are:

- What topics shall we teach?
- What about those topics should students learn?
- What will students do to learn?
- How will we know what students have learned?

The work undertaken by the teachers is used *within and across subject areas* so the entire course has a very practical dimension. It represents another tool that they can 'add to their repertoire of resources and strategies for engaging students in meaningful and lasting experiences'.<sup>1</sup> But one of the main benefits

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<sup>1</sup> Blythe, T & Associates (1988) *The Teaching for Understanding Guide* p.xii

of the course is that the staff work in teams, with colleagues acting as critical friends, just as pupils work with peers and their teachers in evaluating their own learning and mapping out their next steps. In the current session, four colleagues from the English department are involved in the course but last year we had staff from the mathematics, history and art departments exploring cross-curricular themes. I believe that this gives some idea of the scope for staff development which involvement in these programmes affords both to the individual members of staff, and to schools in addressing some of the challenges presented by *Curriculum for Excellence*.

The cross-curricular aspect that I mentioned above and, indeed, cross-sectoral dimension are crucial to the successful development of the four capacities in all who are involved in the business of learning and teaching. Involving staff in CPD opportunities that challenge them to reflect upon their stance on learning and teaching, that involve them in dialogue about learning and teaching, that take them into other colleagues' classrooms to observe aspects of learning and teaching (and to hear the common language that is shared by subject departments, but not spoken in a deliberately connected way for our pupils?) will present us with opportunities for exploring the rich seam of *interdisciplinary* possibilities that exist for making the learning experiences of our pupils in a large secondary more a part of a continuum, more a part of a coherent whole.

At the same time, classroom visits present a perfect opportunity for schools to identify where best practice is taking place and to capitalise on this in-house staff development opportunity. I have to say that, as the member of the senior management team who has responsibility for co-ordinating probationer support programmes, I am often in the privileged position of observing really fine learning and teaching and some truly splendid use of ICT to advance pupils' learning. My homework from these learning experiences is to devise ways to bring these sterling approaches to a wider audience of colleagues across the school. It is a challenge I look forward to undertaking and, in common with what we would wish for our pupils, it will promote in these colleagues a sense of personal and professional achievement. I also believe that we should encourage staff to have a pupil-eye view of the business of learning and teaching by presenting opportunities for staff to 'shadow' a pupil for part of her/his working day. As student regent, I make this arrangement for our student teachers who, first and foremost, thoroughly enjoy the experience and who also learn a great deal from the experience. By presenting our teaching staff with these opportunities, they will certainly develop a heightened awareness of the need to explore crucial areas like the totality of pupils' learning experiences.

On the subject of 'continuum', and returning to my earlier fleeting reference to the 'cross-sectoral dimension', as a school we are also embracing the challenges to our thinking in the title 'the 3–18 Curriculum' and have already begun working with our associated primary schools to widen primary and secondary teaching staff involvement in our liaison programmes. In the Starter

Paper<sup>2</sup> which was presented to the primary/secondary cluster group, the set of principles for curriculum design were taken as a starting point and, from these, areas of focus were identified which would help our cluster to develop the four capacities in our pupils.

In further meetings with our primary colleagues, we have identified literacy, numeracy and science as key areas for development. We recognise that all staff have a responsibility for developing literacy and numeracy and we would intend to use the links with our primary colleagues to provide development opportunities, in both of these areas, for staff in the secondary sector. We have also started working on joint development plans where key elements of learning and teaching and the sharing of information on pupils' prior learning are developed along consistent lines, with particular focus on taking forward Assessment is for Learning. As part of our primary/secondary link project we would anticipate using the folios of pupils' work, having actively supported the pupils in producing them, to give secondary colleagues more information on the pupils' achievements and, at the same time, to celebrate this success with these pupils, thereby promoting in them a sense of personal achievement and, consequently, raising attainment.

And what does the future hold...? We would certainly wish to continue to support staff attendance at Co-operative Learning academies and we would hope to continue our links with Tapestry and Harvard. We want to monitor more closely how effectively both are being used within classrooms throughout the school. We expect that our ASG, supported by Learning and Teaching Scotland, which is taking forward aspects of AifL and, therefore, the development of the four capacities, will present us with many fruitful opportunities for our staff and our primary colleagues to engage in rich dialogue about learning and teaching.

Finally, to reinforce the view that we are all members of a learning community, we would be looking to further develop the following areas in order to provide staff with opportunities to reflect upon their craft:

- student teachers, probationers and the role of mentor
- classroom visits/observation/sharing good practice
- cross-curricular developments to reinforce and consolidate the development of the four capacities
- the use of ICT to enhance learning
- the Scottish Qualification for Headship
- the Chartered Teacher programme.

This should provide us with plenty of scope for continuing professional development.

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<sup>2</sup> Primary/Secondary Cluster Planning 2008–2011, F.J. Berry November 2007