



West Lothian
Council
Education &
Cultural Services

Building Bridges Case Study

St. Anthony's Primary, Armadale
St. Mary's Primary, Polbeth
St. Kentigern's Academy, Blackburn

October 2004



Introduction

In response to the 'Building Bridges' project instituted by Learning and Teaching Scotland, the following projects were piloted within three West Lothian schools. They intended to extend and enhance literacy skills between P6 and S2 and promote positive professional relationships between primary and secondary establishments.

Each school responded to the challenge of the national initiative using the underlying guidance given, and the following case studies are a record of the development work undertaken.

Each school found that audit procedures led to differing areas of literacy requiring additional focus, although the central element was always reading. As such, each school focused on raising the profile of reading leading to the central element of our joint project: a Primary/ Secondary Liaison Initiative.

1. **St. Anthony's Primary, Armadale**
Reaping the Rewards of Reading
2. **St. Mary's Primary, Polbeth**
Raising the Profile of Reading in the upper primary; Reading for Meaning
3. **St. Kentigern's Academy, Blackburn**
Primary/ Secondary Liaison Initiative

St. Anthony's Primary, Armadale
Reaping the Rewards of Reading

Context

St. Anthony's Primary in Armadale is a semi-rural, denominational School, with a growing roll of over 150 pupils. Armadale itself, is a traditional former-mining community where parents have high aspirations for their children and a healthy respect for the benefits of the education that is supportive of the ideals of study and application leading to academic success.

Our Vision

Desired outcome for pupils:

Pupils will enjoy reading.

Pupils will confidently read a range of texts.

Pupils will have an increased sense of purpose in their reading.

Pupils have a clearer understanding in the relationship between reading and writing.

Pupils will have an increased sense of ownership.

Pupils will have an increased sense of understanding.

Pupils will have an increased sense of self-esteem and confidence.

Attainment will increase.

Pupils will have an increased sense of achievement.

Desired outcome for parents/carers

To improve home-school communication regarding learning and teaching in reading.

To show continuity of experience for pupils in terms of expectations in reading.

To inform, and hopefully enthuse and involve parents about the overall project.

Desired outcome for staff

Staff will have an increased knowledge on contemporary texts available.

Staff will enhance professional partnerships as a result of development of professional dialogues and working together to share understanding and develop practices.

Research / literature

To understand the complexities and background issues involved in literacy development, it is important to appreciate and be aware of the current climate with regard to education and attainment. Since the Bullock Report (1975), the notion that language *'permeates the curriculum'* is broadly recognised throughout the education community. Even today, documents such as the National Statement for Improving Attainment in Literacy in Schools (2002) extend and enhance the original tenets of Bullock, and offer schools and teachers a way forward in the promotion of language skills in the classroom.

Uppermost in the rationale of this document are the following skills which are seen as valid aims for developing readers:

- *to obtain information and respond appropriately;*
- *to appreciate the feelings of others;*
- *to reflect upon ideas, experiences and opinions;*
- *to gain imaginative and aesthetic pleasure.*

A general steering principle of the same document gives us the following guidance:

"The overall outcome of achieving the attainment targets is that for reading - pupils will be able to find and handle information for a range of purposes, and will read, on occasion, aloud. They will also be able to enjoy and respond to a variety of texts and, in so doing, achieve an awareness of genre and knowledge about language."

Most relevant to the outcome and aims of this particular study are the following concepts as also proposed and promoted by the National Statement for Improving Attainment in Literacy in Schools:

A consistent and effective whole-school approach, led and supported by management. Every school should have a policy for reading which achieves a clear, shared understanding by staff on all aspects of teaching and learning including involvement of learning support and other staff, parents and the use of accommodation and resources.

School management should support implementation of the policy by identifying and organising staff development activities and monitoring pupils' progress...

Effective involvement of parents in supporting children's progress in reading.

If we accept that these approaches are taking the direction best suited to

achieving the aims of 'The Building Bridges Project' and the general positive development of primary-secondary reading skills, any recommendations or proposals which are borne out of this investigation will reflect their importance.

"There is a belief in the world of education that as far as reading is concerned, the more the better." (Stainthorp 1997).

Concerns about the lack of children engaging in texts for enjoyment have also been expressed through a recent OECD survey (*Reading for Change*)

According to recent research by the National Literacy Trust 65% of ten year olds say they enjoy reading but this percentage drops to as little as 18% by the time they reach fourteen years old demonstrating that this is a key age to encourage an interest in reading. Added to this fact, the National Foundation of Educational Research found that *"children enjoy reading less than they did five years ago"*. (NFER December 2003).

We also looked at 'Raising the Standard of Boys' Achievement in Literacy: Julie Simmons' and how this librarian approached the differences in achievement between boys and girls, in terms of literacy; and the finding from 'Squeezing-Out the Juice Perceptions of Reading in the Secondary School: Jenny Allan and Annette Bruton' where they state that *"teachers have a valuable contribution to make to the reading debate."*

Research methods

Using agreed pro forma recording materials issued by LT Scotland, confirmations of the already perceived needs of the school were realised. A reflective categorisation of learning outcomes in literacy was effected by the completion of this set task that would initialise our individual study.

From here, it was agreed to survey the upper school pupils. To set events in motion, the class teacher initialised an exploratory study investigating children's reading habits. The class teacher thus compiled information on the pupils and their attitudes, choices and opinions on reading material. The survey was heavily weighted to provide an insight into the area of involvement with texts; and other aspects of home study/reading. The questionnaire 'Reading for Enjoyment-B Gibb' was distributed to each member of primary 6 and 7 (48 pupils), and the pupils had time set aside during which they were expected to answer honestly and fairly the questions on the sheets. (Appendix 1) The only guidance given to the pupils was that the results, when collated by the teaching staff, would be examined and used to inform best practice in the future.

Whilst collating the results and findings of this survey, another questionnaire was circulated around the same client group. This new questionnaire, on the suggestion of Sue Ellis (LT Scotland), sought to find out about children's awareness of authors. It was also agreed, at this time, to reissue both questionnaires after extensive awareness raising had been experienced by the participants.

Discussion prior to any exploratory investigation being undertaken had revealed and illuminated a very serious and worrying situation. The depressing fact was that very few children read regularly outside of school and, on their own admission, only a very few admitted ownership of a selection of books at home. Other findings showed an overall lack of interest in reading for enjoyment; that the majority of pupils preferred light-hearted factual books from which they could dip in and out; that the majority of pupils were not encouraged to read at home; and that they had a limited awareness of authors.

As these surveys were being completed, our general awareness, as educators, was that the research findings would offer a starting stance to the creation of a responsive, yet informed, action plan.

Our investigations backed up national concerns

The Development Work

From the audit materials, questionnaire and survey results, and teachers' concerns, we agreed that the key focus of our project was to:

- encourage/inspire pupils, particularly boys, to read adventurously, share their enthusiasm about books and develop the confidence to formulate and express opinions about reading.
- raise and sustain attainment in reading.
- plan and implement a liaison project with the other members of our Building Bridges team

To begin, we decided to do the following.

1. Remove obvious barriers that prevent pupils reading. This involves making the school library more accessible and appealing, with a range of updated texts; giving the pupils more opportunities to read books of *their* choice; ensuring that all pupils have library cards
2. Develop strategies to encourage them to read more; and increase sense of

purpose. The following were proposed:

- Provision of book club and inspirational events to encourage and sustain children's (particularly boys) interest and enjoyment in reading.
- Identify what attracted or discouraged boys to read
- Develop strategies to encourage them to read more; and increase sense of purpose
- Children are invited to a once weekly book club
- Children sign a contract to read a set number of books in a six week period
- Increased liaison with Library Services and involvement with Orange Chatterbox scheme
- Rewards for readers-structured scheme
- Peer recommendations - what was an interesting read. Children post reviews on web site ers.north-ayrshire.gov.uk
- Children have an increased sense of ownership-children involved in ordering new books for library, naming reading circle and with website
- Invite real writers into school as role models(through Writers in Scotland)
- Analyse the success of the work.
- St. Anthony's Big Read-children vote on their Top Ten Books

Who is involved?

James McCrory	Headteacher
Bridie Gibb,	P7 teacher
Anne Greenan	P6 teacher
Irene Brough	Area librarian
Catherine Burt	Classroom assistant
Paddy McGuirk	Classroom assistant

Development work

After discussions with the staff listed above, it was agreed to organise a weekly opportunity for all pupils, in single sex groups, to read and discuss texts with an adult. Our area librarian was able to present our boys with a Chatterbooks folder. (We decided that we should focus on our boys in light of questionnaire and survey results.) The idea of gaining rewards for reading did hold some appeal for them. These reading circles operated every Thursday afternoon. The pupils were grouped with friends, but ability was still taken into account. Each group chose the text they wished to read. Groups had no more than six pupils. Adults were not permitted to advise or steer groups on their choices. Initially, the library services assisted us with the provision of up to date texts.

In the mean time we set about revamping our library. Funds were limited so nine new book stands were acquired after contacting a local builder. He copied - it could be argued improved upon - a free-standing rotating book stand which we admired in an educational supplies catalogue. Comfortable silver chairs were bought; out dated texts were sold in a 'golden ticket' book sale(some books had tickets which could be exchanged for prizes!); and a family fund-raising event was organised, with local businesses providing raffle prizes. A supermarket bag packing event helped add to funds, as did a donation from the school's PTA. Children decorated the library with (mobile phone) texts about texts they have read. They designed posters to promote their favourite books which were displayed alongside commercially available posters.

With approximately £1200 to spend on books, several pupils accompanied me to a local book shop, where, armed with wish lists from their peers, managed to spend the money in great haste. The only stipulation given was that they had to buy multiple copies of texts, for use in reading circle groups

The books chosen included Philip Pullman's Dark Materials trilogy, books from the various series including Lemony Snicket, Darren Shan, Philip Ardagh, Spiderwick Chronicles, and Princess Dairies. Jacqueline Wilson was an overwhelming favourite with the girls.

Pupils were given the opportunity to suggest a name for their reading circles groups. Pagemasters@StAnthony's was the clear winner. They designed a logo which has been used to inform library-goers that they were responsible for the selection of numerous texts at their local library. A web site is currently being set up where children can post book reviews using this address. This increased sense of ownership was leading to an increased sense of confidence and self esteem.

Others events were organised including a book quiz, an author visit and several trips to the Edinburgh International Book Festival. The pupils chose the author sessions they wished to attend: Michael Morpugo, Jacqueline Wilson, Keith Gray and Joan Lingard, and were fortunate enough to obtain tickets for all events. Catherine McPhail visited and spoke to the 48 children involved. She quickly overtook Jacqueline Wilson as the most popular author with girls, although many boys read 'Tribes' and 'Missing'. Her visit raised interest levels beyond belief, and so we have further author visits planned for the session 2004-2005 including Joan Lingard.

Meanwhile, building on the new found enthusiasm for reading, we also engaged upon our bridging unit. After discussion it was agreed to use the text 'Johnny and the Bomb' by Terry Pratchett.

Parents and carers were sent letters informing them of the use of the text, and asking for their support in encouraging their children to read 'Johnny and the Bomb' over their Easter holidays. (Appendix 5) In hindsight, I would not repeat this exercise. The vast majority of pupils did read the text, but it removed the element of prediction. Pupils at St. Mary's were not issued with the text before their Easter break, and, as a result had many opportunities for lively discussion surrounding predicting forthcoming events; something our pupils missed out on.

I compiled a set of worksheets, initially for discussion, although the pupils were eager to write their answers down. I was not too happy at this prospect, as my vision for the project was to steer away from written tasks. As Keith Gray said at the recent Edinburgh Book Festival: "*a book is for fun and enjoyment, not work. Tell your teachers that!*" My concern was that a set of written tasks might 'turn the children off' the text.

I decided to issue each child with a jotter solely for the purpose of writing about 'Johnny and the Bomb'. Pupils could work on the set tasks in pairs, with their partner changing weekly. This proved very effective, particularly for pupils working at levels below that expected at P7.

Impact

Looking at the results of questionnaires (Appendix 2, Appendix 4), it is clear that there has been a change in attitude and awareness. Surprisingly, our boys have overtaken the girls in terms of awareness. The adults involved in the project would also agree that the levels of enthusiasm shown by the boys surpassed that shown by girls.

Parents responses were extremely positive, as is shown on the enclosed DVD. Many pupils now own a number of books where previously, they had little or no interest in the ownership of texts. Pupils are exceptionally keen to access our school library, with many asking if they can sit and read during intervals and lunchtimes.

The most popular texts are those which are part of a series, so pupils don't seem to stop at reading one book. They continue to read the whole series.

The difference in pupils' confidence and self esteem has been remarked upon. Pupils have a sense of pride in the fact that they have read texts independently, and the confidence to approach new authors without deeming it a chore.

Overall, our pupils do now read for enjoyment. They see the pleasure in reading,

and are keen to settle down to read, having no difficulty focussing on their chosen texts.

Where do we go from here? How do we decide to move the project forward?

Plans are underway to disseminate our bridging unit and we are looking forward to proposing the possible benefits of this programme to our colleagues.

Within St. Anthony's, our infant department is also currently looking at ways to raise attainment in reading through a parallel project encouraging advanced reading of the P1-3 children.

After recently gaining funding from 'Read Together', pupils will select texts to keep our library current and up-to-date.

We are confident that our work will seriously impact on the raising attainment agenda within St. Anthony's and will sustain and motivate our pupils for some time to come.

St. Mary's Primary, Polbeth

Raising the Profile of Reading in the upper primary:
Reading for Meaning

Context

St. Mary's Primary is a denominational school serving the communities of West Calder and Polbeth and surrounding areas. The roll is currently 178 with no composite classes. There were 24 primary 7 pupils involved in the project

Our Vision

Our vision for the project was to give pupils an increased sense of achievement in language work, promoting the sense of enjoyment with the added focus on sustainability.

Overall Aims

Our first point of action was to develop an Action Plan to determine our goals and aims for the project. This involved carrying out an audit to provide insight to the main focus for the project. It was found that, in St. Mary's, the main issue arising from the audit was the need to improve skills in reading for information and in analysing different kinds of texts. We realised that if this focus were taken on board, then it would help pupils develop skills, which could be used more meaningfully in other curricular areas. Previous to being involved in the project, this area of language was viewed by pupils as not very motivating. The previous strategy for engaging with texts concentrated more on written work rather than being interactive task orientated.

Getting Started

With our goals set, we now started to look at how our school could implement the Action Plan. We looked at our attainment targets - reading for enjoyment; reading to reflect the writer's craft; awareness of genre; knowledge about language. Then we looked at the core targets in text work - pursuit of meaning; attitude and motivation; and authors' use of language. Looking at these targets, we could now see that there were three main questions that needed to be addressed, thus providing our aims for the project:

1. How are we going to improve pupils' skills in engaging with texts?
2. Is there going to be raising of attainment that can be sustained?
3. Are the strategies used helping to promote interest and enthusiasm in reading?

Progress of the Study

1. How are we going to improve pupils' skills in engaging with texts in Primary 7?

To achieve this aim, we knew we needed new resources to engage and motivate pupils in a more challenging way. We started with Big Books and Guided Reading texts. Big Books proved to be an excellent interactive teaching resource providing material for both Reading for Information and Reading for Meaning. This gave the pupils an opportunity to interact and share ideas. With this resource in place, how were we going to assess how the pupils were progressing and how were we going to measure the outcomes? We look to question 2.

2. Is there going to be a raising of attainment which can be sustained?

To answer this question, we need to assess how the pupils were progressing in their engagement with texts. As well as the discussion of writer's craft and the meaning generated which took place while reading the Big Books, worksheets were also used to engage the pupils understanding of the text. The Guided Reading texts followed the same format.

The link with our High School, St. Kentigern's Academy was achieved by undertaking to read 'Johnny and the Bomb' by Terry Pratchett. This proved to be very successful, with activities and worksheets produced as a follow up and/or for assessment. This book provided excellent class/small group opportunities for discussion of ideas and interaction.

There was indeed a raising of attainment, measured in the quality of responses and in the enthusiasm with which they undertook the tasks. I was very fortunate to be able to work with Primary 7 to monitor the progress of the study and obtain information resulting in data showing a marked improvement in pupils' attitudes and responses to reading. I used questionnaires to determine the views of pupils and I gained a valuable insight to their ideas and attitudes about reading.

Lucy thought that reading is relaxing and comforting while Nicole likes to read at night because it helps her relax and helps her go to sleep.

Mark thought that the purpose of reading is to help you write better, help you gain confidence, give you more knowledge and extend your vocabulary.

I asked the Primary 7 pupils to write about their thoughts on reading. Danielle wrote: "I have read lots of different kinds of books but my favourite was when we were using the Big Books. I enjoyed working as a group."

According to Scott, reading in Primary 7 is one of the most important things to get you ready for High School. Non-fiction books are great for reading when you have to write a report. They are always filled with useful information and excellent facts.

Kathleen wrote: "Reading in P7 is hard work, but very enjoyable. I enjoyed using Big Books. They can help you really well with your writing and understanding of words.

These responses indicate that the project has raised awareness of reading as an important factor in learning. Using the text, 'Johnny and the Bomb', pupils have the opportunity to work with their peers and compare and contrast ideas and ways of working. Thus providing a solid foundation for developing these skills at High School.

The element of enjoyment was not lost either as the pupils gained in confidence and in their appreciation of reading as the collected data shows the amount of time they spent reading and in their visits to the local library.

Where do we go from here? How do we decide to move the project forward?

Building on what had been achieved, I thought that it would be a good opportunity to start a lunch time reading club. This was to keep up motivation and build on the enjoyment factor. It was decided to start with primary six pupils to focus on the feature of sustainability; to enable these pupils to carry their lunch time reading onto primary seven; and then use the acquired skills in S1, linking with the work being done with 'Johnny and the Bomb'.

The school was very fortunate in obtaining funding to buy an exciting range of resources to establish The Reading Club. The format of the Tuesday Reading Club is to begin by using stories on tape to focus on fluency and character setting. The pupils then have an opportunity to choose a title from a selection of modern fiction, and to end the session I read an extract from a book, asking pupils to engage in prediction skills. One of the pupils asked if she could read aloud, and her fluency and expression have really improved.

The Library Services has helped enormously with a venture called The Reading Maze. The idea is to encourage reading at home. Pupils can take home two books and when they are read and returned, they are given a series of rewards, stickers and activity sheets. This culminates in a medal ceremony and the presentation of certificates by our local librarian.

The pupils were asked to review and evaluate what they had done, and their computer skills came to the fore with power point presentations. I also have a reader's profile and reading booklets for each pupil.

Question 3

Are the strategies used helping promote interest and enthusiasm in reading?
Without a doubt, the interest level has increased dramatically. Pupils are encouraging their peers to join The Reading Club.

The venture will be extended to primary six, thus having a reading club for primaries six and seven. The added focus will be on ICT skills with the children using websites to obtain information on authors and books.

What are the implications and next steps?

At St. Mary's, we see our role as continuing to raise the profile of reading throughout the school, which in turn will improve pupils' writing.

The features of the study, using Big Books and Guided Reading texts have been incorporated into our Reading Policy for the school.

Encourage pupils to work in small groups to discuss texts. Listening to the ideas of others and putting forward their own to help sharpen their ideas about a book and build up their skills in forming judgements.

Have a selection of fiction and non-fiction books available for pupils to read, exploring different genre. Also, have a variety of Big Books to engage pupils' understanding of writer's craft and knowledge about language.

Emphasise the enjoyment aspect of reading and encourage pupils to make their own books and design covers for classroom display.

Ask pupils to write about the books they have read, encouraging them to be critical in their understanding of texts.

Encourage pupils to use the Public Library to give them an enhanced sense of reading for enjoyment.

So, the idea of engagement and enjoyment and sustainability has flourished and we hope that we will go from strength to strength in raising the profile of reading at St. Mary's, Polbeth.

St. Kentigern's Academy, Blackburn
Primary/ Secondary Liaison Initiative

Context

St. Kentigern's Academy is a denominational school serving the community of West Lothian. The current role is 1065. The school has ten feeder primary schools.

Starting Point

When we were asked to participate in Learning and Teaching Scotland's Building Bridges initiative, we saw this as an ideal opportunity to enhance and extend our liaison programme in order to raise the attainment of our pupils.

After initial discussions and audits, it was agreed that our focus would be on Reading. Both primary schools were particularly keen to promote the Reading for Enjoyment agenda and we this as a crucial starting point for our project.

In the secondary, we hoped to build on this work and achieve several goals:

- To introduce a common methodology in our approach to the study of a text
- To equip our pupils with the critical reading skills necessary to tackle the 'Writing about Texts' strand
- To extend our pupils' Reading for Information skills and, in particular, highlight the cross-curricular applications of these skills in the secondary sector by involving the Social Studies department and the school librarian as well as the English department
- To strengthen our links with feeder primary schools

What we did

Together with our primary colleagues, we agreed on a text suitable for the project. The final choice was Terry Pratchett's 'Johnny and the Bomb'. There were several reasons for this choice:

- An accessible text with particular appeal to boys
- A 'weighty' enough text to cover the requirements of our desired outcome- Writing About Texts
- A text with obvious cross curricular links, in this case, the Second World War, a topic commonly covered by our primary seven pupils
- Part of a series - the dramatised version of one was already used in the S1 course

It was accepted, however, that the work should be applied to any suitable text - allowing us to change the text when its appeal wanes.

We then worked together to agree a common methodology and put together a

programme of activities which would be delivered by both the primary and the secondary staff during the summer term of primary seven.

Lessons were put together to develop the pupils' understanding and appreciation of key aspects of the text:

- Understanding of events
- Appreciation of character
- Use of setting
- Paragraphing
- Personal reactions to the text
- Exploration of themes

In addition, a set of activities focussing on Reading for Information Skills and based on the Home Front was developed.

Three lessons were then delivered in the following manner:

- Reading and discussing the text was covered by the primary seven teacher, in the primary classroom, during the summer term
- The class then visited the secondary school for an afternoon of activities based on the text
- The secondary Social Subjects teacher and the Librarian delivered the set of activities on Research and Reading for Information skills
- Finally, the secondary school English teacher visited the primary classroom to bring everything together in a lesson focussing on 'Writing About Texts'

Initial Evaluation

The enthusiasm already generated by the work on Reading for Enjoyment in each primary school carried on to the lessons on the novel and the 'liaison' lessons. The pupils' responses to the text were very positive and focussed - pupils could confidently express their opinion and comment on aspects of the text and justify these comments with reference to the text. The 'knock on' effect of this is harder to evaluate in that the two classes have become diluted in their secondary year group. A full evaluation should be more viable after this session when all feeder primary schools become involved.

Next steps

Initially, our intention is to pilot the programme throughout the whole feeder primary cohort. An introductory meeting has taken place and the response has been very positive. Certain issues do, however, still need to be addressed:

- Composite classes in some of our primary school e.g. Composite P5,6,7, make delivering the programme to only the primary sevens a problem. Previous liaison initiatives tended to rely on one or two lessons rather than a long-term programme.
- The cost of buying sets of the texts for each primary school is another issue that needs to be addressed - especially if, as expected, the text is regularly changed/updated to ensure continued appeal.
- Final drafts of the lessons still need to be agreed
- The order of delivery of the lessons may need to change in order to fit all schools into the programme before the primary seven visit days scheduled for June - a particular problem given the number of feeder primary schools involved.
- Changed personnel in the secondary school has left us without a Social Subjects team member - the need to recruit someone else and bring them up-to-speed will be an ongoing problem.

Further dissemination of the programme is planned via the local council CPD opportunities during the current session.

Kathy McHugh
PT English
St. Kentigern's Academy
September 2004

Commentary

The three schools involved in this project are pleased to report the positive benefits of the programme to date, and are enthusiastic to continue to sustain the undertaken work. All three schools were appreciative of the development of the programme in terms of team effort and group motivation and the collegiate spirit through which it evolved.

Raising awareness of the programme has already been taking place through strategic CPU opportunities. Staff in both sectors and senior managers have been made aware of the various studies.

The next steps for the working group are to:

- undertake to establish a 'systematic approach' into the programme.*
- assist and support primary seven staff (in all St. Kentigern feeder primaries) who will be responsible for the delivery of the literacy programme in subsequent years.*

It is the intention of the team to propose the programme to the authority in West Lothian and endorse its implementation throughout the primary/secondary schools who may have an interest in this approach. Proposals for dissemination and practical arrangements for cross visits etc. will be further explored and suggestions/recommendations will be proposed , based on the experience and evaluation of the team.

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