

Cross Curricular Learning Within the Foundation Phase

Our School Environment



Introduction -Cross curricular learning provides the opportunity to combine a range of subject skills and knowledge to develop a well-balanced, integrated curriculum (Hayes 2010). In the evolving Welsh curriculum and 21st Century modern world of teaching this approach is becoming increasingly popular as Donaldson (2015) describes cross curricular responsibilities are key foundations to learning. With ever-expanding demands for confident, well rounded individuals in learning and in life, children need to be given the opportunity to develop and apply these key skills across the curriculum and in meaningful concepts (Donaldson 2015, Kerry 2015). The idea is to reduce the emphasis on subject boundaries to encourage children to think 'outside of the box' creatively with originality, however it does not advocate eliminating these barriers completely (Rose 2009). The hope is by improving teacher's subject knowledge on how the approach should look in a school setting, it can encourage a well-balanced curriculum that is both integrated and effective (Kerry 2015).

Model One – Interdisciplinary An interdisciplinary approach takes two or more learning areas; the knowledge and skills from both are drawn together to produce a creative purposeful outcome (Barnes 2015). These activities will take place in a year 2 class over a term and will be completed through a whole class, group work approach.

The Theme: 'How we can make our outdoor environment more wheelchair friendly?'

Hook- Video on YouTube about a boy called Ian who is in a wheelchair and cannot play with the other children due to not only physical barriers but also environmental ones (Baron 2018). Children will be told that at the end of the topic they will write a report using all the information learnt, as Welsh Government (WG) (2013a) highlights how it is essential to let children have responsibility over their learning on how and what they will do to reach targets.

PSE - Complete a whole class 'roll on the wall' for Ian, Discuss facts they know about him, how do they think he feels, could Ian come to our school? Is our outdoor area suitable? How could we help him? Children will be developing their social and moral PSE skills as they are beginning to respect needs and feelings of others, this links to Health and Well-being AOLE of the new curriculum and the 'healthy confident' and 'ethically informed' four purposes. Children will then go on a trip to Gnoll Park- a wheelchair friendly park to see an example. Estyn (2016a) suggests that using community and going outside the classroom provides children opportunity to apply their knowledge in a meaningful purposeful context.

English- Children go on a walk around their schools outdoor area in groups, Identifying aspects of the school that need improving to make it more wheelchair friendly (taking pictures on the iPad) Children will come back and discuss/brainstorm in group their findings, asking and answering 5W and how questions e.g. Who will help us? What needs to change? Where in the school? Why are we doing this? This gives children opportunity to talk about information they will include in their report before they write it, which is key factor in developing and supporting literacy skills (Estyn 2008), (Corbett and Strong 2011). Children will also have a session to use a range of measuring equipment to measure sections and objects in the outdoor area, Children will also discuss budgeting how much it will cost the school and if that is justifiable. (This would be at a simple level, to introduce budgeting), an aspect in the Health and Well-being AOLE. **Outcome-** Welsh Government (2015) highlight how children should write for purpose and audience to ensure meaningful learning. Therefore, children will then bring all their findings together to create a group digital report for their headteacher. The expectation should be a simple digital gathering of information with suitable heading, subheadings and include pictures that they took while on their walk around school/trip to park. (They should previously be taught how to write a good report).

- **Review of Model- Benefits** An interdisciplinary approach allows teachers to 'make connections within and across AOLE' one of Donaldson 12 pedagogical principles as it gives the ability to combine two or more teaching elements creatively (Donaldson 2015, p.68).
- Allows children to see connections between their learning and build on previous knowledge in a range of contexts (Dewey 1929 cited in Barnes 2015 p.261) Cremin (2018) supports stating how learners can deepen their knowledge by making curriculum connections.
- Supports the constructivist learning approach, as children do not learn through passive absorption but through interpreting new information and ideas linked to previous knowledge and experiences (Piaget 1936 cited in Barnes 2018)
- Creates meaningful engaging opportunities to encourage learners. Estyn (2016a) and Estyn (2018a) highlight how best practice schools use stimulating, imaginative and relevant experiences to improve participation and progression.
- **Limitations** If teachers do not imbed the model correctly it can neglect the crucial importance of disciplinary structures. Teachers need to know how and why they are teaching and be able to create a balance between both forms of teaching to enhance children's learning, not hinder it (Barnes 2015), (Biesta 2010).
- Children need to be given time to firstly learn the specific subject skills and then time to apply them in different situations. Children need to be assisted through Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD) with suitable scaffolding and opportunities to apply their skills (Vygotsky 1978).
- All teachers have different perceptions on how some AOLE link to others, often resulting in unclear teaching and learning (Rowley and Cooper 2009). Teachers can struggle as there are more prominent links between some AOLE than others and therefore some AOLE are taught more than others (Hayes 2010).
- Some teachers may become reluctant to making links to learning areas they are not confident with or do not value as much as others, which does not foster the evolving curriculum (Reid 2005).

Context- The purpose of this poster is to inform educational professionals on ways in which Barnes (2015) theoretical models of cross curricular learning can be used within schools to incorporate literacy, numeracy and digital competence as cross-curricular responsibilities. The poster exemplifies two specific models considering the benefits and limitations linked to theory/research. The activities discussed are suitable for a Year 2 class within the Foundation Phase, and the overriding theme for the activities is 'Our School Environment'.

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Curriculum Links

WG (2015 p.14-35) and WG (2018, p.2-3)



'gather, record, extract and interpret data from pictograms where the symbol represents 'one unit'
'use standard units to measure: – length, height and distance:



'contribute to discussion, keeping a focus on the topic' 'share information to complete a task' 'follow a structure in their writing with support, e.g. reports'
'retell information they have heard sequencing correctly' 'adopt a specific role, use appropriate language



'create multimedia components in order to develop text, image, sound for a range of tasks' 'record data collected in a variety of formats, e.g. pictograms' 'create multimedia components to develop text, image, sound and video' 'save work using an appropriate file name'

Model Two- Thematic- A thematic approach uses a theme to generate authentic learning in several different areas of learning (Barnes 2015). These activities will take place in a year 2 class over a recycling theme week in carousel style approach.

The Theme: Recycling - Based on book 'Don't Throw That Away!'

Hook- Show children the recycling sign, have they seen it before? What does it mean? Read the book Don't Throw That Away! That encourages children not to throw recyclable objects away but to reuse them for something useful.

KUW, Numeracy and DCF- Children will go on a litter pick around the school collecting items that have been thrown away, it is good to throw rubbish on the floor? What should we do with it? The objects collected will then be sort and classified. Firstly, they can sort then in any way they choose as long as they have two criterions and can justify it. They will then sort by the object's material developing KUW properties skills which links to Science and Technology AOLE. Children will then complete a digital pictogram on J2E on the objects they found, interpreting the data e.g. which material were most/ least popular? (Children should previously be taught Pictograms). Welsh Government (2013b) highlights that for children to progress in cross-curricular responsibilities skills they must consolidate and apply them in a variety of contexts and complexities. This activity integrates three areas of the curriculum for children to develop their skills, yet is all focused around one main activity, a litter pick. This therefore also encouraging children to think beyond subject boundaries (Rose 2009), (WG 2019).

Creative Development (Art Strand) and Literacy - Children will use recyclable materials to create something new, however they must create their own version of something that was discussed in the book e.g. bird feeder, a vase. Therefore prior to creating their pieces of work they must retell and sequence the story using pictures of the objects. Children will develop design, craft and modelling skills which also link to the Expressive Arts AOLE. This also develops the 'Creative Contributors' 4 purpose.

Creative Development (Drama strand) and DCF- Children will create an environmental character like the girl in the book e.g Eco Elephant, Landfill Lenny on J2E. Give them a name, what do they look like, what type of character are they? Where do they live? Become the character and create/record a play between you and your friends on the iPad, save it with an appropriate name to share with people in their group. Children will develop their Creative Movement 'pretending' skills which links to the Drama element of Expressive Arts AOLE. This activity also aims to improve children's confidence, Donaldson (2015) highlights how children should be healthy, confident individuals, yet Estyn (2018b) emphasis how progress in soft skills e.g confidence and social is not assessed enough. This activity could also be used as an Enhance Provision, in the Role Play Area.

- **Review of Model – Benefits** A thematic cross curricular model allows educators to 'create authentic contexts for learning' one of Donaldson 12 pedagogical principles, as themes allow for an engaging perspective on learning (Barnes 2015), (Donaldson 2015, p.68).
- Allows children to have a large input into their learning, by influencing the theme through pupil voice. Estyn (2016b) emphasis how pupils voice has a major impact on children's learning including, participation, well-being and performance.
- Supports the right of the child as UNCRC state how all children have the right to be listened to and make decisions on their education.
- The model requires children to apply a range of both subject specific and cross curricular skills throughout the curriculum it encourages well-rounded individuals, which is a key aspect in the evolving curriculum (Donaldson 2015).
- **Limitations-** From experience teachers often plan themes without pupil involvement resulting in non-meaningful learning. In addition, if pupil voice is used for majority vote, not all students have same interests so minority group of children may become disengaged.
- Thematic learning can often become tokenistic if teachers do not have solid knowledge on how these models work, as activities become linked to a theme but do not develop any skills (Barnes 2015).
- The model can also have content issues, as some skills fit themes better than others, which can often result in some AOLE not being covered at all (Hayes 2010). This could then have complications if a child misses a week, as they miss skills taught and do not understand connections.
- Requires more planning and preparation. Teachers workload often increases due to an overloading curriculum, resulting in not enough time to give children a well-balanced curriculum (Rose 2009).

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