

A project which uses 'maps' to introduce Year seven students to art and design, linking Art and Design with teaching in Geography

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Case study: #02

School profile: Teesside High School is an Independent school with 370 pupils ranging in age from 3–18

What was the school trying to achieve?

Discussion took place regarding the most valuable learning experiences for students; these were identified as independent research assignments for homework and visits to museums and galleries. It was also recognised that working collaboratively was extremely valuable, as was drawing on the experience and knowledge of other teachers and experts, and using the knowledge of those already in school.

The two Year seven classes included in the case study were all new to the high school though a significant number of students had joined from the preparatory school. Most had received little or no specialist teaching in art and design though many were highly enthusiastic about the prospect. A 'test' was carried out in the first session which identified some limited knowledge of artists mainly from the early 20th Century and a general lack of confidence in drawing ability and use of media.

It was therefore decided to focus on the key new Secondary Curriculum concepts of 'creativity' and 'critical understanding'.

How did the school organise learning to achieve its aims?

The aims of the art and design department had been re-evaluated in the light of the new Secondary Curriculum. Following this curriculum areas were identified where there were opportunities for cross-curricular work. Once discussion started the possibilities for cross-curricular work seemed plentiful and colleagues were keen to be involved. For Year 7 students Geography seemed appropriate as that department was already involved in delivering the project on 'maps'. (see figs 1 and 2)

The ideas explored in the projects were not all new. Rather they were a gathering together of the department's best thinking. This included a research project carried out as homework on a contemporary painter (e.g. Sarah Morris, Pia Fries, Jim Lambie, Ian Davenport, Fiona Rae), engaging other staff in ideas, collaborative learning opportunities, assessment tasks that challenged ideas by considering value of the work in the 'art' and the 'geography' context, a museum visit which was used to extend ideas in photography, opportunities for students to direct their own learning and linking work to other curriculum areas.

How well has the school achieved its aims?

The department has been delighted with the results of the project. Though the success of longer term aims of encouraging students to make connections between curriculum areas is not yet possible to evaluate, there have been many obvious successful outcomes. Through ongoing observation and discussion, written student feedback, and the work produced it was apparent that students developed their knowledge of some contemporary artists, mind-mapping concepts and made connections to another curriculum area; they improved their confidence in their approach to drawing and material, and were introduced to collaborative working skills and research skills. (Fig. 3 & 4)

All students completed an independent research study based on a contemporary artist; class work included some highly imaginative and confident responses when compared to initial studies; and most importantly, many class tasks were carried out collaboratively and discussion of work became increasingly objective, supportive and constructively critical. (Fig. 5 & 6)



Fig. 1



Fig. 3



Fig. 5



Fig. 2



Fig. 4



Fig. 6