

The main aim in this work was to create a sense of cohesion and understanding of a topic, teaching aspects of the New Secondary Curriculum subjects. Art and design and geography department activities were linked by a world wide issue topic of 'fair trade'. We also wanted students to work independently and present their work for public presentation including an exhibition within the local community.

What was the school trying to achieve?

With a previous 'citizenship' project in recent years students were given the task of raising awareness of contemporary issues with the production of a visual outcome. However some students spent too long on fact-finding or began work without adequate knowledge of their chosen topic. In geography the artwork produced within the subject often incorporated collage but it lacked effective pictorial organisation or an awareness of the dynamics of colour or design. We wanted the students to develop this knowledge and to use these new design skills, gained from a study of the world of advertising, to produce a more sophisticated outcome.

How was learning organised?

The learning was sequential, with ICT skills taught in year 8, and 'fair trade' facts and figures in geography presented from January to the beginning of March in Year 9. Art and design then took responsibility for the creative, imaginative and expressive response through the teaching of advertising techniques, with students selecting appropriate media for their outcomes over a subsequent six week period. Selected G&T students entered an annual local public competition on fair trade using this work and gave a media presentation. Unfortunately they were not the victors on this occasion but the students were confident of their material. The artwork is expected to be presented in a public exhibition at a nearby Natural World centre later in the year. The programme of study in art and design was planned with a much tighter focus on design skills. Major changes to teaching and learning strategies were made, with higher level questioning during the learning process. Good quality PowerPoint presentations were shared between all members of the teaching team.

How successful was the project?

This project covered many of the key points that are part of the New Secondary Curriculum. Students worked collaboratively and were aware of the cross-curricular aspects. Understanding their theme from their research in geography enabled them to spend their time in art on applying their knowledge and to focus on experimenting with new techniques (MDF carving for printmaking, drawing with ink using pieces of bamboo, or trying new painting materials for poster design.) Students also engaged with ideas and images to identify how values and meanings are conveyed, analysing their work with their own Power Point presentations to explain and justify their progression. There is an excitement engendered by the holistic nature of the work and we anticipate even greater pride when the work goes to full exhibition.

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