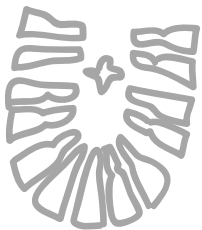
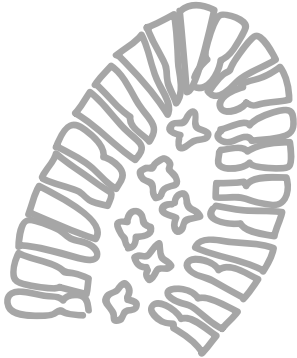




A step in the right direction ?



The student comments below left were just two of the responses offered to the question “What impact has your work on the WWF sponsored Curriculum Management Award Scheme had on you?” There is a wide difference in the perspectives contained within the two responses, but if we consider them alongside the observation made by the teacher, we can claim some success in our ‘radical’ decision to invest hard earned resources in a community based approach to resolving a local issue.

The local issue in question related to ‘access’, and our project was to research and evaluate the feasibility of short, accessible footpath routes suited to the needs of the disabled members of the community. The project became the context and vehicle for curriculum development within our College and, more specifically, our chosen means of establishing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as part of the learning experience of all our students at KS3 (11-14 years).

"Knowing we have increased the quality of life of disabled people has been the ultimate achievement" *Student*

"If we don't work together, we are doomed." *Student*

"The problem is to make sure young people can make the links with other parts of their life!"

Teacher

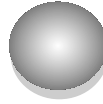
We hope this Case Study will help to describe how the project was used:

- to place and maintain ESD on the College agenda
- as a context for students to develop process skills
- to develop a collaborative and consensual approach amongst staff
- to improve the quality of teaching and learning within the College's ‘timetable suspension programme’
- for staff development.

We hope to communicate our experience to others and show how it could be applied in a variety of educational contexts such as fieldtrips, topic-based work, community service programmes and vocational work.



Access for all?



The context

Hope Valley College is a rural 11-16 comprehensive school lying in the heart of the Peak District National Park, the most visited National Park in England and Wales. The students of the College live amongst the 'real issues' created by visitor pressure – issues that are well-documented in geography textbooks. Against this background, the development of a programme of entitlement for ESD became a high priority.

A foundation had been laid through work with the Peak Park Education Department and the Peak Park Ranger Service during our 'timetable suspension' time (one week in Summer and a further two days in November). This experience further confirmed the need to establish within the curriculum a framework that would enable students to consider local environmental issues and, in so doing, help to develop the process skills so critical to both the ethos of the College and to the ESD approach.

What's this got to do with Education for Sustainable Development?

Skills

- co-operative working
- critical thinking
- negotiation
- problem solving
- reasoned debate
- informed decision-making
- creativity – an ability to envision alternatives.

Values and attitudes

- empathy and awareness of the points of view of others
- an understanding of the place of individual and collective rights and responsibilities
- a desire to participate
- a belief that working with others, we can make a difference.

The dilemma we faced is not an uncommon one: we lacked the staffing and financial resources to do justice to an important task. These difficulties were further compounded by the number of teaching staff in our small school under the additional pressure of being single-person departmental heads.

A decision was made to apply to the Curriculum Management Award Scheme (CMAS) as a means of providing the necessary resources to approach the task realistically. The local footpath issue was raised by the Community Access Group who meet regularly at the College. It was adopted as the focal point of the bid from which we needed to plan how the wider objectives of the scheme could be realised.

"It is not just charity that begins at home..."

Project Co-ordinator

"The project has provided a valuable long term focus for the students by enabling them to empathise with a section of the community; explore practical solutions to problems and present their findings in an informed and creative way believing it has made a difference." *Head of English*

The management approach

Under the pressures outlined above the likely success of another 'top-down' initiative appeared limited. A project team of seven key staff within the College was identified. The team included the heads of a wide range of curriculum areas along with the Deputy Principal. A key member of the team was the newly appointed Head of History who held responsibility for co-ordinating the Project Group. The Group used the resources made available to them to work outside the College timetable day for re-numeration, an approach which minimised class disruption and meant that staff had the energy to contribute.

The Group decided to use the College's 'timetable suspension programme' as the means of approaching the task. This twice yearly break in the timetable enabled a programme of activities to be developed which built in the elements of progression and continuity throughout Key Stage 3 (11-14 years).

Staff development

The footpath project required a significant staff development input to raise awareness and expertise. The initial INSET session drew upon local expertise from key agencies such as the Fieldfare Trust, Derbyshire Footpath Service and local Parish Councils, while the Peak Park Education and Ranger Service provided invaluable initial and ongoing assistance. The second session was facilitated by our CMAS consultant who provided an awareness-raising session on the concept of ESD. This input was critically important as the College had not participated in the Reaching Out programme, WWF's professional development programme for ESD. Both initial INSET sessions were delivered to the Planning Group, governors and key members of the community.

These sessions established the high profile of the project within the College. They were followed by a further meeting of the Planning Group during which the pattern of collaborative and consensual approaches so critical to the outcomes of the project were established.

"The cross-curricular approach lead to co-operation and teamwork with many other subject areas – without involvement in the scheme these things might not have happened."

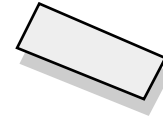
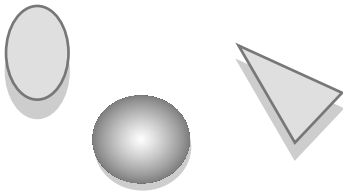
Head of Geography

"Involvement in the Curriculum Management Scheme provided an excellent opportunity for personal staff development".

Head of History

"There is clearly good cross-curricular and interdepartmental co-operation which seems to be strengthening."

Ofsted Inspection Team



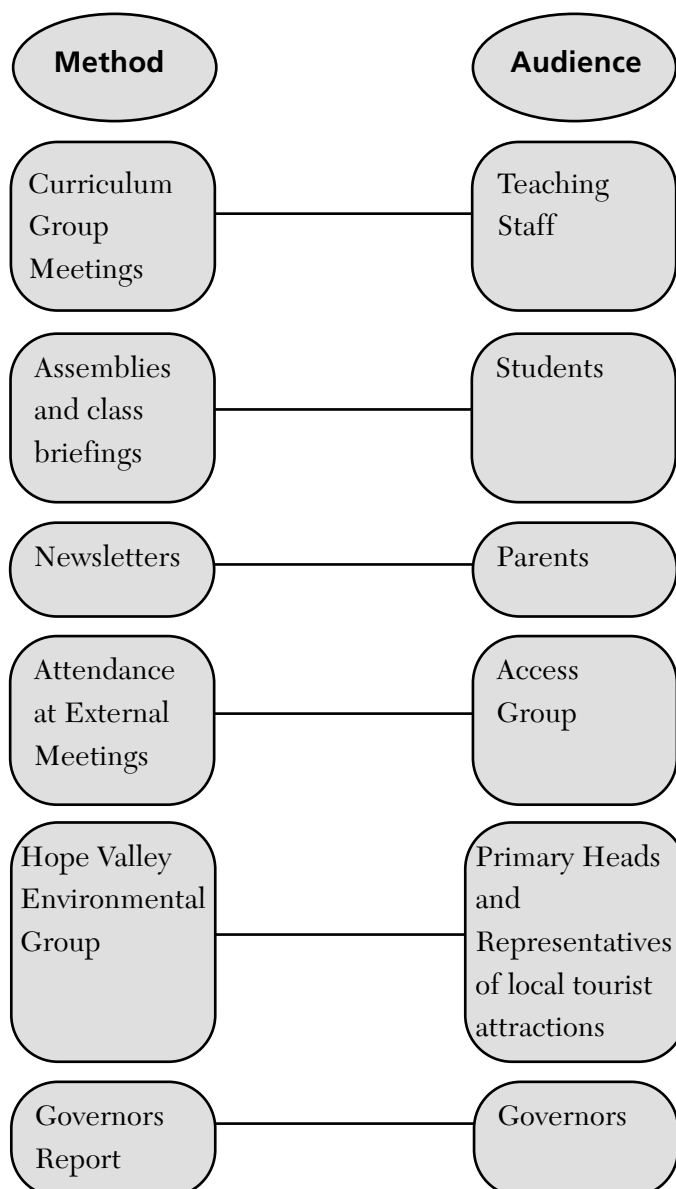
Student involvement

The launch of the project to students was carefully planned to involve the Access Group who were central to the issue. Members of the Group gave their time to act as consultants on a range of activities to raise students' awareness of the issues facing local disabled people. Sustainability in a regional and global context was raised to provide balance to the day. Again specialist input from the Peak Park proved invaluable.

Dissemination

Whilst the Planning Group contained representation from across the College, there was a major task in keeping all those outside this Group informed of the planned activities and their outcomes.

Channels of communication used



"The Access Group really listened to us. They seemed to enjoy what we told them about our footpath project." *Student*

"It was interesting listening to all the different opinions of the students at the end of the day when we watched the presentations." *Student*

"It was a great confidence boost for the students to be able to clearly communicate the ideas to adults." *Teacher*



A member of the Access Group helping students to appreciate issues facing disabled people

"The footpath project became a context for subject teachers to introduce a relevant and topical context into their classroom activities." *Teacher*

Wider involvement

Initial whole college involvement was secured by ESD becoming a College development priority. This required all development plan authors to address and be accountable for implementing the priority.

From this background the message began to seep into the curriculum. Involvement with the scheme has enabled staff with a personal interest in sustainability to address it more explicitly within their teaching. The footpath project itself became a context for subject teachers to introduce a relevant and topical context into their classroom activities. The case studies which follow are examples of some of the teaching activities which took place.





Case studies

Case Study One

Department: Drama


Target Group: Year 7 (age 12 years)

"Keep off the grass" is a play written by the Head of Drama, Caroline Small.

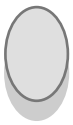
Jeremy and Jemima Tourist are determined to give their children a traditional picnic but the beauty spot they have chosen is the very last patch of grass in the world. They soon find themselves defending their right to picnic against a botanist, a farmer (and his herd of cows) and a documentary film crew!

As more characters arrive to stake their claim on the grass, the government minister, Sir Oscar Wheatear, steps in – with disastrous consequences.

The play is open-ended and students have to find their own solutions. It is an excellent way to introduce and develop both the process skills and the concepts essential to the ESD approach.



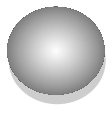
"It made me realise that trees and grass could disappear forever."



12 year old student

"I developed an appreciation that there is more than one solution and that it is essential to take into account the views of others."

14 year old 'Actor'

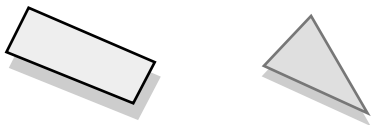


"The project has been critical in developing a wide range of ICT skills in a 'real world' context."

ICT Co-ordinator

"We constantly were required to complete challenging tasks."

13 year old student



"Every time I gave the kid's a challenge they came up with the goods." *Head of Mathematics*

Case Study Two**Department: Information Technology****Target Group: Year 9 (age 14 years)**

During the process of surveying the proposed footpath site, students were involved in recording data using both conventional and digital cameras. The photographic images they produced were collected on a CD and used along with commercial software relating to the Peak District to produce promotional guides for Dirty Lane Site. Students were also able to use the fieldwork data to resource Powerpoint media presentations which were highly commended at the final public presentation.

The project enabled students to demonstrate the necessary ICT skills to access the higher levels (six and seven) of the ICT National Curriculum. The footpath was a 'real' context and an ideal opportunity to extend all students in the ICT strands of Communicating Information and Handling Data.



The footpath provided a real world context for developing ICT skills

Case Study Three**Department : Mathematics****Target Group: Year 8 (age 13 years)**

The mathematics department took advantage of the Year 8 students' recent work with the footpath project to introduce an extended task which used their previous work as a context for open ended mathematical investigation.

Students were asked to consider a wide range of factors that were worthy of consideration by the prospective designers of the path.

Surface type, roughness, gradient and width formed the major items of consideration at the initial brainstorming session before a process of elimination provided a whole class focus upon gradient. In part one, students utilised their original site measurements collected from fieldwork to calculate, present and comment upon gradient data.

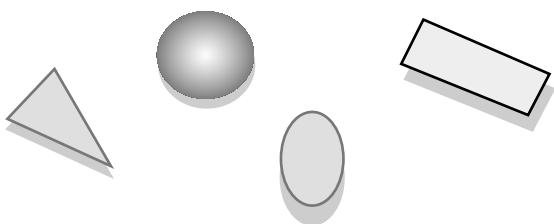
Part two of the exercise involved students deciding upon the use of percentages as the most useful way of describing gradients, and being required to devise spreadsheets to convert fieldwork and map evidence into percentage ratios.

Motivated by their background knowledge and their desire to contribute further to assisting the Access Group whom they had recently met, the group came up with some high quality work in an area of assessment for which it is notoriously difficult to set meaningful and relevant tasks.



In summary...

The intention here has not been to chronicle the progress of the Hope Valley footpath project; rather we've tried to suggest how curriculum development and cross-curricular collaboration – so difficult to achieve in a secondary setting – can be approached in an innovative manner. We are sure that there are innumerable projects that are capable of reaching towards the same goals. Beware – the path is bumpy, but the rewards are worth it!



Acknowledgements

Written by Bernie Hunter, Hope Valley College.

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Further Reading

Keep Off the Grass! (ISBN:1 84 094 083 2), published by
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Warlingham, Surrey CR6 9AQ. Tel: 020 8 651 4119