Teachers Planning Collaboratively for a Cross-Curricular Project with First Years: An Evaluation

Evaluated by:
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‘By integrating 21st century teaching and learning strategies comprehensively and purposefully into the curriculum, and by assessing not only what students learn but how they learn, schools will nurture critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators, creators and innovators.’

Summary

The project involved two schools each with a first year student group and three teachers representing different subjects. Their brief was to develop a cross-curricular, collaborative project to run over approximately five weeks with a focus around one or more of the key learning statements from the New Junior Cycle Framework. This report examines the perceived quality of learning and teaching for both teachers and students, as well as how they experienced the collaborative process itself.

Teachers committed considerable effort and time to planning, developing and executing their project within the limits of their resources. Likewise students reportedly engaged fully in their projects, also giving extra time to complete them and provide reflective feedback. All participants reported positively on the experience of collaboration, the ease and enjoyment of learning and teaching in a less formal manner, and the variety of skills developed through the project.

Reporting from both students and teachers highlighted not only the willingness of both groups to participate in this form of classroom engagement but also the challenges facing schools and teachers in making the shift from current teaching methods to the new learning approaches advocated in the New Junior Cycle Framework and the Blueprint for Educate Together Second-Level Schools. Lack of time, limited resources and a need for more training were the main challenges identified by the participants but the results of this research project suggest that making the shift will require more than that. Teacher feedback fell squarely ‘inside the box’ and highlighted how the current constructs of: 40 minute class time-slots, textbook dependence and physical resources impact teachers’ ability to participate in innovative cross-curricular project work.

A change in thinking for teachers, school management and the educational system as a whole is needed which goes beyond simply incorporating project-based or collaborative teaching methods. Along with this change in thinking a new approach to professional skill development and empowerment of teachers and administrators.

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1 Educate Together (2009) Taking the Next Step: A Blueprint for Educate Together Second-level Schools
is called for, to encourage them to develop professional, management skills and judgement to implement the innovations needed going forward.

Educate Together would like to acknowledge the financial investment that the Ireland Funds have made to make this research project possible.
Introduction

Educate Together is an educational charity which has its origins in the multi-denominational education movement which began in the 1970s. It is the representative organisation of the 68 Educate Together National Schools (ETNS) across the Republic of Ireland, and is patron of 56 of these schools. While all Educate Together schools are National Schools, the network reflects the diversity of primary school types in Ireland, including urban and rural schools, disadvantaged (DEIS) schools and schools that cater for pupils with specific Special Education Needs (SEN) in assisted classes. Educate Together is currently the leading provider of new primary schools and the fastest growing sector in Irish education.

Educate Together schools operate under the same regulations and funding structures as all other national schools in Ireland and are fully recognised by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). They differ from other national schools, however, in their ethos or characteristic spirit. Educate Together schools reflect the view that it is ‘educationally, socially and morally desirable to deliver equality in education and education for equality.’\(^2\) They are obliged, under the Educate Together charter, to ‘deliver equality of access and esteem to all children irrespective of their social, cultural and religious backgrounds.’\(^3\)

Educate Together schools are grounded in the four principles outlined in the organisation’s charter. They are multi-denominational in character, ensuring that children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have equal access to, and rights within the school. They are co-educational and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities. They are child-centred, and this principle underlies not only the curriculum but also the management of the school. Finally, Educate Together schools are run on a democratic basis, encouraging active participation by parents in the daily life of the school while affirming the professional role of teachers.\(^4\)

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\(^2\) Paul Rowe, Educate Together CEO, speaking at the Parnell Summer School in August 2008
\(^3\) What is an Educate Together School? Educate Together, Dublin 2006
\(^4\) The Educate Together Charter (last amended 1999), http://www.educatetogether.ie/about-2/charter/
In 2012 Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, announced that three second-level schools would open with Educate Together involvement in 2014. These include Hansfield Educate Together Secondary School, Dublin 15 under Educate Together patronage, Ballymakenny College, Drogheda under joint Educate Together and VEC patronage, and Kishoghe Community College in Lucan under VEC patronage with formal partnership with Educate Together. The Minister also announced that the new Framework for Junior Cycle will take effect from September 2014.

As Educate Together prepares for these two significant events, this project was designed as part of on-going research into curriculum development strategies for implementing the new Junior Cycle Framework in Educate Together and other second-level schools. The aim was to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning when teachers collaborate on planning and developing a cross-curricular project. In considering the impact of such an integrated approach, we were also interested in how students could be facilitated to become more involved in the planning process, develop key skills including literacy, numeracy and become more actively involved in decisions about what they would learn.

We would like to acknowledge the financial investment that the Ireland Funds have made in making this research project possible.

The six teachers directly involved in the two projects, and other teachers and staff who provided support in administrative and/or technical capacities, are to be highly commended for their energetic engagement with the project. The Principals in both schools are also thanked for their openness and willingness to accommodate the project in their respective schools, as are the students for their enthusiastic participation and feedback.

Methodology

The Curriculum Project is a case study within an overall action research cycle whereby Educate Together aims to explore and define possible approaches to curriculum integration at post-primary level. A comparative evaluation was undertaken between two independent cross-curricular short projects developed and undertaken in separate schools. Project development criteria were non-prescriptive outside a defined time frame and the cross-curricular and collaborative features

5 For further information see the Educate Together website at www.educatetogether.ie
6 The Ireland Funds Ireland: www.irelandfunds.org/Ireland
required. Project development framework resource information was provided to both school groups and the same verbal guidance provided to each at the pre-planning stage. Project evaluation criteria were provided to teachers prior to implementation of the projects.

Qualitative data has been collected, using a number of data collection tools, as follows:
For students - reflection journals and sheets, post-project questionnaires, work output (presentations/projects) blogs, and post-project interviews.
For teachers: interviews at pre - and post - planning and post-project stages, written reflective summaries and post-project questionnaires. Data gathered were used to identify effective elements of the cross-curricular collaboration and key challenges presented by the process from both teacher and student perspectives.

Project evaluator Suzanne Smith is an independent tutor and researcher in adult education, business and health and social care. She has been involved with Educate Together for over ten years in various capacities including at school board level and curriculum development evaluation. Suzanne has a degree in Social Science from UCD and has also studied business and intercultural relations at higher level.

Two schools volunteered to participate in a cross-curricular project based around a single theme, self-selected by the school group. Árd Scoil Ris is an all-boys, Catholic school located in Marino, Dublin and St. Oliver’s Community College is a co-educational, multi-denominational school located in Drogheda. In both schools three teachers participated in the project, each from subject departments, and the teachers worked with a group of first year students on the project over five weeks during the January to March school term. A total of six teachers and forty six students participated in the project overall. In both cases the teachers collaborated with their colleagues on the design of the project including identification of a central theme, definition of learning outcomes and agreement of teaching methods to be used. Student input was facilitated by the teachers on how the projects would be executed and evaluated.

The primary focus of the new Junior Cycle is ‘to ensure all aspects of the curriculum and its organisation are focussed on improving the learning and teaching that takes place daily.’ Other areas of emphasis are the integration of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and the need to make greater use of technologies. Key skill competencies outlined in the Framework are: the ability to use tools interactively, effective interaction in heterogeneous groups, and ability to act

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autonomously. These were reflected in each of the projects through employment of a range of teaching strategies including:

- Effective use of technologies through internet-based research; Powerpoint presentation development, blog and website creation and management.
- Student exploration of their own discoveries through numeracy in calculations and experiments as well as through literacy in reporting of findings.
- Discursive and group work engaged students to explore their understanding and gaps in their knowledge, question and synthesize information and frame their research in a collaborative project.
- Development of interpersonal skills such as negotiation, communication and compromise through conducting interviews and collaborative group participation.
- Individual and group presentation of projects through the use of technology (Powerpoint, website, blog), creative communication (drama, photography) and presentation skills (oral and written).
- Reflective learning through journal, diary and/or blog maintenance by teachers and students as well as mid and post project feedback in written and/or verbal formats around the learning experience during the project.

The project evaluation team met with the teachers before the project began and again for the final presentation by the students. During these meetings guidance was given to teachers in relation to project planning, collaborative strategies, assessment and reflective feedback expected. A range of resource materials and guidelines on project-based teaching and learning, the New Junior Cycle Framework and the Educate Together Blueprint document were also provided to the teachers prior to planning. The collaborative process, reflective learning practice, use of active teaching strategies, and assessment of learning were elements to be included in the project but each group would define how these elements would be addressed in their individual projects. Instructions to teachers were purposely non-prescriptive in order to facilitate their development of a unique project relevant to their own group and their exploration of and reflection upon the process of doing so, without the confines of structured requirements.

At completion written summaries were provided by the teachers, while the students provided access to their blog, completed questionnaires and reflective journals for review and analysis.

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8 See bibliography for resource materials.
The Projects

Air and the Discovery of Oxygen: Árd Scoil Rís, Marino, Co. Dublin

Students examined the discovery of oxygen in its historical context, to appreciate the human dimension behind the work of scientists and the historical legacy they leave behind. It was hoped the students would develop an appreciation of the nature and extent of scientific discovery that took place in the 18th century in its political, social and historical context by linking the content with other units. The project was cross-curricular between French, History and Science and teaching methods included French vocabulary, scientific experiments, research of oxygen related innovations and the study of the social and political circumstances of the time. Students worked individually and in groups on specific project elements and conducted independent research using the Internet. The project ran over four weeks and culminated in a display of information on each subject theme and a PowerPoint presentation, by the students, to the project evaluators from Educate Together.

Then and Now – Life in Drogheda: St. Oliver’s Community College, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Students explored the social and working lives of people in Drogheda at a vibrant time in local history, when Drogheda was a booming industrial centre, with thousands of townspeople gaining a living working in the many local factories, spending their money in the town of Drogheda and raising their families there. The three subject areas were History, Geography and English with some additional support from IT. Learning activities included a guided historical walking tour of Drogheda, interviews with local senior citizens (many whom were grandparents of students), a visit to the local Millmount museum, a ‘then and now’ photography element, internet research and an interactive blog as both a teaching and a reflective tool. The project took place over five weeks and culminated in a photographic and informational exhibition and performance of a play written by the students reflecting what they learned about the era, to another class of first year students, the project evaluators and a number of invited teachers and staff.

Students from St. Oliver’s maintained reflective journals and a blog and students from both schools completed a brief questionnaire following the project to identify

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9 See Appendix A for full project description.
10 See Appendix B for a full project description.
what they liked/disliked, learned and would change about the project. Key skills development reported by both student groups included: working in a team, research, ICT, literacy & numeracy, presentation, organisation, creativity, independent learning and group participation skills. Additional skills were developed by students in each project, based on the specifics of the tasks involved, but those listed above were common to both groups and reflect a number of the key statements of learning from the new Junior Cycle Framework document (p 17).
Project Successes

Teacher feedback from both schools was similar, with comments reflecting the same set of experiences despite different project content and subject mixes. Teachers specifically identified that their own teaching skills were developed and improved as a result of:

- A more ‘natural’ and ‘holistic’ manner of teaching.
- Teamwork, collaboration and collegial support.
- Collaboration with students allowing all to claim ownership of the project through a process of facilitating student decision making about aspects of the project implementation and evaluation.
- Developing awareness of students’ potential to be responsible for their own learning.
- Sharing of good practice and ‘cross-fertilization of ideas’ between teachers.
- Engaging in strategies and teaching methods not usually used such as group work, student led research, creative methods to demonstrate learning and use of technologies.
- Opportunity to draw on personal skills/knowledge not usually used in the classroom such as IT and photography skills.
- Reflective and evaluative aspect of the project.

In addition to professional skill development the teachers noted that students engaged more readily and fully in both projects, both individually and as team members. This was also noted by a number of students, one of whom reported: ‘we were better behaved’. Teachers credited this to:

- Student appreciation of the new methodology used in this project.
- Collaboration and sense of ownership by and with students.
- Student participation in project design and execution.
- Projects designed to relate to student’s own life & experience.

The clear identification of these factors as having been central to student engagement and learning in both projects is promising for future short course and cross-curricular project development.

Students were asked how they were taught differently during this project and what aspects of the project worked well from their perspective. Once again, the responses were similar from both schools and were largely positive and focussed around learning more about the topics in a more relaxed and enjoyable way. Most interesting was that the students essentially identified the same positive experiences as the teachers, albeit from a slightly different perspective.
Natural Learning

Students not only identified the work they had done on the project but reported it was ‘an easier and funner way to learn’. Echoing comments from the teachers about their sense of this as a more natural teaching approach, students saw it as a more effective context for both teaching and learning. Direct participation in acquiring the information about their topic through independent research, rather than reading it from a textbook in class, was mentioned by several students from both projects as having facilitated their learning. Overall they found this approach ‘more organised’, and a ‘quicker’, ‘easier’ and ‘better’ way of learning about the subject. These responses are encouraging, as the recommendations in the Blueprint for Educate Together Second-level schools and the new Junior Cycle Framework seek to nurture greater participation in and responsibility for learning by the learner themselves, and suggest an openness and eagerness on the part of students to be greater participants in their own learning.

Discursive Learning

Students identified the collaborative nature of the project as a positive aspect of engagement and learning: the teachers ‘…let us have opinions and decide what to do’ or ‘…let us talk’. The opportunity to ‘talk’ to each other and to the teacher about the subject being studied was mentioned frequently by students as helping them to learn and understand the topic and may also have facilitated a greater sense of ownership, responsibility, teamwork, and collaboration between students and in the student-teacher relationship. Indeed while parents and educators alike lament the seeming demise of verbal communication, as ‘Tweeting’ threatens to strangle conversation, it is significant that student feedback shows a recurring and clear recognition of debate and discussion as an effective learning strategy.

Responsibility for Learning

Students overwhelmingly reported learning more through the group learning process. Some discovered they liked the experience of being in charge, others found encouragement in being able to share challenges and work to their own strengths. Students also recognised the compound effect of working together on different parts of the project, ‘if everyone pulls their weight everything gets done quicker.’ The importance of skills such as patience, diplomacy and negotiation were highlighted by students, as was the role of communication for effective teamwork.
Teamwork

One student identified how this responsibility as a team member, not only applied to themselves, but also to the teachers, ‘they had to account for what we done with other teachers’. This realisation that the teacher/leader/manager of the project is also part of the team is often missed by team members and it is encouraging that these short projects may have highlighted this essential element for effective teamwork to these students long before they will emerge into the workforce, potentially giving them a head start in developing these key skills. For teachers, teamwork was also a reported positive feature in terms of collegial support, exposure and encouragement to ‘try new ideas and develop new skills’.

New Skill Development

The stated learning objectives of both projects included skill development. Teachers reported enhancing their skills in areas such as creativity, organisation, planning, listening to students, negotiation, interpersonal skills, delegation (of some responsibility to students), group facilitation, interviewing, photography, drama and IT skills. They also acknowledged others they might have used to greater effect if better developed, such as planning, course development, IT, e-learning/teaching and overall confidence in their ability to design and deliver courses or projects.

Skill development identified by students included: planning, organisation of work, research, typing, calculating, maths, logic, computer and internet use, Power Point, reading, writing, grammar, communication, language, working with other people, co-operation, listening, presentation of work neatly, confidence in speaking in front of others and how to ‘mix different subjects together.’ All of these are learning skills, which are transferable across the curriculum and further into the workplace. Equally important is that the student’s own awareness of their skill development, and how they learn, has the potential to further empower them to take greater responsibility for their learning in the future.

Linked Learning

Teachers and students from both groups reported that linking multiple subjects enhanced overall learning of the topic. Expanding the contextual aspect of the core subject theme through cross-curricular linkage offered students a chance to see how what they were learning was connected to their own lives. At St Oliver’s the
study of historical versus current life in the students’ own town as well as linking the experiences of their grandparents with their school learning was seen as effective. At Árd Scoil Ris the links were made by students ability to choose a focus for their research on an aspect of history or scientific discoveries which personally interested them, as well as being able to see how the various inventions impacted and were impacted by the social and political context in which they occurred while continuing to be relevant to their lives today.

Students reported that the teachers ‘talked about other subjects in their class’, which facilitated the linked learning process and brought the subject ‘alive’ for them. One teacher reported that the approach ‘really engaged the students and allowed them to understand’ that events and decisions from other times and places ‘can impact massively on their town and their lives.’ Both the community involvement and the linking of their own subject to those of others were highlighted by other teachers as ‘enjoyable’, ‘thought provoking’ and ‘enriching’.

The Challenges

Time

Apart from specific tasks disliked by individual students who may not have liked ‘dancing in the play’ or ‘rain on the walking tour’ there were two main issues identified as concerns or challenges: ‘not enough time’ and ‘falling behind on other studies’. For teachers time constraints were a dual challenge of not enough time available, for project planning, delivery or assessment, as well as difficulty in timetabling the various components of the project from planning through to assessment. A secondary impact was that ‘some dilution of content became necessary due to time constraints’ a sentiment echoed by comments from students who wanted more time to study the project at a deeper level.

Linked to the timetabling concern were the difficulties presented when teachers had different subjects and classes clashing with each other, may not have been an allocated teacher for the specific student group in the project, and a student group who were not part of a core class group. In both schools the projects required a considerable amount of extra effort by and negotiation with other staff members to facilitate timetabling, class swapping, room reallocation and extra class time. This represents a potential hurdle for similar projects in many schools but logistical issues such as working with a core student group, or collaboration with other teachers timetabled for the same student group, could be resolved at the project
planning or time-tabling stages. The time challenge also raises the question of whether a more flexible school wide class time-tabling structure would be of benefit to allow for longer class periods where needed and if so how this could be accomplished in a whole school context if such teaching approaches were being phased in rather than implemented on a school-wide basis.

Locating and accessing relevant and appropriate resources, including appropriate classroom space to accommodate the collaborative and group-work dimensions of the project was another challenge reported. This was both a time and resource issue due to difficulties gaining computer or internet access at school for teachers during the planning stages and sometimes for students during the research stages in their projects. Where a teacher on one of the projects was absent for a significant time due to illness the difficulty of engaging a substitute teacher in the context of a short project was apparent, thereby potentially impacting the other teacher/s on the project in relation to content, resource and time requirements for completion within schedule.

Collaboration

‘In undertaking a project of this nature, goodwill, flexibility and collegiality are essential components. Without these, such a project would be impossible.’

The enthusiasm and passion brought to the table by the two groups of teachers involved in this pilot project was commendable. The entire process from conception through execution to evaluation was starkly and essentially dependent upon the trust, commitment, contribution and collaborative effort of the teachers in each team. As was pointed out by most of the teachers, without the collegial cooperation with which the teachers engaged in the process the challenges of time, focus, clarity of objectives and agreement on key project elements had the potential to derail the effort at any point.

For schools preparing to implement the development of cross-curricular projects and short courses this will be an important issue to consider. It may seem most convenient to assign a group of teachers to work on a project based on how their timetable intersects but without the support required to facilitate this group working collaboratively there are potential challenges. Even with the level of cooperation evident in the two teams of teachers in the project, some students commented that it was ‘hard to work on a project with different teachers who had different ideas.’ The importance of collaboration, extensive planning and constant communication is
therefore evident if ‘quality of learning’ and ‘effectiveness of teaching’ is to be maximized.

Conclusion

Evaluation of the impact of the collaboration process on both learning and teaching was central to this project. Feedback from participants identified many benefits of such collaboration as well as specific challenges to this approach in the current post-primary context in Irish schools. The self-reflection element was largely expected to serve as an evaluative tool but may have made a greater contribution to the learning and awareness development of both students and teachers. Focus, reflection & collaboration are three principles considered necessary for shared responsibility for learning (O’Neill & Conzemius 2002)\textsuperscript{11} and, taking the student and teacher feedback into account, both of these projects appear to have used these principles to good effect.

The broad scope offered to teachers within which to create their projects highlighted issues around their experience and confidence in the use of project-based learning approaches\textsuperscript{12}, and a current dependence on specifically defined course content. The absence of a text book, the need to identify and access appropriate and relevant resources, the challenge of identifying realistic project parameters and the practical details of project development all presented the teachers with difficulties which, while not insurmountable, required considerable time and effort to address. A lack of initial confidence in creating a new course resulted in constant examination of the accuracy, relevance and ‘educational value’ of the content in relation to the existing curriculum requirements. One teacher saw the project as a positive way to introduce a leaving certificate topic to a first-year class in a relevant way, thereby ‘sowing seeds’ and integrating today’s learning with tomorrow’s examination requirements. This is an indication of a challenge facing teachers when the new junior cycle comes into effect, to avoid using the project or short course options as leaving certificate preparation courses.

The project ‘highlighted the need for the teacher to be a reflective practitioner’, according to one teacher. Despite this assertion, written feedback and comments received from teachers tended to be general rather than detailed or specific about the process and what challenges they personally experienced at different stages

and how they planned to use their experience from the project to inform their future teaching practice. This suggests a gap between the theory of reflective practice and on-the-job implementation and raises questions about the value placed on this aspect of professional development - not only in the current resource-strapped context but more critically as we proceed in an evolving educational environment.

The NCCA states that an aim of the New Framework for Junior Cycle is that the Junior Cycle is ‘no longer an entity to be ‘covered’. Rather it becomes the focus of and resource for learning.’ A number of the teachers noted that CPD in course development and availability of a blueprint or framework for developing courses would be of benefit for future projects. The NCCA have prepared a template and short courses that schools can use but schools will also be expected to develop their own. On a small scale the project reflected the challenge for teachers in making such a significant shift in approach from course delivery to course development. A lack of clear assessment or feedback guidelines and processes in both school projects raises questions about the confidence of teachers in developing relevant assessment mechanisms for such projects, particularly in the absence of clear external exam-based requirements. Processes empowering teachers to have confidence in their own professional judgement may prove critical if teachers are to consider participating in school-based cross-curricular course development in an increasingly results and value-oriented environment.

**Recommendations**

Facilitating effective cross-curricular and collaborative project development in existing schools will require a number of considerations:

- Allocation of sufficient planning, development and reflection time for teachers involved in course and project development
- Examination of the standard 40 minute class block system and its appropriateness for effective implementation of the New Junior Cycle Framework
- Assessment of timetabling for the whole school to accommodate new approaches to teaching and learning
- Provision for easy access to resources and information at the school level
- Support and training for teachers in course development and assessment methods
- CPD in technologies and their applications in group project work
- Staff training and support around teamwork skills as both team members and facilitators
• CPD on techniques to develop partnered responsibility for learning with students
• Promotion of the NCCA template and short course samples for teacher use

The experience of both schools in this project was enthusiastically positive. Replicating and expanding this impact on learning and teaching, to a broader base of schools, will require commitment at a school administrative level and support at a professional organisational level. This project indicates not only that it can be done, but also that both teachers and students may be eager to engage and collaborate in new ways of empowered learning and teaching. The challenge now is to provide the supports to make it so.
References


The Beane/Brodhagen Model of Negotiated Integrated Curriculum available online at: (http://coe.winthrop.edu/blackburnb/EDCI%20600/Beane.pdf)
Appendix A
ARDSCOIL RIS GRIFFITH AVENUE

Overall Project Aims:

The overall aim of this project is to encourage students to research and learn both cooperatively and collaboratively while working on a unit of integrated curriculum. In adapting this pedagogical model it is hoped students will discover the connectivity of various related subject areas while developing group work, communication, and numeracy and literacy skills. The aim of this project is to start developing templates for integrated curricular projects for the short courses in the New Framework Junior Certificate.

Selected Learning Outcomes/Statements of Learning

- To value the role and contribution of science and technology to society, and their personal, social and global importance.
- Recognise the potential uses of mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of knowledge.

Key skills including literacy and numeracy.

Communicating:

- Performing and presenting.
- Using language.
- Using numbers.

Working with others

- Learning with others.
- Co-operating.
- Working with others through digital technology.

Rationale for the Project.

- To develop the understanding of the connectivity of various areas of knowledge, through an examining of a scientific discovery in its human and historical context.
- To understand the lifelong commitment of the great learners and to discover their quest to extend the boundaries of knowledge.
- To help the students realise the study of history is a life story of people in their times.
- To use cooperative learning techniques to advance the methodological thrust of the new Junior Certificate Programme.
Lesson clusters

Week one
1. An examination of the nature of burning and the relationship with the air used.
2. To learn what everyday life was like in France and Britain in the late 1790’s.
3. To use the French language to help understand the context of the times.

Week two
1. Using calculations to understand the nature and composition of air.
2. To allow the students become familiar with the life and times of the scientists involved in the discovery of oxygen through historical research.
3. To compose a series of correspondences in French between the two scientists.

Week Three
1. To allow the students discover oxygen for their research.
2. To examine the historical truth behind the story and to enhance their knowledge of French by bilingual summary.
3. Compile presentation.

Presentation
The students will present the material they learned and the discoveries they made through learner diaries, multimedia presentation and displays exhibited and presented in historical dress.
Appendix B

“Then and Now - Life in Drogheda”

Outline of the Project

Rationale for the project: Why here? Why now?

This five week short-course style project will explore the social and working lives of people in Drogheda at a vibrant time in local history – a decade termed ‘The Swinging Sixties.’ The course has been devised with and will be delivered to first year students in St Oliver’s Community College.

Drogheda in the 60s was a booming, industrial centre, with thousands of the townspeople gaining a living working in the many local factories. These people socialised and spent their money in the town of Drogheda and brought up their families there.

There are many opportunities for learning from this period of local history - not least due to the rapid pace of social change in the 50 years since.

The course will be delivered from an historical perspective focussing on social history interviews with senior citizens on how life has changed in Drogheda over the past 50 years. It is envisaged that there will be a link with ‘Millmount Museum’ in the town for this aspect of the course. This will bring the study of history to life and foster an understanding that life was not always as it is now.

There will be a geography aspect to the course in which the functional change of land usage in the town will be focussed on. The industrial history of the town will be explored through photography. Students will create a comparative photographic exhibition of industrial Drogheda – past and present.

The third aspect of the course will be the creation of a dramatic scenario by the students, based on what they have learned as a result of interviewing senior citizens, and their experience in ‘Millmount Museum.’ This drama will take the form of a short play to be performed in the school to a first year audience.

As each aspect of the course progresses students will record their experiences in a reflective journal and a blog.

Aims:

- To develop a knowledge and understanding of life in an industrial town in Ireland in the 1960s. For example: Drogheda.
- To record the oral history of social, working and domestic lives of the people in this town in the 1960s.
- To examine Drogheda’s changing land-use over time.
- To develop skills in the fields of photography and photo editing.
- To understand some of the major changes and developments which have taken place in Irish towns in the last 50 years.
- To examine and experience through drama what it would be like to live in Drogheda or any similar industrial town in the 1960’s.
- To record our findings in a blog and reflective journal.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will gain an appreciation and understanding of the social and working lives of people in Drogheda in the 1960s.

- Students will be able to critically analyse the significant changes that have taken place in the intervening three generations.

Key Skills:

- Research skills
- Interviewing skills
- ICT skills
- Dramatic skills
- Photography skills
- Team work
- Literacy Skills
- Creative Skills
- Presentation Skills

Some of the 24 statements from the new Junior Cycle Programme relevant to this project are:

- Values local and national heritage and recognises the relevance of the past to current national and international issues and events.

- Communicates effectively using a variety of means in a range of contexts in L1 - Communication skills (including interviewing skills)

- Creates, appreciates and critically interprets texts (including written, oral, visual and other texts) (eg. Photographs, audio interviews, books.)

- Improves their observation, inquiry, and critical-thinking skills (through conducting interviews, designing questionnaires and taking part in a drama).

- Understands the distribution of social, economic, and environmental phenomena.

- Brings an idea from conception to realization.
- Uses ICT effectively and ethically in learning and in life.

- Appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which they live.

These statements of learning are underpinned by eight principles: quality; wellbeing; creativity and innovation; choice and flexibility; engagement and participation; inclusive education; continuity and development; and learning to learn. As per Junior Cycle Guidelines, a number of these eight principles will be reflected in the delivery of this project.