

Aims

To raise aspirations of communities mainly through working with teachers and pupils.

The aim of the project is to encourage pupils to become more interested and engaged in their education by using innovative teaching and learning techniques. These will lead to:

- ◆ higher aspirations
- ◆ better attendance
- ◆ better behaviour
- ◆ better staying on in education and training post 16
- ◆ better employability
- ◆ raised standards of achievement
- ◆ positive impacts on their local communities

Location

The T4L Unit is involved in training across the whole of Northumberland and elsewhere. Activities in Wansbeck District are specifically funded by NRF and take place in the district's schools and with community groups.

The Intervention Strategy

Staffing

The Director of the Unit is Robert Peers. The intervention until recently was staffed by two consultants who had the support of admin staff. As the project is coming to the end of its funding, the consultants have now taken posts elsewhere. They have been replaced by a number of teachers working part time to ensure that the project meets the objectives of its final year.

Funding

All funding for the Wansbeck T4L project comes from NRF. In the financial year 2003-04 the intervention received £155,000 NRF finance. The LEA funded the director of the T4L Unit until March 2004. Other colleagues working in the Unit derive their funding from income generated by training and from a variety of other sources including the National College for School Leadership and the Key Stage 3 National Strategy.

Operating method

Consultants work in schools to offer advice and training to teachers, they also developed resources for teachers to use within their schools.

STAR days (Strategies for Thinking and Remembering) involve the consultants teaching a range of thinking strategies to classes in a school whilst the class teachers observe the children.

The project aims to leave a legacy of teachers with experience of thinking for learning techniques as champions within their school. These teachers also work across a number of schools to ensure that their knowledge and experience is shared as widely as possible.

The floor target in this area reads:

In education, the government will increase the percentage of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE's at A*-C or equivalent to at least 25% in every school by 2006 (20% by 2004) and 38% in every LEA by 2004.

In 2002, the figure for Wansbeck was 41.1%; in 2003 it was 43.5%. The projection for 2004 is 50.5%.

The intervention used schools as a focus for raising the aspirations of the community as a whole. This is achieved through a 3 stage process -

1. The thinking for learning unit provides courses for teachers to model what works with target children and to change teaching methods accordingly
2. This stimulates the interest of parents who start to get involved in school and after school activities. This raises their aspirations, understanding and respect for other parents at the school.
3. Following on from the training in what works with engaging children and parents, the tools of what works in education are used in community group settings with other adults – for example bringing parents and children together to tackle bullying. This has been used in a number of settings and



with a number of partners in the Wansbeck area including the NSPCC, ARTEMIS arts and Debt Awareness North East.

Achievements of the Intervention

Main achievements

Every school serving a priority ward has been worked with.

In depth training (STAR Days and Thinking Certificate work) has been carried out in all First Schools serving priority wards.

Training has been delivered in all Middle Schools at KS2 that draw pupils from priority wards.

A programme for working with the high schools has also been achieved.

Mainstreaming Strategy

The aim is to make the innovative teaching and learning techniques sustainable. Teachers and leaders of community groups have taken the Teaching Thinking Certificates and learned about thinking techniques. By identifying and supporting those teachers and schools who have the capacity to become models of good practice, the techniques will be available to the District after the funding for the project has finished. The Unit is hoping to win other funding to continue the Wansbeck T4L model.

The Learning Curve

The intervention and the support from NRF is giving intensive support and training for the teachers of the district that would otherwise be unavailable.

Pupils, schools and community groups in the District are very responsive to the programme and its aims.

The only real problem faced by the intervention was the late start date after the money was approved. There was a ten-month gap between the money being awarded and the consultants starting their work in the Wansbeck area. Also due to the time limited nature of the funding, there was a difficulty in retaining staff.

There has also been a small problem identified with the time it takes to build the links needed with the Community groups as this is a different way of working and new techniques need to be found for it to be effective.



Thinking 4 Learning (T4L)

Contact:
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NRF Priority:
Education
NRF Authority:
Wansbeck
NRF Funding Level:
Medium

PTO for additional information

Lead Agent:

Thinking for Learning Unit

Main Partners:

Local Education Authority, Wansbeck District Council, Ashington Education Achievement Zone, local schools, community groups

Location:

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Key Lessons

By keeping the project aims flexible, the project was able to respond to changing circumstances with greater ease.

Having the support of the wider Thinking for Learning Unit has meant that the NRF funded project has been able to learn from the experience and practice of a wider range of experts than would otherwise have been the case. The fact that the Thinking for Learning unit existed also meant that when there were staffing problems in the latter stages of the programme, momentum was not lost.

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