



Report on the North Sea Schools' projects June 2009 Innovation & Education Group

Background

The North Sea Schools Network was proposed in 2005. A decision was made to encourage schools around the North Sea to work together in structured projects around the theme of sustainability, and to attract Comenius funding to provide the finance.

The long-term aim is to assist and enable schools, their teachers and students to:

- get to know each other,
- learn about each other,
- make visits to each other's regions,
- work on topics of common interest, and subsequently to
- remain in contact through a North Sea Schools' network.

Two projects were submitted for Comenius funding, and both were successful in obtaining a grant. Comenius funding supports the schools to work together for two years.

Currently 11 schools are working together from 6 countries around the North Sea – England, Norway, France, Germany, Scotland and Denmark.

Two further projects are awaiting news to find out if they have been successful in attracting funding. The results will be available on or about 1 July 2009. If these are successful in all the countries involved, another 9 schools and 4 colleges will begin work and join the North Sea Schools network. The countries involved in these projects would be Scotland, Norway, England, France, Sweden, the Netherlands and also Latvia and Spain.

One of the main benefits for the students has been the chance to get to know others from a different country. For some students there has been the chance to visit another country and to meet and work with the students they have communicated with by email. The teachers have benefited from the professional development obtained during work with schools in other countries. The wider school communities have benefited from the close cooperation between the schools during the course of the projects, and particularly when the schools have acted as hosts to other teachers and students.

There is every reason to believe that the network could continue to grow. Two schools from the first project which has just finished have already expressed an interest in taking part in a future project. In this way it is possible to "grow" more school partnerships by using schools which have gained experience in these Comenius projects to take the lead in developing new partnerships.

Project 1 – Sustainability Around the North Sea September 2007 to June 2009

Age range 9 to 14 (14 year-old students who followed the project from the start were 16 years old at the end of the project) **Lead partner Saxmundham Middle School, Suffolk**

Partner schools:

- Nordsee-Gymnasium-Büsum: Büsum, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany
- Teinå Skole, Stavanger, Rogaland, Norway
- Kannik Skole, Stavanger, Rogaland, Norway
- Donibristle Primary School, Fife, Scotland
- Inverkeithing High School, Fife, Scotland

This project looked at environmental changes due to climate change and man's impact on the environment. Students from six schools from England, Norway, Germany and Scotland, met and worked together on a range of tasks and activities. The teachers met together on four occasions. Students from all the schools accompanied the teachers at the mid-project meeting in Büsum and at the final project conference in Suffolk.

Examples of activities which the students have carried out:

- surveys, finding out what has been happening to the coasts and the North Sea;
- energy use investigations;
- weather recording;
- measurements using the BP Carbon Footprint calculator;
- a boat trip for the students to study sea life and fishing and an exploration of the mud flats and marine creatures at Buesum;
- a visit to the CEFAS laboratories in Lowestoft (previously involved in work with the NSC through the maritime resources group).

The project outcomes included:

- Powerpoint presentations and video clips of their activities and project results by all the schools involved;
- A website and learning platform for the project;
- Pupils from Teinå primary school composed a project eco-song;
- Pupils from Donibristle primary school produced two cartoon DVDs about how the environment might be improved;
- A range of “pledges” by the students, stating their intentions to recycle, to use less energy in their homes and their schools, to walk or cycle as much as possible instead of using cars, etc.;
- Recommendations for their own schools on what measures can be taken to save energy.

This project recently concluded with a final conference which was held in Suffolk.

The teachers and the students have shown the intention to continue to keep in touch with their counterparts across the North Sea.

Project 2 – Talking about Food around the North Sea

August 2008 to July 2010

Age range: primary pupils (5 to 12) Lead partner Invergowrie Primary School, Perth & Kinross

Partner schools:

- Invergowrie Primary School (Scotland)
- Beaumont Primary School, England
- Tofthøjskolen (Denmark)
- Ecole Viala (France)
- Kvaleberg skole (Norway).

Primary schools from Scotland, Norway, Denmark, France and England are involved in this project, which focuses on Healthy Eating. The main aim is for pupils and their families to learn about where their food comes from, what constitutes a healthy diet, and to produce, test and cook a range of recipes for family meals. As part of this investigation they will learn about the food eaten in the different regions in the project, and what foods are eaten at special times of the year. Sustainable food sources are being discovered, and the teachers have made links with local farms, farmers’ markets and research institutes to enable them to undertake project work outside the classroom.

Example of work in the first year of the project include:

- Each school has visited farms, museums, fisheries to investigate where food comes from
- All the schools have all undertaken some form of cooking and using food
- Communications between teachers and between pupils have taken place on a regular basis
- Each school has been involved in bilateral teacher visits, and, in some cases, pupil and teacher visits, to other schools in the project.
- When pupils from the Scottish school visited the Danish school they worked together to learn how to cook a meal for large numbers, and carried this out for a meal for 130 people
- Each school has produced a presentation about the activities they have carried out during the year.

The next year’s work will include the production of a special recipe book, and will also involve the use of food and cooking to provide a context for the introduction to words for food in several languages.

This project has recently held its end of first year meeting, at which teachers presented their schools' work up to this summer.

The final project conference will be held in Invergowrie, Scotland in June 2010.

Some of the schools were attracted to join through hearing about the first project, or having contacts with schools who were in the first project.

Projects awaiting approval for Comenius funding

Project 3 – for colleges in the subject area of art and design – age range 16 to 21 Lead partner Dundee College, Dundee

If successful in attracting Comenius funding, the **Connect, Create, Sustain Partnership** will explore sustainability in design, images, attitudes, ideas and practices. Through the medium of creativity and design, it encourages innovation within the progression from concept to realisation.

Transnational student teams will work with recycled materials and environmentally sound techniques and methodologies, stimulating a better understanding of different cultural attitudes and approaches to sustainability. The countries involved in this partnership are Scotland, France, the Netherlands and Sweden.

A programme of international Masterclasses and mobilities will enable students and teachers to extend their range of specialist and core skills.

Participants will communicate using environmentally-friendly methods, including Virtual platforms, blogs, Skype, wikis, face-to-face meetings and study visits. The project will culminate in the publication of a series of recommendations produced by the students, designed to influence educational and sustainability policies at local, regional and European level. In addition, a virtual gallery will display the students' work developed during the project, a final dissemination event will be held in Scotland in summer 2011 to showcase innovative creations, and a catalogue will be produced by student participants.

Project 4 – Healthy Living – age range primary and secondary Lead partner Kirkhill Primary School, Aberdeen City

If successful in attracting funding, this project aims is to stimulate better transnational understanding of the factors which lead to a healthy lifestyle, including the role of physical activity and the nutritional values of different food types. Pupils will learn about the cultures of other regions of Europe and their peoples by studying their traditional sports and cultural activities and the food they eat. The countries involved in this project are Scotland, England, Norway, the Netherlands, Spain and Latvia.

Pupils will learn about a variety of sports and physical activities, working together in international teams. They will cooperate to investigate links between healthy diet and personal wellbeing and performance. They will also explore the influences on uptake or involvement in physical activities.

Students will also work in international teams to develop strategies to promote and encourage healthy lifestyles for the whole school age range e.g. 5 to 19. An outcome will be to publish recommendations for Healthy Living, aimed at young people within the whole of the school age range, for promotion in each partner region.

The project will conclude with a final sports and cultural event in Scotland in Summer 2011.

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