

Enterprise Education in Practice

Laisterdyke Business and Enterprise College, Bradford July 2008

Five years ago Laisterdyke High School was the first school in Bradford to be given Business and Enterprise specialist college status at a pivotal time for the development of Enterprise Education nationally.

In February 2002, largely as a result of Howard Davies' report into Enterprise and the Economy in Education, the government made Enterprise Education a high priority for schools and colleges. The opportunity for Laisterdyke to be in at the beginning and to shape an appropriate programme and strategy was both a motivator and a responsibility.

Gerard Liston, Enterprise Co-ordinator at Laisterdyke Business and Enterprise College explains: "The responsibility to develop and share best practice comes with specialist college status and our strategy was based on a simple, commonsense model of involving and engaging students and staff and where possible, offering opportunities to work with other schools.

"Our strategy is based on two broad strands of activity - Enterprise Projects and Enterprise Challenges. Enterprise Projects offer opportunities within the normal curriculum for students to learn a wide range of enterprise skills, including working in teams, leadership and problem solving. All staff are encouraged to look out for opportunities within their subject areas and to ask for support if they need it. Enterprise Challenges involve students across all year groups working on a real life, community issue that will have a meaningful outcome because of their involvement. We aim to give each year group at least two challenges each year."

Enterprise Project

A year 10 English class was set the task of making a short film. In addition to mastering a range of new terminology and devising a script, the exercise was further enhanced by bringing in a professional BBC cameraman to work with the students. This expertise clearly made the experience richer for the students but in what way could this be seen as being part of enterprise education?

Gerard Liston explains: "Bringing in a professional immediately meant that this was not just a classroom exercise, this was real. Enterprise is about making things happen. Having an idea, planning it, making it happen and reviewing the result, is the enterprise process. Enterprise education is not just about business start ups and entrepreneurship, it is about creating capabilities in young people that they can use beyond school, whichever path they follow.

"In making a film alongside a professional the students were learning how to overcome real obstacles and were learning the mindset and attitude you need to see your ideas through to a final result. Working in teams, being creative and taking decisions are part of creating an enterprise culture."

Enterprise Challenge

Working in partnership with Bradford City Council the whole of Year 8 have been part of a consultation process on the city's future housing strategy. Following a presentation by

the council outlining the issues students were invited to put forward practical ideas to help planners decide where to build the extra 50,000 houses needed in Bradford by 2026.

After extensive research and planning the exercise culminated in students presenting their ideas to a 'Dragon's Den' panel from the council. The students demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the need to consider transport links and employment for the citizens of Bradford who would be the likely occupants of the new housing stock. The council were so impressed a short film has been made, identifying the students with the best ideas, and will be screened in Bradford's Centenary Square.

The Challenge is a good example of what enterprise education is about at Laisterdyke. It aims to give students a sense of having a say and making a difference by allowing them to make something positive happen in their own community. Student and staff engagement on the Challenge was sky high because the future availability of housing in their city was meaningful, relevant and likely to affect them all.

Building relationships with a variety of professionals who can act as mentors is an important component in the Laisterdyke model and indicates that any school who aims to cultivate enterprise in young people has to be seen to be enterprising in its own approach to establishing good contacts.

Taking the rough with the smooth

A year 9 Challenge invited young people to submit a plan for a small business that could be run in school. Funded by the Lottery, the best idea stood to attract a start up fund of £900 and was won by a group who will launch their Smoothie production and sales operation in school from September 2008.

Following food hygiene training trials and tests using different flavours have taken place under the watchful eye of Asghar Ali, the owner of the Lahore restaurant in Bradford. Mr Ali advised the students on equipment, stock and pricing and will continue to mentor the group through 2008.

Working alongside a local businessman who runs a successful food production business has been an invaluable asset, especially when unexpectedly the original 'staff' members dropped out and new recruits had to be quickly trained and motivated to keep the business running to plan.

Managing staff turnover and succession planning will offer additional opportunities for learning as the business is likely to be handed to a new team when the founders leave school. Their first experience at running a small business may have given them the taste for a career path they could follow in later life.

Girlz United

The intake at Laisterdyke is 90% Asian and a group of enterprising girls from the school are the driving force in helping to expand the lives and outlooks of many of the women in their own communities. The girls, from a variety of age groups are helping mothers, sisters, aunts and cousins to rethink their career and leisure opportunities by organising self help courses in subjects such as first aid, textiles, plumbing, engineering and computer technology.

As a result one local textile firm has given accreditation to a sewing course, opening up a future route to employment. The students learn alongside their elders and as the Girlz United stand at the annual Bradford Mela festival proved, a positive message is being received. A survey amongst the women during the festival brought 85 new applications from women in the community wanting to join a course.

Another initiative, involving a visit to the new police headquarters has resulted in one student considering a career with the police force and could see a role for herself in serving her community through working with young people in schools.

The activities of Girlz United impressed local MP Ann Cryer who has expressed an interest in taking a group to London to share their experiences with other MPs.

Shamila Arif, a member of Girlz United from Year 10, was one of six young people chosen to represent England on a trip to United Nations Headquarters in Geneva in June 2008. The trip was organised by the Childrens' Rights Alliance for England and Shamila spoke about the need for the student voice to be heard at more high level forums on human rights.