

**Authority:** City of Glasgow

**Case Study Focus:** Developing Intercultural Awareness through a cross curricular project in Italian

**Establishments:** Learners' stage/s: S2

**Practitioner/Staff role:** Italian FLA, teaching staff from the HE department

This Case Study illustrates how a secondary school used the Italian dance 'Tarantella' as a focus for cultural awareness and interdisciplinary learning. Although the main departments involved in the project were Modern Languages and Home Economics, through learning and performing the Italian dance 'Tarantella' the pupils were also involved in the area of expressive Arts, in particular PE and Drama. This interdisciplinary project was itself part of a larger whole-school project the 'Italian Week' in which other areas of the curriculum including Maths, CDP, Music and Physics were involved.

**Within this project, the following aspects of CfE were explored:**

This case study exemplifies how the following Introductory Statement from the CfE Modern Languages Framework can be achieved through interdisciplinary tasks:

**'I enhance my understanding and enjoyment of other cultures and of my own and gain insights into other ways of thinking and other views of the world.'**

By engaging the pupils in a wide range of collaborative activities, the project develops the four capacities that underpin CfE in the following ways:

**Successful Learners** with enthusiasm and motivation for learning and able to learn independently and as part of a group.

**Confident Individuals** with a sense of physical, mental and emotional well-being and able to relate to others and manage themselves.

**Responsible Citizens** with respect for others and able to understand different beliefs and cultures.

**Effective Contributors** with an enterprising attitude and able to work in partnership and in teams.

## Background

**About the educational establishment and the learners:** St Mungo's Academy is a 6 year co-educational Roman Catholic comprehensive in the east end of Glasgow. The ML department is very dynamic and comprises four teachers. Italian and French are taught from S1 on a 'rolling programme'. MLs are optional after S2, but the department has a very healthy uptake with over 50% of the S3 cohort opting to study until the end of fourth year and a higher than average number of pupils sitting Higher and Advanced Higher exams in French and Italian.

### Project aims

#### **The main objectives of this project:**

It was envisaged that the pupils would:

- gain understanding of the origins of the Italian 'Tarantella' dance
- learn how to perform the dance
- develop collaborative skills with others as part of a dance team
- develop collaborative and enterprising skills working with others in the creation of costumes and in the production of a 'show' involving the performance of the dance
- reinforce knowledge of certain aspects of the Italian language including numbers, names of clothing and colours

#### **Learning experiences:**

It was envisaged that through this project learners would experience:

- greater understanding of another culture's festivals and how they are celebrated
- enjoyable physical exercise which challenged them to learn steps and sequences of a new dance
- a practical application of numeracy through learning the sequence of dance steps
- challenge and enjoyment through collaborating as part of a 'team' in the planning and production of an event for others to enjoy.

## Process

### Preparation and Planning

The Tarantella project took place within the context of an 'Italian week', supported by all the subject departments and co-ordinated by the Principal Teacher of Modern Languages. During the 'Italian week', every department was involved in some way, with modern languages the thread running through all the different activities:

- Mathematics: the department produced a power point called 'McMungo family go on holiday to Italy' in conjunction with the Modern Languages department with activities relating to travel timetables, money exchange and other numeracy issues
- CDT: the department planned a practical activity based on the Italian flag
- Music: the department focused on Italian musicians
- Drama and Physics: these departments collaborated to perform a production about the solar system and Galileo.

### The Role of the Foreign Language Assistant

The Principal Teacher of Modern Languages was actively involved as the liaison person between the subject departments, organised all the permissions and rooms for the pupils to practise and also wrote a successful bid for Enterprise money to be used for the purchase of material to make the costumes. In all other aspects the development of the 'Tarantella' project was the responsibility of the Foreign Language Assistant who was responsible for preparing the background cultural information, organising the pupils and teaching them the dance.

The Italian assistant researched the history, costumes and the music of the Tarantella and produced a power point presentation for all the Italian S2 classes prior to the Italian week. Pupils were then asked to volunteer to learn the dance before taking part in a demonstration of the Tarantella before the whole school. The pupils were involved in the design and fabrication of the costumes, which can be seen in the accompanying photos.



The pupils chose which costumes they wanted to wear, described them in Italian with the help of two S6 pupils chosen by the FLA and with the help of the Home Economics department, designed and made them. Pupils met with the Italian assistant after school and at lunchtimes to learn and practise the dance.

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## Activities:

- The pupils were shown the power point of the origins of the dance, looking at its history and development to the present day.
- Pupils were taught the dance by the assistant, using authentic Italian Tarantella music.
- Pupils chose, designed, created and described in Italian their costume.
- Pupils performed the dance in front of the whole school during 'Italian week'.

The contribution of the FLA was therefore seen as extremely valuable, not only because of the production and performance of the Tarantella, but also as a source of information and reference to the other subject areas involved in the Italian week. Quote?? 'She showed tremendous energy and enthusiasm not only in working with the pupils but also in responding to questions and requests for information from the subject areas. We would never have had the time of in-depth knowledge necessary to make it such as success without her.' (BCT 01/07/53)

## Impact

### Impact on pupils

- All pupils were asked to fill in an evaluation of the performance; all of them were extremely positive, including those from pupils who were only involved as spectators.
- All pupils are now more interculturally aware regarding another country's customs and celebrations (responsible citizens).
- The pupils who took part are now more confident as a result of performing in front of the whole school (confident individuals).
- Pupils learned how to operate collaboratively as part of a 'troupe' where the correct sequence and performance of steps is crucial to the success of the overall presentation, recognising their responsibility to the other dancers (responsible citizens, successful learners, effective contributors).
- Pupils were made aware that departments in school work together not in isolation. In the same way pupils worked together, giving up their free time to rehearse and make the costumes (responsible citizens).

## **Impact on staff**

An interdisciplinary project such as this demands time and commitment from the many individuals involved. The Principal Teacher of ML was the contact person throughout who liaised with other departments. The HE department made the costumes in their free time, helped by the pupils after school. The PE department provided the space to rehearse. All staff enjoyed the Italian week in general and the contribution made by the FLA and the S2 dancers was described as 'the high point of the week'. All staff are committed to working on another themed week (see next steps below). The French assistant has already started work on a transition project with the primary cluster and has worked with the drama department and S3 pupils to write and perform a short play for the 'Rencontres Theatrales' competition, which won first place.

## **Impact on Parents and Community**

Parents were provided with a newsletter which included photos of the pupils performing the dance. Primary schools from the cluster were invited to the performance and many pupils expressed themselves eager to come to the secondary and to learn Italian. It is planned that in future projects, parents will be invited into the school to watch performances by pupils (see next steps below).

## **Next Steps**

- It is planned to ask future Italian assistants to produce some sort of performance for next year's Italian week which will take place in October.
- Following the success of the Italian week, staff have decided to have a French week in May.
- Parents will be invited to watch any performances by pupils.

It is clear that the Italian FLA's contribution to the whole school has been greatly valued both by staff and pupils and has allowed all pupils to gain a better understanding of another culture's customs and language.