Authority: **Inverclyde**

Case Study Focus: **Developing intercultural awareness in the wider school community through a 'Cultural party' for parents and pupils organised by the Foreign Language Assistants**

Establishments: Learners' stage/s: **S3-6**

Practitioner/Staff role: **Spanish and French FLAs**

This Case Study illustrates how cultural information may be disseminated to the wider community of a school through a social event which combines in an informal atmosphere focus on the language and cultural aspects of the country. Pupils worked with the Spanish and French Foreign Language Assistants to produce a short programme of cultural information about the country whose language they were studying as well as organising introductory Spanish and French 'lessons' for the parents. Food and drink typical of the two countries were provided, based on the 'tapas' culture of small snack type dishes, which parents could sample.

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

This case study exemplifies how all three of the Introductory Statements from the CfE Modern Languages Framework can be integrated through using preparation for an extra-curricular event with the focus on cultural awareness as the context for developing competence in the foreign language and an enhanced understanding of the similarities and differences between languages.

'I gain a deeper understanding of my first language and appreciate the richness and interconnected nature of languages.'

'I develop skills that I can use and enjoy in work and leisure throughout my life.'

'**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 and relating aspects of family life in Germany to the pupils' own experiences 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 group in order to share their knowledge of the language and the culture of the country with others.

Confident Individuals with a sense of physical, mental and emotional well-being and able to relate to others and manage themselves in order to present cultural information successfully to an audience and to interact effectively with adults to teach them aspects of the foreign language.

Responsible Citizens with respect for others and able to understand different beliefs and cultures in order to present and discuss these knowledgeably with others.

Effective Contributors with an enterprising attitude and able to work in partnership and in teams in order to work collaboratively to produce interesting presentations and a language learning experience for a mixed audience of adults and pupils.

Background

About the educational establishment and the learners: Gourock High School is a 6 year co-educational non-denominational comprehensive in Gourock. The languages department is very pro-active and has large numbers of pupils opting to study languages post-16. The pupils in this project were all volunteers from Spanish and French classes in years 3-6.

Project aims

The main objectives of this project:

It was envisaged that the pupils would:

- **collaborate with others, including the respective FLA, to produce presentations about different aspects of Spain and France**
- **conduct personal research into cultural aspects of the countries in order to contribute to a 'quiz' about life in Spain and France for the parents.**
- **collaborate in the preparation of typical regional dishes of the two countries.**
- **collaborate with others to devise and produce a short 'lesson' in the foreign language which would be taught to the parents**

Learning experiences:

It was envisaged that through this project learners would experience:

- **increased enjoyment and confidence in using the foreign language to communicate meaningfully through teaching the foreign language to others.**
- **greater knowledge and understanding of aspects of another culture and how these relate to their own experiences in Scotland.**
- **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 Modern Languages department suggested holding a Spanish and French information evening for parents and discussed with the French and Spanish assistants what this might involve. As the original focus was on raising the cultural awareness of the parents, the event became known as the 'Cultural Party'.

The Role of the Foreign Language Assistant

The Foreign Language Assistants readily took responsibility for the event and took the initiative in planning a programme for the evening in consultation with the pupils and members of the ML department. The FLAs worked together with the pupils to design and write invitations in the foreign language to the parents. They then worked together with the pupils to research aspects of French and Spanish culture which the pupils used to prepare a presentation and quiz for the parents. They also worked with the pupils to create a 'mini-lesson' for each language which would be taught to the parents. In all these activities the process adopted by the FLAs was heavily influenced by the aims of CfE and AifL in that the pupils were actively involved in their own learning by encouraging them to take responsibility, make decisions and reflect on the work carried out.

Activities

The ‘Cultural Party’ lasted approximately two hours. The Head Teacher was very supportive and welcomed the parents. The pupils then delivered a presentation about different cultural aspects of France and Spain. ‘We wanted to show that there was more to Spain than holiday resorts and sun and sand’.

Parents were then challenged to complete the cultural ‘quiz’ produced by the pupils and were then invited to take part in a short ‘lesson’ in each language, conducted by the pupils.

The Foreign Language Assistants then gave a presentation about their role in the school, how they worked with the pupils of different ages and what were their impressions of Scottish culture.

Throughout the evening, there were typical dishes from the two countries available for parents to try. These had been prepared by the FLAs with some help from the pupils.

Impact

Impact on pupils

- Pupils were able to work responsibly and independently to research contributions to cultural presentation and quiz (responsible citizens, successful learners, effective contributors).
- Pupils developed collaborative skills in planning, rehearsing and delivering the presentation, quiz and ‘lesson’ (effective contributors, responsible citizens)
- Pupils developed confidence through presenting the information, quiz and ‘lesson’ to parents (confident individuals, effective contributors).
- Pupils developed their knowledge of the language through teaching it to someone else. “Teaching it to someone else made me realise how much practice you need to learn and remember even a small amount of French.”

Impact on staff

- Staff enjoyed the presentations very much and will use the cultural aspects in teaching other classes. Although they had overall responsibility for ensuring the success of the evening, the modern languages staff were adamant that it was the FLAs and the pupils who deserved the credit as they had done the bulk of the groundwork and preparation.

Impact on Parents and Community

- Parents expressed themselves very satisfied with their evening and were impressed by the quality of the pupils' involvement.
- Parents all commented on their increased knowledge of aspects of French and Spanish culture as well as commenting favourably about the food on offer. 'That was just great! I learned a lot of new and useful information about both countries.'
- Good links between home and school have been established and parents have greater understanding of the valuable work of a Foreign Language Assistant. 'It's great for our kids to have contact with such enthusiastic young people.'

Next Steps

Owing to the success of the event it is planned to have a similar event next year.

It is planned to open the evening to school staff from all subject areas and to consider if they may be involved in contributing to the event.

Although the idea for the ‘Cultural Party’ emanated from the ML department, it is clear that the commitment and the creativity of the FLAs ensured that this informal event was a great success within the community, taking culture awareness out with the boundaries of the school to a wider audience.