



Raising boys' attainment

Dawne Bell and David Wooff, [Edge Hill University](#)

Finding new and innovative ways in which those training to teach design and technology can engage with specific groups of learners is always high on the agenda so when David Allen, St Wilfrid's Church of England Technology College, Blackburn contacted the team at Edge Hill University for support with a unique project we were keen to get involved.



As David Allen explains "I approached Edge Hill University because I am targeting a group of seventeen boys all of whom have high target grades at GCSE, but who have a negative residual currently at Key Stage 3. As an intervention strategy the boys were selected and grouped specifically to work with an innovative teacher in order to raise attainment. The philosophy behind the idea was to help boost the enthusiasm, motivation and aspirations of boys through a range of new and exciting approaches to learning and teaching in design and technology."

He goes on to explain that at school "The boys are thrown into a competitive environment in which they are encouraged to challenge and compete amongst each other in order to improve towards their target grades as a collective. The use of a head-to-head challenge and a shared league table has helped in order to do this, and currently has proved to be effective in terms of achieving and setting targets, improving levels and it is something that they really enjoy".

Partnership schools

Previously trainee teachers from across a range of our routes into teaching have supported a range of activities in many of our partnership schools. This particular project involved year one trainee teachers from the BSc course, Flexible PGCE trainees and an Edge Hill GTP trainee who was on his teaching placement at St. Wilfrid's.





As David Wooff, BSc course leader explains “We are keen to work with schools, to develop the Partnership, and providing opportunities for both staff and students to come into University is an excellent way that we can help to support and build those links for the benefit of everyone involved”.

David Whyte, Head Teacher states,

“ We are committed to the training and development of trainees and professionals at every stage of their educational journey. When considering the emphasis our school has placed on technology, creative opportunities like this to develop the way learning is achieved, are always welcomed and encouraged at St Wilfrid’s. ”

Prior to the visit, working in small teams the boys completed a series of preparatory lessons, with their classroom teacher and GTP trainee David Wilson. Upon arrival at Edge Hill, skills sessions were delivered by University staff and under the guidance of both post and under graduate trainee teachers, the boys engaged in a range of activities including the use and application of contemporary design software, CAD/CAM and graphics. Adopting this approach, the trainees were able to observe their tutors teaching, and then replicate the key points as necessary. In addition to the change in environment the students benefitted from the intensive and extended contact time as well as the additional support.

Presentations

Following a morning of hectic activity, after lunch the boys were given time to prepare their work for formal presentation. In addition to the students and teachers in attendance, the boys presented their work to a very special panel of judges comprising of students, teachers and University staff. The culmination of a long days hard work, this session took the form of ‘Apprentice’ style presentations, with panel members judging the boys’ work with their own set of ‘hired’ or ‘fired’ cards.

To follow up, University staff were able to visit the school and support subsequent lessons and there are plans to expand the scheme.

Feedback from both students and trainees alike was excellent. As David Allen explains, “The opportunity to take the boys out of their usual rigid classroom setting and place them in an interesting and creative environment like the University not only gave them a great sense of maturity and self esteem but also raised their awareness of where design and technology can take them in life, and how the activities can benefit their development in the long term, not just as designers but as people”.

The design and technology Key Stage 4 Manager at St Wilfrid’s, Catherine Tipton echoes this stating, “It’s fantastic that a partnership between the school and University has provided this specialist group with such an opportunity to develop their creativity and aspirations. The chance to expand the experience of design and technology for this wonderful group of students can only help to benefit their development.”

