

CURRICULUM DELIVERY CHANGES AT WAIPU PRIMARY SCHOOL

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Waipu Primary have started delivering the curriculum in topic areas by focusing on them for a day each week instead of the traditional daily spot. The daily spot was being eroded by many factors and “topic” areas were being skimmed over with little in depth study in Science, Technology, Social Sciences and Environmental Science.

Teachers have chosen their area of “expertise” and developed units for in depth study.

Students have been allowed to choose the area they want to study in as much as possible.

Our most recent professional development has been around using the SOLO taxonomy for children to rate their knowledge at the start of something and then at the end. Obviously they need to be able to prove their level to teachers at the end.

The curriculum day started after morning break. There was a clear expectation that maths and reading would be done prior to morning break and that the topic would involve some writing. Year 4-6 classes did their interchange on one day while Year 1-3 classes did it on another day as this fitted with on Class Release times. Our 2 new entrant classes did their own mini-swap as we felt they needed to get used to school and shifting them around classes was more likely to confuse them.

The sessions were timetabled from Week 2 to Week 9. In week 10 our 2 groups decided to share what they had done and this will become part of the process in future.

CURRICULUM DELIVERY

All staff agreed doing a topic study for one day a week had improved their curriculum delivery. They said things like:

- There was more chance to gauge children’s knowledge, more time for research, discussion and brainstorming. There was a chance to complete an activity in a day and reflect.
- I was more thoroughly prepared, read more for background knowledge, had good vision of learning outcomes, collected lots of activities and had time for lots of group and buddy work. I went on a search for curriculum books that had been gathering dust for some time.
- There was more time to explore concepts and get really stuck into a topic.
- More focused and specific. Having longer sessions enabled us to get more indepth into the subject.
- Having longer concentrated sessions provided the opportunity to really delve into the background of a subject and there was time to really engage students interests rather than rushing them through.
- It was good to keep going most of the day on the same topic and cover more indepth activities and not have so many interruptions. I learnt more myself.
- Children have time for indepth learning of skills and content. Teacher has time to deal with different age levels
- Have had more time to get stuck into activities and not having to rush through
- Being able to do more activities-often science “talk” and Smartboard/written work but I enjoyed doing more of the material world activities.
- Had to find out more-deeper knowledge about science-could teach indepth

CRITICAL ISSUES

Staff found they had to be well planned week by week , resources collected and parents informed. Organising visitors or helpers was important. Each days programme needed evaluating afterwards and the next weeks lesson set up based on that evaluation. Time and resources were important issues. Other comments were:

- Thorough planning was needed at the beginning x2.

- It was good splitting classes so we had older children as role models for doing project work and other activities.
- The difference in ages and levels of competency. Big discrepancy 5.5year old to a 7 year old.
- Having the resources available to complete information and activities.
- Buying ingredients/supplies.
- Time to get worksheets, booklet, recipes etc all ready.
- Resources, time, student engagement

STAFF SUPPORT

What support do staff need to further develop?

- Access to more resources
- Time to prepare before unit began
- Ongoing discussions about what worked well and what hasn't. Good to plan with others
- Ideas-maybe to discuss / brainstorm with others or work with someone else
- More ideas on teaching technology. What other things could we plan/design at primary level
- Create different learning stations so that there are different activities to involve children's thinking and questioning
- Recognition of good work that is done-time in a full curriculum is difficult to find

IN DEPTH TEACHING - LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

Are learners and teachers fully engaged in the topic discipline?

- Children's knowledge at the end of the programme was improved. On going interest was noted after completion. Levelling using the SOLO taxonomy at the start and end showed growth.
- Children discussed quiz questions in depth showing excellent focus and depth of thinking. A wide variety of learning noted. Pleased with motivated creativity in their activities.
- Feedback from children. They were excited and keen to come to topic day. Final discussions and reflections showed children linking ideas and understanding why we did background learning before the main study.
- Reflections and discussions-students sharing of their learning at the end showed how much they had learnt.
- Students reflections at the end of the topic. Their ability to share their ideas and understandings about technology throughout the unit. Their enjoyment and pride during and at the end of the unit.
- Not really sure about this-a bit hard to gauge with such young children
- From the output of oral language, written work and models
- Yes more time to look at topic and gain a deeper understanding. Children can have time to complete activities so they are sure they have understood.
- Many parents have told me their child talks about science at home and are noticing evaporation etc at home. Parents love their children's reaction and enthusiasm.
- Increased student knowledge and teacher knowledge. Student engagement-students enjoyed lessons.

LESSONS LEARNT IN IMPLEMENTATION

What lessons have we learnt in implementing this method of curriculum teaching?

- More writing required before hands on activities. Children need to have more input rather than teacher guided. Great to have mixed age groups where older children help the younger ones.
- More effective, more fun and engaging for everyone
- Using children's own specialist knowledge to share with the class and their parents experiences too. Looking through old resources-there is lots of useful information in there.
- To diversify learning activities so students are learning and creating in different ways throughout the day
- By concentrating topic work into one long session, one day a week, it meant there seemed to be more time on the other days to fit in other areas of the curriculum. The children seemed more motivated on topic days.

- Children enjoy hands on activities that challenge their thinking and like to talk about what is working. Ages and levels need to be catered for.
- You can fit a lot more into one lesson. You need to be well prepared. Children can gain more understanding as they have more time to work on an activity and not just snippets here and there.
- Can do it if forced to do so. Regular commitment makes it happen. Need parent help for these activity days.
- You need to be prepared and organised-have indepth subject knowledge. Able to concentrate on one topic and teach indepth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What recommendations would there be for other schools considering this approach?

- Be thoroughly planned with clear objectives. Be well resourced. Know your topic well-well up the SOLO taxonomy level.
- To continue interchange for at least 2 groups otherwise teacher input isn't worth the outcome. Give yourself plenty of time for thinking, finding and preparing resources. Make sure computers are working.
- Background teach first so children have knowledge of the topic so that the main focus of teaching (Learning Intention) can be explored at a higher level of understanding.
- If you have a special interest in a particular subject you can be more passionate about it and motivated to teach it.
- Be aware of age groups as there is a gap in the level of thinking of a Year One to that of a Year 3.
- Good idea –don't have to worry about fitting bits into the week as it is all on one day
- Be very well prepared. Expect to spent a lot of time planning, organising, gathering resources etc. plan parental help with each session
- Think carefully about topic choice-be prepared and organised

SUMMARY

Specific Curriculum knowledge:

90% of staff said their curriculum knowledge had increased a lot. 10% said it had increased hugely.

Topic Knowledge:

20% said their knowledge of the topic was slightly better, 50% said it was lots better and 30% said it had improved hugely

Motivation:

60% said they were motivated lots. 40% were hugely motivated

Student engagement:

60% of Staff believed students engagement was lots better, 40% believed it was hugely better.

80% Students were eager to learn. 20% were hugely eager to learn.

Student Opportunity:

Staff believed 75% of students had lots more opportunity to follow their interests. 25% said they had a huge opportunity to follow their interests.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE –CURRICULUM DELIVERY

All students in the school contributed to the questionnaire. There will be some slight errors in accuracy as Junior classes were asked as a group and some possibly copied off their peers.

	Yes	%	NO	%
Have you enjoyed <u>choosing</u> what to study?	158	94	10	6
Did you like <u>spending more time</u> on your study?	138	91	13	9
Have you <u>enjoyed working on a topic</u> in this way?	138	90	15	10
Do you have a better understanding of what your topic (Science, Social Science, Environmental Science etc) is?	137	89	17	11
Were there more activities on offer within your topic class?	119	79	32	21

Rate these questions (1 not at all, 2 slightly, 3 a lot, 4 hugely)

	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%
Knowledge of my topic improved	0	0	6	4	50	32	106	64
I was keen to learn more	1	>1	6	4	29	19	118	77
My classmates were eager to learn	1	>1	13	10	47	35	75	55
The activities we did made us think	1	>1	11	7	37	24	106	68
Students had more opportunity to follow their interests	2	1	8	5	31	21	112	74

The change of topic delivery was very successful with around 90% of students responding positively to the first bracket of questions. Only the question to do with activities rated lower at 79%.

If we look at those that rated their answers at 3 (a lot) and 4 (hugely) 96% of students found their topic knowledge improved. Similarly 96% were keen to learn more. 90% thought their classmates were eager to learn as well. 92% found the activities in the various classes made them think more while 95% enjoyed the opportunity to follow their own interests.

Overall 1% or less of students used the rating not at all in any of the areas surveyed.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Although this method of curriculum delivery required more work and thorough planning many benefits were noted by staff. The ability to do indepth work around a particular area and get students involved and well engaged was noted. Teachers felt they delivered a better quality lesson.

Students were highly motivated and enjoyed the activities. Their knowledge improved, they were keen to learn, were made to think and were able to follow their interests.

Overall the implementation of this method of delivery was positive and we will continue to develop our curriculum teaching along this line.