

The Curriculum Story Project

1. Curriculum Co-design

This pack provides examples of how settings and schools, educators have impacted learning by experimenting with co-designing the curriculum to suit their local context.

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The case studies, discussion and practical activities are researched and written by NoTosh for Education Scotland, with thanks to the practitioners, schools and Local Authorities involved for their contributions.

From 'delivering curriculum' to Curriculum Co-Design

In the past, curriculum design was most often a top-down approach. People outside the educational setting designed it and then handed it down to practitioners as a finished product.

This pack provides examples of how settings and schools, educators have impacted learning by experimenting with co-designing the curriculum to suit their local context.

First, educators have worked collaboratively to create curriculum programmes and have interpreted the guidelines to fit the context of their settings and schools and the needs of their learners.

Second, educators have applied their skills and experience to experiment and prototype ideas.

Finally, they have carefully monitored their progress, learned from feedback and built on their successes. This prototyping culture is supported by structures that give time for educators to plan, teach and assess together.

We're going to share some inspirational stories with plenty of ideas that you can take back into your setting, whether you work in an early learning and childcare setting or the senior years of secondary school. We'll share the impact of changed practices on learner outcomes, the rationale behind that change of practice, and some practical ideas to get you started on making similar changes in how you plan, teach and assess learning.

Calderglen High School, East Kilbride: transforming the senior phase

Interdisciplinary Learning offers new opportunities for learners to succeed when working at SCQF Level 4.

Calderglen High School's shared planning and interdisciplinary teaching improved the progress for learners who might not progress to SCQF Level 5 courses. Pairing two subjects together in unit-based cross-curricular courses helped learners make real connections, and they were motivated to continue making progress in learning.

The school successfully co-designed a range of learning and assessment IDL units at Level 4. Staff had noticed a low progression rate for learners proceeding to Level 5, a local challenge in the school that is visible right across Scotland. They needed to offer them a chance to progress. They saw interdisciplinary projects as a potential solution because IDL would move learning towards a more unit-based approach, in which those learners would do better. In addition, the opportunities to make connections in learning in IDL projects offered young people a chance to progress with their learning.

A co-designed course: Maths and Business Studies

The first co-delivered IDL course was Personal Finance, co-designed by educators from Maths and Business Studies departments. This success led to further prototyping of the curriculum design model, and Physics and Technology teachers co-designed a unit-based course on Electronics SCQF Level 5.

"It's been a sell-out! Especially because it includes Physics. The combined learning is not abstract, and learners can make genuine connections between science and technology. Young people benefit from the co-delivery, which is reflected in attainment data and growth of the subject."

Jill Dodds, DHT, Calderglen High School.

The team at Calderglen believed that they "needed to stop flogging a dead horse with something that does not work". So another iteration of the approach happened through a concern about disengaged learners working on National 4 Sciences and pushing the same curriculum, even though experience suggested progress into National 5 may be limited. Therefore, science teachers collaborated to create an SCQF Level 5 Lab Skills course that was set up to nudge the learners' progression in learning through a deeper experience of practical science activities.

Course bundles

Building on feedback and success at each stage of the curriculum design journey, Calderglen has created a Level 5 Sports bundle. The course borrows from a mixture of SQA units to create a new course. This gives young people a rich experience while also accruing tariff points. Learners can choose events management, sports leadership, and other practical elements of sport.

Looking forward, they are excited to explore the possibilities of a Humanities Bundle.

The curriculum design has been a success because teachers have been given time, space and autonomy to reconsider new approaches to learning for disengaged learners. The school uses a structured design cycle to

monitor the implementation of each IDL unit. As an example of continuous prototyping, it helps the teachers reflect on how to improve the units in the future, and other subject teachers are inspired by their success. There is a clear and flexible structure in place for planning the curriculum design of IDL units.

Calderglen recognises the vital importance of funding for maintaining the capacity and sustainability of their new courses. However, less funding means losing staff. Therefore you can only deliver what you can with the staff you have. Traditionally, Highers fill up most of the options forms in the senior phase, and the new courses are at Level 5.

“No one wants to lose a Higher Class, so as funding starts to become less clear in the future, the ones that will go are these innovative bundles that are making the difference. It’s vital that this doesn’t happen.”

Elizabeth White, Head Teacher, Calderglen High School.



Key features of IDL at Calderglen High School

- Educators co-design IDL units with subject pairs.
- School supports collaborative professional learning by creating space and time for collaboration.
- School uses a flexible design cycle to experiment, prototype and evaluate IDL units.
- School is focussed on improving the impact on a learning progression for National 4 students.
- Teachers have buy-in because of the success and are motivated to be a part of future projects.
- Learners have buy-in because of the clear connections between subjects and the broader definition of success.

Resources

Calderglen High School Curriculum Rationale:
<https://sway.office.com/TxeWvSOotqUAIS28>

Inverlochy Primary, Fort William: Learning culture from band culture

Primary Wind Band Boosts School Learning Culture

The unique experience of playing a musical instrument and being part of the school's Band Class project has helped shift the learning culture of Inverlochy Primary. As a result, children can connect the discipline and successful learning habits of playing an instrument in a group setting with the concentration and effort required to make progress in other areas of their learning.

This band class project connects children with real-life learning habits and enriches the school community. The inspiration for the IDL project started after the High Life Highland woodwind and brass instructors covering the Lochaber area realised the need for an alternative method to promote instrumental music recruitment. They looked towards the United States of America and their well-established approach to group music-making and instrumental learning in a whole-class setting.

Lochaber High School (LHS), the local secondary school, has a prestigious wind band history. The LHS Senior Wind Band conductor, Mark Reynolds, was awarded a scholarship to attend the prestigious Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. Karen Thomson, the Principal Instrumental Instructor for the Lochaber area, also attended. It was there that they were able to discuss the early plans for the 'Inverlochy Band Class' project with conductors and composers for whom teaching band class is an integral part of the standard US curriculum.



A culture of engagement

Band culture in America is very different. It is a vibrant and core part of school culture, curriculum, and community identity. In Scotland, recruiting students keen to start instrumental lessons was proving more and more challenging. So, when the two instructors returned to Scotland, they were inspired to boost numbers and move their teaching and recruitment in a new direction.

The wind band programme in Lochaber is unique. There is a natural progression from primary to secondary within the standard band structure. The LHS Junior Band starts from approximately P6 level. However, too many students were dropping out before they were exposed to the joy and benefits of group music-making. Something had to be done. What better

way than to create a culture in which primary school classes all learn an instrument at the same time? In a relatively small area with wide population dispersion, they have a high intensity that is not just attached to one secondary school.

Along with Norman Bolton, High Life Highland (HLH) Head of Music Development, and Kirsty Clark, Head Teacher of Inverloch Primary, Mark and Karen planned a prototype curriculum design for a primary wind band that would bring that band culture to younger pupils. Karen's and Mark's collective energy and drive are crucial to the project's success – as is the support of the headteacher, school staff and HLH Instrumental Service.

“The leadership and drive from Kirsty as Head Teacher is a vital part of the mix. She understands that music offers a chance to shift the culture in a school.”

Mark Reynolds

The curriculum design carefully considers the provocations required to hook the primary learners. Mark and Karen plan instrument demonstrations and explain the skills needed for each one of the four instruments. The learners are all required to choose one instrument each. Parents are informed of the band's development via email and social media and are encouraged to attend performances whenever possible. There is no opt-out for the students. It is presented to the children as a curricular subject with universal participation. Inclusion was and still remains key to this project, with considerable time being spent creating specific materials for students with additional support needs.

Bold funding, bold ideas

As Primary Head Teacher, Kirsty made bold funding decisions that paid off and ensured the project's initial success. The Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) and the Youth Music Initiative from Creative Scotland funded the project's costs. This was both a deliberate choice and creative thinking on the part of the Head Teacher and HLH. Kirsty had the vision to realise that being a member of a band and being part of something bigger might effectively support an individual child's achievements in learning.

“They're going to enjoy playing in a band more than a one-on-one intervention on literacy. Being made to stand out because you're removed from class, versus being part of something that you achieve together. You've got to open pupils' eyes to where life can take you.”

Kirsty Clark, Head Teacher

Values-based learning

Concentration, discipline, practice, and a caring of quality are key learner attributes of the High School wind band ethos. These attributes that the instructor team and the school want to instil as the general ethos in the primary school band classes. The children are responsible for setting up their music stands and announcing the pieces they will perform. The teachers focus on a shared collective effort, such as remembering to bring your music to band practice.

Therefore, high expectations, the formation of good learning habits and a culture of learning pride are fundamental in the shared approach between the primary school and the instrumental instructors. Combining these skills is perfectly demonstrated in the performance opportunities that all the band classes have in Inverloch. The sold-out band concerts at LHS main hall also featured experienced young band musicians from across the Lochaber area. This collaborative approach to performance and community

engagement allows both students and parents to realise the opportunities and levels that can be achieved within the wind band programme.

“It has positively impacted on me as a person because I really enjoy doing something that not everyone can do and it makes me happy to achieve things that I didn’t know I could do. Not only that but we have really caring teachers that are proud of us in every achievement.”

Olivia, Inverloch Primary learner

From band to a whole-school influence on learning

This unique collaboration has impacted all areas of learning in primary school. The children concentrate better and work better together. It has also positively impacted other parts of school life. For example, teachers explicitly reference the connections between music discipline and what needs to happen with personal progress in literacy and numeracy. In addition, teachers see more positive relationships due to the shift in learning culture. It has also given the children increased ownership of their learning, and they can tell the story of how they’ve grown as learners.

The branding of the wind band also emphasised an inclusive school community and learning culture. Togetherness matters. All the children wear the same t-shirts with the same logo. In addition, learners in P7 get a baseball cap with the band logo when they leave.



The unfolding success story of the project and the positive impact it has made on learners, parents and teachers alike have caught the interest of organisations like the Scottish Concert Band Festival and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. The RCS is very interested in the IDL curriculum design model at the heart of the project. Other national organisations such as the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra are keen on continuing and developing existing links with the band programme in Lochaber because of this small community’s energy, discipline, and vibe.

“I never really liked performing in front of anyone. I liked letting others do the work and not me. Band ended up making me more confident and it made me realise just to express yourself with the things you love.”

Alex, Inverloch Primary student

Key features of curriculum co-design at Inverloch Primary:

- HLH Instrumental Music Service working in partnership with the primary school to collaborate on planning curriculum design.
- Curriculum design borrowed and tweaked an existing model for the unique context of the school and area.
- Creative and bold decisions were made regarding funding streams to support the project.
- Learner and community buy-in and relevance were crucial. Learners made real-life connections between learning to play in a band and learning across the curriculum.
- The project is unique to the context and geographical community of the schools.
- The project is about growing children as musicians, but it is also about developing a common language and culture of learning built around high expectations, effort and togetherness.

Discussion Prompts

You may wish to use these discussion prompts with your team or create an interdisciplinary learning session with colleagues from across your setting. Set aside three sessions to tackle each question in turn - use the time between sessions to research, experiment and probe further. And don't forget that there are practical activities available for download from the Curriculum Stories pages.

Session 1: How do you approach Curriculum Design in your school or setting?

For example, what is unique about the context of your school or setting that you could amplify when considering the Curriculum Design of IDL projects?

Session 2: What challenges do you face in your school to be able to co-design and prototype the curriculum?

For example, how do you ensure there is adequate time and space to plan collaboratively?

Session 3: What aspects of the Curriculum Design approaches from the Curriculum Stories could you apply in your school or setting?

For example, would you consider experimenting with a design cycle approach?

Next Steps

Tell us how it went:

On social media, using the hashtag #curriculumstories

By email curriculuminnovation@educationscotland.gov.scot

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