

Around the World in a Week

ESOL Project

Introduction

This practice example describes the work of a partnership between community learning and development (CLD) services and St John's Primary School in Barrhead. It is an example of partnership working across different education sectors supporting the employability and language goals of the adult ESOL learners while complementing the local school's priority on inclusion and their Rights Respecting Schools Programme. The project involved joint planning and preparation between the school and the community development worker/ESOL tutor, which happened over the course of 8 months. The project focussed on the proposal that a group of ESOL learners from a community based ESOL class would visit a school and share their culture and language with the children. This culminated in a week long showcase event within the school where children travelled around the world in a week attending adult ESOL learners' workshops on the topic of their culture and language.

Identifying the need

The school was looking for ways to make their school more inclusive of families with EAL children and to encourage their integration in school life. Many schools do a lot to help EAL children understand about Scottish culture; this project looked at helping Scottish children understand other cultures including those of the EAL children in their community.

Part of the role of the community development worker is to build relations with educational establishments. Adult Learning Services, runs English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for adults and were looking at the next steps for a group of adult ESOL learners who had just finished an ESOL for Work course, many of whom had a background or an interest in working with children. The outcomes for each were different. The learners involved from the community based ESOL class achieved outcomes related to improved language skills, increased confidence in understanding and being familiar with a school setting and improved employability outcomes with some learners moving into work or volunteering. For the school, the children got to learn about other cultures and languages and had a positive impact on EAL children whose cultures/languages were being showcased.

Factors which made the project a success

The adult ESOL group consisted of people from a range of different countries.

Almost all the adult ESOL group were interested in working in education in some way.

The school had a positive welcoming ethos.

The school and CLD services had established a good relationship through previous partnership working arrangements.

The support of an experienced volunteer ESOL tutor during the week long showcase event helped the Community Development Worker by ensuring all the ESOL learners were supported and supervised in their inputs.

Factors to consider in developing a similar project

ESOL learners within your group should represent a range of cultures/countries. For this project, 8 countries were represented by the ESOL learners.

The model would work well in a school where there are many EAL children. Being able to involve the parents of EAL children at the school, as well as the ESOL learners, proved to be effective in many ways. Peer support allowed the parents, who had a range of English language levels (all of whom were previous ESOL learners) to overcome their fears and stand up in front of a class to deliver their workshops. Their children felt proud to see their parents taking on the role of a 'teacher' for a week and it achieved the school's aim to help families feel part of school life.

Most of the learners' language level was at SCQF level 4. Learners below this level may struggle.

ESOL learners were very involved in the design of the programme, to ensure they had ownership over the content and the methods of the delivery for their workshops. Partnership between the provider and the school involved needs to be strong and there is an understanding of each other's objectives. This avoids the risk of one partner taking on all the work.

Consider the size of the school that may be involved. If the school has a large number of children, you would need to consider how you would include all the children in the showcase event.

This would suit ESOL learners who would like to share their culture with others and in particular those interested in working in an educational setting.

The project could also work in a secondary school context on the basis that it is supporting understanding and awareness of cultural diversity.

Pairing ESOL learners together allowed for peer support. The learners enjoyed getting to know about their classmates' countries and cultures and they were able to help them during the workshops. This helped learners to feel less daunted when delivering their workshops.

Planning and preparation for the project – a partnership approach

The Community Development Worker undertook a lot of research in relation to teaching children and the different approaches to use to engage with children.

She also met with the school to understand from them the different engagement approaches that would work for different age groups as well as finding out what the children already knew and what they would be interested in. Good partnership work allowed for effective communication systems to be put in place between, ESOL learners, the ESOL tutor and school heads who in turn cascaded information to school teachers and pupils. This led to the programme running smoothly during the delivery week, with everyone feeling welcome when in the school.

The Community Development Worker also worked with the school to ensure that resources and materials were available for all the activities for the showcase event.

The adult ESOL learners were involved in task-based language learning for the 6 months prior to the event as they planned and prepared their engagement sessions.

As the ESOL learners saw this project as a challenge, it was important that they understood it was achievable. Our approach and support allowed the learners enough time to prepare well, build confidence and gain the self-belief needed to deliver the workshops.

As this project based language course was a totally new concept for the learners, it took a lot of explaining and discussions around what the delivery time in the school would look like. We visited the school on a couple of occasions to familiarise the ESOL learners with the venue, equipment and resources which was valuable preparation. The success of the project relied on the learners having faith in their tutor when promising they were able to achieve such a task. Having a good rapport with your learners and knowing them well, is paramount to this.

Children in school prepared for the week-long event by preparing their passports for “travel”.

Contextualised language learning

The ESOL class started in September with the showcase event at the school taking place in March of the following year. The ESOL class met over this period of time once a week for two hours. ESOL learners also did preparation and planning out with that time.

Areas covered within the ESOL class (all with a focus on improving English language skills):

Presentation skills including using PowerPoint, note taking, body language awareness, forming questions for interaction and presenting confidently using prompts.

Planning skills

Lesson planning

How to engage children of different age groups

How to manage classrooms

How to give clear instructions, set up activities and motivate children.

Learning about culture and first language of peers and how to support each other.

Outputs

A week long programme of events running during the full school time – Monday to Friday from 9am – 3pm.

Co-delivered inputs by the ESOL learners where one took the lead while the other supported.

Outcomes

The school's approach to inclusion of EAL families and their integration in school life was improved.

ESOL learners improved their employability prospects. Many wanted to work in education, so having the experience of engaging in a project with school involvement increased their confidence and understanding. The project bridged the gap between what they learned in the ESOL class to the outside world of work and the wider community.

ESOL learners improved their language skills as well as IT skills. They learnt to design and give presentations, plan workshops/lessons, engage children through a range of activities such as games, arts and crafts, competitions, origami etc, manage groups of children and gained an awareness of how to differentiate between ages from primary 1 to 7.

Children in the school increased their awareness of other cultures, diversity and languages and reported on how much they enjoyed travelling around the world. Projects and class work were further developed, picking up on different activities and information from the Around the World Week. One class designed a board game based on the Polish bottle cap game and had tournaments in Golden Time for the weeks following on from the project. Other children designed an information board for the school, based on the knowledge developed from the workshops. Children across the school made thank you cards for all the ESOL learners and presented them at the assembly at the end of the week. (St John's Primary School)

St John's Primary School reported better links with the ESOL community and have since continued that partnership through other projects such as Café Kids (School enterprise project) and the World Café (ESOL integration project) coming together, for a couple of sessions. More recently, the school have been planning to work with ESOL learners on a new project sharing Education in different countries.

EAL children within the school confidently shone during the presentations as they were able to help the ESOL learners when teaching their friends their first language.

Impact on ESOL learners

The course gave ESOL learners the confidence to work in a school environment.

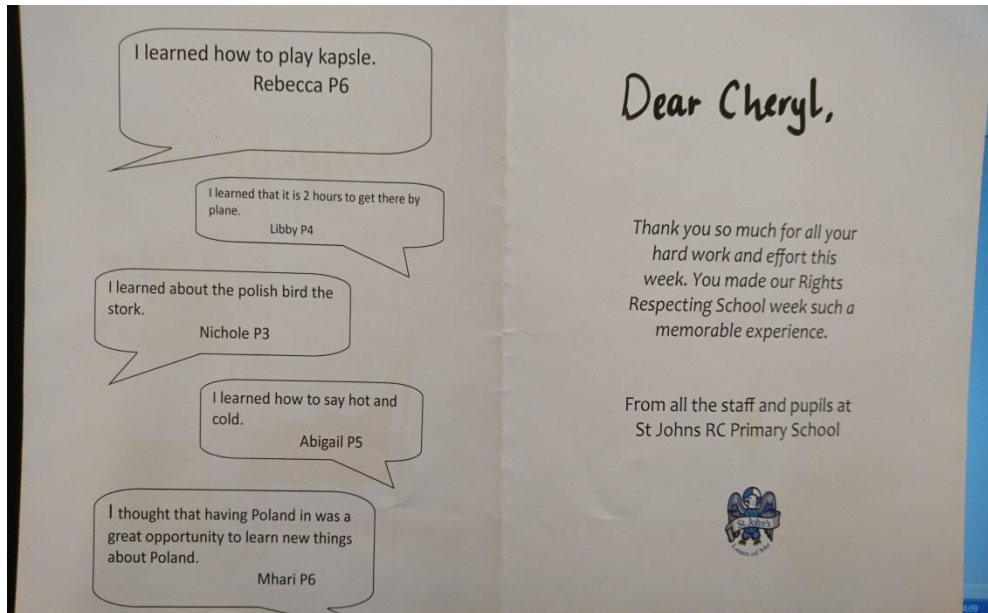
Three of the learners went on to get jobs with primary schools as supply pupil support assistants.

One learner is now teaching Japanese. She used the materials prepared for the school in her job interview which helped her feel confident and successfully get the job.

Some learners went on to volunteer or gained employment.

All said it improved their confidence and English language skills and that they felt a huge sense of achievement. They loved having the opportunity to share their culture with the children and other ESOL learners.

Thank you card



Quotes from the ESOL learners:

I had a chance to teach children my country, language and culture at the Around the world project. I have gained a lot of new skills like how to make a lesson plan, making a presentation and giving instructions to engage children. Not only I did well at the presentation but also I was amazed that how warmly the teachers and pupils (the real world) welcomed and included us.

I was really afraid about my English and I didn't feel really confident but since the project began I started to feel more confident about my English, my knowledge and my skills. The Around the world project has been an enriching and rewarding Project. Thanks to Cheryl, this would not have been possible and thanks to St. Johns Primary School to have given us the opportunity to feel part of the community.