NARRATOR :

Curriculum for excellence has been introduced to raise standards of learning and teaching, and help improve children’s achievements and life chances, the most extensive consultation ever on Scottish education, involving parents, pupils, teachers, employers and others. The national debate on education in 2002 widely recognized that if Scotland’s children and young people are to gain the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for life in the 21st Century we need a forward looking, coherent curriculum that will inspire them to achieve at the highest levels.

The kennel club project at Deans Community High School in Livingston was a numeracy across learning project that was planned around numeracy, craft design and technology (CDT), and construction. We see learners develop their numeracy skills in a real and relevant context and across curricular areas, focusing on the importance of knowledge and skills. Being able to measure, use different shapes, have an awareness of the cost of materials and how long certain tasks take to complete, all relate to developing these concepts and skills.

Numeracy within mathematics is a skill for learning, life, and work. This project exemplifies what that means in practice. We listen to the ways in which the young people make connections between learning tasks in the classroom and the world outside the classroom. We hear them explain how they have used their maths skills and CDT class, and how their understanding of maths had improved as a result of working co-operatively. But most of all we can see a pride taken in what they have accomplished, and the enjoyment experience in developing numeracy concepts and skills in this way.

‘Kennel Club’ project at Deans Community High School, Livingston

ELAINE COOK (Headteacher):

Curriculum for Excellence has allowed us to look and see how we can connect learning and transfer skills and look at skills for learning, skills for work, skills for employability.

GEMMA THOMPSON (Maths Teacher):

All the new numeracy, crafts, design now comes. We were given a few ideas and we jumped at the chance to do this one. Absolutely loved it. Main reason, it was incorporating crafts, maths, and the kids were seeing a real link between school and real life situations.

SAM:

With math, I think, most people don’t want to do it, but I think if you’re using it with CDT- I kinda like CDT. I think it’s making me realize that well, I need to do math, I need to get better at it, I need to do well in it.

DAVID DODDS (CDT Teacher):

Kids can go from maths and then see the link in CDT, and it’s really good because they then can take that actively learning in maths and apply it in CDT, and vice-versa.

AIMEE and MARTINA:

Skills I’ve taken from the kennel club experience is that I’ve been finding it easier to work out sizes in the wood that we’re using and being able to use and identify the saws that I’m using, the equipment, so it’s been good for helping me with things that we’re going need throughout the topic.

GEMMA THOMPSON (Maths Teacher):

Getting them out of the maths classroom and doing maths in another area has worked really well for them. They love it and they now say ‘This is when I use maths,’ because we used to get questions ‘When will I use it? When will I use maths?’ Now they know.

PAMELA LUNDBERG (Principal Maths Teacher):

We can see that they’re more confident in the way that they’re taking part in peer discussions, you know, discussions that are taking place between the teacher and the student. They’re more confident in sharing their ideas with their peers, as well as the classroom teacher. We’ve also got written work, which has shown that they’re actively engaged in what they’re learning in the classroom. They’re able to put it down on paper.

AIMEE:

The thing I’ve improving through teamwork, we’ve been helping each other more, and those that have strengths in it are helping out those that don’t. And those who have strengths in maths are helping those that have more strengths in CDT than maths. So we all work together, put our abilities together, and just really proud of how it’s coming together as a kennel.

MARTINA:

I feel inspired cause you can do so many jobs with just the two subjects. So you can go out there and pick anything really.

DAVID DODDS (CDT Teacher):

They’re not just doing it because they’re making a kennel, they realize, you know, or as I say, bringing the outside world into the school has been a real big benefit as well. They’re seeing that to be a joiner, to work in trades, they need math skills and craft skills. Whereas before, they felt they were doing the subject because they were at school, whereas now they’re being able to relate real life to actually in the classroom. Which is, makes learning so much more actually engaging, and so much more fun for the kids.

AIMEE:

I think that the success will look like a really good kennel. A kennel that we build to take away and be proud of. And the fact that we’d be happy enough and proud enough to be able to sell it and know that it’s a good product.

ELAINE COOK (Headteacher):

It’s something we did, in the first instance, and it’s not just a one-off, it’s something we’ll be continuing to promote throughout the school and we hope that it might not be dog houses, it might be sheds next thing for all we know. Wendy houses was another idea that we thought, because we do have a playgroup and a nursery, and the idea was to provide the nurseries around with Wendy Houses, etc., so that might be the next one.

With thanks to the pupils, staff, and parents at Deans Community Secondary School.