

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

3 MARCH 2011

THE IMPACT OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING - AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CO-OPERATIVE LEARNING METHODOLOGIES IN ANGUS SCHOOLS

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to advise the Education Committee of the outcomes of a recent review of the impact of Co-operative Learning methodologies on Angus pupils, staff and parents.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee
- (i) note the terms of this report
 - (ii) note the scope of the recent very positive review of the impacts of Co-operative Learning training and the use of Co-operative Learning methodologies in Angus school communities
 - (iii) note the recommendations of the review report about continuing support for this very favourably received and high impact pedagogical approach and
 - (iv) note that copies of the review report are available electronically at <http://intranet/Departments/Education/Documents/The%20Impact%20of%20Cooperative%20Learning%20on%20Pupils,%20Staff%20and%20Parents.pdf>

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 3 June 2010, the Education Committee considered a comprehensive Position Statement in relation to the authority's arrangements to support Angus schools in preparing for the formal introduction of the new curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence (Article 6 refers).
- 2.2 That Position Statement indicated that Curriculum for Excellence is fundamentally about "*improving how and not just what pupils learn, and how and not just what teachers teach*". This major reform of the school curriculum in Scotland expects and indeed needs all teachers to become confident in delivering a curriculum which develops skills – for learning, for life, for work - and not simply knowledge. The delivery of a skills-based curriculum will depend crucially on the ability of teachers to become confident and competent in applying learning and teaching methodologies which provide pupils with the range of learning experiences and opportunities that will assist them to develop key transferable skills.
- 2.3 Against that background, since September 2006 the education authority has invested significantly in the delivery of a comprehensive 'Co-operative Learning' training programme in which all Angus teachers are expected to participate.
- 2.4 Between September 2006 and June 2010 there were 20 three day Co-operative Learning training events, known as 'academies', attended by a total of 1,321 staff. The training has regularly attracted extremely favourable evaluations from participants, the vast majority of whom believe that involvement in this training programme will assist them to manage with increasing confidence active learning methodologies in their routine classroom practice.

- 2.5 Beyond the initial training programme, the authority's efforts to promote and support the adoption of Co-operative Learning methodologies have included the nomination in each school of a Co-operative Learning 'supporter'. Co-operative Learning supporters meet together at regular planned network meetings in order to share emerging good practice and learn from each other's experience of Co-operative Learning methodologies.
- 2.6 Given the central importance of the training programme in the authority's plans to support the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, it was agreed that it would be helpful to the service to undertake a formal evaluation of the impacts of the training and of the use of Co-operative Learning methodologies.

3 NATURE, FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION EXERCISE

- 3.1 A departmental review team was established in June 2010, comprising seven members of the Educational Development Service and two members of the Educational Psychology Service. The team planned the design and the conduct of the ensuing review exercise. That exercise concluded on schedule in December 2010.
- 3.2 A sample of 32 focus schools was identified to include all eight secondary schools and a range of small, medium and large primary schools from each of the Angus school clusters. The sample group of primary schools represented 44% of primary schools. All of the schools approached accepted the invitation to participate in the evaluation exercise.
- 3.3 In the course of the exercise a total of 459 Angus pupils provided feedback about their experiences of Co-operative Learning methodologies. A total of 156 teachers in the sample schools responded to an online evaluation questionnaire located on GLOW. The teacher sample represented 11% of primary teachers and 15% of secondary teachers. A total of 520 parents of pupils attending the sample schools responded to the parental questionnaire.
- 3.4 The main objectives of the review were to:
- evaluate the impact of Cooperative Learning training on classroom practice by investigating:
 - the extent to which the methodology is used by teachers
 - teachers' perceptions of the impact on pupils and their own practice
 - pupils' perceptions of working cooperatively
 - parental views of this methodology
 - the role of the Cooperative Learning supporter in schools
 - the usefulness of the resources and the support provided by the authority
 - collate and disseminate examples of strengths/successes/achievements in the use of Cooperative Learning
 - provide specific feedback to schools in the light of evaluation interviews and pupil and parent survey responses
 - identify the support needs of teachers and schools in order to inform future Authority planning

4 CONCLUSIONS OF THE EVALUATION EXERCISE

- 4.1 The comprehensive report produced by the review team provides a detailed analysis of feedback from each of the stakeholder groups cited in paragraph 3.3 above.
- 4.2 The thorough analysis of the use of this methodology offered in the report will assist schools, school clusters and the authority to build on achievements to date and to address the report's recommendations.

4.3 The main conclusions of the review are that:

- Co-operative Learning training has had a major impact on teacher practice in Angus schools
- every teacher who responded to the survey indicated that they regularly used aspects of the training that they received
- members of the teacher sample rated the impacts on their practice as '*more than considerable*'
- most teachers who responded to the survey reported positive impacts of Co-operative Learning methodologies on their pupils. Almost all pupils who responded to the survey demonstrated impressive levels of familiarity with the key aspects of Co-operative Learning methodologies
- secondary teachers reported that they use Co-operative Learning methodologies less frequently, that they employed a more limited range of related techniques and that to date they had observed less benefits to their pupils than their primary colleagues
- most of the pupils sampled enjoy Co-operative Learning activities and consider such lessons worthwhile
- relative to sample size, the sample of upper secondary pupils reported more worthwhile activities than any other group and were extremely positive about their experiences. [That outcome is surprising since this group experienced the lowest frequency of working with Co-operative Learning methodologies]
- of the difficulties which pupils and parents report in relation to Co-operative Learning approaches most appear to be due to perceived deficits in the teaching of teamwork skills
- on a related note, teacher responses suggest that team skills are often not as explicitly taught and analysed as they themselves believe necessary to make pupil learning teams function efficiently and effectively
- primary teachers are more likely than their secondary colleagues to use the Co-operative Learning technique of 'home teams'. (Approximately 50% of teachers who use 'home teams' use mixed ability groupings which they believe work very effectively)
- Co-operative Learning supporters value the regular schedule of network meetings now in place
- most Head Teachers make good use of their school's nominated Co-operative Learning supporter to assist, advise and support colleagues in relation to the use of associated methodologies
- most of the 520 parents who responded to the review survey were positive about Co-operative Learning and about the perceived benefits of this methodology for their children's learning and development.

5 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW REPORT

5.1 The report sets out a number of key recommendations for teachers, schools and the education authority. The following paragraphs detail each set of recommendations in turn.

5.2 **Teachers** should seek to develop their skills in the use of Co-operative Learning approaches by:

- attending further centre-based training, in particular, recall days
- making effective use of support resources provided by the authority
- making academic and social goals explicit in their lessons
- investing time in teaching and processing team skills and structuring Co-operative Learning activities so that they are appropriately challenging for all pupils including the most able
- building and managing 'home teams' to support learning across the ability range
- increasing their repertoire of Co-operative Learning techniques and ensuring that the techniques used suit the learning purpose and;
- collaborating with colleagues to share and improve practice.

5.3 **Schools** should assist teachers to improve their practice by:

- encouraging and enabling teachers to make use of training opportunities including recall days, twilight sessions and 'next steps in Cooperative Learning' days
- providing opportunities for in school training including observing and learning from confident practitioners
- supporting the teaching of Co-operative Learning team skills
- disseminating the Cooperative Learning newsletter and other authority support materials
- sharing materials through Glow
- engaging with parents to share the key features and purposes of Cooperative Learning

5.4 The **Authority** should continue to support teachers and schools by:

- continuing to offer the core training programme
- working with Co-operative Learning ‘supporters’ and schools to enhance the professional learning of teachers
- identifying and sharing good practice
- encouraging more networking/mentoring across sectors
- ensuring that authority trainers have access to quality support
- offer training to ensure that effective in-school arrangements are in place to monitor the use of Co-operative Learning methodologies.

5.5 Arrangements are in hand to engage with Head Teachers in a detailed consideration of the review report with a view to enhancing the confidence levels of staff in their continuing use of a methodology whose potential contributions to the successful delivery of Curriculum for Excellence are widely recognised across the Angus education service.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the terms of this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from the consideration of this report.

8 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An [equalities impact assessment](#) is not required.

9 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

9.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Single Outcome Agreement:

- Young people and adults in Angus maximise their potential through learning opportunities (National Outcome 3)
- Children and young people in Angus will have access to positive learning environments and opportunities to develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem to the fullest potential (National Outcome 4)
- Children and young people in Angus will be involved in decisions that affect them, have their voices heard and be encouraged to play an active and responsible role in their communities (National Outcome 11)

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law & Administration.

NEIL LOGUE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.