



# Lurgan Junior High School

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Principal: Mr. J. M. Johnston B.Sc., M.Ed.

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## STEM Professional Development Activity

### Implementing The Revised Curriculum – Learning From Good Practice

Mrs Beverley Carson

# **STEM Professional Development Activity**

## **Implementing The Revised Curriculum – Learning From Good Practice**

### **How The Need Was Identified**

I have been teaching science at Key Stage 3 in Lurgan Junior High School for some considerable time, and with the introduction of the Revised Curriculum and the increased emphasis on developing Curriculum Skills and Capabilities, Active Learning Experiences, and Assessment For Learning, I felt the need for fresh ideas and inspiration. I wanted to observe how aspects of the Revised Curriculum had been introduced well into schools where science was a curricular strength.

### **Professional Development Activity Undertaken**

I visited two schools within the Southern Board Area, Dromore High School and Banbridge Academy to observe good practice and discuss ideas for schemes, lessons and activities, for the teaching of science at Key Stage 3. Dromore High School is a controlled secondary school, presently catering for 11-16 year old pupils; Banbridge Academy is a controlled grammar school, catering for 11-18 year old pupils. Lurgan Junior High is an all-ability school, for 11-14 year olds, where pupils are banded according to ability and I was interested in seeing good practice across the ability range.

### **Improved Practice By The Teacher**

As a result of my discussions I feel I am clearer about how to identify opportunities to more firmly embed the Key Elements into the teaching of science in order to develop the pupils as individuals, as contributors to society and as contributors to the economy and environment.

I feel too better prepared in helping pupils to develop the necessary Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities and in helping them to identify and develop these skills themselves. I have initiated more overt discussion with pupils about, for example, problem solving or self management.

Developing Assessment For Learning was another area that I was keen to discuss with other teachers and to consider ways that I could guide pupils in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses in particular and in target setting.

### **Pupil's Learning Experiences**

As a school, we have of course been implementing the Revised Curriculum since 2007 and since then have been approaching our schemes from the point of view of 'What do we want our pupils to know?' 'What do we want our pupils to be?' 'What do we want our pupils to do?'

I am conscious, however of the desire to increase practical activities with more opportunities for pupils to work together to develop practical skills. I want pupils to discuss their work more with each other in pairs or groups and actively use scientific vocabulary in the correct context.

Pupils also need to see more examples of the applications of science in the wider world. I want them to understand how the science they are learning may be used in the world of work and to open their eyes to career possibilities.

Overall I hope that pupils will enjoy science more, become more motivated to do well and to continue to study the subject at Key Stage 4.

## **Evaluation Of The Activity**

After making some changes to schemes and pupil notes, I intend to seek feedback from others on the school Curriculum Committee. I also intend to evaluate if pupils have been able to identify personal development in thinking skills and personal capabilities addressed, are aware of career opportunities related to the topic studied and have been able to evaluate their progress effectively and set specific targets in how to improve their standard in the topic covered.

## **Sharing Experiences, Skills and Knowledge Gained**

Experiences, skills and knowledge gained have already been outlined at a science department meeting. I intend to modify schemes and pupil notes in a topic that I am mainly responsible for and use that as a basis for further discussion in order to attempt to implement best practice.

I will also feedback to the school Curriculum Committee of which I am also a member and to other teaching staff at a non-teaching training day.

## **Reflection On The Activity**

On reflection I regard the Activity as having been very interesting and worthwhile. I am indebted to the Heads of Science in both Dromore High School and Banbridge Academy for taking the time to discuss their Key Stage 3 Science Units of Work with me and to allow me to observe good practice. Also to the General Teaching Council For Northern Ireland for facilitating me to make the visits to the other schools.

It was interesting to see how the two different types of school had sought to implement various aspects of the Revised Curriculum. Dromore High School has gone down a more thematic route to make science more interesting and relevant to pupils. Thinking skills and Personal Capabilities are embedded in activities carried out by pupils. Banbridge Academy has maintained a topic based curriculum, whilst enjoying exploiting the opportunities to bring science to life whilst incorporating the Key Elements. Both schools stressed the importance of active learning and implementing Assessment For Learning strategies.

The activity has reassured me that the steps we have taken to implement the Revised Curriculum are similar to some of those taken in the schools I visited and inspired me to take further steps to especially develop pupil's thinking skills and to make science more relevant to pupils' everyday life.

## **Future Plans**

I plan to maintain the contacts I made with the two schools involved as I feel the discussions I had were worthwhile and it was interesting to find out a little about what is going on in other schools.

In the short term I plan to work on our Cells and Reproduction unit of work and pupil notes, incorporating some ideas I have had since my visits to the other schools. In the longer term I plan to look specifically at our introductory Booklet for first years to ensure that pupils start off in science at secondary school with more practical experience and skills development.

**Date**.....

**Signed (teacher)** .....

**Counter-signed (Principal)**.....