

CGEOG (TEACHER) ONLINE CPD MODULE

HOW TO IMPROVE LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENTS AND LOCAL UNIVERSITY GEOGRAPHY and EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

By Garry Atterton Chartered Geographer (Teacher)

The Learning outcomes of the presentation are:

- 1. To use The Geography department from The Castle School Thornbury as a case study of excellent practice of links that are presently in place with local university geography and education departments.**
- 2. To explore the perspectives of the different stakeholders**
- 3. To evaluate the benefits and successes of links with local university geography and education departments**

RESOURCES

- 1. Presentation PowerPoint.**
- 2. Guidance notes (this document)**

SESSION OUTLINE

- 1. Introduction. The learning outcomes above should be outlined to department staff before the CPD activity and at the beginning so they are clear about why the activity is taking place.**
- 2. There are three sections to the CPD activity. Firstly slides 3 to 7 use The Castle School Thornbury as a case study of very best practice to show what can be done to improve links between school geography departments and local universities. The second section for slides 8 to 13 covers the stake holders and their viewpoints. Each viewpoint covers the main advantages of improving links; there are comments from geography students, a geography teacher educator, and a geography lecturer. The final section shows the excellent link work being done by The Geographical Association and The Royal Geographical Society.**
- 3. Throughout the PowerPoint and guidance there are discussion questions called OVER TO YOU and suggested further reading.**

The guidance notes below are mainly the text from each slide of the PowerPoint with some additional notes.

BACKGROUND TO THE GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT OF THE CASTLE SCHOOL THORNBURY

The Geography department characteristics are:

- ✦ A high achieving department within an academically very good school.
- ✦ A high performing department as recognised by The Local authority and Ofsted.
- ✦ It has achieved national recognition with the Secondary Geography Quality mark and runners up with The GA Bradford's Award.
- ✦ There are excellent links with the Geographical Association and Royal Geographical Society.
- ✦ Department members have helped set up and run the Geography Best Practice forum for secondary geographers in the local authority. One department member is a Chartered Geographer (teacher) and an Advanced Skills Geography Teacher.

OVER TO YOU: Use the above information to describe the achievements of your geography department.

THE CASTLE SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT AND THE LINKS WITH LOCAL UNIVERSITY EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

- ✦ Having excellent links with the Geography subject tutor in the School of Education at the University of The West of England has led to rewarding collaborative work. Examples include:
- ✦ Working together on presenting Geographical Association Bristol branch lectures.
- ✦ Organising Sustainable development conferences for teachers and competitions for sixth form students.
- ✦ Planning and running Inset and an annual geography conference for Secondary teachers from the Bristol region.
- ✦ The Castle School also takes PGCE students for their initial teacher training from UWE. Partnership projects with local primary schools have been developed on school grounds and the local environment activities.

OVER TO YOU: What are the benefits of having a trainee geography teacher and having links with the local university education department?

THE CASTLE SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT AND THE LINKS WITH LOCAL UNIVERSITY GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENTS

- ✦ Links has been set up with the School of Geography at the University of the West of England. Examples include:
- ✦ Working on the Best Practice website www.southglos.gov.uk/ed/advisory/BestPracticeFora/Geography created by the Local Authority, with an on line revision course for A level students. UWE geography lecturers responded to questions asked by students from schools in South Gloucestershire.
- ✦ Use of UWE Geography lecturers for lectures for sixth formers at the University of Bristol and UWE Geography departments. This was organised with the Bristol branch of the Geographical Association.
- ✦ Visiting Geography lecturers to The Castle School for sixth form conferences, with other local schools invited.
- ✦ In summary having direct links with more than one member of staff on regular continuous basis allowed a sustainable partnership to evolve.

For more details about the Geography and Environmental Management course at the University of The West of England see <http://www.bne.uwe.ac.uk/gem/about.asp>

OVER TO YOU: What are the benefits of having links with a local university geography department?

LINKING THE SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT AND LOCAL UNIVERSITY GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENTS WITH PROFESSIONAL SUBJECT ASSOCIATIONS

- ✦ The Geography department has had a long term connection with the Bristol branch of the Geographical Association. Examples include:
- ✦ Going to evening lectures given by Geography lecturers, many from local HEI's.
- ✦ Taking part in sixth form competitions at The Geography department of The University of Bristol.
- ✦ Meeting and sharing ideas with geography teachers from other local schools.
- ✦ A practical GIS day was organised for sixth formers that linked many of the members of the geography community the RGS, the GA, the University of the West of England, local secondary schools and Bristol City Council planners.

See the following websites for membership information.
<http://www.rgs.org/JoinUs/Join+us.htm>

<http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/about-the-apg/reciprocal-membership/>

OVER TO YOU: Are you school members of The Geographical Association or Royal Geographical Society? If not why not!!!

Why study Geography at university?

“There has never been a better or more important time to study geography. With growing interest in issues such as climate change, migration, environmental degradation and social cohesion, geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study. Geographers are also highly employable.

Whatever your passion for the world - fascination with landscapes or concerns about inequality - geography will provide you with knowledge and transferable skills that will reward you personally and advance you professionally.”

Dr Rita Gardner, director of the RGS-IBG

For more details about why study geography at university, choosing a course, making a successful application, should I take a gap year and careers with geography see <http://www.rgs.org/OurWork>

OVER TO YOU: How many students from your department go onto study geography at university? Do you actively support their applications? What more could be done as a department?

The student perspective: Year 13 students from The Castle School

- ✦ “It was useful to attend lectures as it extended knowledge and case studies.”
- ✦ “It provided great learning opportunities.”
- ✦ It was good interacting with and competing with local schools.”
- ✦ “Very useful to have a different perspective to a teachers view.”
- ✦ “I felt that The Castle School Geography departments links with the University of the West of England gave me and excellent insight into studying the subject in higher education.”

The student perspective: Year 13 students from The Castle School comments about The Going Places conference held at UWE in October 2008

From the Geography careers day I obtained an insight into how advanced degree level geography can be. It was an eye-opening insight into how careers in Geography can not only further your knowledge, but open doors to many walks of life. The talks were educational and inspiring. “Matthew Mapp

“It was a really interesting day because I got to meet students in their last year of university and I got a real feel for university life. I also found it helped the UCAS application process as I found out what university geography departments were looking for. “Dan Wood

The so called higher education and school geography divide debate

There is a debate that universities have drifted apart from school geography because of the importance of producing high quality research that brings in large amounts of funding and that the content of national curriculum controlled school geography has polarised the two bodies.

Two useful references to read about the debate are:

‘Is the future secure for Geography Education?’ Graham Butt
Geography Vol 93 Part 3 autumn 2008

Castree, N; Fuller D. and Lambert (2007) ‘Geography without borders’
Transactions of the institute of British Geographers Vol 32 pp 29 -32.

OVER TO YOU: How difficult have you found it working with local universities?

The Geography Teacher Educator (GTE) perspective: Mark Jones the University of the West of England

- ✦ The collaboration with partnership schools working with the IIT programme allows the development of wider participation by giving an experience of university to students of different ages.
- ✦ Acting as a link between school and academic geography departments allows the GTE to improve partnerships.
- ✦ Without the very good will of both school and university departments the relationship would be more fragmented, broken – each retreating into their respective institutions.

The university geography perspective: Dr. Alan Terry the University of the West of England

1. To try to provide students with some sort of idea what geographers do at university so that they can make more informed choices when deciding on post-school careers.
2. To show how geography is relevant to real people and organisations outside academia.
3. To convey some idea of the excitement of geography
4. To improve links with local schools and learn from them how the syllabus is changing and the implications for us.
5. To provide pupils who are thinking of staying in the area to study geography an opportunity of seeing what we do at UWE and thereby give them more information when making choices.
6. If our materials have any benefit to students who are studying for their A, AS or GCSE exams then that is a bonus but we don't claim to provide materials specifically suited to those levels of study.
7. To get to know a greater range of colleagues in local schools and try to build up trust and personal links that both institutions can build on in future.
8. To become part of a wider network of geographers in the local area.
9. To provide our student volunteers with possible links to schools so they can experience what teaching is like before committing to PGCE courses (This may become more important if we can develop an option to provide our students with credits on modules for volunteering in schools, something I need to speak to you about in more detail).
10. To support the local Bristol GA branch
11. In the future, to provide our ambassadors with possible links so they can develop their ambassadorial skills in schools.
12. To have fun and meet pupils in a different setting.

OVER TO YOU: What are the benefits of improved school partnerships for university geography departments?

The Action Plan for Geography Perspective:

The Geographical Association and The Royal Geographical Society (IBG) have developed the following initiatives which are related to the improvements of linking school geography departments with Local university Geography decampments:

The Geography Ambassadors Scheme

The Secondary Geography Quality Mark

The Chartered Geographer (Teacher) Scheme

See the following websites for more information about the above initiatives:

www.rgs.org/ambassadors

www.geography.org.uk/secondary/secondaryqualitymark/

www.rgs.org/OurWork/CharteredGeographer

OVER TO YOU: Which of the above have your department been involved with? If so what benefits have they brought to the department?

What benefits would the Geography Ambassador scheme bring to my school?

- ✦ The ambassador scheme is a great way to introduce students to the benefits of studying geography and encourage them to pursue the subject beyond the compulsory stages.
- ✦ There is no financial cost to the school and a minimal paperwork requirement. Ambassador involvement will offer potential extra help during geography lessons to enhance the teaching and learning of the subject, a chance to integrate with the local geographical HE and business communities, increased achievement and motivation, positive role models for pupils and, potentially, increased uptake in geography at GCSE and A Level.

SUMMARY OF THE BENEFITS OF IMPROVING LINKS BETWEEN THE CASTLE SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT AND LOCAL UNIVERSITY GEOGRAPHY and EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS

- ✦ In summary the links made have been the result of many years of working closely with members of the local geography community. It is about a partnership that is not school or university led.
- ✦ It has taken a lot of hard work, commitment, enthusiasm and time.
- ✦ The Castle School Geography Department has benefited directly and indirectly in the following ways:
- ✦ GCSE Geography numbers has stayed steady at around 90 students per year. A Level numbers are very good with around 35 students per year.
- ✦ Overall annual results are very good in terms of % A-C and in terms of added value.
- ✦ Many students go onto University to study Geography and Geography related degrees.

“Much of the academic success that the department has gained has been enhanced by the varied and interesting geographical diet offered outside of the school with our Geography friends in the local community. “

Garry Atterton Geography teacher from The Castle School Thornbury.

“It can be concluded that a successful future for the discipline of geography lies in strengthening the schools/HE interface, by uniting local self-help with national organisations, policy and resources”

Hill, Woodland and Atterton (2008)

For further reading see Hill; Woodland W. and Atterton, G. (2008) 'A case study of activities to enhance undergraduate recruitment in Geography'. Planet, 19 pp21 - 25. November.

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If you have any comments about this CPD unit please contact garry.atterton@thecastleschool.org.uk