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Balshaw, Maggie; Fowler, Mary; Grimes, Peter; Sharples, Suki; Sheehan, Janet  
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## EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS ARE INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

*Maggie Balshaw, Mary Fowler, Peter Grimes,  
Suki Sharples and Janet Sheehan*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper outlines the key features of a research project that has been working with a range of schools in England over the last decade. The 'Reaching Out to All Learners' project (ROAL), has been experienced in over sixty schools during that period. The underpinning rationale for the work is that of the UNESCO project on developing more inclusive practice using the UNESCO teacher education materials (1991). The title\* is drawn from the current Ofsted Inspection framework for English schools, which recently (2002) has recognized that effective schools are indeed inclusive schools.

Drawing on the experiences of external consultants and practising head teachers the paper analyses the processes and strategies used to support this research and development work. The overview is offered from the perspective of the external consultant who has directed the project since its inception and the external consultant working with Tower Hamlets schools in the last five years. School and LEA experiences are drawn from Bradford and Tower Hamlets (East London). Ten years of the project as 'a way of life' is outlined by a Bradford head teacher involved since 1993. (See appendix 1) More recent developments that incorporate 'The Index for Inclusion' are described, drawn from the teams' evaluation reports and head teachers' commentaries from schools in the current project. (See appendices 2 and 3) Several of these Tower Hamlets schools had taken part in a national ESRC funded project (2000 – 2003) on using the Index for Inclusion as a strategy to develop more inclusive practice. These schools were able to build on that experience through the ROAL project work.

The underpinning rationale for all the project work is using inquiry processes and critical self-review as a school improvement strategy. Involving many perspectives in putting this picture together is a key to the work. This also involves seeing staff development and adult learning as a crucial factor in the school's overall capacity to respond to the individual learning needs of all its children. This happens whilst seeking to identify the barriers to participation, learning and achievement that any children might experience, and finding ways to reduce these through the inquiry work. Choosing the direction, seeing the unfolding process as 'organic' and as a process of growth is a clearly established principle. Each of the schools would now identify itself as 'a learning organisation', (Senge 1990). Each of the schools sees the work as central to its school development plan (SDP), currently required of all schools in England. The stories of individual schools in the appendices illustrate these points.

The paper takes seven key themes that seem to have been essential to participants and the consultants in being successful in the development work. Over a period of more than a decade they have emerged through evaluative processes as crucial to the collaborative inquiry processes leading to the development of inclusive practice.

## 2. MAJOR THEMES DRAWN FROM ALL SCHOOLS' EXPERIENCES

### 2.1. Inquiry-based school improvement strategies using the UNESCO resources and the Index for Inclusion

The core principles of the research done in all the schools are those of the UNESCO resources for teachers' and school development. These are based on the active involvement of learners; using the individual school's starting points as a focus; sharing ideas with others in order to challenge and develop thinking and practice; opportunities for demonstration, practice and feedback; continuous evaluation of learning and support for learners in classrooms and staffrooms. These principles are espoused in all strategies used and underpin the action research done in the classroom practice development of more inclusive settings and seminars carried out in both network x-school sessions and those in staffrooms in individual schools.

More recent versions of the project have layered the Index for Inclusion into the basic use of the UNESCO resources for staff development. This has enabled the identification of a focus and research questions in three dimensions of each school's development work, as identified in the school improvement plan. These are at the culture, policy and practice levels. It has also widened the concept of inclusion firmly to any pupils who may experience barriers to participation, rather than solely those seen as having special needs. The comments below illustrate features of this.

*HR We worked with staff using materials from the UNESCO pack to help us first understand and examine our own preferred styles of learning. There was one particular comment from a support assistant which hit at the root of what we were trying to achieve when she said "I have never thought about how we learn". Staff quickly began to appreciate that children and adults all have individual styles of learning and the need for individualisation and differentiation was established.*

*BJ We chose 'Culture: Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school. Policies: Pastoral and behaviour support policies are linked to curriculum support and learning support policies. Practice: Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind. Lessons encourage the participation of all students'. In this way the indicators were a mirror on what we were doing with the school improvement plan.*

*St A We chose 'Culture: staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation in school. There are high expectations for all learners. Practice: student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning. Community resources are known and drawn upon'. The reasons for doing this were the need to look at the transition to year one.....this particularly involved a focus on the quality of teaching in Maths and the tension between this and the need the children still have for structured, planned play. The needs of the parents in terms of communication were also high on our agenda. We also wanted to break down barriers within the local community by developing links with TB infant school (also in project).*

### 2.2. Using the development of inclusive practice as a 'lever' for school improvement focusing on 'barriers to participation'

Connecting the development of inclusive practice into overall school development is a crucial concept in the project work. Schools are encouraged to put the research activities at the core of their school development plan, acting as a 'lever' for the duration of the project work, and hopefully as an ongoing feature afterwards. Focusing on the barriers to participation that any student, or indeed member of staff, (or the wider school community such as parents and governors), might experience, provides a starting point. Finding out what people's actual experiences are in their role as student, governor, support staff etc provides rich illuminative data about the barriers that are perceived to be or are actually there. Exploring why they are there and what may be done to remove them becomes a focus of the work. The comments below illustrate features of this.

*HR We asked ourselves the question “How can we encourage and develop self-evaluation skills in children with moderate and severe learning difficulties and communication problems?” The context in which this question was posed was one in which discussion with another child can at best be difficult, in some cases impossible, and one in which children were unused to having, or expressing an opinion about themselves. Through imaginative and collaborative approaches we devised strategies to involve children in recording and evaluating their own learning. Children were empowered in a way that had hitherto proven impossible.*

*B We spent time trying to recognise the barriers to children involving themselves fully in learning. We felt perhaps children who spoke English as a second language and who had less developed vocabularies were finding the initial lead in to a lesson (i.e. the whole class ‘carpet time’) difficult to access and so were ‘tuning out’ at this early point. Additionally, children may have been finding the more formulaic and routine nature of Literacy and Numeracy lessons boring and difficult to become involved in. We chose to look at ways we could change our teaching that would help these children become more involved and thus get 100% participation by the group*

### **2.3. Starting with a focus on classroom practice**

The participants involved in the leadership of the project work in schools are encouraged to look closely at the quality of student experience in their own classrooms and find partnership colleagues with whom they can review and discuss this. There is a variety of ways in which people have taken this forward. One example is mutual observations of jointly planned lessons that can lead to a deepening of the inquiries carried out. Others have agreed some new ideas and planned ideas for use in their own classrooms and then reviewed these activities in team meetings. The comments below illustrate features of this.

*HR Learning partnerships between teachers represented much more than the usual helpfulness between colleagues. One teacher commented “It’s affected my classroom practice. Supportive discussion on its own might not do that.” Teachers were all involved in learning partnerships where they talked together to agree a focus, watched each other in class and agreed on how to do things better. Another teacher commented “Our children have more knowledge of what they are going to do and more understanding of what they have done.”*

*B In order to increase participation by these children (as described above) we decided to focus on different ways to lead in to a lesson. We felt that if lesson introductions were visual, auditory or hands-on experiences, rather than being text based or simply teacher talk, learners may engage quickly and build a vocabulary or experience base that would help sustain their interest and participation throughout the lesson. We encouraged teachers to take risks with their lesson introductions in any subject, although particularly emphasised Literacy and Numeracy where introductions tend to be less creative as lessons adhere more closely to the structure prescribed by the National Strategies.*

### **2.4. Involving a range of school-based personnel to lead the inquiry processes in schools**

The leadership teams that coordinate the developments in school and also attend the seminars and workshops for networks of schools are drawn from a x-section of the school staff. A member of the senior management team should be, and in the most successful schools is one of these. Where headteachers have been involved in the coordinating team schools have made the most effective use of the project. Classroom practitioners, whether they are teachers or support staff, are also important to the coordinating team. Governors have also attended. The mix of people brings differing perspectives to the discussions.

Seminar sessions address the issue of leading project work, understanding and managing change, working in partnership with colleagues and other key processes. These strategies are at least as important as the substantive topic work on the nature of inclusive practice, how to work within the

UNESCO principles and getting familiar with the Index potential. The comments below illustrate features of this.

*H It would be too much to do on your own. It is so important to have the time to spend with a partner from school, as well as gaining feedback from staff in our own school and other schools. It felt as if we were going round in circles at the time (early on), but looking back it was an important phase for us. We ended up being very clear of what our project was looking at and our reasons behind it.*

*B For our working party, we learned much about leading a project of this kind. On reflection, we needed to have a broader selection of staff. Our group was mainly senior or experienced teachers and a wider perspective could have been gained by the inclusion of a Teaching Assistant and less experienced staff members. As a small team we didn't formally allocate responsibilities and tasks. In retrospect it would have been more efficient for us to do so.*

*St A It is an excellent example of process not product – where you think you will end up at the beginning is not necessarily where you will go. It is very important that a shared philosophy is arrived at through discussion. It is very easy to get a good project swallowed up by other things, that's why the days out (at seminars) are so important. It is difficult to effect change from a position with little power, and senior managers or head's involvement is important.*

## **2.5. Seeking the views of a range of stakeholders, such as the students/pupils themselves, teaching staff, support staff, parents and governors to enhance perspectives in the data collected**

It is essential to draw on as many different perspectives in the school community as possible. In many cases this started with drawing the children into discussions, reviews and feedback. This seems logical, in view of their first hand classroom experience of teaching strategies and learning processes and outcomes. It is often a surprise for adults how illuminating this can be, how sophisticated even quite young children can be in offering their opinions, and how some of the dissonances created through doing this can offer wonderful insights about the indicator focus chosen.

Where support staff are also asked about their perspectives on classroom practices further insights emerge. What has become apparent is that they themselves experience barriers to participation in learning and teaching, and as such can say a lot about both their own experiences and that of the children with whom they work. These are often mirror images of barriers to participation, experienced by both children and support staff.

Encouraging teaching staff to seek out answers to the questions about classroom practice can be a move from staff meetings being largely didactic and informative, to being participative and problem-solving. The UNESCO strategies used in the seminars demonstrate methods of doing this, and seminar participants are encouraged to use them in workplace sessions. The comments below illustrate features of this.

*HR The processes used in the project and the learning that took place became 'the way we do things around here' and so embedded as to be a way of life. An ethos of mutual support and trust developed where individuals shared problems and concerns confident in the knowledge that jointly a way forward would be found. All members of the school community contributed to decision making: following a training day with the project co-ordinators the support assistants had the confidence to co-operatively lead a joint meeting with teaching staff to feedback and discuss their suggestions for improvements.*

*H We gathered most of our information from the children by telling them that a giant had visited our school and wanted to find out about things that we do/learn in school. He could only read children's writing, therefore he would be able to read the letters that children wrote to him, teachers would have to ask children what they had written in order for them to understand it.*

*BJ There was something about this meeting that began to characterise what ROAL was about for the school. I feel now that it shifted the focus from teachers being expected to have the answers to teachers being responsible for finding the answers and accepting that they sometimes they needed support from each other. ROAL was not a project being done to people but an opportunity to reflect on what was being achieved and how the input of staff was part of the process of that achievement.*

*TB As each group became involved, e.g. parents, TAs and children, they realized the importance of the project and became fully involved. It was interesting to find meaningful ways to include all the relevant groups of people*

## **2.6. Partnership insider-outsider research**

The principles of collaborative research are used, i.e., inquiry done ‘with’ people and not ‘on’ them. Using their foci and interests is the key to the work. The ‘outsiders’ see themselves as entering into a joint inquiry with the schools, both individually and as a network group.

Individual schools are visited by the external consultants in order that focused discussions, meetings, interviews and observations can take place. These visits are planned to take account of individual school needs and as such are responsive to the school’s research agenda. The comments below illustrate features of this.

*HR Working on a regular basis with ‘consultants’ from outside the LEA helped us to evaluate our performance against other schools locally, nationally and worldwide through links established from involvement in the UNESCO project.*

*B To gauge the impact for the children we initiated a ‘Hidden Voices activity’. With the assistance of M and P, we brought together a range of children from Key stage 1 and Key stage 2 who were interviewed and asked their opinion on how they learned best and whether they felt this different style of starting lessons had helped their learning and achievement. Their scribed responses were shared and reflected upon through a poster tour during a staff meeting.*

*TB M and P came to the school and gathered information from TAs and children. The information was collated and used towards the project. During their visits they also led two staff meetings.*

*CJ Throughout the year several of the ideas and techniques introduced by P and M were introduced to staff in staff meetings. Particularly successful was the poster tour. After using it in a staff meeting several teachers were observed using it in lessons.*

BJ P and M came to the school in March and helped us to gather information from both TAs and children. We focused on the indicator about ‘learning being planned with all children in mind’ and in particular what makes learning fun and what gets in the way of this. It was a key point in the project as it harnessed a broader range of views which enriched the feedback we were getting and also gave real pointers for new areas of practice that we felt were being addressed in policy.

## **2.7. Networking amongst local groups of schools in order to support developments and evaluation processes**

Seminar and workshop sessions with coordinating teams attending on a regular basis are used to demonstrate ideas and challenge thinking. The UNESCO resources and Index for Inclusion provide stimuli for thinking and discussion. (See appendix 4 – an example of the resources based on the original UNESCO materials used in workshop sessions and appendix 5, an example of a research review sheet used in a session). The process of reviewing progress is often done on a x-school basis so that they learn from each other about processes of managing change and developing more inclusive classroom practice. There is as much learned from and between participating schools as is learned from the input provided by the external consultants.

Local links are enhanced and individual schools have partnered up to take the conversations and joint developments in practice forward. Visits between school participants to each others' schools have come about through the project work. The comments below illustrate features of this.

*TB Working with St A's school, time was given for staff to share ideas, staff took on different roles as the need arose, groups of children from the different schools met and worked together. Combined staff meetings and staff from both schools met to plan a joint end of term party.*

*From working with other schools we were able to share ideas, discuss similar projects and during group discussions we were able to re-evaluate our work and make sure we kept on track.*

*BJ The most useful support has come from the days to reflect together on the work in school and the way in which Maggie and Peter have helped us to focus our work more effectively as the project has gone on. It was also useful to have support from other ROAL colleagues and sharing their ideas, such as 'golden moments' and 'non-linguistic lead-ins' for lesson starters.*

*HR Meeting together with the project co-ordinators and colleagues from the other schools involved was really important. The project became a catalyst – there's someone asking you questions, challenging you, helping you continue your own learning and helping you formulate and carry out your action plan.*

### 3. EVALUATION ISSUES

Throughout the work of all the projects with different networks of schools, ongoing formative and summative evaluation has taken place. These words from project evaluation reports and head teachers about what it meant in their schools offer insights into the kinds of themes that were evident in the evaluation commentaries:

*Involvement in the project helped staff to work collaboratively to formulate and prioritise relevant targets for school development and to create a shared sense of purpose between governors, parents and the whole school community. It facilitated the development of reflective and collaborative practices both within school, and outside school which created a culture of continuous improvement and self evaluation where individuals were reflecting, questioning, evaluating and most important of all, recognising that they were continuing to learn. Standards of teaching and learning were therefore very high and following an Ofsted inspection the school was included in HMCI's list of outstanding schools.*

Heaton Royds School

*Through this action research project, creativity in teaching and learning has been given an increased profile and status at B. Teachers feel they have a mandate to take greater risks with their teaching and feel more comfortable moving away from the prescribed pattern of Literacy and Numeracy hours. Creative lead ins are planned for and now are written into our Curriculum Web as a starting point for creative learning across the curriculum. This framework is being introduced in September 2004 and will hopefully result in creative lead ins becoming embedded in practice and further our commitment to ensuring that learning is relevant and linked.*

Bangabandhu School

*'The most important piece of work we have done as a school in developing more inclusive practice'*

Mandy B Harbinger School

*'A really good practical way of ensuring that the development of inclusive practice can be built into the school's development .....a fantastic opportunity to network and collaborate with other schools in a sustained way'*

Janet S St Anne's School

*'It's not your typical training course - it's about networking across schools and sharing really good practice which you're supported in developing in your own school. You choose where your school is now – it's about working from your own starting point. That means we are moving it forward rather than it being another initiative pushing us somewhere we don't want to go'*

Peter S Cyril Jackson School

*'It has given us the space and time to think and reflect. That's just what you need as a school and it's what you don't get the opportunity for nowadays. The project has been so valuable in supporting the development of our thinking and then supporting the development of our practice in school'*

Nicola H Thomas Buxton Infant School

#### **4. Summary/overview from external consultants' perspectives**

As external consultants it is important to recognize that the schools are in the driving seat in this development work. The journey toward more inclusive practice can involve changes in focus or direction. As a process that is ideally seen as organic, involving growth, this is to be expected, indeed encouraged. The action research and inquiry that schools choose to pursue is shaped by the existing conditions in the school and subsequent directions taken, informed through the data gathered.

External consultant skills involved are those of acute and active listening to school participants, exploring ideas and challenging practices and assumptions, posing questions and encouraging the participants to seek their own answers. In addition, understanding how to support the inquiry and change processes undertaken is essential. Appreciating the leadership strategies that any of the school participants undertake and skills they need, (not only the heads and managers) and enabling all of them to learn to lead successfully are also crucial. Being sound in the underpinning principles of what the development of truly inclusive practice looks like and how both the Index and UNESCO resources can be used to this end are also key factors in the external consultants' work.

Illustrating the power of partnership inquiry, and being open and explicit about this with the participants should not be underestimated in its importance. The external consultants use each other to challenge thinking and practice in the field of leading collaborative inquiry of this kind. Showing participants that we are learning about these processes all the time is an essential facet of our work together. Clearly the schools involved need to see these kinds of processes demonstrated in ways that enable their learning and development.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Effective Schools are Inclusive Schools

#### The story of Heaton Royds

Heaton Royds is a small co-educational day special school catering for 48 pupils aged 2 – 11 years with a wide range of moderate or severe and complex learning difficulties, with associated communication, physical and/or behavioural difficulties. Approximately a quarter of the pupils have degenerative conditions. Over a third of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school takes pupils from a diverse catchment area, catering predominantly for pupils living in run down, low cost inner city housing. The types of special needs the pupils experience are found in all socio-economic, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The staff consists of 6.5 teachers, two nursery nurses (one of whom is bilingual), 13 special needs assistants and ten ancillary staff.

We became involved in the 'Effective Schools for All' UNESCO project as it was then called, 11 years ago shortly after I was appointed as head teacher at the school. There had been a turbulent history due to a review of specialist provision which threatened the school with closure followed by vigorous campaigning which earned the school a reprieve. Effective school development had been severely limited during this period of uncertainty so the project offered an appropriate vehicle for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

To develop schools as 'learning centred' the project focused on helping us as a participating school to use the following processes to facilitate the development of quality teaching and learning environments:

**Collaboration:** 'Learning Partnerships' were established on several levels. Within school partnerships were created between teachers within an agreed framework. A focus was decided upon and teachers would observe one another's practice, feedback and discuss changes, draw up an action plan, review the effect of any changes and discuss what they had learnt. Staff also visited other schools to examine good practice in an identified area.

Working with colleagues from three first (3 – 9yrs) schools in the project enabled us to examine our own learning styles and to develop processes to reflect continuously and to evaluate our own learning. Joining together the staff from all four schools also provided a stimulating opportunity for debate and to learn from each other's experiences.

Meeting regularly and developing a working partnership with the external consultants was also really important. They provided challenge and focus in helping us to formulate our action plans, review progress and continue our own learning as well providing support and challenge to ourselves as facilitators and leaders in the management of change.

The project provided a shared sense of purpose with governors and parents and the whole school community: we reported regularly on progress and some became involved in training sessions and in talking to staff about the effects of partnership working on classroom practice.

**Active involvement of learners:** Having worked with our partnership schools and the consultants to establish our own preferred styles of learning we then carried out the same exercise with staff. Staff developed a much clearer understanding and appreciation of different learning styles and how we all have different preferred styles of learning. This underlined the need for individualisation and differentiation of the curriculum and the appreciation of the need to work in different ways with the children. There was also the recognition that we are all continually learning whether we are established teachers or managers or children with special educational needs. This helped establish that it was 'safe' to try out new approaches and to take risks without fear of blame or criticism. Staff shared problems and concerns confident that jointly a way forward would be found. Collaboratively staff prioritised relevant targets for school improvement and time for reflection and evaluation was built in.

Having spent time deciding how as adults we would be involved in evaluating our learning we moved to look at how we could involve our pupils in the process. It was a considerable challenge to think of ways of involving children in this process who had limited or no speech and who were unused to having or expressing an opinion about themselves. Thinking imaginatively and collaboratively, various systems gradually emerged. Choosing to post a photograph of yourself in a box with either a sad or happy face on it, or using an interactive switch, for example. Children were encouraged to think for themselves and were provided with mechanisms to express their thoughts.

**Continuous evaluation of learning:** This took several forms: all staff were encouraged to keep a learning journal for their own personal reflections. We also held a meeting close to the beginning of each term to reflect back on the previous term and identify 'critical incidents or events' in the change process and their effect on the learning taking place both personally and as a school.

Monitoring and evaluation of curriculum planning and teaching and learning was built in on an individual and organisational level. Weekly team meetings involved all staff in the process as well as whole staff meetings. Individual Education Plans were evaluated every half term and targets for pupils amended and reviewed. Assessment data was analysed according to age, ethnicity and gender and used to set whole school and group learning targets.

**Continuous improvement:** The processes and learning that took place through using them became 'the way we do things around here' and so embedded as to be a way of life. An ethos of mutual support and trust developed and staff felt confident that in sharing their problems and concerns others would help them find a way forward. These types of discussions would take place routinely and were not seen as the prerogative of 'experienced' teaching staff. This engendered the expectation that by publicly 'theorising', ideas are generated and people are **actively thinking more**. Some of the most far reaching discussions or decisions would take place following a spontaneous discussion in the corridor, or during break time. This really did mean that continuous improvement was taking place where individuals were reflecting, questioning, evaluating and most importantly, recognising that they were continuing to learn.

**So, did this really make an impact on standards of teaching and learning????**

- "Outstanding school": Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools report 2002
- Investors in People award 2002
- School Achievement Award from the Department of Education and Skills 2003
- Award from Education Bradford for Outstanding Contribution to Education 2003

Mary Fowler: now Head teacher of West Oaks Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre and Technology College, Boston Spa, Leeds, West Yorkshire, England. Phone 01937 840110 E mail: [mfowler@westoaks.leeds.sch.uk](mailto:mfowler@westoaks.leeds.sch.uk)

## APPENDIX 2

### Effective Schools are Inclusive Schools

#### The Story Of St Anne's

St Anne's is a Catholic primary school in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. We have 18 children with statements and a high number of children in receipt of free school meals. I have been head teacher at the school since September 1999.

Embarking on the 'Reaching Out to All Learners' (ROAL) work in September 2003 was the obvious next step for St Anne's. As a school we had begun to go through the process of 'finding that the notion of inclusion becomes clearer as they engage with the materials' [*Index for Inclusion p2*]. We had taken part in the ESCR project on developing inclusive practice which involved three LEAs and three universities. During this project we had focussed on parental inclusion as well doing community cohesion work with Thomas Buxton school. At some point during this time inclusive vocabulary such as 'breaking down barriers' became part of our culture and inclusion ceased to be a project but just became 'the way we do things' at St Anne's.

ROAL gave us the opportunity for reflection around our practice in the company of 'critical friends' from other schools within the LEA as well as the researchers. At the beginning, we had a clear aim in mind which was to focus on the transition from reception to year one. This we did but the project sparked off other work such as the development of our inclusive curriculum further up the school as well as provision mapping. It also gave us a vehicle to bring on board the last few members of staff to embrace an inclusive philosophy. It was particularly helpful in enabling people to deal with the perceived conflict between achievement and inclusion.

We are delighted that the project is continuing as it is a unique opportunity to reflect on and research into practice and philosophy within a clear structure. Many of the techniques we have learnt, such as poster tours for example, we now use in school based INSET.

Janet Sheehan

Head teacher, St Anne's School, Tower Hamlets, East London

### APPENDIX 3

#### Effective Schools are Inclusive Schools

#### The story of Ben Jonson Primary School:

#### Reaching Out to All Learners: From Prescription to Creativity

At the start of my headship five years ago at Ben Jonson Primary School in Tower Hamlets, in London's East End, it was difficult to prioritise as there were so many things I wanted to change. The time-scale was in part dictated by having a negative Inspection report within three months; the priorities then became what Inspectors dictated, instead of what I believed to be the need.

Changing the culture and practice from an activity-led curriculum and directive leadership to a learning-led curriculum, inclusive practice, and an environment where people monitored and thought about what worked well, took initiative appropriately, carried out action research, and reflected on their practice, was going to take time!

We put in place more initiatives than we intended – so much so that I spoke about the process like a circus 'spinning plates' act. Pulling these together and making them part of our practice looked impossible.

We worked for two years with the ESRC Inclusion Project, and then continued this through the UNESCO 'Reaching Out to All Learners' Project to evaluate changes made. I appointed three further members of the Leadership Team who thought in the same way, and recruited more permanent staff. Now, five years later, we have achieved a more integrated approach to teaching and have re-written and implemented a more cross-curricular scheme of work; we have encouraged parents to become more involved, who now feel more confident about coming to school; our children have high self-esteem and good behaviour, and we see consistent practices throughout the school. We asked for feedback from the 'Hidden Voices' in the school community – those of parents, teaching assistants, teachers and the children themselves - and responded to their concerns.

#### Teaching Assistants:

Twenty-four Teaching Assistants form half the school's workforce. They now plan weekly with the teachers, and are allocated to specific children or to carry out intervention programmes with groups, evaluating their impact after a half-termly block. Training for a variety of programmes takes place regularly.

- Weekly TA meetings are opportunities to share good practice, take part in training and discuss what works well.
- Early Intervention programmes such as ELS are very effective. The two TA's are often visited by teachers in other schools as good models of guided reading.

#### Parents:

Children have targets for reading, writing and maths. Parents are informed every term about progress and achievements. 100% of our children have English as an additional language. Our school is on a large council estate in the East End of London, which has funding through a Government Scheme called New Deal for Communities to enhance the quality of life locally and address issues in terms of crime, education, housing, jobs, and health. This Scheme pays for a team of staff to work with several local schools, writing and translating maths homework sheets for children fortnightly. It is also funding electronic whiteboards and projectors throughout the school, and a set of class laptops. Parents whose own education may have been non-existent or very formal are enabled to access the curriculum by playing games with their children at home.

- As many as 65% of parents come to termly maths workshops with their children to find out which maths activities they can share at home. Bengali and Somali translators are available at each workshop.
- Individual children have tailor-made programmes and personal targets, and are well-supported through the allocation of Teaching Assistants.
- We now run parent literacy and numeracy schemes, and English classes, and have just made a film for parents about reading with their children, and home learning in general.

#### Pupils and Teachers:

We set up action research projects using the 'Index for Inclusion' (Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow) to challenge the idea of 'grouping according to perceived notions of ability'. Teachers are encouraged to change groupings for different activities or subjects. Drama strategies support this work, and we continue listening to the 'hidden voices' in the school – setting up a school council and class

council sessions, using circle time to teach about emotional literacy strategies and discuss feelings, listening to points of view, and asking the children for their opinions on what helps them learn best. New Schemes of Work have been written in the past two years, following Bloom's Taxonomy, focussing on the learning to take place, making cross-curricular links and giving back creativity about what to teach to teachers themselves.

- Teachers experiment with different groupings, asking the children what they believe is most effective – some ability groups, some have a variety of experts for collaborative work, and sometimes people use a 'Jigsaw' approach.
- Children help identify the success criteria for each lesson, by teasing out the learning intention. These are broken down into small achievable steps for different groups, and the children assess themselves within the lesson. This makes it possible for all children to succeed; one outcome of this is that children are encouraged to take risks and that challenging and teasing out misconceptions helps them learn.
- Writer's Workshops use a cross-curricular approach based on a half-termly planned text such as 'The Firework Maker's Daughter' (Philip Pullman) 'I Am David' (Anne Holm) or 'I'm Going on a Bear Hunt' (Michael Rosen). We use real strategies to model high quality language structures, and challenge higher level thinking skills.
- We use the elite Accelerated Learning cycle - connect, activate, demonstrate, consolidate – for a variety of planning both within lessons and for staff meetings.

**Learning Styles:**

- We decided to address different learning styles by using a range of strategies and incorporating visual, auditory and kinaesthetic elements in lessons.
- We organised a conference for the whole staff team and with five neighbouring schools to hear from Alistair Smith about a VAK approach, thinking skills, mind-mapping; at staff meetings we discuss how to teach best to address multiple intelligences.
- Outside trips and workshops with artists help develop the whole child, to motivate and challenge all children's understanding.
- Lessons involve all children, and observations now show an increase in participation, pace, enjoyment, motivation, and higher expectations from everyone. Displays are more exciting and the statistics indicate that educating the whole child makes a big difference.

**Recruitment and Retention:**

We believe strongly that learning is for life; we model this as a leadership team, and as a whole school. New experiences and sharing good practice are essential to keep people fresh and help them evaluate what is effective. Visiting schools in Montreal and the Eastern Townships in Quebec, Canada, helped us see that what we were developing in terms of inclusion was very focused, but that we needed to put back some of the creativity and fun into the curriculum; A recent Government document (Excellence and Enjoyment) enabled us to experiment but to keep the sharp focus; our Canadian trips helped us to change the curriculum offer so that high-quality Literacy texts focus the work for each half term.

- Sabbatical trips to Montreal and Boston have helped teachers to think about what we could do differently, to team-build and to take risks, in return for promising to stay to develop the school.
- Teachers carry out peer observations to help reflect on good practice, and share it.

Suki Sharples

December 2004

Head teacher, Ben Jonson School, Tower Hamlets, East London

**APPENDIX 4****Reaching Out to All Learners (ROAL)****Tower Hamlets 2003 – 2004****Classroom Strategies Chart: inclusive practices****Based on original materials from the UNESCO Resource Pack 1991**

Personalising curriculum tasks	Involving children in setting their own targets and in assessing their learning	
Making sure that TAs/support staff understand the purpose and aims of the lesson		Praising children's efforts and achievements
	Encouraging creativity in curriculum approaches	Groupings that take account of different learning styles
Providing opportunities to support learning from and with peers		Involving adults, including parents, in assessing and recording progress

NOTES for planning/action

## APPENDIX 4

### Reaching Out to All Learners

(ROAL) Tower Hamlets 2003 – 2004

#### Classroom Strategies: inclusive practices

Based on original materials from the UNESCO Resource Pack 1991

**Aim:** to consider the strategies used in classroom that promote the development of inclusive practices, particularly involving children in decision making about their learning and progress.

#### Activities:

- Individually read the examples on the outline chart. Mark with a tick any strategies that you personally use in your classroom practice. Add any further examples that you find effective in helping to make your classroom more inclusive in the blank boxes.
- Put a star in the three most important to you in your own practice.
- Do all this by yourself.
- In the group: tell each other what you have been doing, drawing out the examples that seem to be common to different group members.
- As a group agree the whole group's three favourite/most used strategies.
- On the large sheet of paper record each of these three. Below each write actual lesson examples that group members have used that illustrate the chosen point.
- Each group member make a note of what has been written on the large sheet as a personal record of the agreed examples.
- In the new group: in your new group explain to other group members the conclusion your first group had come to.
- Use active listening techniques for two minutes. Each group member to report in this way for two minutes.
- Then compare ideas in a group discussion.
- Make sure you also look at the large sheets of paper posted up in the room, after you have finished your discussion.

#### Evaluation issues:

What new things have you learnt about developing inclusive practice?

What are the implications for your own practice in the classroom?

(Adapted from UNESCO Resource Pack (1991) MB/PG March 2004)

## APPENDIX 5

Reaching Out to All Learners (ROAL)

Tower Hamlets 2003 – 2004

**Research Action Plan** (ongoing) 11<sup>th</sup> March 2004 Since January 14<sup>th</sup> 2004 – review

Which **action points** have been addressed since January?

What **data has now been generated** using the **Index questions** you identified in September and November?

**Culture**

**Policies**

**Practice**

**How?** (eg discussions/meetings/ROAL activity sheets etc)

How has this been **used to inform decisions** that support school developments?

**Who (else) has been involved** eg SDAS, LEA staff, other schools here?

**What forms of support** for your developments have you identified and used? (Remember the advice about action research activities)

**What forms of challenge** to your developments have you identified and either used positively or deflected? (Remember the advice)

Notes: what forms of **support and challenge** have you experienced as an individual?