

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2001

LINKS WITH GEORGIA, USA

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring Members of the Education Committee up-to-date on links that have been established with education departments and establishments in Georgia, USA.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Over a number of years positive links have been established with the State Education Department and district education boards in the State of Georgia in the USA. Central to the development of these links has been the liaison developed between education establishments in East Ayrshire and education establishments in Georgia. What has been developing has resulted in an interchange of ideas, education strategies and pupil and staff development opportunities in both countries. Within the framework of raising educational standards developed in this Authority, this link with the USA is proving to be a successful component.

- 2.2 The liaison strategy that has been developed relates to four main areas which inter relate:

- pupil and staff exchanges
- developments in the arts in education
- transition to the world of work and enterprise education
- economic regeneration

3. PUPIL AND STAFF EXCHANGES

- 3.1 A number of East Ayrshire schools have direct and regular liaison with schools in Georgia. In addition to links facilitated by the use of ICT, pupil and staff exchanges have taken place to both countries. Secondary school exchanges have introduced pupils in both countries to school life and the experience of living in family homes in a different country.

- 3.2 These exchanges have greatly benefited pupils in East Ayrshire who have had an insight to the education system in districts in Georgia and to a wide and varying pattern of American society. Staff have also benefited from the exchanges.

4. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARTS IN EDUCATION

- 4.1** Great emphasis is placed in East Ayrshire on raising educational standards through progressing an arts in education strategy. Through this forward looking development, pupils from all schools have had a wide range of opportunities to develop skills in the arts, enhance confidence and self-esteem and, as a consequence, be better placed to raise their educational horizons.
- 4.2** In recent weeks, the visit by 92 East Ayrshire students and 12 staff to various school districts in the State of Georgia has proved a great success in many ways. At six venues, including being the main performers in Eastman, Georgia on Independence Day, our schools band and choir performed to audiences in excess of 2000 people. Living in homes and college halls of residence, students met with peer groups and established many positive links with pupils, staff and community representatives across Georgia. The ten days visit was an outstanding success for all who were involved. Opportunities now exist to develop links through arts initiatives.

5. TRANSITION TO THE WORLD OF WORK AND ENTERPRISE EDUCATION

- 5.1** Facilitated by Achievers International, many successful links are now established between schools involved in enterprise education. In both countries, pupils in schools, through companies that they have established with their own board, have marketed a range of artefacts. These experiences of enterprise education develop a range of personal skills in pupils.
- 5.2** At the recent launch of a national strategy for enterprise for primary schools in Scotland, the work of Muirkirk Primary School in enterprise education, including links with USA was referred to by two key speakers. Through pupil and teacher exchange and the use of ICT, enterprise education initiatives are well established.

6. ECONOMIC REGENERATION

- 6.1** Many parts of Georgia face economic challenges similar to our own Authority. When in middle Georgia, the Chair of the Education Committee and Director visited a range of educational facilities where the effects of social deprivation are in evidence. Elected representatives of the State legislature presented an analysis of the problems that they faced and how they were planning to bring about regeneration of communities through education linked initiatives. The establishment of purpose built Further Education and Higher Education facilities and the development of roads, rail and air infrastructures are being planned. With education at the heart of the strategy for economic regeneration, many similarities exist with what is being planned and developed in East Ayrshire. It is considered worthwhile to explore these possibilities further, so that experiences and opportunities can be developed for the good of our communities.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The links with Georgia, USA, have progressed to a stage where further and structured liaison will prove beneficial in terms of approaches to economic regeneration, enterprise education, developments in the arts and teacher and pupil exchange. There is much to learn and share which will prove helpful and greatly facilitate our staff and students in raising standards. Opportunities will be grasped to help staff and students enhance confidence and self-esteem linked to raising levels of achievement.

8. RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:

- (i) note the strength of the links established between the Educational and Social Services Department and a number of school districts in Georgia, USA;
- (ii) note, with pleasure, the outstanding success of the recent visit of the East Ayrshire Schools Band and Choir to Georgia, USA;
- (iii) invite the Director of Educational and Social Services to explore and develop links which will assist exploring initiatives assisting in the economic regeneration of East Ayrshire;
- (iv) agree to a partnership agreement being established between the Department of Educational and Social Services and the education service in the state of Georgia, USA; and
- (v) otherwise, note the content of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

JM/JP
10 September 2001

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact John Mulgrew, Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: (01563) 576017).

Implementation Officer : John Mulgrew

AGENDA