

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 16 SEPTEMBER 2003

FUTURE LEARNING AND TEACHING PROGRAMME

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise Members of the Education Committee of additional resources allocated through the Scottish Executive Education Department Future Learning and Teaching Programme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Future Learning and Teaching Programme (FlaT) supports the piloting of new and forward thinking approaches to the delivery of the five National Priorities in Education.
- 2.2** Activating Children's Thinking Skills (ACTS) is a method of teaching thinking skills which has been implemented in Northern Ireland for three years. It has been pioneered by Professor McGuinness of Queen's University, Belfast and implemented in all Education Boards across the province.
- 2.3** East Ayrshire Council already enjoys productive links with the South Eastern Education and Libraries Board (SEELB) in Northern Ireland. Head Teachers have taken part in video conferencing and exchange visits discussing approaches to self evaluation, learning and teaching and support for children with special needs.

3. ACTS IN EAST AYRSHIRE

- 3.1** The Scottish Executive through the FlaT programme has agreed to fund the introduction and implementation of the ACTS project in East Ayrshire over the next two years.
- 3.2** One of the most innovative aspects of the project is the further links which will be made with SEELB. Staff participating in the project will have the opportunity to visit schools in Northern Ireland and work with practitioners already implementing the programme. Return visits to East Ayrshire will also take place. This is a unique aspect of the project which puts East Ayrshire at the forefront of both approaches to learning and teaching and developing partnerships.

4. IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** Using the ACTS approach this project will be based on the development of thinking skills across the curriculum. It will involve upper primary staff and pupils. The approach is based on the idea that if pupils are to learn meaningfully, to think flexibly and to make reasoned judgements they must be taught explicitly what is meant by different types of thinking.
- 4.2** Staff will be trained to systematically identify opportunities within the 5-14 curriculum for thinking skills development and to design the lessons to highlight a specific skill within this context.
- 4.3** In the initial phase of implementation fifteen Primary 5 teachers will be trained to take the Activating Thinking Skills Project forward. An allocation of individual Professional Development, suggested at 15 hours, will be credited to the participants for the preparation of ACTS lessons within the framework of the 5-14 curriculum.
- 4.4** The opportunity to visit Northern Ireland and work with teachers already implementing the project will be available and visits from teachers to East Ayrshire schools will take place during both phases.
- 4.5** In Phase Two the project will be working towards full adoption by schools. A group of fourteen primary 6 teachers will be trained using the model described at 4.3. By moving on to primary 6 for the next group a steady roll out in to S1/2 can be planned at authority level during subsequent sessions.

A control group of schools will be identified to allow a planned evaluation of effectiveness. Two lead trainers will be identified and trained to take the project forward without the sustained input from the team at Queens University. Trained teachers will take the project forward in their own schools by direct training and mentoring staff.

- 4.6** An instructional video and ACTS Handbook will be produced and distributed to all schools in East Ayrshire. The video will be available to SEELB schools.

5. POLICY/LLEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Nil

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The grant to the Authority in support of the two year implementation phase is £18955.
- 6.2** East Ayrshire will provide in kind officer support and teacher cover from within existing delegated resources

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Members of the Education Committee are invited to:

- i) welcome the additional funding allocated from the FlaT Programme
- ii) agree the framework for implementation outlined in this paper
- iii) invite the Director to advise Members of the committee of progress re the proposed links with SEELB; and
- iv) otherwise, note the content of the report

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

CMcC/MR
25/08/03

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service:
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IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : GRAHAM SHORT