

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2003**

### **UPDATE REPORT ON PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE**

#### **Report by Director of Educational and Social Services**

## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of developments in the inter-authority Partners in Excellence project.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Members will be aware that Partners in Excellence is a joint modern languages project involving East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and Argyll & Bute. Funding for the project is provided by the Scottish Executive.

The Partners in Excellence project provides senior students of modern languages in the three authorities with opportunities to develop their specialism through modern technology and innovative methods of delivery.

- 2.2** The aims of the project include:

- allowing students to develop their potential in modern languages to the full;
- providing opportunities for students of modern languages to link directly with young people in Europe;
- facilitating links between local authorities and Higher Education institutions in Scotland and in Europe and forming positive links with business, industry and enterprise initiatives;
- encouraging uptake of modern languages post S4;
- enhancing attainment of all modern languages students in S5 and S6;
- providing training for modern languages staff in technology;
- providing a model for other subjects;
- supporting the study of minority languages.

Features of the project include:

- the development of an interactive website, LanguageZone (<http://www.languagezone.org>), which complements class teaching and provides support to learners;

- the development of an information portal (<http://www.pie.org.uk>), which acts as a community resource for those involved in the project and a source of information to visitors from other areas;
- the provision of high quality technology facilities for all Modern Languages departments in East Ayrshire secondary schools;
- the organisation of residential weekend courses focussing on the development of students' language skills through film-making;
- the provision of immersion visits for students to France, Germany and Spain;
- the introduction of innovative approaches to language teaching;
- the increasing levels of uptake of and achievement in modern languages among East Ayrshire pupils.

### **3. PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT**

**3.1** The success of the project has been recognised by the European Commission in being awarded a European Award of Languages 2003 for innovation in languages education. The European Award for Languages is a Europe-wide initiative supported by the European Commission and is organised in the UK by CILT in London. The aim of the Award is to draw attention to innovation and effective practice in language-learning that has potential for replication. Fifteen UK projects have been recognised for innovation and effectiveness in languages education this year. All award winners will receive their Awards from Sir Trevor McDonald and a DfES Minister at a special event hosted at the Italian Embassy on 26 September, the European Day of Languages.

**3.2** The Partners in Excellence project has provided a significant boost to the learning and teaching of modern languages in East Ayrshire. Key findings from initial SQA data for 2003 include:

- Uptake in languages at Higher languages increased by 40% since 2000 (from 122 to 171)
- Uptake in all languages at all levels increased by 118% since 2000 (from 136 to 297)
- Uptake in languages other than French at all levels increased by 28% (from 75 to 96)
- Number of Higher Grade at grade A increased from 36% to 47% since 2000, representing 30% increase

**3.3** The Partners in Excellence project is subject to ongoing evaluation by the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (SCILT). The Partners in Excellence project will continue to develop over the current session and will be subject to review both by SCILT and SEED.

**3.4** Partners in Excellence provides an excellent example of local authorities working in partnership to improve the attainment and achievement of pupils. The lessons

learned from the project will be of relevance both to other curricular areas and to education authorities throughout Scotland.

#### **4. POLICY / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Nil.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** Partners in Excellence is funded directly by SEED.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee note:

- (i) the success of the Partners in Excellence project in receiving the European Award for Languages 2003
- (ii) note the increase in the number of pupils taking languages at Higher grade since 2000
- (iii) note the increase in the attainment level at Higher grade level since 2000
- (iv) approve the continuing development of the PiE project.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

JMc/EO'N  
27 August 2003

Members requiring further information should contact Mark Pentleton, Partners in Excellence Project Co-ordinator (01563 555652) or Kay McMeekin, Citizens of a Multilingual World Support Officer (01563 555653)

#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

**Implementation Officer: John McCarney, Head of Service: Schools Support**