



Shared Education News



Welcome to our Shared Education News

Welcome to the first edition of our Shared Education News Letter. A great deal of collaborative activity has been happening between our schools. Therefore we wanted to share some of the exciting highlights of our shared activities with you!

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Year 10 Shared Education Signature Project

As part of our Shared Education Signature Project both schools focused on the need for Year 10 pupils to have the opportunity to the experience collaborative classes before choosing their GCSE subjects. Teachers from both schools collaborated and planned a series of twelve Learning for Life and Work lessons, led by Mrs McCormick and Miss Thompson. In September, the second year of our Year 10 Project began, this involved over 50 pupils from each school being given the opportunity to take part in shared lessons.



The theme for this year's lessons was 'Our Government'. Pupils took part in team building, explored democracy, political parties, the electoral system and the role of Stormont. On the 4th and 7th of October, pupils were taken to Stormont Buildings to learn first-hand about how our government is formed and how their vote counts in an assembly election.



One pupil stated, about the shared lessons, "I enjoyed the chance to see around Cross and Passion and now feel a lot happier about taking classes there. We saw that teachers were friendly and how they taught. It was great because it helps us to be more open-minded when meeting others. I would love to do it again." - Lois, Year 10.



New Joint School Council Elected



Our new Joint School Council for 2016/17 has been elected. The Joint School Council elects representatives from years 13 and 14 with the aim of giving students from both schools a voice in the collaborative arrangements and developments in our shared education. Congratulations also to our newly appointed Office Bearers for this year - Frank McAlonan and Holly Reilly as Joint Chairpersons - Rebecca McGowan, Orlagh McHenry and Eve Lowry as our Joint Chairpersons and Lois Kane and Darragh O'Mullan as our Secretaries.

(Some members of our Joint School Council)

The Council aims to improve our partnership for all pupils who will experience shared education between our schools in the future. The focus of the council this year has been to provide a student perspective on the proposed plans for our shared education campus. The Council will share these hopes and concerns with Senior Management to assist in future planning. The Council has also met with educationalists from Los Angeles to show how we share resources, facilities and deal with issues. The representatives from Los Angeles commented that seeing how well the council dealt with issues "gave them hope" for their own sharing and future planning.



New School Buildings for BHS & CPC

Back in July 2014, Education Minister, John O'Dowd gave the green light to the Moyle Shared Education Proposal, stating that there would be funding allocated for "two new schools and two shared centres".

He also said, *"I believe shared education has the potential to deliver real educational benefits, to ensure best use of resources and to further community cohesion."*

Mr O'Dowd also commented that, *"The Shared Education Campuses Programme provides schools with the opportunity to build on existing sharing arrangements and access funding to help improve or provide shared facilities."*

The business case has now been approved and nearly £40m has been allocated to support the development of the new schools. These will include new state-of-the-art educational facilities for 1,180 post primary pupils in the two schools across a shared campus. The infrastructure to be delivered will not only include two core school buildings, but also all required car parking spaces, bus access and turning space, site landscaping and a suite of external pitches (both grass and 4G), courts and changing facilities.



Continued Success for GCSE & A-Level Classes

Continuing a long tradition of success, our GCSE and A-Level courses continue to be offered across both schools giving all our pupils the best possible opportunities to study the subjects they need to achieve their best at both Key Stage 4 and Post-16.

This year, there are approximately 300 pupils studying in shared classes. At both GCSE and A-Level, timetables have been aligned in both schools to give all of our pupils access to a much wider range of subject choice. Those pupils who choose to study in their home school can also do this and there is no obligation to choose a subject outside of their home school.

Not only does sharing give your child better educational opportunities, it also allows them to socialise with other young people from different communities and broaden their horizons.



Stranmillis University College Students' Visit

As shared education is now a major part of our education system, a group of first year students from Stranmillis University College visited our schools to experience what it entails. The eight students are exploring shared education as part of their PGCE course in Stranmillis and as a result are keen to gain first-hand experience of shared education in action.

During their trip, they were given a presentation on the history of our shared partnership by Mr. McClean and Mr. Williamson before visiting some shared lessons, followed by a tour of both schools hosted by some of the Joint School Councilors.



Year 10 Signature Project Pantomime Trip

On January 13th all year 10 pupils from Ballycastle High School and Cross & Passion College attended the Grand Opera House's performance of their 2017 pantomime, Cinderella. This trip gave the year group a great experience of what it is like to see live theatre and was a great treat to those who had taken part in our shared drama workshops. It was also an opportunity for any of our budding actors to see what a life on the stage might be like before choosing GCSE Drama.

The trip was fully funded by the Shared Education Signature Project, all those who travelled to the Grand Opera House had a great afternoon of family entertainment and thoroughly enjoyed the show.



What shared education means to me!

"I have been part of the Shared Education Programme between BHS and CPC since Year 11 in which I had shared History and Geography classes. I am now in Year 14 and I still am a part of the shared education programme in which I am in a shared History class. I was part of the Joint School Council last year. I think it is important to emphasise that the principle of shared education should be based on respect of one another's beliefs, whether it be religious or political, and that you are comfortable to ask questions and be unique in your own beliefs. In History, which is obviously a contentious subject in terms of the Irish history we are learning about this year, we learn about topics from both a Nationalist and Unionist background, for example the 1916 Easter Rising and the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant.

My History teachers are both absolutely brilliant teachers and deliver history to us in a completely non-biased way in which all people in the class can form their own views on past events no matter which ideology they personally have.

In our History class, on a whole, I feel that we are able to ask questions about one another's religion and, to a certain extent, politics. Hopefully this relationship between students will continue to develop. I have made friends from the shared education programme and I have built relations with students that I would not have met in the first place if not for our collaboration with BHS.

I have benefitted greatly from shared education in that I absolutely love my History teachers in BHS, they strive to ensure that each pupil reaches their potential no matter what school they are from."

By Luiseach Mathers - Year 14, CPC



"I think shared education is a great idea! Through it, I have been able to take advantage of new and exciting experiences, without this partnership these opportunities would not have been open to me. Shared education gives us the best range of subjects and provides pupils at GCSE and A-Level with the choice of the areas which are best suited to their interests and potential careers. This level of opportunity may not have been available before we shared resources. At GCSE and A-Level, I have been involved in collaborative classes. This has given me the chance to travel to another school and have classes with new teachers, pupils and experiences. I believe that my classes are of the highest standard because with shared resources we have the chance to improve our educational experience.

Through shared education, I have also built relationships with both pupils and teachers. We have been able to go to different places, such as Krakow in Poland, which allowed me to grow as a person and ignite irreplaceable friendships. I was also elected to represent my peers as a member of our Joint School Council. This allowed me to play a role in shaping our partnership for the future. I have met many people from around the world, who have visited our schools, and got to see how inspired they are by us working together. This does always remind me that what we are doing is a great thing and it is easy to forget how important being able to work together is.

As a result of this shared experience, I believe my educational experience has been enhanced and I have been provided with a wonderful range of people and opportunities." B

By Kathryn McCooke - Year 14, BHS



Stars in Their Eyes!

Year 10 pupils have taken part in a series of shared drama workshops. These workshop allowed pupils to which they completed in the run up to Christmas.

Through these workshops, pupils explored topics such as *Physical Theatre* and *Heroes & Villains*. Mrs Kerr from Cross & Passion College and Mrs Cochrane from Ballycastle High School taught the workshops together and pupils travelled to both schools on different days to take part.

One pupil commented, "I really enjoyed the lessons with the Year 10 pupils from Ballycastle High School. I made new friends and I would definitely like to study some of my GCSE courses in Ballycastle High."



Shared Education European Trips

"Through our shared education experience, we have been provided with opportunities to develop new relationships as well as widening our knowledge and understanding of different cultures and beliefs.

The selection of subjects we are offered at GCSE and A Level has been greatly enhanced by the shared education programme and allowed us to gain the best possible education. As a result, we have experienced different teaching approaches, met a wide variety of people and made some fantastic friendships. This has given a totally new dimension to our education and has allowed us to thrive.

A real highlight of shared education for us was when our two schools came together for a joint sixth form R.E. trip to Krakow in Poland. Here, we were able to visit to spend time together away from school. We visited the Salt Mines, Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Schindler Factory Museum and enjoyed the beautiful city.

As a year group in two different schools, we have been brought together through sharing education and many fun activities. We have been encouraged to work together, we have developed our similarities and been able to respect our differences. We have been able to eliminate many of our preconceived stereotypes and embrace the excitement of meeting new people. We have focused on a bright future of shared education.

We have thoroughly enjoyed our experience of shared education—friendships have been ignited and our learning has been enriched".

By Rafal Kardas, Lucy McDonald and Eve Lowry
—Year 14 BHS



"In my four years of participating in shared education, studying history at GCSE and A Level, I have had many doors of opportunity opened for me. Two of the most exciting opportunities I have accessed, due to shared education, were the school trips abroad to Krakow and Berlin. These trips opened my eyes to new perspectives and simultaneously allowed me to forge closer friendships with pupils from Ballycastle High.

These experiences also helped me gain access to a wider view, understanding and tolerance of different religions which is essential to life outside Ballycastle and which has helped broaden my horizons. Last year, I was elected onto the Joint School Council. This council has been responsible for the crossing between Ballycastle High and Cross and Passion and we strive to tackle any issues pupils may face in day to day life in all aspects of shared education in both Cross and Passion and Ballycastle High. The joint school council helps maintain good relations and organises various induction days, which help breathe life into cross community friendships that may previously have never occurred.

Through our shared education programme with Ballycastle High, I was given the opportunity to study History in the High School. Thanks to the dedication of my teachers, I achieved an A grade at both GCSE and AS levels. I have gained many benefits from the Shared Education Programme, from travelling abroad in Europe, to opening my eyes and changing my perspective. The program has improved the educational experience for me here at Cross and Passion College."

By Frank McAlonan - Year 14 CPC



Northern Ireland/Los Angeles Teacher Exchange Project

One of the main supporters and drivers of the development of shared education in Northern Ireland has been Professor Tony Gallagher from Queens University, Belfast and the team at the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work. Currently there is a lot of progress being made in Los Angeles between schools of very different natures and in how they share facilities/elements of their curricula. Professor Gallagher has attracted funding from the US Government to facilitate a teacher exchange, the idea for which came from a desire to showcase some of the excellent practice that has emerged in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to collaboration and shared education. In addition, the time that others have spent in US schools suggests that their schools will be of much interest to us. Mutual learning for mutual benefit is the key.

The four areas which the educators from NI and LA hope to explore together are:

The benefits and logistics of school collaboration; Comparative strategies for school improvement; Support for special and inclusive education; and, The role of schools as key social institutions.

The educators from Los Angeles are being supported by Loyola Marymount University and will be met by the US Consul General in Northern Ireland, who is keen to get involved in the project.

