

### Literacy newsletter

#### The Highland Literacy Project



Now in its sixth and final phase, the Highland Literacy Project (HLP) has played a key role in preparing staff and pupils for 'A Curriculum for Excellence'. With a focus on the sharing of best practice in the teaching of literacy, pupils are taught to become increasingly independent learners with sound skills for life. All aspects of literacy are intertwined; reading and writing are firmly connected and are underpinned by structured talking and listening and the use of collaborative strategies. It is therefore both 'whole school' and cross-curricular with all pupils being included.

All Highland primary schools, including Gaelic, plus 20 of our secondary schools are involved with HLP and extensive staff training has allowed it to not only be sustained but developed alongside a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This session, HLP is offering more than 50 days of Literacy training including Moving Image Education, using Scots language, literacy through drama, motivating writing and Literacy through active learning and play. In addition, Probationer teachers in Highland attend three days training in all aspects of literacy learning and teaching.

A main driver in the HLP has been the introduction of literacy coordinators in every school. Enthusiastic members of staff, these teachers play a key role in helping their own school's literacy

development. Whilst primary schools may have one or two, most of our secondary schools have several from across all subjects. This session, recall days for our phases 1-5 coordinators focussed on CfE aspects such as critical literacy and higher order questioning.

The Highland Literacy Project website [www.hvlc.org.uk/hlp](http://www.hvlc.org.uk/hlp) allows the sharing of materials, ideas and strategies and is used by teachers, pupils and parents and has been commended by staff from across Scotland and beyond. A new HLP group has been set up on GLOW where staff can have a discussion about literacy developments.

Highland is very well placed in moving forward with Literacy in a Curriculum for Excellence and the following articles are just a small sample of the excellent work that is happening throughout the whole authority.

*Lorna Sim, CfE implementation officer for Literacy*

#### Learning & Teaching Scotland (LTS) Literacy Network.

Highland Council takes an active role in supporting the National Literacy Network, and recently spoke with literacy representatives across the country on our CfE developments. A number of authorities are now making use of our freely available Highland Literacy Project materials. Midlothian Council has used these as a major element of their newly revised literacy strategy.

#### Connecting Literacy across the Curriculum

A major feature of a curriculum for Excellence is that all teachers are being asked to take responsibility for





consolidating, developing and extending their pupils' literacy skills.

*"...the greatest impact for a learner will come from all practitioners, in all learning environments, including rich literacy experiences as part of their day-to-day learning & teaching programmes."*

A Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

Whilst this has generally been straight forward in the pre-school and primary setting, it is proving more of a challenge at secondary level as teachers begin to look at what this means in their subject.

Some schools have taken a cross curricular approach where pupils are given opportunities to connect their learning. For example, first year pupils at Ardnamurchan High School have been independently studying short stories from Arabian Nights in their English classes. In small groups, pupils were asked to summarise each text to make storyboards, later video taping them. These summaries were then used to help pupils retell the stories through their own compositions in their Music classes.

Other approaches have included a focus on particular literacy skills across the whole school. Both Nairn and Dornoch Academies are trialling this approach with the skills being taught during one period of English and reinforced in all other subjects, especially when pupils are asked to write. Punctuation, presentation and spelling are the main skills chosen for this session.

Many secondary schools have formed a literacy group, with membership from a variety of subjects, to look at ways of promoting literacy across learning. A team of maths teachers, led by their subject supporter, has produced an excellent document 'Literacy in Mathematics' which can be found at <http://www.hvllc.org.uk/hlp/docs/secondary/literacy-in-maths.doc>

The Highland Literacy Project team has led literacy training for secondary

subject teachers, SMT and support staff, and materials for continued professional development can be downloaded from <http://hvllc.org.uk/hlp/secondary.htm>

### Literacy at Ardnamurchan High

Staff are currently collecting "Kitchen Table Lingo" which will then be displayed and pupils encouraged to add their own family words. This will become part of a display on use of language, including a focus on Scots, colloquialisms, formal language, Gaelic, French and technical subject language.

As part of the school's St Andrew celebrations there was a focus on Scots Language, including a visit from James Robertson (Kidnappit). This tied into work undertaken in other subject areas and emphasised the strong literary culture we have in Scotland.

### HOP ON



HOP ON is the name of the Highland Literacy Project intervention programme for pupils in P2 who are having difficulty in learning to read. It has been designed for individuals who have been identified as failing to reach a basic reading milestone by the end of Primary 1, and is a 16 week, daily programme where pupils are taught on a one to one basis. Sustainability is a primary factor in its design - schools received books, materials and training which will enable them to use the programme in coming years with new pupils. Importantly, parents/carers are key partners in the programme and are given advice on how they can continue to support their child at home.

This session is year two of the trial involving Alvie, Ardersier, Balloch, Banavie, Bishop Eden, Craighill, Cromarty, Dunbeath, Duncan Forbes, Fort William RC, Kingussie, Kinlochleven, Kinmylies, Lybster Mulbuie, Newtonmore, North Wick,



Raigmore, Rosebank, Smithton, Strathpeffer and Tongue Primaries.

*"HOP ON has been very successful at Fort William RC Primary. The pupils receive focussed one to one support to develop their reading skills. The children love the books, and the daily repetition of phonics gives them a good sound base for reading and writing. Pre and post assessments show a significant improvement and we find that the children are now enthusiastic and motivated to read."*  
K. Bentley, Support for Learning Teacher.

### Multi Modal Texts

Within a *Curriculum for Excellence*, the definition of 'texts' is not only very broad, but it also needs to be suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner. As well as traditional novels, plays and poems, it includes a widening range of media such as text messaging, blogs, films, web pages and games. Highland has embraced emerging technologies as a part of the learning and teaching of literacy, and many schools are involved in projects within their own schools or as part of authority and Scotland wide initiatives.

### Games Based Learning

The Highland Literacy Project [HLP] has teamed up with the Developing Technologies department in *Learning and Teaching Scotland* and the following primary schools from across Highland are currently working with their development officers on a variety of games based learning projects.

**Alvie:** Wild Earth African Safari

**Merkinch:** Sim Animals

**Castletown:** Sim Animals

**Dingwall:** Nintendogs

**Dornoch:** Wild Earth African Safari

Update from Sandra Nesbitt, DHT, Dingwall Primary School:

*"Pupils in P3 in Dingwall Primary are very excited as they have been allocated, on a one year loan basis, 12 Nintendo games consoles and the Nintendog software from Learning and Teaching Scotland. The software allows pupils to care for a virtual*

*puppy. If you are picturing solitary pupils passively working through a computer game – then think again. Two pupils share a Nintendog and are supported by a P7 'training buddy' – so listening, talking and social skills such as sharing are developed.*

*Although there are lots of opportunities for cross curricular work, the main focus of our project has been to use the Nintendogs as a motivating context for writing. Although it has not been under way for long, their teacher can already see an improvement in the content and quality of writing. We believe that the pupils' motivation and enthusiasm has had an impact in other curricular areas. We have set up our own blog to share our work. Please visit us at [www.edudogs.edublogs.org](http://www.edudogs.edublogs.org) Other motivating writing projects taking place at Dingwall can be accessed at <http://motivatingwriting.edublogs.org>*



Brian McLaren, Technologies Development Officer with Learning and Teaching Scotland recently visited Dingwall and Alvie Primary schools:

*"Dingwall PS have been struck by the level of engagement and impact on writing in their P3 class which continues to grow as the children become more attached to their Nintendogs! In Alvie Primary they are taking a cross curricular approach which will lead to an enterprise activity day. The work is coming along very well with one wee boy bursting to tell me that he can now write in paragraphs!"*

### Pupil Blog ~ Critical Literacy

The Highland Literacy project has set up a blog where pupils are encouraged to write critically about a book they have read. They can see what their peers are reading in a safe environment as all reviews are monitored before they are published. Pupils can blog at school or at home by using the user name *hlppupil* and



password reading at <http://hlpreadingblog.edublogs.org>

### Developing the new National Assessment Resource

Pulteneytown Academy Primary, Wick, has been nominated by the authority to help to develop resources for the new National Assessment Resource {NAR} for Literacy.

### Moving Image Education

HLP is now in its third year of promoting the use of film as a motivational tool in the teaching of writing. Both primary and secondary teachers have attended training in using moving education, supported by development officers from *Scottish Screen*, and have developed practice in their own schools. Highland has recently offered additional training in creating texts using animation, *Comic life* and *Photostory* and pupils across the authority are now extending their skills through this technology.



Farr High School and their associated primaries are in their second year of a successful transition project, recently praised by HMIE, which is based around Moving

Image Education. Supported by a peer mentoring approach, pupils learn how to write and create films which are shared in the community and across sectors.

Not only are they extending their literacy skills but are also developing the CfE capacities of effective contributors, responsible citizens, successful learners and confident individuals.

### Scots Language

"The languages, dialect and literature of Scotland provide a rich resource for children and young people to learn about Scotland's culture, identity and language" A Curriculum for Excellence 2009. As a result of A Curriculum for Excellence, pupils across Highland, from nursery to

secondary, are learning about and using the Scots language in a wide variety of ways.

Ullapool High School has a very successful transition project where P7 pupils from all the feeder primaries have opportunities over several weeks to work alongside first year pupils in buddy pairs. They look at the Scots language through a variety of mediums and develop their listening, talking, reading and writing skills.

Another group, nursery children from the Nairn ASG, has been involved in a Scots language project based around a tattie bogle (scarecrow) which they affectionately called Tottie Bogle. Their project has developed using a storyline approach which allows a flexible approach to learning as it is child led.

*The Adventures of Tottie Bogle* Anne Bryce, Linda Devine and Georgia Barton, Auldearn Primary Nursery: *This Literacy based project, with many cross-curricular elements, began in October with National Poetry Day when children listened to a poem about a Tattie Bogle, written in Scots. The pupils then created Tattie and Tottie Bogle – Tattie for the farmer's field next to the school grounds and Tottie Bogle for the Nursery outside area. Sadly Tottie was stolen that weekend, resulting in the police taking descriptions and the children making posters.*



*And so started a series of incidents involving the scarecrows and the local community, including arriving at the wedding of Mark Owen from the group 'Take That' at Cawdor church.*

*Tottie has had, and continues to have, many more adventures and has got to know all the children from the Nairn ASG nurseries. You will shortly be able to read about her adventures in full at [www.hvllc.org.uk/hlp](http://www.hvllc.org.uk/hlp)*



### Scots resources for Teachers

A group of Highland teachers from Bonar Bridge and Smithton Primaries, Alness Academy and Inverness High have been involved in producing and then trialling materials to support the teaching and learning of the Scots language. Financial support was given by LTScotland to allow time out of school, and some of this has been used to offer training to Highland staff from nurseries, primaries and secondary schools. The materials are available on the Highland Literacy Project website at

[http://www.hvlc.org.uk/hlp/scots\\_language.htm](http://www.hvlc.org.uk/hlp/scots_language.htm)

### Knowledge about Language modules launched

Nationally, LTS is poised to publish a number of important literacy resources. These include two CPD modules which support knowledge about language for both English and Scots language. Both modules should be available towards the end of February 2010. Highland Council's own Scots materials are available through both the LTS website and our own HLP page.

### Supporting Parents

#### 'Write at Home' Initiative

Following a very successful 'Read at Home' project, Highland is now working with *Learning and Teaching Scotland* (LTS) to encourage pupils to choose to write at home. Many school applied for funding from LTS and the following schools were successful in their bids: Kilchuimen Academy, Hillhead Primary, Invergarry Primary, Milton Primary, Dingwall Primary and Carrbridge Primary.

There has been a wide variety of projects planned at school level, but for all the key goal is motivating the pupils to write. Projects range from having a 'writer in residence' in secondary leading to broadcasting in partnerships with parents, to using recording devices and flip cameras to write a story in nursery.

Hillhead Primary took the fun approach using their flag pole and pairs of pants!

*"Hillhead Primary School in Wick has a flagpole which it likes to use in a number of ways. Flags will tell if the school is opened, closed or to pass on Season's Greetings at Christmas time. Flags from different countries are flown to reflect the backgrounds of individual pupils or to welcome visitors from overseas to the school. They even have flags which they can hang out to tell if a member of staff has had a boy or a girl baby.*

*However a scheme run at Hillhead to encourage pupils to write at home had them looking at something very different on the school flagpole at the start of this session. For six weeks, a different pair of pants was flown each week! The pants contained a number of different motifs suggesting that they belonged to someone who carried out a specific job. The pants showed space planets, numbers, skull and crossbones, animal prints, types of transport and fish. Each set of pants was sewn by the school secretary, Mrs Erica Macleod.*



*The whole school, from nursery to Primary 7, had homework activities in relation to each set of pants. Pupils in Primary 2 to Primary 7 had a specially made PANTS homework booklet which asked them questions about each of the pants. Who wore these pants? What job would they have done? What would their hobbies have been? The school also used a number of picture storybooks which have PANTS as a theme.*

*The main aim of the project was to create both discussion and writing at home through the use of the pants. A survey of Hillhead parents found that more than 90% thought that the PANTS flag idea was a good one and that they had entered in to discussion with their child as a result of it. Pupils were also positive about the initiative*



with 75% agreeing with the statement that it was a good idea. Suggestions from parents and pupils for a future initiative which would again use the flagpole in some way show that national flags interest both groups. The school will seek to explore the educational opportunities offered by this next session."

A. Budge, Head Teacher

### Parent Clubs

Merkinch Primary is one of many schools that have been looking at ways in which they could offer support to parents who wanted to brush up on their own literacy skills. Some also felt unsure as to how best help their children at home, and so by combining the two aspects, a parent club was formed.

Mrs T. Sinclair, Depute Head says, "At the outset, we decided to invite parents to a homework club along with the adult literacy team and myself. We thought that we might gain more interest this way and not make it too daunting for some of our parents. We advertised both in the school and in the local community and at the moment have several parents coming along. Importantly, we also provide childcare for the duration within the school so that these parents can relax with a coffee and a biscuit without interruption. The classes are very informal and very enjoyable and I have to say we have quite a laugh. We initially had a bit of an introduction as to why they were there and what exactly they hoped to achieve by coming. We then had a look at where our starting point was so that in week 2 we could proceed.

It turns out that our parents who attend have missed a lot of their own schooling for one reason or another and really wanted to start from scratch with their child's homework. Most have children in the infant department, so we decided to teach them Jolly Phonic - the actions, the sounds and some supporting activities - and this has helped them to feel confident as they are one step

ahead of the game where their child is concerned.

We are now at the point of evaluating progress and planning next steps."

### Literacy Case Studies

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/sharingpractice/supportforstaff/literacy/index.asp>

Two case studies have recently been published and should be of interest to both primary and secondary practitioners. One focuses on the development of literacy within Social Studies. The other looks at the successful development of writing across an ASG. Forthcoming case studies include English as an Additional Language and extended writing in English and Science.

### Scottish Book Trust (SBT)

<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/>  
The SBT is running a super children's programme in 2010 with a number of authors including Anthony Brown, Charlie Higson, Patrick Ness and Lemony Snicket.

A series of live online events are planned, kicking off on 4 March 2009 with Michael Rosen online in the morning (primary audience) and again in the afternoon (secondary aged young people). Each event will also be available online afterwards.

The "Bookstart" programme continues with free books for 3 year olds and is available through our own Library Services.

A deadline of 30 January has been set for the next round of grants for authors' visits. Is this something that could be used to extend your literacy work further? Half of the author's fee and all travel costs are met by The School Book Trust!

### Reay Primary

Last term Reay Primary used Learning Unlimited (Joining the Learning) writing project, *The Magic Castle*. It was a great success, combining Literacy with Art based around a Harry Potter type theme.



From Burns to Sorley

Portree Primary recently hosted a Sorley Supper instead of a Burns Supper to celebrate the life and works of the Gaelic poet, Sorley Maclean. This was a real interdisciplinary project with a huge focus on Literacy and other cross curricular skills and followed on from pupils studying the works of Sorley and their influence on local culture and politics etc.



The event was well supported by parents and the community, with another knock on effect associated with Literacy being that a *Youth Speaks* team were involved in a public speaking tournament, talking about the proposal – “*Should Sorley Maclean be our National Bard?*”

Curriculum for Excellence in the Special School Setting - Drummond School Literacy Week

Drummond School has been part of Phase 5 of the HC Literacy Project since August 2008 and the school’s Literacy Coordinator, Acting PT Jill Brain, along with all the teaching staff, organised the school’s first Literacy Week. This was a truly whole school venture with cross curricular activities and the Parent Council being involved. Pupils created two whole school stories. The Secondary called their story ***A Romance in France*** and the Primary created ***A Seashore Story***, but there was much, much more.....



As well as the stories being produced, there were sensory stories with Mr Creeping Toad, puppet stories and a puppet show, a whole school treasure hunt, a visit to Borders bookshop, and a

fancy dress disco with everyone dressed as a character from a book, film or cartoon.

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*Working together to inspire learning and achievement in Highland communities.*

*A’ toirt piseach còmhla air ionnsachadh is coileanadh ann an Coimhearsnachdan na Gàidhealtachd.*