

CEWC Cymru – Training for Democracy

The Electoral Commission established the New Initiatives Fund to support and promote new ways of raising awareness about voting and democracy. We have awarded grants to local, community and national organisations working with different target audiences across the whole of the UK.

This evaluation report provides information about CEWC Cymru's Training for Democracy project funded by the New Initiatives Fund. In the report we highlight the aims, objectives and achievements of the project, and lessons learnt by CEWC Cymru.

Introduction

CEWC (Council for Education in World Citizenship) Cymru was established in 1944 as an educational charity working with young people promoting local, national and global citizenship education.

They provide resources specifically for teaching the Personal and Social Education (PSE) framework, and an online bilingual teaching resource for Key Stages 1–4 Citizenship. Today, they provide training for teachers, and organise a number of events including the Wales Schools' Debating Championships.

Aims and objectives

The objective of the project was to increase democracy within schools and enhance pupil learning about elections and democratic systems.

Funding

We awarded them a grant of **£17,679** in June 2004. The project ran for a year from September 2004 and was delivered in seven schools in Wales.

Target outcomes

The target outcomes of the project were to:

- enable teachers to understand the principles of democratic involvement, to teach about electoral processes and to apply democratic principles to classroom practice, school councils and whole-school policies;
- enable students to improve their knowledge and understanding of democracy, as a result of teachers' enhanced professional skills;
- eight teachers spread across Wales to be involved in the project, teaching at schools with different social/economic backgrounds;
- organise and pilot one INSET session, deliver five further INSET sessions with any changes; and
- disseminate INSET information materials.

How successful was the project?

The project appears to have achieved its key objectives, although some of its planned

activities were adapted or not followed through as the project progressed. At the outset it was anticipated the primary focus would be working with teachers and developing school councils. However, the level of awareness about democracy at some schools was so low it was decided they should work with staff alongside students and collaborate and mentor them.

The model they used focused on providing support to staff to enable all pupils to engage actively in democratic decision making and pupil led activities, appropriate to their abilities and interests.

Materials from a previous project (Your Say) were adapted for the training and a further toolkit was developed. The toolkit will enable schools to self-assess their needs, helping them to identify areas for improvement before they embark on the whole project. A special needs school and a secure unit were involved with the project and the materials and toolkit have taken their needs into consideration.

An independent evaluator was hired to assess the project through case studies, questionnaires, observations of workshops and interviews with participants and school staff. Her report concludes that as a direct result of the project, teachers used participatory approaches more effectively in classrooms, pupils engaged in

elections for school councils and pupils were also consulted on a wide range of issues of school policy. The evaluator also felt that teachers benefited directly from working collaboratively with CEWC Cymru.

Good practice

- The project was able to adapt as it was being delivered, so it could evolve from working purely with staff to working with students alongside the staff.
- The realisation that the mentoring approach used could not reasonably be provided to all schools in Wales led to the production of a Self Assessment (CD-Rom) Toolkit. The toolkit enables schools to identify their own areas for improvement.
- Having a mix of schools, including a special needs school and a secure unit ensured that the approach and materials have been tested widely and are applicable in different contexts and to a wide audience.

Lessons learnt

Projects of a similar nature can learn from the following lessons:

- Starting the project in September meant missing opportunities at the start of term to link up with school INSET lessons.
- An email support network has not been successful due to the infrequency with which teachers access email.

- All the schools participating in this project volunteered to do so, thus showing a commitment to enhancing democratic practices. In future they will need to work on strategies for working with schools that are more reluctant.

Further information

For further information about this project please contact:

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Further information about the New Initiatives Fund and the wider work of The Electoral Commission can be found at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

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