

Teaching for **SOLIDARITY**

Vision and Values – a collaborative community cohesion project 2008-9

Working with staff and students in Croydon, Staffordshire & Waltham Forest

Co-ordinators: Di Layzelle, Tutor Manager/Head of Enrichment, Croydon College; Kirsty Colburn-Hayes, Assistant Director of Citizenship, De Ferrers School, Burton, Staffs; Carrie Supple, Citizenship/Community Cohesion Consultant, Waltham Forest; Coralie Isaac, Assistant Head, Rush Croft School, Waltham Forest.

Aim

By working with 3 groups of staff and students in Croydon, Staffordshire and Waltham Forest, we aim to create an approach to teaching about community cohesion which promotes a sense of agency and encourages young people and staff to work together.

Need

The project is needed because staff all over England are concerned about how to approach their students' expressions of/negative behaviour towards people seen as 'other' – whether because they are black, or white migrant workers, disabled or gay. They are very keen for effective strategies and materials.

Action

Phase 1 Summer term 2008

Participating College/Schools were identified. Project organisers researched and agreed materials and initiatives designed to support staff working with young people to explore the meaning of community cohesion and 'difference'. What enables and prevents community cohesion.

Phase 2 Autumn Term 2008

September/October 2008, each organisation worked with a group of students to: Look at what community cohesion is – using activities to challenge perceptions and to stimulate discussions around this topic; Address issues of identity and belonging and run dynamic activities to look at what is meant by 'Difference' – why it can be controversial. Why do many people of all ages find 'differences' to be threatening? Students to establish what for them are the key issues that enable and prevent Community Cohesion in preparation for a conference which was held on October 22nd at Croydon College.

We are delighted that Sylvia Lancaster, the mother of Sophie Lancaster murdered for being a 'Goth' in 2007 was our main speaker. She and family and friends have created

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a foundation in Sophie's memory: S.O.P.H.I.E. (Stamp Out Prejudice, Hatred and Intolerance Everywhere).

12 students from each school/College attended the conference to: Present the issues and findings from Phase 1 to the other student delegates; Continue with a range of activities and discussion that give the opportunities to investigate and analyse the reasons behind controversial issues linked with community cohesion and difference; Students agreed which local issue to focus on and left with clear tasks and an action plan to prepare for the conference in Staffordshire in the Spring term 2009.

The social action projects – some of these ideas were adapted over the year

- Croydon College – The media's portrayal of young people and how it focuses on crime, making communities feel unsafe.
- De Ferrers Technology College – A drama based project to encourage an acceptance of difference in primary schools, via assemblies & drama.
- Rush Croft School – Tackling the gangs and violence in our culture. Raising awareness via a drama for primary schools

At the conference, students spoke about how they were enjoying the project because, 'it has something to do with everyday life. What happened to Sophie Lancaster is shocking and shows how much prejudice there is' (Kwabene, Rush Croft) and David, Rush Croft described the preparation lessons as '... fun. I really like working in groups and having the opportunity to offer our own opinions.'

Natalie Waterhouse, an A Level student at Croydon College, said, 'it broadens out everyone's mindset; you start to think about other people's situations.' And Charlotte Beddoe of de Ferrers Technology School said, 'It has been great to be able to talk to people and make decisions and work together to achieve one thing.'

Phase 3 Spring 2009

Each organisation brought students to a conference in Staffordshire where they fed back on the outcomes of their agreed actions, planned what next and how to disseminate the lessons learned and resources nationally. The aim was to make resources available nationally. Aon Productions Ltd filmed the process and a DVD will be available (see the link embedded on this website).

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