

ADULT BASIC SKILLS What Role at Key Stage 4?

Adult Basic Skills qualifications are now part of the 14-19 education scene. A number of schools are either running them or planning to do so in the near future. Adult Literacy and Numeracy qualifications range from Entry Level to Level 2. Schools' rationale for incorporating them into the KS4 curriculum include the educational, enhanced learner motivation, and the pragmatic, enhancing school achievement and attainment tables.

Riverside Community College has been piloting the use of both Adult Literacy and Numeracy courses this year to good effect. Pass rates with initial pilot groups of Year 11's have been very high. Attitudes amongst staff and students are very positive. Next steps under consideration include, the integration of the courses into Year 10 and, possibly, into Year 9 programmes. A recurring message from learners is the value placed on taking a (real) test early on, getting quick feedback and having the option to move to a higher level (potentially within one year). Factors to be considered when contemplating Adult Basic Skills in schools include -

- **Flexible delivery**
they can be offered within GCSE courses or discretely, to whole or part cohorts

- **Recognition**
they are well known and used in FE
- **Virtuous cycle of achievement**
they are small bite-sized qualifications that can be assessed throughout the year, paper-based or online. Results and feedback are generated very quickly. Achievement can boost confidence with implications for achievement on GCSE courses

- **Performance Tables**
Adult Numeracy and Literacy count in the Achievement & Attainment Tables. This may have a positive impact on A*-C figures, especially in cases where learners gain, for example, 4 GCSEs and need one more to hit the threshold

- **Functional Skills**
will become an integral part of the revamped GCSE English and Maths courses from 2008 and 2009. There are close similarities between the Adult Numeracy and Literacy and what is being proposed for the respective **Functional Skills**. Working with Adult Numeracy and Literacy qualifications will provide an invaluable insight into, and preparation for, the revised more practically based GCSEs.

Working in conjunction with Zone Managers and APPG coordinators, VESA has been supporting centres wanting to explore the use of Adult Basic Skills in their schools. Our 2nd February "Finding Out About

Basic Skills" session was well attended and this is being followed up by more in-depth "Getting Inside the Specifications" sessions for Numeracy and Literacy, aimed at Maths and English teachers on 10th March.

If you would like to discuss issues relating to Adult Basic or Key Skills please contact Stuart King at the VESA office.

Conference Dates 2006

Alternative Qualifications -
Beyond GCSE
23rd March

The Severn Trent Education
Centre, Cropston

Progress File Conference
5th April 2006
Beaumanor Hall

Alternative Curriculum
Conference
25th May 2006
Beaumanor Hall

VESA 13-19 Curriculum
Conference
7th June 2006
Beaumanor Hall

Aimhigher Summer
Conference
22nd June 2006
venue to be confirmed

Pathways to Vocational Achievement

Last September saw 120 students from 9 schools (Babington, Bosworth, Burleigh, Countesthorpe, Fullhurst, Guthlaxton, Sir Jonathan North, and William Bradford) embark on a new ESF project entitled 'Pathways to Vocational Achievement'. The aim of the project is to provide a vocationally relevant curriculum to students identified in KS3 as at risk of becoming disengaged and/or underachieving at KS4.

Many of the students are involved in vocational courses at FE Colleges, or with Training Providers and the majority have made a successful start. In addition to the vocational courses, nearly all the students have been involved in a variety of team-building activities, and some have participated in a range of outdoor pursuits activities. Mentoring has also been arranged by the LEBC for approximately half the students.

All ESF project schools are using 'PLUS' materials to help improve students' basic skills. Initial reports indicate that the materials are very motivational and are proving very popular with the students. As part of the project,

William Bradford and Burleigh are piloting the use of PC Tablets to improve students' basic skills and again this has had a significant impact on students, not least in motivating them to produce 'written' pieces of work.

Project Co-ordinators have reported the impact of the project on students has, up to now, been very positive, as demonstrated through improved attendance and time-keeping, reduced exclusions and better motivation.

Aspects of the ESF Project will be shared with delegates at the Leicestershire Alternative Curriculum Conference (Thursday 25th May, at Beaumanor Hall, 9-3.30pm). Details of this conference will be circulated to all schools in the first week of the Summer term.



For further information please contact **Graham Conway at the VESA office.**

Support for Behaviour Management Proves Popular

This academic year VESA has seconded Mark Sampson from Keyham Lodge School to provide specialist support in the area of behaviour management, in particular supporting school and F.E. College colleagues working with alternative curriculum students and those presenting challenging behaviours.

Mark has worked with a number of school and college collaborative groups in the City, County and Midlands region. He has provided INSET for a number of Leicester/shire Increased Flexibility Partnerships, with sessions on 'Handling Challenging Behaviour' and 'Dealing with Aggressive Behaviour'. Mark has also worked with individual institutions in helping to develop their behaviour policy and providing inputs to trainee teachers.

If you feel that Mark could make a contribution to supporting you with your behaviour management developments please contact, **Mark Sampson at the VESA office** to discuss your possible requirements

Alternative Qualifications Beyond GCSE - 23rd March 2006

VESA, working in collaboration with County Partnerships and City Zones, is running a one day event aimed at those curriculum managers wanting to increase their awareness of the wider range of qualifications now available to schools. Many would agree that increased flexibility to design the 14-16 and 14-19 curriculum to better meet the needs of all learners is a good thing. However, with increased flexibility comes the need to

develop an appreciation of what is available. To help colleagues in this endeavour, we are bringing together a range of **Awarding Bodies** - all in one place.

The day will comprise a keynote input, a 14-19 update and, central to the event, the opportunity to hear from, and to find out about, qualifications (large and small) offered by several Awarding Bodies. In attendance will include **ABC, ASDAN, City & Guilds, Edexcel, NCFE, NOCN and OCR.**

Time will be built into the day for colleagues to meet together to share and compare thinking.

Booking forms can be downloaded from the VESA website www.vesa.org.uk or by contacting **Megan Jones at the VESA office.**

For further information or to discuss ways in which VESA can support curriculum development in your school/college please contact **Stuart King at the VESA office.**

Keeping the Learner at the Heart of the PDC

Connexions and VESA submitted a successful bid for an Aimhigher Innovations Project to address some of the criticisms identified by Ofsted in relation to the delivery of specific aspects of the Personal Development Curriculum (PDC). Another key aim was to find ways to make students feel that 'PDC is about ME and my needs'.

The QCA definition sees PDC as made up of the following areas of the curriculum: PE, RE, Work-related learning (WRL), Careers Education, Citizenship, PSHE and Enterprise

Ofsted reports conclude that:

- currently these tend to be the weakest of all curriculum areas
- the areas are perceived as 'less important' than 'academic' subjects and insufficient time is given to them
- inappropriate staffing structures de-motivate learners eg. team of 13 tutors as opposed to a small committed team
- there is insufficient staff training - staff don't have the required knowledge or skills

- a 'bolt on' approach is too prevalent - students don't ever see the 'whole'
- there is a lack of appropriate means of assessing achievement and progression in the PDC (both formal accreditation/ qualifications or informal assessment) - with a consequent negative effect on the motivation of students and staff.

Connexions held a student consultation event during February to ascertain students' current views on a) their past experiences of the PDC and b) their views about some of the ideas put forward through the Aimhigher project.

Outcomes of the project will include a resource pack for centres containing a number of 'tools' to support a more coherent approach to the delivery of the PDC. These tools have been produced and piloted by representatives from across the key stages.

For further information please contact **Kay Ives at the VESA office** or **Amanda Fearn at Connexions (0116 2615920)**

Aimhigher Year 9 Roadshow Update

The 2006 Aimhigher Roadshow visited 4 County High Schools and 8 Leicester City Schools between 13th and 31st January. A great deal of detailed planning went in to this year's Roadshow experience. This was somewhat disrupted when the Roadshow bus itself was stolen during the first weekend in Leicester!

However, due to the fine efforts of all parties, the Roadshow experience was still offered to all the schools that had been scheduled to be involved. One of the main developments for 2006 has been the way in which some schools have seized the opportunity to transform the Roadshow day into a broader **14-19 options experience**. In some cases, this has entailed the involvement of some or all of the following in the Roadshow day itself:

- The Aimhigher Roadshow bus
- Local HEI Aimhigher staff and undergraduates
- FE and/or 6th Form Colleges
- LANTERN [representing work based learning and apprenticeships]
- Connexions Leicester Shire PAs
- In the County, Upper Schools in the partnership that are linked in to the feeder High Schools.

Schools that have adopted this holistic approach report that it has been generally very successful and provides a real enhancement of the Roadshow approach. The timing is helpful as well because January is the point at which many schools have just commenced, or are about to commence, their 14-19 options programmes supporting Year 9 students to make choices for Key Stage 4. For further information contact **Tim Farthing at the VESA office**.

Young Apprenticeships in Leicestershire

VESA is responsible for project co-ordination of the **Young Apprenticeship Programme** and has been successful in securing funding for 30 Business places for 2006-08.

Building on the successful work developed through the previous two cohorts, it is anticipated that 3 schools and 2 post 16 institutions (Leicester College and Loughborough College) will form the Partnerships.

On this YA programme, students study level 2 Business qualifications

for 1 day per week and spend an additional day on a work placement, undertaking activities linked to their qualification.

As the aim of this programme is to attract more able students into the work-based route, the entry criteria are specific. Students need to have a combined SAT score of 14 as well as a good attendance history at school and a clear commitment.

For further information please contact **Viv Laxton at the VESA office**.



VESA FLYING HIGH!

VESA is organising a visit to Birmingham International Airport for the GCSE development groups for Applied Business and Leisure and Tourism. This will take place on the 21st June. The main focus for this event is to provide support in the delivery of specific units from elements of both courses. This afternoon visit will include an overview of the Airport, a guided tour of the terminals provided by Andy Holding the Community Affairs Officer and an opportunity to assess how to use the Airport to support the production of coursework. Useful resources for the delivery of the Applied GCSEs already exist and are already available on the Airports website at www.bhx.co.uk/community/73.pdf for Leisure and Tourism and www.bhx.co.uk/community/72.pdf for Business, this visit is intended to supplement the use of these freely available materials.

All VESA subscribers will receive an invitation to this event early in the summer term.

For further information please contact **Brian Sanderson at the VESA office**

Vocational CPD Programme Summer Pilot

As reported in our previous VESA Newsletter, working with a range of local and regional partners, VESA is leading on the development of a CPD programme for teachers of vocational courses. The course will lead to Masters level accreditation through the University of Derby.

The Leicester+shire pilot of the East Midlands CPD programme is to take place during the latter part of the Summer Term and first half of the Autumn Term and will comprise a series of twilight taught and group sessions. During this time, participants will also take part in a week-long industrial placement, linked to their chosen vocational area. Teachers from a range of city and county schools will be involved, including Babington, The City of Leicester, Beaumont Leys, Longslade and John Cleveland. As we go to print, there are still a few places left on the pilot programme. If you (or a colleague) would be interested, please get in touch.

Building on lessons learned from the pilot, the intention is to roll out the programme during 2006-7. Future programmes can be put on in local areas for individual institutions or groups of schools and colleges.

For further information please contact **Stuart King at the VESA office.**

Development of the Increased Flexibility Programme 05-06

Leicestershire

Leicestershire's Increased Flexibility (I.F.) programme has expanded yet again in 2005-6. The I.F. programme, offered across five City and County partnerships, which aims to offer Key Stage 4 students a wider range of curriculum opportunities, has seen extensive increases in the range of courses offered and the number of students involved.

In 2005-6, there are 1000 Year 11 students and 1250 Year 10 students accessing the programmes across Leicestershire. The recognition of vocational courses in the school achievement and attainment tables has given significant currency to achievement through vocational qualifications.

Leicester City

The Leicester City Partnership has 320 Year 11 and 420 year 10 students on a wide range of courses with F.E. Colleges and Training Providers across the 4 campuses studying on Vocational, BTEC and Applied GCSE courses. The majority of City schools participate in differing ways across the whole programme.

These opportunities have enhanced the Key Stage 4 curriculum, motivated students, given them an opportunity to experience learning in a different environment, increased progression into the Post 16 sector and contributed to additional achievement in the City.

Early indications are that there is likely to be further expansion for 2006-7 and the Leicester City Increased Flexibility Prospectus, which has recently been posted to schools, can now be downloaded from our website www.vesa.org.uk

Please note that applications for programmes published within the Increased Flexibility Prospectus will need to be at the VESA office by **March 24th 2006**

For further information please contact **Viv Laxton or Graham Conway at the VESA office**