

Paris beckons for three teachers judged to be the most innovative so far in the Partners in Learning joint Microsoft/Scottish Qualifications Authority programme. Speaking at a one-day conference in February, held at SQA's head office in Glasgow, to showcase the inspiring work being carried out by all teachers involved in the different aspects of the programme, Tom Drake, interim chief executive of SQA described the work of the three Paris winners as "ground breaking".

### **Partners in Learning Awards Presentation**

Stephen McCrossan, computing teacher at St Andrew's High School in North Lanarkshire, impressed the judges with his work as part of the Innovative Teachers Programme, where he is delivering the Higher Computing course through a video conferencing tool called Marratech. Andrea Kay, head teacher of Glentool Primary School in the village of Glentool in the Scottish Borders was commended for her use of a Challenge Fund grant to encourage her pupils to use ICT when organising a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary party for the school. Rod Macaulay, coordinator of TASSCC (Technological Assessment and Support for Children and the Curriculum) and was the third to be singled out for his project developing a new text-to-speech software package to ease learning for pupils with dyslexic-type language difficulties. All three will now go on to Paris at the end of March to represent Scotland in an event that brings together Microsoft Innovative Teachers from across Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

A further four teachers were congratulated for their innovative practice in schools, with each receiving a certificate and a cheque for £250. Ollie Bray, depute head at

Musselburgh Grammar School, East Lothian, has pioneered the use of social technologies in helping pupils revise for geography exams. Gillian Graham, acting depute head at St Cadoc's Primary School in East Renfrewshire, led a project where the pupils produced a DVD raising awareness of healthy lifestyles. David Noble, a teacher at Hillside School in Fife, a residential school for boys aged 11-16, got his award for a project where pupils used podcasting to connect with the rest of the world as part of their studies. This led David to start his own fortnightly podcast aimed at informing fellow teachers of the possibilities of new technologies. Finally, Jacqueline Ferguson, a computing teacher from Cumock Academy in East Ayrshire, developed a project with S1 and S2 pupils, which created presentations in Powerpoint to help pupils from cluster primary schools make the transition to secondary.

### **Innovative Teachers**

Jacqueline's work was part of a series of displays on show at the conference, which were produced by some of the Education Authorities (EAs) participating in the two-year Innovative Teacher programme. East Ayrshire was the first to pilot the initiative two years ago, meaning it is much further ahead than the other authorities involved. Under the auspices of Eileen Speirs, the EA has been empowering teachers to be more adventurous and innovative through on-going training and by creating a community of teachers to develop and promote best practice. At the conference in Glasgow, Eileen shared with other teachers how the project was progressing and was able to report that her authority would have up to 10 completed projects to share by June,

when it plans to hold its own awards ceremony.

Stephen McCrossan was also showcasing his progress, and was able to explain to delegates how using Marratech in North Lanarkshire was spreading through his authority. His project was initially to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching ICT to a S5 Higher class through the video-conferencing programme, but it has already spilled over into other subjects. It is being used to support the professional development of probationer teachers, while pupils studying Spanish are video-conferencing with a school in Majorca. The Marratech format is particularly useful for languages as it allows pupils to view on screen lists of vocabulary while speaking to the other students. Now the EA is looking at delivering Gaelic through the same medium.

The Angus Innovative Teachers initiative, which made a presentation to teachers and other specialists gathered at SQA's offices, brought along two teachers to demonstrate how innovation was affecting their practice in class. Anne Wallace a biology teacher from Carnoustie High School has been combining ICT with cooperative learning to surmount the problem of teaching some of the least popular elements of biology, while Naomi Anderson from Edzell Primary School has used it to facilitate collaborative working among her pupils in maths.

In Aberdeenshire, which faces the same problems as Angus of rural schools with huge distances in between, Anna Rossvoll, ICT project officer, has been working with a community of teachers keen to spread their expertise with interactive whiteboards, and to get others using them as more than just projection screens. Anna was able to demonstrate to delegates at the Microsoft/SQA

event how a conference that the authority organised earlier this year overcame the problem of distance by being held on a Saturday. It was aimed at training the trainers and managed to attract more than 150 teachers. The plan is for these "experts" to cascade learning down through their schools. In Dundee, Theresa Mungall has been making use of the EA's ever-growing community of ICT enthusiasts, created initially from those who attended the Early Years Masterclasses (part of earlier ICT initiative), but now including others with an interest in using ICT with the youngest children. Their first project has been to measure the impact of ICT in children's education and Theresa set up a display at the conference showing Dundee's first completed Virtual Classroom Tour (VCT) – a presentation in Powerpoint that summarises the key aspects of an ICT project. It focuses on the authority's use of a standard evaluation tool (MIICE<sup>1</sup>) to judge how effectively nurseries were using ICT in general learning.

Martin O'Callaghan from Glasgow City Council, made a presentation to show how an e-specialist project in his EA is progressing. He was able to tell delegates that all the volunteers, who have different levels of ICT expertise, have now been allocated with the necessary software and laptops and an online forum has been set up. So far attention has been focused on bringing all the volunteers, who come from across the different stages of education from Early Years to Secondary, to a common standard of ICT ability. The next step is to get them working together to develop materials that will be used to populate on-line environments such as the GLOW network.

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<sup>1</sup> MIICE Measurement of the Impact of ICT on Children's Education

Emma Griffiths from East Lothian also made a presentation on the Extreme Learning project currently underway in her authority. She brought along Jenny Walker from Ormiston Primary School, as a working example of the project. Jenny has a large P7 class, where the majority of children were reluctant to complete homework. Extreme Learning involves the P7 pupils using the Internet to create Wikis<sup>2</sup> on a topic of their choice, something that they feel passionate about. For many of the boys this meant football, which they had to research on line and produce a short report. Two girls produced Wikis on soap operas, becoming the class experts, while another did hers on baking. The latter's mother even organised for her to do a food hygiene course. Working at school or home, or for those without computers, at the library, all the children in Jenny's class completed their Wikis. "Up to that point only nine children in my class consistently handed in homework, but every pupil completed this project," says Jenny.

### **The Sports Store Game**

As well as celebrating success, the Showcase event was also an opportunity to bring together all the groups involved in the different projects within the Partners in Learning programme, so they could witness what others were doing. It gave those involved in the Challenge Fund an opportunity to meet and hear from Innovative Teachers, while those involved in the Sports Store Game pilot got a chance to see how Microsoft has been supporting work with CEOP (Child Exploitation and On line Protection Centre). The initial Sports Store Game pilot has almost finished. It will now go live in

April in the second stage and the Microsoft/SQA partnership is currently recruiting up to 400 other schools to participate. The game has also finally been given an official name – sport4life.biz, the winning suggestion of Connor Robb from Inveralmond Community School in West Lothian. Pupils from Queen Anne High School in Fife were at the conference to give a demonstration of the pilot game, which involved owning and developing a sports store with either Hearts or Rangers branding. But with the next stage, Microsoft and SQA were pleased to announce, the Scottish Premier League has been signed up allowing students to choose whatever team they wish. Ross Cumming, an S5 pupil at the school has spent more than 20 hours playing the game.

"I was interested because of the business element rather than the football element of the game, but it is fun to play. You get to hire and fire people, buy in stock, manage the money and all that, but you also have to make sure you don't work too much or your health goes down. It's about getting the right life/work balance," said Ross.

According to Vanessa Ranaldi, project manager at SQA, it is possible to mould the game to any retail business. "In the future we would be able to make it any sort of shop – fashion, sweets or music, for those not interested in football. But is more about running a business than about football, and we've found it has been popular with all students," she says.

### **The Challenge Fund**

The showcase was also an opportunity for teachers and delegates to see the sort of innovation being encouraged through funding from the Challenge Fund. David Noble, who won £250 for his work, gave a presentation of what he is doing with boys based at Hillside

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<sup>2</sup> Wiki – a webpage that users can add to and edit collectively

School, a residential unit in Aberdour, Fife, for those with behaviour, social and emotional difficulties. He demonstrated the benefits of using a number of free online tools: Google Earth, MP3 players and podcasting, RSS feeds from other teachers and multi-user virtual environments. His pupils have enthusiastically produced projects through podcasts, used virtual environments to inspire creative writing, and linked up with Google Earth to do maths. Students zoomed in on Las Vegas and measured roads, or the length between specific sites. David, himself, has personally benefited from using syndication services on the web (RSS) to keep up with blogs and podcasts of innovative teachers around the world.

“It saves me having to search for information. I simply mark those that I’m interested in and whenever that person adds something to their site, it is forwarded to me by RSS immediately,” he explained to delegates. He also told them about Audacity, a free sound recording program and about NASA’s website, which is packed with educational resources for children and young people, and again can be accessed for free.

## **CEOP**

The fourth focus of the showcase event was a presentation by Helen Penn, education team coordinator of CEOP, a multi-agency partnership led by the Serious Organised Crime Agency, and which includes Microsoft, aimed at making technology safer for children. NSPCC<sup>3</sup> employees are based within CEOP offices at all times to ensure it is more than just a police unit.

“To older people, social networking is new technology, but for young people

it is just another social place, like the park, for them to go and hang out,” she said. “We can’t stop them using it, but we have to make them understand the consequences of what they do while on these sites.”

She explained that the approach to online safety taken since the turn of the century of giving children a list of don’ts wasn’t working. CEOP had found that one in 12 nine to 19-year-olds had arranged to meet in person someone they knew only through the Internet.

CEOP is now trying to take a different approach with its latest education resource, Thinkuknow, which was launched in England last year and in Scotland this March. All schools will be sent this resource to use with pupils in class. Training will be given by CEOP and there will be a script for teachers to follow. Some of the material in the pack is quite shocking. The aim is to make young people aware of the dangers and let them make their own minds up.

“We aren’t going to patronize them, we are just trying to help them make better choices,” she said.

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<sup>3</sup> NSPCC National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children