

Jurassic Coast

Teaching Schools' Alliance

Newsletter No. 2



The Conference



The first conference of The Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools Alliance took place on Tuesday July 10th at Monks Yard near Ilminster and proved to be a great success. Hopefully it will become an annual event.

Over forty delegates attended, with strong representation from across the partnership. In addition we had speakers from the National College and the Teaching Agency.

The Alliance

Axe Valley Community College
Axminster Community Primary
Axminster, St. Mary's
Babcock Devon
Budmouth College
Chardstock Primary
Charmouth School
Colyton Grammar School
Dorset LA
Holyrood Academy
Marshwood School
Mountjoy Special School
Mrs Ethelston's, Uplyme
St. Mary's Bridport
St. Michael's, Lyme Regis
The King's School
The University of Exeter
The Woodroffe School
Thorncombe, St. Mary's

Crisis is the norm and complexity is fun.

Tim Brighouse, Passionate Leadership

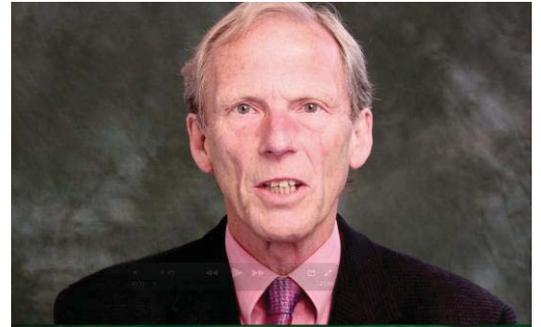


Introductory Conference

The aim of the conference was to get everyone together and to ensure that we had some definite activities lined up for next term. Given the enthusiasm evident on the day, both aims were certainly fulfilled and there are now a number of things we can get going on straight away.

The most impressive aspect of the day was the commitment and enthusiasm of everyone who attended. There was a real sense of common purpose and a wealth of suggestions as to how we might work together to the benefit of the students in all our schools. By the end of the day it was apparent that the alliance is going to work and that, despite the National College's peculiarly schizophrenic high accountability/minimal structure approach, a clear idea of what the alliance was all about had begun to emerge.

The focus on learning is paramount and welcomed by all. It will doubtless act as a driver over the months to come as we start to get some of the more ambitious projects off the ground.



*Professor Gordon Stobart,
Emeritus Professor
The Institute of Education*

Although with us only through the wonders of video technology, Gordon was undoubtedly the star of the show, offering an inspiring insight into learning to kick start the conference. It is hoped to make the video available soon and we look forward to Gordon's further involvement with schools as the alliance develops.

*Someone to
watch over us*



The Big 6: Quick Wins

There was an enormous number of ideas discussed in the afternoon session and too many to list here. However, there are some 'quick wins' rising to the surface and these are summarized below. Hopefully, we can get going on these as soon as the new term starts in September.



Learning is at the heart of everything we do

ITT

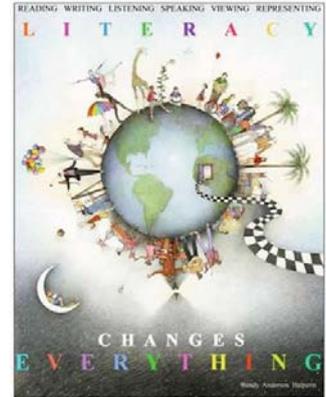
- ITT places arranged with the University of Exeter are, where possible, to be paired in schools which are part of the alliance
- There was general support for some joint professional studies sessions as well as an alliance conference for Trainee Teachers
- A protocol should be put in place to agree common principles and ways of working with ITT students
- Develop succession plans for ITT mentors
- Aim to employ the best trainees in alliance schools
- Encourage participation in the University M level programme
- Investigate Schools Direct more thoroughly and bid for five places to be shared across the alliance as a pilot programme

SLEs

- The role of SLEs needs to be explained to staff and governors and promoted more widely across the area
- Staff need to be encouraged to apply for SLE status if they have the appropriate skills. Details are on the NCSL website and applications will be handled as follows:
 - Application forms can be downloaded from July 16th
 - Application round opens September 7th to 30th
 - Interviews October 8th to December 1st
- It is hoped that SLEs are appointed from schools across the alliance
- A team approach should be adopted where possible
- A charging structure will need to be established and a promotional strategy agreed

CPD/Leadership

- Trios may be the easiest way to set up cross-school working. It is hoped that in September schools in the alliance will be able to suggest teachers who are keen to work in trios, or in other collaborative groups, across schools. This could be from department to department, or cross-phase. After a brief period of training to ensure common approaches and protocols, staff can begin working together. Trios could well become the glue that binds the alliance schools together.
- Colleagues to be encouraged to take part in the various middle leadership development programmes running in schools in the alliance as well as the NPQH at Holyrood
- Much of what we plan to do can be successfully linked to the Exeter MA course and it is hoped that we can gather a cohort of at least ten teachers from across the alliance prepared to take part in the course together. It should be possible for some of the course to be delivered locally and links made with our existing in-house CPD programmes
- It would be very useful to create a directory of CPD courses currently offered at schools in the alliance so that they could be opened up to any teacher from any school. This could be impracticable but if possible it would be a very easy way of making a much wider range of CPD available to colleagues at virtually no cost
- There is clearly a need for support staff training and, in particular, Teaching Assistant training
- Building on the Exeter MA model, an NQT programme could quickly be devised across the partnership
- A directory of expertise is essential but so is some indication of the needs of the various schools in the alliance



Literacy/Reading Conference

Following a couple of presentations at DASH (Dorset Association of Secondary Heads), the first about the Teaching School Alliance, the second about Literacy, it was agreed that one of the first things we would do as an alliance would be to put on a one day Literacy Conference in order to share good practice.

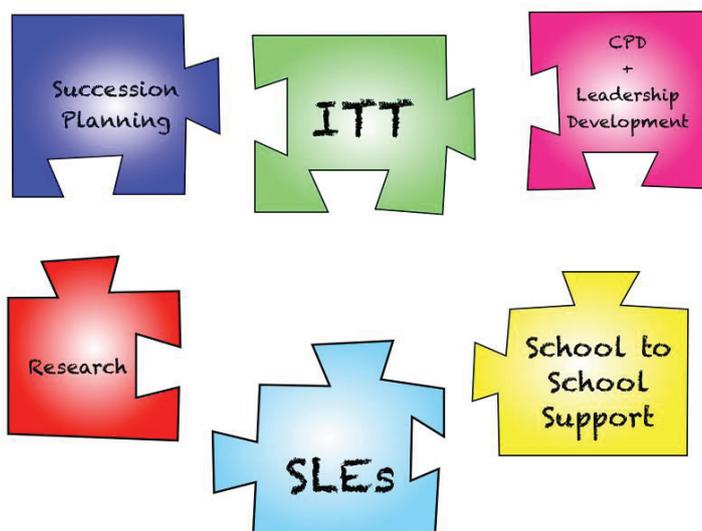
David Akers has offered to host this in the Business Centre at Budmouth and we are hopeful that Dorset LA may be able to offer some financial support.

The plan at the moment is for a conference towards the end of October, with inputs from the University of Exeter, Ofsted, Dorset Advisory Team and a range of good practice from within our schools. We may even be able to attract a children's author down to get involved.

We will need to charge a reasonable course fee to cover costs but we would hope to offer significant reductions to schools in the alliance.

Succession Planning/Talent Management

- Leadership exchanges at all levels could help to ensure that succession is thought about more seriously. These could take the form of SLT shadowing but also middle leader exchanges or Heads of Department/Heads of Year/Heads of Key Stage pairings across the alliance. These could be set up on an informal basis to begin with but it will be essential to keep a record of contact in order to evaluate its effectiveness
- There is also a case for encouraging administrative and finance staff to work together to share good practice
- Promoted posts should be advertised across the alliance (via the website) to allow us to keep talented individuals in our area



School to School Support

- The alliance is well placed to work with both Babcock in Devon and Dorset LA to offer support as required
- Babcock plan to include us their menu of support and there are schools in Dorset already requesting support
- Once the SLEs are appointed, we will be able to create a detailed directory of support, though this doesn't have to be delivered solely by SLEs. A wide variety of support should be available
- Schools will need to consider their capacity to become involved
- An audit of expertise is an essential first step
- A quality control mechanism will need to be put in place to ensure that the support we offer is of a very high

Research and Development

We have been fortunate to have our bid for a Research and Development Grant Accepted. The research title we applied for was:

Theme three: How can leaders lead successful teaching school alliances which enable the development of consistently great pedagogy?

Acceptance of the research grant commits us to the following:

Working with the research team and other alliances under theme three to identify key research questions to address, and then implementing a rigorous school-driven research approach to these. This will include regular data collection and reporting, leading to an interim report in summer 2013 and summer 2014

Collaborating with other teaching school alliances working on theme three including through participating in and sometimes facilitating/hosting termly action learning set meetings

Meeting the research team on a termly basis to share emerging learning and issues

Committing to disseminating the learning across the teaching schools network (for example by organising/contributing to events for other teaching schools in the region) and supporting the National College/Teaching Agency with wider dissemination work

Attending at least one R&D network event a year.

Actions

So that we are ready to get going in September, there are a number of steps to be taken. It would be really helpful if every member of the alliance could return information quickly and take part in the following activities:

1. We will shortly be sending out an audit of expertise, CPD, development needs, etc. A prompt reply would be helpful
2. If there are examples of good practice in Literacy please contact Woodroffe so that they can be included in the Literacy Conference
3. Explain SLEs and encourage applications
4. Inform governors of the implications of your commitment to the Teaching School Alliance
5. Suggest at least one colleague who would be keen to take part in cross school Trio work
6. Indicate whether you would like to host a Schools Direct Trainee, salaried or unsalaried, and in what subject area
7. Nominate a member of SLT to be a member of the steering group (see below)
8. Identify colleagues who are interested in joining an alliance MA group and give some indication of how the fees are to be funded (by the colleague themselves, part funded by the school etc. It may be possible to use some of the TSA start up money to subsidize courses in the first year). There is an October deadline for applications

Website, Steering Group and other information



The Website

Following a very detailed discussion as part of the conference, we now plan to set up a Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools Alliance website as soon as possible and certainly by the start of next term.

It is hoped that the website quickly becomes an essential repository of information.

We also plan to include a Research and Development website with a Wordpress blogging area so that all research activity and Trio working can be recorded.

NCSL Discussion Group

All headteachers/principals of our alliance schools should now have access to the NCSL Teaching Schools Group on their website:

<https://network.nationalcollege.org.uk/groups/16391>

Access is limited for some unknown reason but if you contact Woodroffe, a groveling request can be made on your behalf and you may be allowed to join if you promise not to reveal any of the fantastically confidential information hidden on the site.

Steering Group

There are detailed plans for governance of the alliance in the Action Plan but the essential first step is to create a steering group. It is proposed to create a group comprising one senior colleague from each secondary school and one from each group of primary schools (currently the Lyme cluster, the Axe Valley Learning Community, and 'other!'). Where the group meets and how frequently will be agreed at the first meeting but each school will need to nominate a representative as soon as possible. Nikki will be chasing you for an answer!

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The Finances

This is an area which still needs further work. Gill Sleigh from Woodroffe and Steve Cook from Colyton have had a preliminary meeting but there is a great deal of work to be done regarding fees, sustainability, brokerage etc.



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