

The Leadership Series: Volunteering for Life Thursday 11th March 2010

Executive Summary

Keynote 1: Peter Wanless: Big Lottery Fund

Why is volunteering important?

- Engages young people naturally attracted to learning
- Helps confront barriers to learning
- People come out of their narrowly defined boxes united by a common cause and reference point
- Contributes to greater well-being (research studies have picked up great differences between volunteers and non-volunteers in physical and mental health)
- Develops educational skills such as research and presentation skills

A case study of a Nairobi slum

- Cramped living conditions leading to many health problems within the community – lack of education within the local population to deal with this
- Community development work began to deal with the issues of living in close proximity
- A youth drama group set up to involve the young people – plays cover issues the young people face
- Young people clamoured to be involved in the group and take the health messages seriously
- The children have become more knowledgeable and more mature than the adults in dealing with the health issues
- Powerful peer role models and information filtering through to whole community

Creating a volunteering culture

- What motivates and empowers young people?
- Youth projects that are driven by young people give them a chance to decide their own future, they choose what they want to do and they develop the project
- Mixing young and old people breaks down stereotypes and preconceptions
- Sport often provides a way in to volunteering
 - Leadership opportunities – sports leaders award

A case study of dealing with anti-social drinking

- Addressing the problem of anti-social drinking amongst girls on a council estate
- Asked the girls what they valued and what they wanted – they said they wanted health and beauty, they were not interested in getting work or beginning a career
- Classes run on the health and visual effects of smoking and drinking
- Once they had the girls' interest they then offered guidance in getting careers in the health and beauty industries

Benefits of volunteering within school

- Pupils have an opportunity to apply learning and skills in real life situations
- In the US volunteering league tables have been set up that are viewed positively by schools
 - Schools compete to do the most volunteering - results reported in the local press
 - Offers more balance to the league tables as they are not all just about attainment

Facing challenges

- *Young people do relate to the concept of services to their community*
- Lack of resources? – there are many organisations out there with innovative ways to help

- www.blastbeat.org – getting kids across the whole school to organise a rock concert – engages young people that can be hard to reach and has real learning outcomes
- Pressure on time? – make volunteering part of the routine of your school
- Stretch and push young people to think outside of the box and to push boundaries
- Young people are attracted to programmes developed from their ideas and that reflect their interests

Funding streams from the Big Lottery Fund

- **Awards for All/ All things to all people** – Significant open/ demand led programme
 - Up to £10,000 awards
 - 4/5 week turnaround after application
- **Charitable Organisations**
 - Open applications up to £500,000 – **must demonstrate the impact of outcomes**
- Targeted/ Strategic funding e.g. 'Forces in Mind'
 - For areas deemed in need of development that are currently not being supported
- Place based/ community funding
 - Some areas lack the ability to target funding themselves so funding is directed towards them – outcomes are not only the projects set up but also the future capacity of these communities to target funding streams
- **People's millions** - opened on 10th March 2010 for applications
 - £50,000 award
 - Emphasis on engaging and involving young people in design and decision making of projects

Keynote 2: Jane Denny: A Case Study: Volunteering in Weobley

Weobley is in North West Herefordshire. It includes one high school and six primary schools. It is the most deprived rural ward in Herefordshire.

Volunteering in Weobley – Eco Schools

By 2020 all schools are expected to be sustainable schools – Eco Schools project recognised as the best way to become sustainable - involves volunteering from children, whole school and wider community.

- Young people at the high school trained to give workshops/ talks on sustainable development to pupils at the primary schools
 - Develops presentation skills and confidence
 - Children at the primary school completely engaged, love learning from young people – it provides a change from their teacher
 - When primary schools later had a film making competition one school chose to make a film on global warming
 - All films shown at the local cinema in a big 'Oscar night' extravaganza
 - High School pupils invited to the evening and at the end of the film were delighted by the acknowledgement for their contribution
- Informing the school and wider community about what is being done in Weobley for the environment - pupils volunteer to go out and do this
- Taking part in activities
 - Litter picking – volunteer to do this on a Saturday, get whole village involved
 - Interactive assembly at primary schools, leading assemblies to peers – communication and public speaking skills developed
 - Walks group – series of walks devised by group of girls as an alternative to P.E. – measured calories, number of steps, devised quiz for children to complete on way round, photocopied and put in shops, doctor's surgery etc. – local residents, councillors, parents and governors all joined in
 - Hedge laying and coppicing courses on local farms – preserving a traditional countryside skill and farmer benefits as work is done for free

- “Man in the kitchen” scheme - age range 17 – 80, men willing to pay to attend as enjoy it so much, last year was year of food and farming – schools nominated a farming hero, men who attended cookery course volunteered to cook breakfast for the awards ceremony – have been asked to cook again for this year

Volunteering for Life

- Initially less secondary schools taking part in Eco Schools
- Now primary school children moving on and badgering their secondary school headteachers to do something about the environment
- They view volunteering and Eco Schools as an important part of life
- *Starting when they are young increases the chances of young people carrying on when they are older – instil the idea of volunteering at school*

Meet Jamie

- Very able student – 6A’s at A-Level, now at Durham University
- Active member of the eco schools committee
- Given lots of opportunities to make presentations about environment
- Hosts visitors to Weobley High School coming to see how the school contributes to the environment
- Presented to the 1st secretary from the Chinese Embassy and other influential people and key figures in the community on Eco Schools and took questions from the audience
- Invited to be Master of Ceremonies at Travel Plan Awards, Sustainable Schools Award and Herefordshire Sustainable Schools Conference – all opportunities that stemmed from his volunteering to do eco schools
- *Volunteering offers opportunities for the most able students to be stretched, challenged and develop new skills*

Meet Anita

- Special Education Needs – personalised learning plan, Cope Group, fostered
- Started coming to Eco Schools meetings
- Initially would not contribute – low self esteem and self confidence
- Began to take part in Eco School assemblies
- Delivered several interactive assemblies to primary schools and eventually one to a high school
- By year 10 had gained so much confidence from the opportunities offered by Eco Schools she tackled the headteacher when he refused to let them out of school on an Eco Schools project and got him to change his mind
- *Volunteering can help reach out to sometimes hard to reach children offering them different and attractive opportunities for learning and developing new skills*

The impact of volunteering

- Volunteers learn new skills and confidence grows
- Adds to school’s reputation and raises school profile
- Creates and spreads a positive message
- Can change the destiny of individuals and the destiny of the community

The role of Headteachers in enabling volunteering

- Teaching and Learning isn’t just what happens in the classroom – the ‘extras’ contribute to a child’s development, self esteem, confidence and skills which in turn helps the teaching and learning
- Make time for the extras within the timetable
- Be part of it and show genuine interest in what is happening
 - For a pupil that is used to being low ability in the classroom it means so much to hear the headteacher praise and express their approval of work done in other areas

- *Volunteering is the logic of Community Cohesion and Sustainable Communities – getting people to work together on a variety of projects*

Keynote 3: Dame Elisabeth Hoodless: Community Service Volunteers – Volunteering for Life

“**Volunteering**” is undertaken of own free will without expectation of any reward

“**Community Action**” is the Government’s term for its new school programme – they are sending out people on 12 month contracts to every Local Authority to develop this

“**Community Service**” involves people helping the environment and local community, often voluntarily although it can be used as an alternative to custody as it is recognised to have redeeming effects

Where can volunteering begin?

In the family

- Although absent in a number of homes it is critically important – children intuitively have a sense of reciprocity and mutuality
- A family day out volunteering (e.g. clearing up a local church yard) is free and allows the family to spend a day together (much cheaper than an amusement park)

At primary school

- For example pupils from Blessed Sacrament School cleared a derelict slight that was unsightly on their walk to school – wrote to the site owner to flag up the importance of waste bins
- Impact
 - enjoyed a half day out
 - discovered how they can make a difference by working together
 - learned the importance of holding authorities to account – as there are still no bins the children are planning to write direct to the chairman of the site and ask when he is planning on installing the bins as promised

At secondary school

- Much broader range of engagement – PSHE, citizenship in the curriculum as well
- For example Battersea Technology College ran a community service project within their own school – although initially suspicious of introducing community service they had a group of difficult students that they were keen to get out of the classroom for a while so decided to work with them on a project to improve the school grounds
- Impact
 - pupils learned measuring, designing, planning, quantities, teamwork
 - pupils learned persuasive skills in getting local suppliers to donate plants etc.
 - attendance rose
 - previously unappealing school grounds were transformed
 - Her Majesty the Queen visited the school to officially open the garden

Long term partnerships

- For example Francis Holland School have developed a relationship with Westminster Children’s Services – the privileged six form pupils of Francis Holland support a group of “looked after” young people culminating in a 7-day residential camp at the end of A-levels which they begin planning from Lower Sixth
- Impact - fantastic education in both directions for those involved
 - Girls from Francis Holland learn
 - about the lives of some of the nation’s most deprived citizens
 - how to work as a team

- how to raise money
- how to work with young people with very different life experiences
- The Westminster children
 - develop new friendships
 - have raised aspirations
 - enjoy an excellent week away

➤ *Every young person can make a positive contribution – sometimes you just need to dig a little deeper*

The impact on volunteers

- Empowerment – learning how to make things happen
- New skills and knowledge not available in the classroom
- Broadens career choices
- Raised expectations and self confidence

Impact on the local and wider community – some examples

- In Hastings youth crime rate dropped by 50% after the introduction of new activities for the young – kids were occupied not only by joining in but also organising the activities
- The 'Summer of Service' cut teenage pregnancy by 50% - young people found better things to be doing!
- In Sidcup volunteers at the hospital helping with 'feeding' patients cut recovery times by 24 hours

Making the most of volunteers

- Over 30% of people would volunteer if they were asked – people are often very modest and think they are not wanted/ useful
- Older volunteers are the fastest growing group of volunteers – senior volunteers can organise a community service programme in school – utilise them
 - Older volunteers in schools often report that the holidays are the worst time as they have no reason to get up in the morning – by using them you are doing them a favour too!
- Need the contribution of young people as they bring new approaches – the best and most successful projects are those that have been thought up by the young people themselves
- Although rewards such as certificates, chocolates, names in the local paper are appreciated often just thanking someone is enormously powerful
- Build a partnership with another local school (find one with good facilities!) and get kids from high school to run programmes for the primary children in the Summer holidays – can even ask parents to contribute to the cost

Innovative developments

- Curriculum related service – where students can see the point of service attendance increases and attainment rises
- In Argentina students investigated how to help an impoverished mountain village dependent on wine making
 - To increase the value of the wine students worked out how to improve the soil and therefore wine and how to communicate this to the village
 - Students learned about chemicals and how to protect the land by closing sluices (having a real reason to learn science encouraged them to do so)
 - Students research skills developed, wine was improved resulting in the price going up so now all children in the village can afford to go to school – economy and standard of living in the village transformed – all the students involved are now at university

➤ *Once you get started other doors open*