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Easing the transition from KS2 to KS3 through work in the food area of Technology

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Abstract
Transferring from primary to secondary school can be a very traumatic experience for children. At Phoenix School all effort is made, through a Primary Liaison Programme, to ensure that this transition is made as smoothly as possible. We do not concentrate on year 6 pupils but encourage all ages and abilities of pupils to visit the school throughout their nursery and primary school life.

My presentation is an account of some of the activities which take place in the food area of a Technology Department.

A series of slides show pupils at work in the area. Not only are they learning but they have fun when completing the projects.

There are many problems which arise from this transition:
1) knowing what experience the pupils have had previously
2) transferring information - how much, what type and how useful is it
3) assessment of levels for National Curriculum
4) the constraints of the National Curriculum Technology
5) time for staff from both schools to meet to discuss ideas for projects, progression and continuity.

Phoenix School is a fairly ordinary comprehensive school in the middle of a new town. It is, I think, unique in its approach to Primary Liaison - easing pupil from KS2 - KS3.

When pupils started in the first year of secondary school - Year 7 - it was almost assumed that they had not done anything previously and pupils were assessed to find their level of ability.

In practical areas rarely was any account taken of pupils previous experience either at school or home. Everyone started with basic routine and skills.

With the advent of the National Curriculum it became more obvious that secondary and primary staff should communicate and liaise more now that it was necessary to view education 5 to 16.

We have the green N.C.C. box Technology Key Stage 1 and 2 and the green N.C.C. box Key Stage 3 but nobody is giving any guidance and help for getting from one to the other. This is a crucial time in a child's life changing from a small primary school to a large secondary school and needs to be handled carefully continuity is essential.

In Phoenix a programme of Primary Liaison has been in progress for the past 10 years. Not just the one visit by pupils who had chosen to come to our school for their secondary education but throughout the year and with all classes and ages.

Many of the curriculum areas are involved, Maths, English, Science, Music, P.E., Drama, Paired Reading, Learning Support Unit, Resources area and Technology.

Food, of course is an excellent media for pupils to work in. What more satisfaction can be gained by making something and taking it home for parents and grandparents to enjoy and give praise. You couldn't wish for better encouragement and job satisfaction.

The slides show some of the activities undertaken in the Food area and as a Technology department.

Activity 1
Year 5 pupils
The potato project was a major activity starting in February and ending in July. All aspects of preparing soil, planting, earthing up and harvesting were covered in the school garden which lies between Phoenix and Captain Webb Primary School.

When the weather was bad or there was nothing
happening in the garden we worked indoors on all aspects of potato production into a consumable product. We visited Sainsbury's to find out how many products contained potatoes and how many varieties of potatoes were on sale to the general public.

Visiting Everest Frozen Foods proved to be very popular as we saw the whole production process when making chips. Of course, as good quality controllers we had to taste the finished product at the end of the visit.

Back in the school food area we prepared chips using deep fat fryers and pre-prepared chips and compared cost, quality, taste and safety aspects. We made crisps of all shapes and sizes but were unable to entice Walkers to tell us the secret of making flavoured crisps. Being part of an imaginary health food outlet took us into making jacket potatoes for lunch and each pupil had to create a filling which would make their potato the most popular buy.

The project involved skills of organisation, teamwork, invention, maths, geography, science, written and spoken English and practical cookery skills.

Activity 2
Year 6 pupils
Primary liaison does not just stop at primary/secondary links. The group of pupils were taken to Radbrook - a further education college - to visit the bakery department. Ever since the pupils had seen harvest loaves at the Harvest Festival Service they wanted to know how to make them. Much of the equipment was bigger than themselves but each managed to make a harvest loaf.

On our return to school the loaves were varnished and displayed in their school. Again much skill and concentration was required to make a quality product and many added their own ideas to the set pattern. One went on to make a Cornucopia - a horn of plenty.

Activity 3
Reception
Infants enjoy the alternative version of the Little Red Hen story. Everyone will know the original version where little Red Hen takes the flour to the bakery to be made into bread but in this version the bakery was closed.

Little Red Hen was given several recipes for bread and she has to decide which is best.

The project started with a visit by me to the class in their own school taking along lots of fresh yeast and strong flour. As the story is told all the recipes are made up and left with the pupils to watch throughout the day. When the loaves are baked they have to decide which is the best recipe and why. Yeast is left to feel, smell and divide and placed in test tubes to produce carbon-dioxide to inflate a balloon.

Later the pupils visit Phoenix to make their own bread. By this time they know which is the best recipe and they also know why. Each pupil makes a cottage loaf just like the Little Red Hen to take home for tea.

Of course infants in an adult size kitchen provide us with a few difficulties but with a little ingenuity and an amenable craft department these are easily overcome.

Activity 4
Year 5/6
Pupils have made their own breakfast cereals, designed the packaging, written jingles and even used videos to record T.V. commercials.

Activity 5
Year 6
Most recently junior pupils have been encouraged to become involved in the St. Ivel Award Scheme which has now been extended to Primary Schools. This offers a chance to introduce aspects of diet, exercise and healthy eating. Pupils monitor their diet and exercise for two weeks and can then analyse it on the computers using a National Dairy Council pack called Healthy Bytes which is easy to use and gives a pictorial read-out.

They then use their knowledge of healthy eating to make a snack, breakfast or packed lunch for themselves. This involves them in thinking up ideas, choosing, planning and organising themselves to a set time. Obviously the evaluation is in the best form - eating it.

Activity 5
Year 6
A project involving the craft area arose from pupils trying to encourage birds to feed at their school. They had designed all kinds of bird tables and were supplied with a variety of materials from which to make them. The tables were then placed outside for testing.

During the day it rained. The ones made out of card disintegrated. The ones made from plastic or wood withstood the weather.
Pupils then visited our craft area. The pupils who had not managed to make a table which was substantial were given a chance to make a wooden bird box or table which they could take home to their own garden. Those whose designs were more substantial went on to use the computer to design more complicated tables and boxes and also familiarise themselves with the graphics package.

Activity 7
Year 7

Shortly after the beginning of year 7 a visit to Waterworld is arranged for our technology project. The whole year group is involved with seven staff. Either the timetable is collapsed for 3 days or the project is taken over a half term.

Pupils are taken to Waterworld and are set tasks looking at the structure of the building, safety aspects, signs, uniform, the restaurant and food service, facilities for Mums and toddlers and the disabled. Pupils evaluate the facility by using it.

On their return to school they chose a topic to study and are allowed to choose an area in which to work and a member of staff to work with.

Projects have covered all aspects of a large leisure facility. Designing visual signs rather than verbal ones; producing healthy foods and redesigning the food service area; making a corporate image by designing logos, signs and uniforms; making promotional material in the form of pamphlets, videos, commercials etc.

All work is then displayed for the first parents evening. The reason we arrange this type of project early in the term is to capitalise on the style of working usually pursued by pupils in primary schools. We use group work and extended periods of time and give pupils the freedom to work in whatever media and area they choose.

All these projects have arisen naturally out of the curriculum and through links with partner schools. In the present climate of National Curriculum Technology and S.A.T’s, enthusiasm for these activities has been stifled and buried under the weight of paper and long winded assessment procedures. There is no time left for the wonderful practical experiences which are so much fun and so rewarding for both pupil and teacher.

Documentation comes into the school in many forms, from the one sheet of A4 to a folder containing a wide variety of work from a pupil. These of course are extremely useful but very few staff use these as there is rarely time to wade through up to 120 folders. Teachers therefore start from a basic point and work on regardless of what experiences the pupils might have had before.

My biggest worry with the National Curriculum Technology is that pupils will come into Phoenix having spent several years identifying needs, planning and evaluating and having done very little making. They will not want to continue this type of work. They will be eager for information about what foods will do on their own and in combination with others. They will want to know about the Technology related to food and food production and will want to get their hands dirty making and taking home a quality product.

If we still have to spend a considerable time with AT’s 1 & 2 there will be no time left to really get down to the nitty gritty of food, nutrition, diet, the manipulation of foods and the correct use of Technology and hygiene in handling of foods.