

Secondary RE Conference

6 July 2007, 10:00 - 3:30
Ealing City Learning Centre

Nora Leonard, SACRE consultant
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Jan Parnell, 14-19 Adviser with SACRE responsibility
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Attendees: Clare Broomfield (Greenford), Sheena Chahal (Greenford), Suzy Cole (Dormers Wells), Patrick Cootes (Villers), Megan Dee (West London Academy), Louise Douglas (Ellen Wilkinson), Paul Faux (St Anns), Axel Fouabi (Featherstone), Sophie Johnson (Twyford), Nora Leonard (SACRE consultant), Hatice Osman (Ellen Wilkinson), Samantha Simmonds (Villers), Latifa Wakili (Ellen Wilkinson), Dave Webb (Elthorne Park), George Wrigley (Ellen Wilkinson)

Apologies: Glenn Burchell (Drayton Manor), Kate Johnson (Featherstone), Helen Keogh (Brentside)

Special guests: Jan Parnell (14-19 adviser), Alim Shaikh (assistant manager, Ealing CLC) and Gina Reeves (curriculum consultant, Ealing CLC)



Alim Shaikh and Gina Reeves

On Friday, 6 July 2007 the first secondary RE conference was held at Ealing City Learning Centre.



Jan Parnell

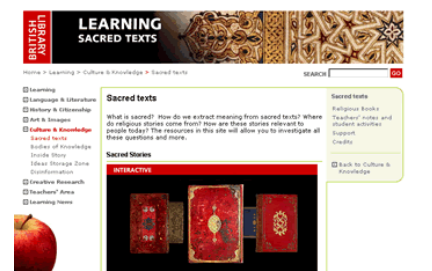
Jan Parnell, Ealing's 14-19 Adviser with responsibility for SACRE, gave the opening welcome, which included the news that SACRE had (finally!) agreed to pass the new RE syllabus onto Cabinet for ratification¹. She also congratulated Alim, Gina and Nora for the completion of the content for the RE module of the Caspian "Thinking Worlds™" educational games software.

Promoting religious studies

"RE is taught in schools so religious discrimination is wiped away from the world..."

The above quote comes from a presentation made by Year 7 students that Megan Dee (West London Academy) used as an introduction to a session on promoting religious studies. She looked at various ways that teachers could increase interest in following a course in religious studies, including the production of a leaflet of GCSE topics, and a questionnaire for year 9 pupils that sets them the task of answering the question "How can you use religious studies in your life?"

Megan also showed the group several excellent on-line resources, including the British Library website on sacred texts² and the religious studies website³, which has a selection of downloadable resources.



[British Library website on sacred texts](http://www.bl.uk/learning/cult/sacredbooks/sacredintro.html)

¹ Cabinet ratified the syllabus on 24th July, with the recommendation that it be "fully implemented in all schools in the borough in time for the start of the autumn term 2007." We, however, have more realistic expectations, and encourage schools to move over to the new programmes of study as soon as humanly possible.

² <http://www.bl.uk/learning/cult/sacredbooks/sacredintro.html> Interactive resources include a site where you can pose questions to various figures, as well as an animated exposition of religious stories from most of the major traditions.



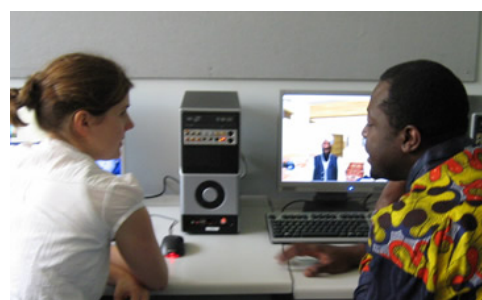
*Representatives from Ellen Wilkinson:
George Wrigley, Hatice Osmond,
Louise Douglas and Latifa Wakili*

Raising attainment

Axel Fouabi (Featherstone) led the session on raising attainment. Some of the reasons put forth for underachievement in RE at GCSE level included lack of interest, exam technique and the fact that pupils often believe that the short course is not valued as much as a full GCSE. Solutions included understanding the usefulness of data, target setting and using GCSE criteria for assessment. Axel also took the group through various ways assessment can be tracked using the Schools Information Management System (SIMS)⁴.

“Thinking Worlds”™

During the lunch break we had an opportunity to trial the beta version of the RE module of the Caspian “Thinking Worlds”™ game software. Caspian had a tight deadline to programme the content in order for it to be ready for our conference, so predictably there were glitches, including the unfortunate sight of several of the characters doing what appeared to be advanced break-dancing, or with their heads stuck in the wall.⁵



Sophie and Axel have a go at the games software

Schemes of work

After lunch, Suzy Cole (Dormers Wells) led a session on schemes of work for the new syllabus, “The marriage of heaven and earth.” She took us through a sample scheme, as well as demonstrating some of the resources for the new syllabus already available on the Ealing Grid for Learning.



Megan Dee, Paul Faux, Dave Webb and Suzy Cole

The rest of this session was devoted to drafting a scheme of work for a unit on ‘Moral dilemmas’. Four topics were chosen: “Right and wrong: black, white and various shades of grey”, “Sources of moral authority”, “Are humans good or bad?” and “The role of the media,” and we split into groups to brainstorm suggested activities for each of these topics.

Learning objectives proposed by the various groups included: developing an awareness of the different moral viewpoints expressed in the media; beginning to make discriminations regarding how, why and if rules are needed; developing an awareness of how they are influenced by different sources of moral authority, including their own ability to reason and having a conscience; learning that in many difficult situations, both sides of a conflict can believe that they are in the right.⁶

³ <http://www.religiousstudies.co.uk/>

⁴ <http://home.capitaes.co.uk/SIMS/>

⁵ All of these glitches have now been logged, and it is hoped that another ‘beta’ version will be available for testing by pupils. Please contact Alim Shaikh (ashakh@ealingclc.net) if you would be willing to bring a group of your students to the CLC for this purpose.

⁶ A scheme of work based on this exercise can be found on the key stage 3 curriculum page of the EGfL: http://www.egfl.org.uk/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re_curric/ks3.html

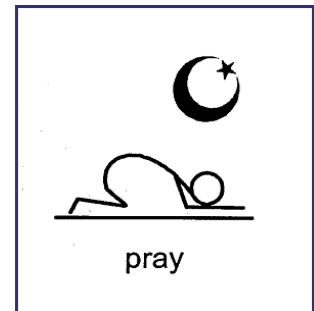


Villers vs Greenford

Patrick Cootes and Samantha Simmonds debate moral dilemmas with Clare Broomfield and Sheena Chahal

RE for SEN and gifted and talented

Paul Faux⁷ (St Anns and Springhallow) shared some of his experiences of teaching RE to pupils with special educational needs. He showed a presentation that one of his year-groups at St Anns had produced, which included examples of the Makaton symbols used with children with severe learning disabilities (SLD). He also gave us a handout of P scales⁸ adapted for use in RE, as well as information about the Entry Level Certificate in World Religions, which is a qualification for those lower attaining pupils who have difficulty in reaching the national curriculum level 3 by the end of key stage 3.



Christianity's first gifted and talented pupil?



Christ disputing with the scribes (detail)
Duccio di Buoninsegna, 1308-11

Nora Leonard ended the afternoon session with a discussion on meeting the needs of pupils who are gifted in RE. In her presentation she talked about some of the diverse ways pupils can express these talents, e.g. imaginative use of symbols, development of critical thinking, logical insight and an empathetic understanding of religious experience—the last of which can also be demonstrated by pupils who do not necessarily define or express their empathy in specifically religious terms. She also talked about how giftedness in RE can manifest initially as difficult behaviour, especially amongst those pupils who are ‘twice-gifted’, i.e. pupils who have some form of special educational need yet at the same time also have an aptitude for the subject. The situation of gifted pupils who perform badly in RE—perhaps because they are holding themselves back through fear of eliciting familial or cultural disapproval—was also discussed.

Next network meeting: Friday, 2 November, 1–4, Ealing City Learning Centre (venue to be confirmed)



⁷ For more about Paul's work at St Ann's see the article "Spirit unfolding" on the EGfL RE site: <http://www.egfl.org.uk/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/Articles.html>

⁸ P level attainment targets apply in relation to pupils aged 5-14 with special educational needs who are working below level 1 of the national curriculum. For more information see: http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_8541.aspx