



Citizens All? Children's Rights and Citizenship Education

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**Speech by Ian Massey (Intercultural Inspector and Advisor, Hampshire)
at the launch on 12.04.05**

Hampshire Rights, Respect & Responsibilities (RRR) Programme

Hampshire has just started a journey with this Rights, Respect and Responsibilities (RRR) project. Going beyond rights awareness approaches to teaching and learning about and through the UNCRC. We believe this has the potential for transforming schools & communities. It is based on research evidence in Cape Breton, Canada and Hampshire UK, which indicates a positive impact on, ***teaching, learning, ethos, attitudes and behaviour***

Research Evidence from Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada on a right based curriculum

- Children perceived greater levels of peer & teacher support.
- Adolescents showed higher self-esteem and also felt valued.
- Children's increased knowledge about their rights improved behaviour and their understanding of the importance of rights for all.
- Teaching children's rights necessitated more democratic, egalitarian styles of teaching.
- When teachers model rights the atmosphere of classrooms is perceived to be more supportive. Teachers reported a real impact on classroom behaviour (more time spent on teaching). Much more positive atmosphere.
- The research suggests a 'contagion' effect, in that learning about one's own rights results in support for the rights of others, including adults' and teachers' right to teach.
- Student support for the rights of adults, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities, were significantly related to their teacher's support for children's rights.

A study group visited to Cape Breton to look at this work and the –began trials in Andover. Hampshire also had work underway through the work of its DEC on 'First Steps to Rights' for 3-7 year olds, which has since been published by UNICEF.

The trials in KS 3 schools of learning through a rights perspective produced the following feedback.

RRR in Andover, Hampshire

- Higher levels of motivation. Pupils more interested in their work,
- More 'adult' behaviour from Year 6 – less quarrelsome, more responsible
- Improvement in class ethos, relationships
- Pupils feel they are listened to & shown more respect. More opportunities for speaking & listening.
- Changes in teacher style – more democratic
- Quality of literacy work higher. Best KS 2 results in writing in SAT's
- Developing a vocabulary. Children heard to tell other children to be quiet as they have a right to an education

With a range of colleagues we have attempted to identify why this approach seems to be so effective.

RRR Features of Effective Practice

- There is explicit teaching of the UN Convention, similar to a body of knowledge.
- Children learn they have rights – now, solely because they are children. They are not earned or are awarded at a certain age.
- All adults model rights respecting behaviours and promote a culture of respect in classrooms.
- A consistent democratic, egalitarian teaching style.
- It acts as a unifying framework for a lot of the schools' work. Schools council, student voice, Drugs/relationship ed,
- The *universality* of the Convention appeals to children and young people. A developing vocabulary
- Internationally agreed values. It avoids the teachers' or the schools' values being seen as isolated examples of political correctness.
- **It allows teachers, schools and children to point to an Authority that is higher than their classroom, the school, their community or their country.**

- ***It demonstrates that codes of conduct are not unique to each school, but come from a set of world-wide principles, informed by the moral precepts of the world religions, but not religious***

Over the past 12 months the journey has focused on training

- With DfES support 17 introductory days run and two pyramid/cluster INSETs based in secondary schools. Over 300 primary schools have taken part in some form of training in past 12 months.
- 90% say RRR will have a 'very high' or 'high' impact in their schools.
- Core of HCC response to Children Act.

We are delighted with the initial response of schools and will soon be offering this to secondary schools. We are also pleased to be part of the UNICEF Pilot on the accreditation of a Rights Respecting school as this will be our next step.

Hampshire is now committed to the UNCRC as the basis of its approach to schools and communities.

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