

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 21 FEBRUARY 2005

REPORT ON: LEARNING TOGETHER IN DUNDEE – A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE LEARNING AND TEACHING

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 131-2005

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The Education Department has worked with schools to pilot a number of approaches designed to improve learning. In recent years research evidence has confirmed that strategies which improve the relationship between teacher and learner and which result in a better understanding, by both, of the learning process will have a significant impact on achievement. The Education Department has now incorporated a number of initiatives on learning into a single strategy to improve learning and teaching. This is known as Learning Together in Dundee. This report outlines this strategy and how all teachers will be given training in its use.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Education Committee is recommended to:

- i) Agree the strategy for Learning Together in Dundee;
- ii) require the Director of Education to arrange suitable training in the strategy for teachers, pupils and parents
and
- iii) instruct the Director of Education to implement Learning Together in Dundee in all classroom in all Dundee schools by 2008 and to provide updates to the Education Committee as appropriate.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The financial implications relating to this report will be contained within the Education Department Revenue Budget.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Learning Together in Dundee focuses on helping all young people to become enterprising and effective learners. It helps to develop the key skills of enterprise, team work and problem solving which required of all future employees.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Learning Together in Dundee aims to ensure that all pupils can develop to their highest potential and become effective learners.

6.0 REPORT

6.1 Successful learning takes place where teacher and pupil have a clear understanding of the learning process; where both understand the intended outcomes of the lesson; where all pupils are given the opportunity to succeed; where pupils are given good feedback on their learning and the next steps to improve their learning. In this situation both teacher and pupil see themselves as working together on the learning process. They see themselves as Learning Together. Where this has taken place in classrooms teachers and pupils report a better understanding and increased respect between teacher and pupil which not only leads to improved learning but reduced conflict and indiscipline.

6.2 Learning Together in Dundee has grown out of a range of initiatives which have been developing in Dundee schools over a number of years. These have included work on learning styles, skills for learning, accelerated learning and others. Most recently the national programme to develop formative assessment has shown clear impact on learning, on achievement and on ethos. Learning Together in Dundee draws these programmes together to make a single strategy for developing learning and teaching in Dundee. At its heart is a concern with how we improve learning in our classrooms so that young people in Dundee become more confident, enterprising and competent learners.

6.3 Pilot work across a range of schools in Dundee has had very positive feedback from teachers and pupils. They report that both teachers and pupils are clearer about the learning intentions in lessons. That this results in not only in better learning but in better relationships between teacher and pupil which sees both as partners in the learning process.

6.4 Learning Together in Dundee is unique in that it has largely sprung from classroom practice and the work of teachers. A strategy has now been developed to support the work of the teachers already in the programme and to extend that through staff development to all of Dundee's teachers. The Learning Together in Dundee folder is part of that support and is designed to introduce the key aspects of LTiD to all teachers and to give practical advice on how they can incorporate these developments into their teaching (copies of this folder are available in the Councillors Lounge and with group secretaries).

6.5 A programme of inservice has been put in place to support and train teachers. Already over 500 teachers have attended a Learning Together in Dundee Forum to share good practice. Inservice training will be extended over the coming years to ensure that all staff have appropriate access to training and support. Schools will be required to develop with staff a strategy for implementing Learning Together in Dundee in all classrooms over the next three years. School strategies will vary and already some

schools have agreed to train all staff together while others will introduce it to some staff who will then help train and support others. Both approaches are equally valid.

6.6 A key element of the Learning Together in Dundee Strategy is the active involvement of all stakeholders in discussing how learning can be improved. Open Voice events bring together these stakeholders to talk about learning and to share experience and ideas. Already very successful Open Voice events have been held at City level for Head Teachers, for parents and for pupils. These events will become regular features in all schools over the coming years and will help to involve parents and pupils more meaningfully in the learning process.

6.7 The effective implementation of Learning Together in Dundee will require dedicated support and resources. The Education Department is committed to supporting this strategy as a priority objective and will place it at the centre of its next Development Plan 2005 – 2008. The approaches in Learning Together in Dundee may initially be more time consuming for staff. Evidence suggests that this will be compensated for by an increased pace of learning as the methods take effect. In addition the Education Department is committed to looking at ways to simplify what has become a severely overcrowded curriculum (particularly in Primary schools). As a matter of urgency the Education Department will engage with the Scottish Executive Curriculum Review Group to discuss the possibility of piloting approaches which will simplify the curriculum and allow more time for teachers to make learning more effective.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Dundee City Council is committed to raising attainment for all pupils. Learning Together in Dundee provides a clear focus on improving learning in the classroom so that all young people become more effective learners who are able to attain to their highest potential.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head Teachers of city schools have been consulted in the preparation of this report. The detailed implementation of the various elements of the Learning Together in Dundee Strategy will be the subject of further consultation with Head Teachers, teacher trade unions, pupils and parents.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

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AW/CDGT

11 February 2005