


Summer 2011





Once again Beauchamp hosted a successful Leading Edge Conference which was attended by staff and students from Longslade Community College and John Cleveland Community College. Everyone who attended was impressed by the standard of research and presentations. The conference demonstrated the depth of research topics undertaken by students and staff at the three colleges and underlines the value which is placed on research within the partnership. The Leading Edge Conference encompasses all that is good within the research culture which is now recognised as a powerful tool for school improvement, and also demonstrates the innovative practice and mutual respect shown by all participants.

Student research continues to flourish throughout the college as is evident in this edition and at the many presentations which have impressed the leadership team throughout the year. The enthusiasm and confidence exhibited by the students when undertaking these research projects is a testament to their interest and determination to ensure that The Student Voice continues to be heard.

Our thanks also go to the staff undertaking their Masters degree who have contributed to PLM.

Anne Pennington and Deborah Sims

Would you like to contribute?

If you would like to contribute to the next edition or would like any further information about issues raised please contact:

ap@beauchamp.org.uk

ds@beauchamp.org.uk





6

Does the Beauchamp library promote reading to all of the students?

Sadia Arif 11ALH
Safiyya Bhamji 11TT
Maryana Kurti 11AP
Jessica Lail 11AJO
Felicity Roles 11 RMR



8

Would it be beneficial for KS4 students to have a comfortable designated seating area?

Daisy Pope 11KVL
Bekah Oxley 11KVL



10

Boys' disillusionment
To what extent can non-conventional methods of communication encourage reading in boys?

Joseph Gilford



13

‘Understanding what revision strategies students use, and how effective they perceive these to be. How can I improve my teaching as a result of this?’

Ann Berry



16

Do Extra-Curricular Days Benefit Students?

Jovia Gao 10NS
Jessica Bains 10RLS



18

To what extent does taking an e-portfolio approach aid learners to develop individual and collaborative understanding in design and technology?

Nilesh Visavadia



Does the Beauchamp library promote reading to all of the students?

*Sadia Arif 11ALH
Safiyya Bhamji 11TT
Maryana Kurti 11AP*

*Jessica Lail 11AJO Felicity
Roles 11 RMR*

For our research we decided to investigate the library and to see if it promotes reading. We were inspired to do this particular investigation as all of us use the library at some time or other and many people are unaware of just how valuable the library is. Therefore, we thought that as the library would be moved in a few months, this was the ideal opportunity to do a research project on it so that any improvements could be made.

We distributed two questionnaires to 120 students that had different purposes and also interviewed the librarians, to find out their observations on this matter.

Our Specific research questions were:

- To investigate which gender reads more fiction after school (First questionnaire)
- To establish which gender and year uses the library the most (Second questionnaire)
- To explore whether the library is promoting reading for pleasure, in general

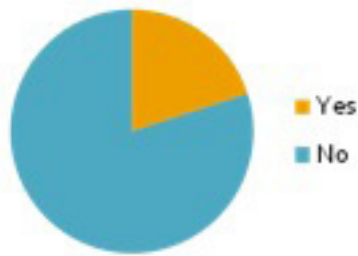
Summary of findings:

We found that overall; girls read more for leisure than boys. On the whole, the year that reads the most is year 13. We also found that 90% of Year 10s do not use the library, which was very unexpected and 50% of them did not know if the library is endorsing reading. Only 28% of year 11s use the library and 45% said that the library is not promoting reading. However, the sixth form students use the library dramatically more than KS4 for school work and also for taking books out for leisure reading.

Year 10 10%



Year 11 28%



Year 12 80%



Year 13 84%



number of sixth-formers has increased.

Recommendations

To conclude, we think that before the library can endorse reading it needs to first promote itself, which could easily be done by having an open day when it relocates. Furthermore, we propose that Key Stage 4 students are encouraged to use the library, as it would be beneficial for their education. This could be done through posters around the school, form tutors and the library itself. In addition, improved facilities would help attract people to the library e.g. a wider range of DVDs and CDs and a relaxation corner, where people can read for leisure. •

How many students actually use the library?
From the interviews we conducted, we discovered that the atmosphere in the library is not very hospitable for the younger years. The librarians were opposed to the card system themselves and the location of the library does not attract people. Since the library moved to the ALC, the Key Stage 4 students have stopped visiting and the





Would it be beneficial for KS4 students to have a comfortable designated seating area?

Daisy Pope 11KVL
Bekah Oxley 11KVL

Rationale

Being in year 11 we have sometimes found it very difficult to find somewhere to sit and relax at lunch and break times, especially when exams are on and the hall is closed. Therefore we wanted to see if other KS4 students had the same views and what they would like to be done about it.

Our research aims

To see if research would allow us to test our hypothesis and whether the data collected would enable us to come to an overall conclusion.

Our hypothesis: "Different lunch and break time environments can influence attitudes of students in the following lessons and throughout the rest of the day."

Methodologies

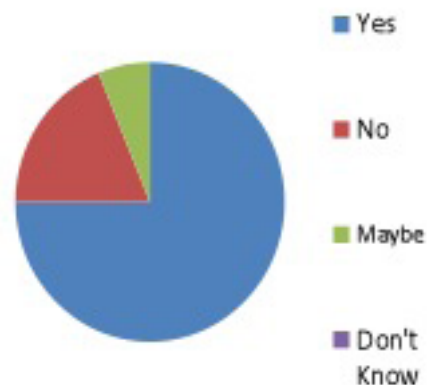
We decided to use two primary methods of

research:

Interviews (qualitative data) and
Questionnaires (quantitative data)

This is so that we could gain a better understanding of how students felt about their seating areas as we mainly wanted students' points of view because we think that the students are the most important people concerning this issue.

Q6. Do you think how you spend your lunch and break times can influence your mood in your next lesson?



Sample and Respondents

We randomly chose form groups whose year 10 and 11 students were asked to answer our questionnaire. We chose the form groups randomly so that we would get a good variation of students. We interviewed five different students in year 10 and in year 11 to gain a firsthand account of what they thought about KS4 break and lunch time facilities. We randomly chose students to give us more diverse opinions.

Findings

Our research showed that 60% of students said that they often get moved from where they choose to spend their time, other than the hall, at lunch and break and 52% of students do not feel relaxed in their next lesson after lunch and break times, as the numbers are so similar we believe there may be a link.

Conclusion

We conclude that...Most KS4 students do not enjoy spending their time in the hall at lunch and breaks because they feel it is uncomfortable. Most KS4 students would prefer to have a designated area to spend their free time which provides a comfortable and relaxing environment. Students feel that having an uncomfortable and unrelaxing lunch and/or break can have a negative influence on their next lesson.

Recommendations

We would like to recommend that in any further developments that take place in Beauchamp you will consider our findings and bear in mind that our research concludes the hall is mostly an uncomfortable place for KS4 students to spend their free time and that a designated/comfortable area, especially when exams are on, or more comfortable improvements to the hall would be preferable in the future. •





Boys' disillusionment

To what extent can non-conventional methods of communication encourage reading in boys?

*Joseph Gilford,
Teacher of English*

Investigating the facts which cause disillusionment and underachievement in boys

The underachieving boy has been a key focus for discussion over the past fifteen years as the gender gap has become more and more apparent. This is especially evident when we begin to recognize the national statistics as well as those at Beauchamp. The statistics for GCSE English in 2009 at Beauchamp, showed that 93% of female students achieved an A*-C, compared to 78.5% of males achieving this. Although, both of these results are well above the national average they represent a 14.5% difference between male and female students. Boys underachievement is even more prevalent in the highest grades, with 39.3% of females gaining an A*-A in GCSE English, compared to 17% of males. Therefore, Beauchamp is no exception to the divide in results between male and female students in GCSE English. This therefore causes us to question why these statistics are evident within the college. Is there a gender gap because of a lack of ability, or is it because of the curriculum and teaching styles being

more favourable to girls, and thus resulting in discouraged boys. It is these statistics, coupled with the fact that there seem to be a higher quantity of disillusioned boys in lessons that encouraged me to investigate this area.

In the second year of my Masters, I investigated whether technology could be used as an effective way to combat disillusionment and underachievement. Students, especially boys, are often more drawn to the internet, computer games and iPods/Mobile phones, thus seeming an interesting avenue to research. I decided to explore three key areas; Facebook and social networking; audio books; and more conventional reading logs.

Facebook and social networking

This area involved me researching whether a Facebook page with revision materials, recommended reading lists, downloaded articles, discussion forums and links to other literary pages would help encourage reading. From interviews and questionnaires

I found that students found this to be a good tool for revision, rather than a resource which encouraged them to read more literature, other than their set literature texts. Nonetheless, I still regard this to be a result, especially when you consider that students who accessed this site, using it for revision, met or in the majority of cases exceeded their FFT grade by one, and some students achieving as many as two grades higher than their FFT grade. Undoubtedly, there is a place for more online applications for students, which is an area which should be further investigated, especially as Facebook is the most accessed page on the internet. However, there are other possibilities, such as using Twitter and Blogs, especially if these could be incorporated into Moodle.

Audio books

This was perhaps the biggest success as four year 11 boys were given access to audio books in order to help them revise and encourage them to read more. I chose audio books as these offer an indirect reading experience as plot, characterisation, imagery, to name a few, can still be understood and explored through audio. In many ways, an audio book is more accessible as it can be listened to in more situations. All four students who listened to these found that they enjoyed using them, finding them to break 'reading' down into more manageable chunks suggesting that they would use them again in the future. But the most pleasing aspect of audio books were the grades achieved by the students who used them as it gave them a greater confidence with literature, not only their set texts, but also with the unseen literature in the GCSE

English exam. Two students achieved two grades higher than their FFT targets, and the other two achieved one grade higher than their FFT grade in Literature. All students also achieved at least one grade higher in their GCSE English exam. These successes have caused me to use audio books more in my lessons, as well as encouraging students to use them outside of the classroom.

Reading logs

When questioning students, many said that they would like more quiet independent reading sessions at the start of lessons. Therefore, one Year 10 class, were given the opportunity to keep a reading log of the fiction and non-fiction texts they had read; this was in conjunction with a fifteen minute quiet reading session at the start of one double a week. Students enjoyed the opportunity to share reading, especially the boys, who tended to read more non-fiction texts, giving them an opportunity to discuss and evaluate texts, often without realising they were doing it. After several months of these reading sessions, the level of reading for all students had increased outside of school, especially amongst boys. This is because students, especially boys, need to be given the opportunities and guidance to help initiate and foster reading practices, thus getting them more into the habit of reading.

Recommendations from this research

To further research the use of blogs, social networking sites and other forms of technology as ways to engage and develop



learners within the college; however this may be more beneficial for revision.

To further explore using non-conventional methods of communication in lessons, especially incorporating an English blog.

To make students more aware of audio books, and incorporating the use of these within lessons.

To have a weekly structured reading session for Year 10 students at the beginning of each double lesson, but to allow for students to read fiction and non-fiction texts.

To email parents suggested reading lists for their children to try and read.

be eventually discovered as I continue with this research. Ultimately, if we can close the gender gap, but more importantly, enthuse and motivate disillusioned students, then we will have an improved learning environment.

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Current research

With all of this research in mind I have decided to continue researching boys' disillusionment for my dissertation, but this time with a focus on the specific causes rather than the solutions. I chose this area as I feel that it is all well and good looking for the solutions, but if we are able to hit the problem head on by exploring the causes, then we may be able to continue to combat their underachievement. Therefore my research involves me looking across the Key Stages, from the Foundation Stage to A-level examining the factors which cause boys to become disillusioned.

Initial findings

From the interviews and research already conducted it appears that the lack of male role models, lack of creativity and feminised curriculum are causing boys to become disillusioned. It remains to be seen what will



‘Understanding what revision strategies students use, and how effective they perceive these to be. How can I improve my teaching as a result of this?’

Ann Berry
Teacher of Business Studies and Economics

Purpose

I chose to base my small research project on revision techniques used by students. Given the importance of exam results at A-level in determining the future study/career options for students, the focus of my research was Year 13 economics students.

My research question was chosen in order to challenge a widely held assumption that, by the time they get to year 13, students know how to revise and what techniques work best for them.

I wanted to learn more about student’s actual approach to revision in order to help me develop and improve my practice in relation to exam preparation.

The key areas of focus for the inquiry were:

1. The varieties of techniques and resources students use to revise and how they value each.

2. Students’ approach to revision and the effort applied to the process; how organised and disciplined are they when it comes to revision?
3. Self-efficacy: How accurate are Students’ beliefs in their own competency and what are the factors that might affect this:
 - The performance goals they set themselves
 - The accuracy of students’ assessment of their competence
 - Motivation
4. What external factors affect the students’ approach to revision?
 - Peer pressure
 - Parental pressure

Research

This was a small scale research project as part of the first module of my MA in Educational Leadership and Management. The methodology adopted was student questionnaires issued to one group of A2

economics students, and a focus group with selected members of the group based on the results of the initial questionnaire.

Findings and Recommendations

1. Variety of techniques

The table below summarises the students responses in terms of techniques used and valued.

	Low value	High Value
Low usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BOLL Economics web sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mind Maps Sessions on how to revise Teacher produced revision packs
High Usage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Past papers Teacher-led sessions Revision Notes (colour coded) Published revision guides Charts and flow charts

- Past papers and Revision guides are the most valued and often used resources by students.
- Whilst they can see the value in using mind-maps, students felt they needed instruction in how to construct and produce them in order to be able to use them effectively.
- Even by Year 13, there are a number of students who would welcome teacher-led sessions on how to approach revision. For some, this was a realisation that the more 'lack' approach adopted towards revision at GCSE and AS level would not work at A2; for others, previous revision strategies had failed to produce good results and

therefore the perception of these students was that they had done it wrong!

- BOLL is an area for development for A-level economics. Although much has already been done to develop our own economic resources for BOLL, a key issue is the fact that Economics is not a widely offered subject in state schools and as a result there is a lack of market produced resources available for us to purchase to develop BOLL further.

2. Approach to revision

In terms of timing, 3 weeks is a key timescale:

- 65% of students start their revision 3 weeks before their exam
- Less than 10% any earlier than this.

Revision timetables not an effective tool

- Only 25% draw up a revision timetable
- None stick to it!

3. Self-Efficacy

University offer grades are the key performance goals

- All students firmly focused on the grades required to secure their university place.
- Less than 20% of students are interested in achieving beyond these and stretching themselves to achieve the best they can.
- Exam performance and technique more important than a deep understanding of the subject.
- Motivation - Parental pressure is the

most important influence on students' motivation to revise

Recommendations

- Encourage students to adopt more effective note taking methods throughout the year e.g. Cornell approach to avoid timely rewriting of class notes for revision.
- Supplement current past paper revision material with additional revision materials.
- Further develop the BOLL resources for A level economics
- Use year round assessments/target grades to develop a personalised revision schedule for each student
- Incorporate more exemplar materials in to help students gauge the level that they need to aim for.
- Ensure that parents are communicated with in the run-up to exams: share expectations and advice with parents to enable them to support the students during revision. •



Do Extra-Curricular Days Benefit Students?

Jovia Gao 10NS

Jessica Bains 10RLS

Some see it as a chance to play truant, others as an opportunity. Teachers spend hundreds of hours organising them. But, at the end of the day, do extra-curricular activities actually benefit the students?

This topic is relevant to school-life because extra-curricular days are an extra that the school does not necessarily have to put on. Therefore, it was of particular interest to discover whether students enjoy or benefit from the activities on offer.

The sub-questions to be answered were:

- Do extra-curricular days benefit the learning of students?
- Are extra-curricular days enjoyable?
- Do students enjoy extra-curricular days?
- Do extra-curricular days provide a break from the syllabus for GCSE and A-level?

Methodologies

Data was gathered by two different methods; questionnaires and interviews. Forty

questionnaires were sent out in sets of four to a random selection of forms and tutors were asked to give one to a student from each of the year groups. This was in order to gain a student view on whether extra-curricular days benefitted them. However, there were only twenty-two responses, but, due to time restraints and other complications, more could not be sent out. Realising that this sample size was extremely small, some informal interviews were conducted with friends and acquaintances who had taken part in Creativity Days and Challenge Days here, at Beauchamp, to gather some qualitative data from students.

Results

Interviews

All of the teachers agreed that extra-curricular days benefit students. Benefits included helping pupils widen their horizons, extend knowledge, prepare them for life outside of college and express themselves in different ways. One teacher mentioned that sixth-

formers got involved in the organisation of BeauchStock, a music festival last year. The teachers also noted that the days gave students a break from a very set, structured syllabus. They also felt that it was better to get students to sign on to an activity so the amount of students playing truant is reduced. Something mentioned by all five of the teachers that we interviewed was that the days seem to always fall on the same days — specifically Tuesdays and Fridays— so the lessons that are on these days are consistently affected.

Questionnaires

64% of our sample population thought that extra-curricular days benefitted their learning. Although three-quarters of students were interested in extra-curricular days, only 59% actually enjoy taking part in them. Students also welcome the break from normal lessons.

Informal Interviews

In the informal interviews, we asked students what they thought of the extra-curricular days, what benefits they received and what they would improve. Students thought that they could try things that they would not necessarily be able to do in lessons or under other circumstances and that some activities encouraged them to think in innovative, out-of-the-box ways. Some pointed out that they were able to have fun while still learning at school and it was a good way to take a break from lessons. Students also enjoyed the atmosphere around college when BeauchStock and lounge music sessions were on. There were some negative responses. Some students believed that the days were

a “waste of time” because the activities were boring. The solution to this, they thought, was that students should be able to suggest the activities that they would like to see and the feasible ones should be voted on. Some Key Stage 5 students were unwilling to even take part because they thought that the activities were mainly aimed at Key Stage 4 and did not appeal to them.

Recommendations

From the research conducted, recommendations for improvement have been drawn:

- Students should be asked the activities they would like to appear in extra-curricular days in order to generate more student interest.
- Students should be encouraged to help organise extra-curricular days, with the support of a member of staff to ensure they are more involved with the planning of the day.
- There needs to be more thought put into the day on which an extra-curricular day falls to lessen the effect on subjects that are, at present, continuously affected.
- The procedure of signing up to activities, instead of just having a day off, should be continued in the future to reduce the number of students playing truant. •



To what extent does taking an e-portfolio approach aid learners to develop individual and collaborative understanding in design and technology?

*Niles Visavadia,
Teacher of Design*

In this paper I was interested in how learners make use of modern communication methods to aid their learning. Equally I wanted to explore effective methods of up to date teaching.

My interests grew out of a number of early research findings including an utterly fascinating lecture at a recent conference by Jonathan Akwue (2009). The lecture described a changing learning landscape for generation Y (our current cohort of students). Akwue describes some of the characteristics of this group of learners as, 'multi-tasking, technically savvy and collaborative networkers'. The theme of collaboration is further examined through Vygotsky's theory of social constructivist learning (1978) where speech plays a central role. The research goes on to determine an effective frame work for classroom talk and is used to judge the extent of learner's progress.

The research also points to an emerging need to redefine the context of literacy. Brown (2009) suggests fluency in literacy for today's e-learner is as much about visual, musical,

social and kinaesthetic as it is about text, and that information navigation is perhaps the key component of literacy in the digital age. Furthermore Xenia Danos (2010) has presented the idea of 'graphicacy', the ability to communicate through visual information, as having equal importance to literacy and numeracy to today's classroom learner.

The research draws upon a large scale national study conducted by Kimbell and Stables (1985-2009) called project e-escape. This project was based on recordings and assessment of the live progress made by KS3/4 D&T students as they worked through a design and make task via a web based e-portfolio. My own research takes an ethnographic case study approach with four Year 10 product design students at Beauchamp College. Some of the research principles draw upon those used in project escape.

A number of research tools are used to obtain the responses from the sample of four students. This data is further corroborated against semi structured questionnaires carried

out with 100 Year 10 students and 100 Year 12 students. From the many outcomes of the questionnaires it becomes clear that social networking websites are used extensively by students, however communication via the college email system is heavily underused.

Interestingly it is also apparent that Facebook, which is the most popular website, is used almost entirely for personal use rather than to discuss college work. When students are probed about the potential of Facebook to be used to aid college work an apparent gap appears between Year 10 opinion, who show a negative regard and Year 12 who are more open to the idea. The perceptions learners hold here appear to conflict with the views of others. Observing university education, Brown (2009) notes a recent study conducted by the President of Harvard which asked, 'what is the single best predictor of being successful at Harvard, answer, your ability to join study groups'. This provides further evidence that learners are successfully forming opinions and constructing knowledge from each other. The differing opinions held by college and university learners are perhaps accounted for in part by the levels of age and maturity between the groups.

In project e-scape live web based e-folios and mobile devices were used to guide students through the design and make task. When simulating a similar scenario for my own research the four Year 10 students carrying out the game in a bag e-folio project raised concern about being over directed, repetition and plagiarism, but were very positive about the ability to reflect on their learning and plan for further progress. The analysis of the data further supports the findings which

show greater potential for meta-cognition to occur. Kimbell (2009) has described this process as useful not only to gather evidence of capability but also in scaffolding the progress of the activity and the performance of learners.

From the number of useful insights offered, of particular significance is perhaps the influence technology is having on the changing way in which knowledge is being constructed and consumed through social collaboration. These factors have clear relevance to education, and therefore are important considerations for the development of teaching and learning of generation Y in the constructivist classroom. Furthermore it is also clear that teachers will need to verse themselves with a digital pedagogy that does not suffocate, by being formulaic, but scaffolds classroom learning.

The questions for further research that arise from this study are many but specifically include those concerned with the quality of learners' collaborative experiences. Hennessy and Murphy (1999) have suggested that too much classroom practice is based on 'collaborating to learn', rather than 'learning to collaborate' and that higher level cognition occurs more effectively through approaches taken by the latter. Heeding this advice, the importance should then be placed on how collaborative understanding happens and significantly, how it can be better mediated through modern and relevant means.

During my MSc course I found a number of books on research methods helpful however, this one was written in plain English and designed with the beginning researcher/

practitioner in mind.

Thomas, G. (2009) How to Do Your Research Project: A Guide for Students in Education and Applied Social Sciences. London: Sage Publications.

You may also find the following interesting:

Using Action Research to inform better classroom teaching
<http://idater.lboro.ac.uk/>

Literacy, Numeracy and Graphicacy
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZvsZtUfQQs>

TED - Graphicacy
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP4AkVC HJ0k&feature=related>

TED- Ken Robinson, Do schools kill Education?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55 wbtY&feature=related>

If you would like to know more or just talk about any of the issues raised in this short abstract please feel free to email me, nv@beauchamp.org.uk or pop down and see me in Design.





beauchampcollege

Ridgeway Oadby Leicester LE2 5TP

www.beauchamp.org.uk