

Description of the Project

Throughout Europe, many citizens with severe learning disabilities didn't have the opportunity to attend schools until the 1970s. Before this time, their needs were addressed by social services or health authorities and a medical model was followed, as education was thought inappropriate for such children.

Now, the right to education for all children has been established in all European countries with many young people who have learning disabilities attending school with their able bodied peers.

However, opportunities for some of the most vulnerable young people are very limited when they come to leave school. There are a number of factors surrounding this; a curriculum which does not encompass the skills and attitudes required for the world of work, the lack of appropriate facilities and college courses geared to meet the needs of those with special educational needs and ultimately, the lack of employment opportunities for young people with learning difficulties.

As special educators, we feel that we must work to address some of the deficiencies in provision and support to enable our pupils to make the greatest success possible of their lives. This will include preparing them to be economically active and recognise that they have a valuable contribution to make to their local and global community.

An aim of our partnership is to address some of these problems by sharing our expertise to develop a work related curriculum which will provide our students with the skills and attitudes required for the world of work.

The participating institutions have particular strengths which allow them to develop specific areas, these being:

UK - inclusion in schools and colleges

Estonia - Independent living skills

Portugal - Social inclusion and vocational training

Romania - work related learning

Latvia - work related learning for students with severe learning disabilities and ICT.

We feel that this project team is well equipped to deliver an ambitious project with each participating institution bringing individual strengths and a network of external partners to test and contribute to the project's development and implementation.

The co-ordinator will communicate with all partners and stakeholders every two weeks using electronic mail to keep them informed of the development of the project, to ensure clarity, to remind partners of deadlines and to rectify any problems that may arise. The role of the co-ordinator is also to collect base line data and termly data from partners as this will be the tool for the development of a work related curriculum. A termly newsletter containing project, community and work related news will produced and circulated. The co-ordinator will collate items sent by partners and produce the newsletter. The newsletter will be circulated in schools and the local community.

Transnational project meetings will take place each term and address specific aspects of the project, these being:

Year 1

Data collection and curriculum planning workshop

(Data informing of students cognitive needs, behavioural needs. A curriculum plan will be produced)

Sharing good practice in work related learning, visit and seminar.

(Visits to areas of good practice to observe and discuss work related learning. A seminar will inform the group of existing practice in partner schools. It will be decided which components of existing good practice will be placed in curriculum documentation).

Employability and the importance of social inclusion.

(Visits to places of employment and meetings with employers. Employers will inform the group of skills and attitudes they are looking for in employees).

Visits to areas which demonstrate positive inclusion in the work place).

Year 2

Development of basic skills including the use of ICT.

(Workshop to decide the workplace vocabulary and numeracy to be included in our work related curriculum. Use of ICT as a communication and information gathering tool - seminar).

Communication and literacy in the workplace.

(A team activity exercise to highlight vital communication in the workplace).

(Seminar informing group of age appropriate reading materials).

(Meeting with employers to discuss obstacles for employment).

Seminar - A common goal, developing a work related curriculum.

(Meeting to collaborate our findings and expertise. A workshop to decide on the structure of the work related curriculum. Following the meeting the group will decide who will complete aspects of the curriculum).

Year 3

Visits to areas of good practice involving opportunities in the world of work. Convention with employers, agencies and post school providers.

(Meeting to decide which aspects of work experience and sheltered work experience should be incorporated in our curriculum).

Meeting - monitoring, evaluation and dissemination of our work related curriculum.

(Document to be produced incorporating data, monitoring, evaluation and dissemination).

Meeting - launch our final documentation of a work related curriculum.

(Seminar informing group of the delivery of a work related curriculum within partner schools).

Staff from each partner school will attend project meetings. The international co-ordinator from each partner school will be accompanied by a maximum of two staff who demonstrate expertise or are developing expertise in work related learning. Seminars and workshops will be supported by local experts and employers will be given the opportunity to visit areas of good practice.

The results expected during the project and on its completion are as follows:

RESULTS

School:

- A detailed work related curriculum is in place and active in all partner schools which will incorporate basic skills (literacy and numeracy), careers education and guidance, social skills (Personal Social and Health Education), leisure activities, independence skills and ICT. All aspects of the work related curriculum will be designed to support young people with learning disabilities in a relevant, meaningful manner and will be reviewed annually.
- An assessment system will be used to evaluate individual learning and will be a tool for establishing work related education plans.
- A system of data collection and its impact will be in place in each partner school and reviewed termly.
- Strengthened relationships with local employers in all partner schools.
- School Governor representation from world of work/employers.
- Greater links with agencies and local colleges.
- It will raise the profile of our schools in the community and bring the community into our schools.
- It will raise the profile of SEN in our communities, our countries and across Europe.
- It will expand our community of learning by providing opportunities for families and the wider community to engage in work related activities.
- It will inform the wider community of the rights of all citizens to become active members of the work place.
- Our schools will become pathfinders for multi-agency work related learning and will have a raised profile in the wider educational community.

Learners:

- Students will access a meaningful, relevant work related curriculum which will prepare them for employment.
- Students will have a greater understanding of the world of work and of the skills and requirements of the workplace.
- Students will be confident communicators and have an increased work related vocabulary.
- Students will gain skills which will enable them to live independently or with some support.
- Students will access work experiences placements where appropriate.
- Students will be aware of the opportunities for volunteering in their communities.
- Students will have a greater understanding of work opportunities across Europe.
- All students will be aware of their rights and responsibilities and will embody quintessential values of European citizenship and be aware of European mobility.
- Our students will have a greater understanding of Europe and gain a sense of being European citizens.

Staff:

- Staff will have gained the opportunity to work collaboratively and communicate with colleagues in other European countries with increased confidence.
- A platform will have been created to allow staff to share expertise and develop an essential work related curriculum which will be used in our schools and with SEN providers across Europe, therefore recognising their status as feeling valued as expert facilitators.
- Staff will have an increased understanding of a work related curriculum through a planned programme of CPD.
- Staff will feel valued members of a European family of special educators and will continue to plan curriculum areas and share initiatives.