

Solway Community School

British Science Museum Project

As a direct result of the Mexico link project the British Council recommended that our school be invited to take part in the British Science Museum debate "Climate Change-Your Burning Questions". We are one of only 8 link partnership schools in the UK to have been invited to take part in this project that will culminate in 14 of our students travelling to London during February 2003 to take part in this prestigious debate.

As part of the new Citizenship curriculum all of our year 11 students are currently undertaking the research and display work necessary to ensure that those who eventually represent us in London are fully equipped with the knowledge and understanding of the subject that they will need.

Wildflower and Sensory Garden Project

The school council in collaboration with year 8 pupils and Solway Rural Initiative have recently been successful in their application for a grant from the Cumbria Community Foundation to develop a small area at the back of the school into a wildflower and sensory garden for the benefit of the wider community. The aim of this active citizenship project is to encourage our young people to become responsible active citizens through hands on work, planning and making the garden giving due consideration to the needs of others.

Pupils are to begin this work during this month and hope to have the garden finished by the spring. The garden will contain a pond, wild flowers and herbs, benches and nesting boxes and will be wheelchair accessible.

Mexico Link Project

Breaking down misconceptions and prejudices

Solway Community School Manuel Hayser Jiminez

The School Council at Solway Community School first became involved in the Mexico link project during September 2001 after realising that the British Council in Mexico City were keen to find Secondary schools in Cumbria to link with Secondary schools in Mexico City.

Cumbria Development Education Centre coordinated the project and were instrumental in the pairing of schools from each country.

The objectives of this project were to promote cultural exchange between Mexico and the UK and to compare life, attitudes and society. To raise awareness of citizenship issues; family, community, human rights amongst secondary pupils and to encourage the use of information technology as a form of personal communication.

It was obvious from the start how much both communities had to gain from a link partnership when pupils from each school were asked what their assumptions were concerning their link country, people, environment etc.

Our assumptions about Mexico:

Poor people
Dodgy moustaches and big hats
Hot, desert, speedy mice
No clean drinking water
A nation of refugees trying to escape

Mexican assumptions about Cumbria:

Hooligans
Castles
Cold weather and fog
People are cold in attitude
Families are not close
The people are mentally and physically better than us.

Currently we have nine pupils of Solway Community School who have been responsible for the development of the link programme. These pupils represent all year groups and have been working on the link since the start. They are dedicated to the aims of the programme and meet at least once a week in their own time. Through them the rest of the school and wider community are becoming aware of the discussion topics and are united in the aim of dispelling current misconceptions about Mexico.

The teacher exchange sponsored by the British Council earlier this year has most certainly been beneficial to both of our communities; all involved have learnt so much about each other and we have forged a strong relationship to build on. As teachers we realise that we can only do so much to inform our pupils and as hard as we might try to relive our experiences for them, we are still teachers telling them. The real difference will come when all our community has the chance to meet with and speak to our counterparts. With this conviction the original Mexico link has now developed into the Solway Mexico Link and we propose to develop our link initially through the exchange of the link pupils next year.

I am sure you will agree that this is a worthwhile project and I hope you will support us in the development of this work.

If you feel you can help us raise the funds needed for this project please contact Julia Cooper at Solway Community School.



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