A (composite) week in the life of a design and technology coordinator

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

I have been a non-class based deputy with the opportunity to support and work throughout the school in a variety of ways, including the development of technology. These are a few remembered moments.

Monday:

After a session of administrative catching up (who designs some of these forms?) I happily went along to Reception class, having remembered to put my 'technology trousers' (p.v.a. resistant/machine washable) on. It is amazing how far glue can go when spread over little hands! In the event it was a familiar exercise with the 'water castle' construction equipment, initially as a dry run. The children in the group were quick to realise the ways in which it could be manipulated and could meet simple challenges. Not only that, they could also predict how the water would flow down through their designs (demonstrating valuable bathtime/Nursery experience). Some components had been individually tested in the sink, but two completed models were taken outside, along with a variety of water-filled containers in order to evaluate the castle creations. Needless to say, the children gave them the thumbs-up and I came out reasonably dry.

At dinner-time there was a minor incident when a ball got stuck in the branches of a tree. I had to stop children throwing stones at it, pointing out that their problem-solving solution could lead to greater problems!

Tuesday:

The Year 4 teacher phoned in sick so I had to change my plans and cover the class. They had been doing work on electrical circuits and so I took the opportunity to do a technology-based mini project (what else!) for the day. I had remembered an excellent early SATIS unit about pylons which I could use as a starting point. Having been pleased with this initial inspiration I was amazed when we could not see any pylons within the vicinity despite being in the middle of the Black Country. All was not lost, though. I found a surprisingly good safety film which started off the discussion, from which came investigations into 'strong' shapes using card strips and paper fasteners, stability tests, sketched pylon designs and safety posters. By the end of the day, with the whiff of silver spray paint still in the air, we had our own national grid of individually engineered card pylons just waiting to be wired up.

The staff meeting after school was for a technology review. We were looking at coverage and continuity. I had been collecting examples of work to show aspects of textiles within the school. There were some lovely pieces of weaving and texture work based on 'Elmer the Patchwork Elephant' from Key Stage 1, together with cross-stitch, computer design and appliqué collage from Key Stage 2. It led to discussion about skills routes and plotting progression (I may have to devise yet another grid!).

Wednesday:

We started the day with a Year 2 class presenting their assembly to the whole school – a feat of technology in itself – by brilliantly performing the complete story of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory in three easy scenes. They then reported on their visit to Cadbury World, but ran out of free samples before they got to me.

From then on it was a day of minor problems: the stock of 10mm wood had suddenly dropped to scavenge level due to the Tudor house construction of Barratt's proportions going on in Year 3. An emergency phone call to the local wood shop remedied that. Then the Reception tape recorder was sent with a cassette jammed inside – a job for the technology coordinator. Finally, the Ion camera, the answer to our 3D model storage problems, decided to go on the blink – so much for technology!

Thursday:

I had a purge on central resources, the eternal headache. I am a hoarder of useful items (everything) by nature but sometimes I try to be vaguely rational, knowing very well that whatever I throw out will be the one thing I am desperate for next week. (I wonder whose law that is?)

After break time I was, by special request, going to demonstrate a tissue, hot-air balloon to the budding Richard Bransons in

Year 2. I had foolishly related in the staff room the story of how I had previously made and tested one at home with spectacular results. It had risen into the night sky and floated in the direction of Birmingham City Centre, much to my horror. With the children assembled at a safe distance to witness the Mk.2, I got ready for launch. Unfortunately, just as it was about to life off a gust of wind blew the envelope into the flame and the audience cheered as burnt fragments dispersed in the breeze.

In the afternoon Year 6 children were to be observed rushing round with syringes in pursuit of pneumatic applications. I had a very serious conversation with Tim, a Year 1 child about the distinctions between natural and man-made materials. I managed to confuse myself, but he said he would find out and let me know. Shortly after, I was proudly offered a cake that had been cooked in Reception. My evaluation was very positive despite any misgivings I may have had about additional ingredients that any have been included.

Friday:

It was my turn to lead the whole-school assembly. I always use props to keep the younger ones interested. Today it was one of those plastic, balloon-powered rotors. The thing worked beautifully and the children applauded spontaneously as it whirled and whined upwards. I gave some of the older children the task of thinking about how it worked while I told the story of Icarus. The moral of the story was probably less important, though, than where you could get a model helicopter from.

Thinking about next term's planning I was asked for possible technology ideas to do with the proposed topic on 'water'. This was to include a visit to a sewerage works – needless to say, not all the suggestions were either practical or desirable, but they were technology!

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