

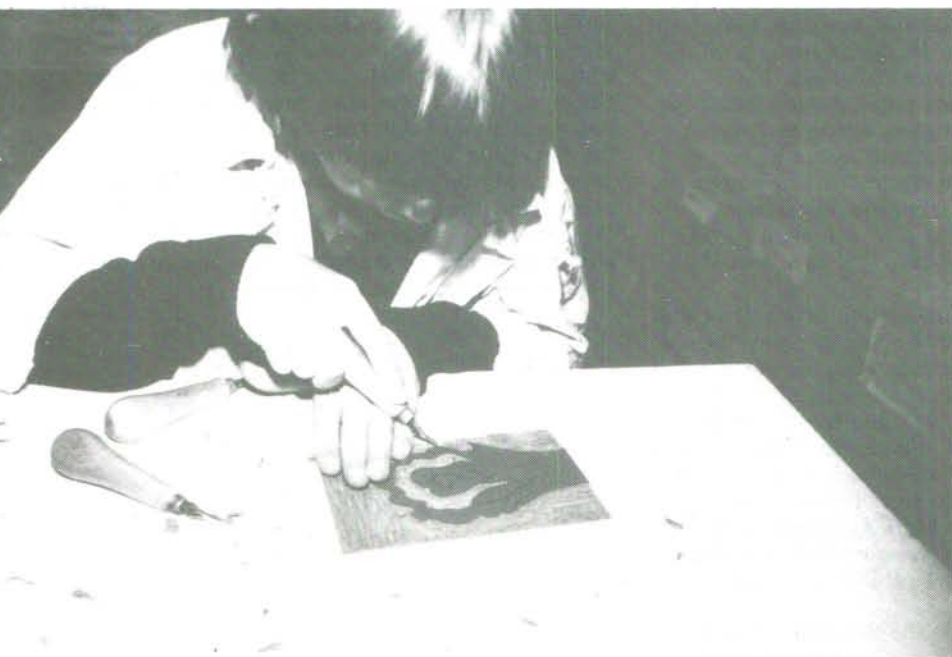
Inter-School Liaison in Art, Craft Design and Technology

In an ideal world, progress from one level of education to the next would be simple, each student would move through a system which was constantly in tune with his needs, there would be no unnecessary breaks, each teacher would see himself as an aid to the student in his own development and would have complete confidence in the work of his colleagues in neighbouring levels of the process. But if we were to be commissioned to design a

Project assembly.



Lino cutting



system specifically to frustrate this smooth progress then we would, in the present structure, have an ideal model. Such a system would require a great variety of levels with widely varying resources and financing, each part would need to be independent of every other part and would be encouraged to develop its own individuality. Each teacher would be independent also and would himself decide on the work to be carried out by his students without reference to any one else. We would create a system which encouraged professional parochialism and would ensure that neither individuals nor institutions had any accountability, we would render ineffective any finer degrees of control and would rely on colleagues powers of persuasion to effect change. We would foster professional jealousy and inter-institutional suspicion which would inhibit change.

Fortunately our system is composed very largely of people who want to achieve this smooth student progress in spite of the problems which make effective liaison so difficult. In order to achieve it, each institution has to surrender a part of its independence, it has to be prepared to be bound by a liaison agreement and to implement any changes even if they require some modification of the institutions own priorities. Such commitments cut across dearly prized independence and consequently cause friction within institutions which are not geared to external control.

The liaison work between our Creative Arts Faculty and our four major contributory middle schools, over a number of years has fallen victim to many of these stresses. So that when the request came in 1982 from our CEO to try again to achieve better liaison in the area Art, Craft, Design and Technology I was very apprehensive, even with the support of the local authority advisory staff and the NFER. I knew how easy it is for a number of teachers to meet, agree aims and objectives, set up a common syllabus and produce an attractive report. I knew that in the past such exercises had not succeeded because the individual teachers who contributed did so without a commitment from their own schools to put any agreement into effect. I knew that such ineffective agreements are worse than no agreement because of the cynicism they produce.

However, this time there were some encouraging aspects which eventually convinced me that the risk was worth taking. First of all the local authority, through the CEO, had made the first move and this move recognised the value of Design Based learning at all levels. There was a guarantee of financial support and even though this was hardly a blank cheque it did encourage us. The middle schools had developed more effective team teaching, which we ourselves were learning from. The heads of the establishments were to be involved at the outset, at



*Above: project testing
Above right: project assembly*



the ratification and during the evaluation process and we had a very strong support system available. I felt that if we succeeded it would establish design based work across several subject areas from art to technology, the whole package would be recognised not only by individuals but by schools and the local authority all of which would be under some obligation to effect the changes and provide much needed resources. And so we committed ourselves to the project.

The first stage of the liaison programme is now completed with the publication of the 'Agreed Approach for Middle Schools in the Carisbrooke High School Area'. This document is not merely a list of aims and objectives nor even an agreed syllabus but a complete system for liaison of which the document itself is only the first part. The document defines the area of concern to ACDT and lists essential elements in terms of thinking and practical skills, experiences, materials, tools and attitudes to be developed. It seeks to clarify where there may be misunderstandings by exploring the meanings and use of graphics, the learning patterns for technology, changing attitudes in art education and it presents the whole design activity as essentially one. It talks in practical terms about time required, and both human and material sources it provides starting points for work and an example of a scenario for design activity, it provides a check list of skills which a student might be expected to develop and most importantly it sets up its own evaluation system. While each part of the document is important, for the purposes of this article I would like to mention three in particular.

The first section is in answer to the question 'What comprises ACDT in a 9-13 middle schools?' A question which had arisen because some heads

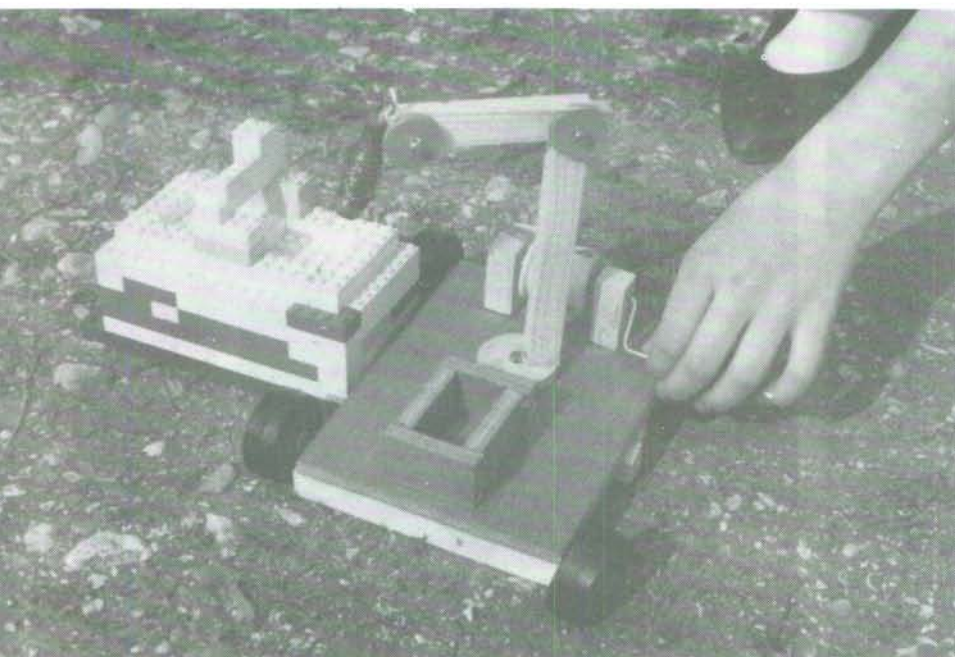
did not seem too sure and maybe we too needed to clear the ground. The answer seems to me to illustrate the breadth of the approach and also our concern to present the understanding of technology, the ability to make and build, communications skills and concern for feelings as essential elements in the whole.

The group spent a considerable time reflecting on this question, looking at children's work, reading, and viewing television programmes. This investigation was necessary to pin down the type of work which falls beneath the umbrella of ACDT. A consensus was reached that work covered by ACDT includes:

1. 2D and 3D art activities — emphasising aesthetics.
2. Working with wood, metal, plastics, emphasising skills.
3. Solving problems which require an end product — thinking skills and a design process.
4. Applying scientific principles to solve problems (Zanussi science) — emphasising technology.
5. Drawing and graphics — important 'enabling' abilities.

There was also agreement on factors which should underpin a middle schools course in ACDT.

- a) Pupils should have experience in using a wide range of materials.
- b) They should be taught a range of skills and techniques.
- c) They should observe, investigate and record, aspects of the natural and man-made world as a background of experience for future use.



Project testing

- d) They should apply knowledge and skills to make decisions and complete partially solved problems.
- e) They should, in the final year, be asked to investigate simple problems and identify solutions to those problems.
- f) Emphasis should also be placed on quality of work and aesthetic appreciation, as well as a respect for and care of tools and equipment.
- g) The joy of working and making should not be overlooked.
- h) Thinking and feeling should not be in conflict and both should be encouraged.

The second section concerns the attitudes to be nurtured in middle school ACDT. It reminds me that knowledge and skills are only part of the process and that unless we act upon the attitudes of young people they are unlikely to be able to use their skills and knowledge effectively for their own and for the good of their fellow men.

While it is recognised that the development of practical and intellectual skills together with the acquisition of knowledge are fundamental in respect of ACDT, it is also most important that pupils develop constructive attitudes.

1. Pupils should seek enjoyment and value personal satisfaction from their achievements in designing and making things.
2. Pupils should be encouraged to be involved and committed to ACDT activities.
3. Pupils should be willing to take responsibility for planning their own work, thinking ahead in order to identify problems.
4. Pupils should be encouraged to work co-operatively in order to value and respect the contributions made by themselves and others.
5. Pupils should develop a pride in their performance, attempting to achieve quality, accuracy and precision in thinking and making.
6. Pupils should value the materials they work with.
7. Pupils should value the 'process' as well as end products.
8. Pupils should be encouraged to have the confidence to 'have a go' and stick with a task until it is completed.
9. Pupils should be actively encouraged to overcome traditional sex role barriers.

The third section concerns the built-in evaluation aspects of the programme which ensures that all parties to the agreement make progress towards implementing it, and which requires annual written

reports which will account for the progress made and the problems encountered.

In order to keep the agreement between partner-schools alive and flourishing it is suggested that an annual review is necessary. The review would help with liaison between feeder Middle Schools and the High School, particularly among Carisbrooke High School to respond to what is a developmental situation in the Middle Schools.

The review should be in two parts, a) a written report by both Middle and High Schools which are exchanged in the January of each year, b) a meeting or series of meetings between the High School and each Middle School and later between the whole group together during February.

The Middle School Report should include the following:

A brief outline of the experiences of the year four during the previous twelve months and notes on expected work for the rest of the year.

A statement indicating the extent to which the Middle School has been able to match the agreed programme, and an outline of any problems.

Proposed modifications in the programme for the following year.

Notes on specific students with special abilities or needs.

The High School Report should include the following:

Comments of the previous years intake and the programmes they have followed. This could be in detail and relate to each student if required.

A statement showing how the High School has responded to the Middle School changes in the development of its own courses.

Proposed modifications in High School courses for the following year.

The purpose of the meetings between Carisbrooke High School and individual middle-schools would be to discuss pupils with special needs/talents, while the whole group meetings would focus on such items as planning joint exhibition; staff development within the group; changes and developments in ACDT etc.

The Review should involve Headteachers and all members of ACDT teams in the partner-schools.

As we enter the second phase of the project none of us is expecting that all problems will be solved and that there will be a sudden all round improvement, but we have entered into the task with determination and with a system which may help us overcome some of the problems inherent in our educational structure. We intend to deal with problems in a professional manner, with confidence in our colleagues but with a determination to say what needs to be said if the need arises.

Copies of the agreement can be obtained from:
The Isle of Wight Teachers Centre,
Upper St. James Street, Newport,
Isle of Wight.
Price £1.75.