

# Girls in a Male Environment: Mixed CDT

Working as a Head of Department in a girls' and then a mixed school (the result of an amalgamation) has highlighted many of the factors which need to be considered when developing CDT courses in mixed schools.

In the girls' school, our main aim was to create an environment which would provide the pupils with the opportunity to develop an interest in a number of CDT areas in the Lower School, so enabling them to take the subject at 4th-6th year, to 'O' and 'A' level. Examination courses included 'O'/CSE graphical communication and CSE Mode III Jewellery. A number of girls have also taken 'A' level courses in Design and Technology and Graphical Communication.

Our greatest difficulty when setting up the courses was a lack of time. We only had two periods in the 2nd and 3rd year for half a year, an inadequate allocation for covering the Foundation Course. The only way round this at the time was to offer after-school workshops for both lower school pupils and examination classes. We lacked the facilities and staffing to offer courses in new technology and modular technology at upper school level. Yet as a department we had many complementary skills in areas of graphics, wood, plastic and metal technology and so were able to draw on each other's technical expertise in developing non-specialist courses in the lower school, and in providing the teaching materials for the upper school courses.

We all had a common aim to develop and promote the area of CDT in an interesting and relevant manner. We tried to use the talents, skills and interests of the girls to the full and considered them when selecting our teaching materials. In developing a 'girl-friendly' CDT department, we were well aware of the importance of creating workshops which moved away from the traditional image of heavy, dirty machines in a dull, drab environment. We introduced a lot of wall display materials, including pupils' work, posters, design ideas, and magazine cut-outs. All this helped create an exciting, lively working atmosphere where girls didn't feel intimidated by their tasks, or by the equipment they had to use. I'm sure that most teachers do this, but it's often lacking in workshop areas.

CDT was a new subject on the girl's curriculum, and they came to it with fewer preconceptions than boys, so were able to respond in a more open-minded and original way. Working in an all-girls group, the pupils felt secure and willing to seek help and advice and they were much less self-conscious in class question-and-answer sessions. Uptake of the subject at option choice was good. Many of the girls have gone on to pursue careers using their CDT — in furniture design and manufacture, interior design, product design and as engineering technicians. In the upper school by 1982, we had thirty 4th year girls following an 'O'/CSE CDT course, and thirty two 4th year girls following an 'O'/CSE graphical communication course. By 1984,

eight girls decided to take 'A' level courses, four in Design and Technology and four in Graphical Communication.

The number of girls following an examination course have dropped since the reorganisation. The amalgamation brought us more workshops and staff, but also a host of problems — not least developing from a small tight knit department to a large sprawling one. Initially we were on four sights, now, thankfully, two years later, reduced to two. We've also had to develop a new department identity with a staff who, initially, had very differing viewpoints and experiences.

The whole workshop environment changed with the inheritance of a set of well-equipped, but single-material workshops which could not cater for the needs of a CDT course. A change in workshop organisation was essential if we were to continue with the developments we had already made in teaching CDT to girls, and although this is in hand, we're still awaiting phase two of the refitting.

As a newly amalgamated department, we have had to work through staff insecurity and low morale. Many members of the department had only ever taught boys; and have taught a traditional skills-based course, rather than a problem-solving approach. The difficulties facing the department are not specific to this amalgamated school, but are to be found in many mixed schools, where girls have simply been given access to CDT courses without any further thought to the curriculum. In fairness to CDT teachers though, the subject has undergone some fundamental changes over the last decade. This has led to a situation where the consideration of Equal Opportunities has been placed low on the priority list and not been seen as integral to good practice.

## Issues for Mixed Schools

There is a real need at the moment to examine the content of the curriculum on offer in the majority of secondary schools. Many projects and assignments give clear messages as to whom they are aimed at. Design briefs are boy orientated. As well as curriculum, we have to look at pupil grouping. It is not enough for pupils to opt for CDT, our aim is to help them succeed at it. Given our present intake, which is balanced in favour of boys we have adopted a policy of putting all the girls into one teaching group, rather than have random groups where girls could easily be isolated and made invisible. This is working well. We have also considered forming girl-only groups, although this is not yet departmental policy.

The amalgamation had allowed us to develop new areas of CDT — new technology and robotics. However, it is overwhelmingly boys who participate in these activities after school and get 'hands on' experience. As a department, we have a lot of hard thinking to do about methods, materials and access to equipment.

Although the policy of Equal opportunities has been in operation for a decade, the dearth of girls

taking up options within CDT in mixed schools indicates that there is considerable room for innovation. Simply allowing girls into an environment which has been traditionally male-dominated has proved to be inadequate. Teaching style, teacher expectation, the interaction of girls and boys in a practical environment, curriculum content etc. all have to be looked at critically if departments are to offer equality of opportunity. Girls can do CDT, as our experiences in the girls school clearly shows. A good starting point for any CDT department would seem to be to examine the good practice in an all-girls department, alongside the typical practice in mixed departments.

## UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

### A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE FOR PRIMARY TEACHERS ART, CRAFT AND DESIGN IN THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM Saturday 29th November, 1986

Art, Craft and Design are a vital part of the core of the primary curriculum and this one day course will allow participants to make fuller use of this group of subjects throughout the whole work of the primary school. It will be led by John Lancaster, a well known artist who has worked extensively in primary education and Mavis Eccles, a practising primary school teacher who has made work in art, craft and design the key to the curriculum of her school. All primary teachers, with or without experience in art, craft and design, are welcome.

The day will commence at 10.00 a.m. and consist of three talks, a discussion session when small groups will be asked to consider specific questions and a plenary session. In order to initiate and encourage further debate, however, in addition to the follow-up work back in classrooms, the organisers hope to produce an 'Art, Craft and Design Teaching Pamphlet' based upon contributions from participants which will be circulated to all who attend.

A detailed programme will accompany the notification of acceptance for the course.

#### PROGRAMME

SESSION 1	(½ hour)	What We Should Teach
SESSION 2	(½ hour)	Classroom Strategies
SESSION 3	(½ hour)	Cross-Curricular Work
SESSION 4	(½ hour)	Discussion Groups (Each group to discuss a topic — choosing a chairman and recorder)
SESSION 5	(1 hour)	Plenary Session — (Reports from groups and discussion)

#### APPLICATIONS

Should reach the In-Service Office, Institute of Education, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, not later than 8th November 1986

#### FEES

The fee for the conference is £12, payable at the time of application. This is inclusive of à la carte lunch in the Arden Management Centre, tea and coffee, and the booklet arising from the day. Local Education Authorities may be prepared to give assistance with the cost; teachers wishing to receive such help should apply to their Authority in the usual way.

Please complete and return the slip below

**APPLICATION FORM**                      **ART, CRAFT AND DESIGN IN THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM**  
Saturday 29th November, 1986

I wish to attend the One Day Conference on Art, Craft and Design in the Primary Curriculum and enclose a cheque for £13.

Cheques should be made payable to 'University of Warwick'

Name & Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation/Institution \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RETURN, NOT LATER THAN 8th November 1986 to: In-Service Officer, Institute of Education, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL.

To: Mrs. B. Wiggins,  
 Studies in Design Education and Craft,  
 30 Wenger Crescent,  
 Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8LE  
 England.

Please enter my subscription to *Studies in Design Education Craft and Technology*

\* I enclose payment/official Order for £11.00 (\$20 or £15.00 overseas) for a one year subscription commencing with Volume 19 No 1 (Winter 1986) and continuing in subsequent years until cancelled.

Name .....

Address .....

Postal Code .....

I am a new subscriber/existing subscriber.

\*delete as appropriate.

Please make cheques payable to *Studies in Design Education and Craft*. Receipts are not issued unless requested, in which case please enclose S.A.E.

*Banker's Order*

The Manager

\* .....

Please pay immediately and, commencing in 1987, on 1st May each year, the sum of £10.50 to *Studies in Design Education and Craft*, Lloyds Bank, 30-95-21, Loughborough, Leics., England. Account No. 0592296.

Please cancel any previous order.

\* Insert name of your bankers.

Please send to:

Studies in Design Education and Craft,  
 30 Wenger Crescent,  
 Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8LE  
 England

and *not* to your bankers

Name .....

Address .....

Signed .....

I am a new subscriber/existing subscriber.