

EXCERPT OF MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 MARCH 2000

ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERACTIVE LEARNING CENTRE IN BELLSHILL ACADEMY

18. There was submitted a report dated 8 February 2000 by the Director of Education (1) advising of the success of a bid to the Scottish Executive for funding for the establishment of an Interactive Learning Centre in Bellshill Academy to support the implementation of multi-disciplinary and self directed approaches to learning; (2) intimating that a grant of £709,000, payable over a two year period, had been awarded for the initiative, and (3) indicating it was anticipated that future operational costs would be met by sponsorship from the private sector and income generated by the lease of the facilities of the centre to local businesses and agencies outwith school hours.

Decided:

- (1) that the success of the bid to the Scottish Executive for funding for the establishment of an Interactive Learning Centre in Bellshill Academy be noted;
- (2) that the Director of Education submit further progress reports on the initiative to future meetings of the Committee, and
- (3) that the report be remitted to the Bellshill Area Committee for its interest.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT

To: Education Committee	Subject: BeCel An Interactive Learning Centre
From: Director of Education	
Date: 8 February 2000	
Ref: MO'N/EK	

Purpose

The education committee will recall giving its approval for the Director of Education to be part of a special Scottish delegation, in conjunction with SEED, to Chicago at Easter 1999. This paper outlines a major new initiative, funded by the Scottish Executive, which has evolved from that visit: the establishment of an Interactive Learning Centre which uses the latest technology to support self-directed learning for students. As such, it sits equally well within the education department's Raising Achievement for All policy and the authority's commitment to providing community access to lifelong learning.

Recommendations

- (1) That the education committee notes the success of the bid to SEED.
- (2) That the education committee requests the Director to provide progress reports in due course.
- (3) That the education committee refers the paper to the Bellshill Area Committee for information.

Members wishing further information regarding the attached report should contact:

Michael O'Neill, Director of Education, on 01236 812336
Dan Sweeney, Head of Service, on 01236 812291

Michael O'Neill

North Lanarkshire Education Department

BeCel

An Interactive Learning Centre, situated in Bellshill Academy

Report by Director

1. Background

- 1.1 The education committee will recollect that permission was given for the Director of Education to be part of a special Scottish delegation, led by David Crawley of SEED, which visited Chicago in Easter 1999. The main focus of the visit was to view the Arthur Andersen 'School of the Future' which uses the latest technology to support self-directed learning for its students.
- 1.2 The centre comprised a very large, open area divided into learning bays, each bay being equipped with up-to-date technology, and students work on their own projects with the help of a facilitator. A self-directed learning system allows each student to move at his/her own pace in a co-operative learning setting. Students move on to new learning only when they have demonstrated mastery. Each student develops an individualized Action Plan against which progress is assessed by the student and monitored by the teacher and parent.
- 1.3 The delegation was very impressed by this concept, although it was agreed that the American model would require to be adapted for the Scottish education system. SEED intimated that funding could be available for a Scottish version, especially if links could be made with the University for Industry, by making the Learning Centre available for the development of new skills in people currently in employment or hoping to enter employment, and to the community outside of school hours.

2. Progress to date

- 2.1 An Interactive Learning Centre will be established to support the implementation of multi-disciplinary and self-directed approaches to learning for all pupils of Bellshill Academy. The Centre will support the establishment and delivery of a range of alternative curriculum provisions, based on principles of individual ownership of learning outcomes. This will include the timetabling of S1/S2 classes to the Centre to work on a cross-curricular project in Environmental Studies
- 2.2 The Centre will also provide community opportunities for adult learning and for multi-agency youth work. It will act as a focus from which opportunities for learning will be extended into the community and school cluster through the development of a local Bellshill learning community intranet.
- 2.3 Having decided upon the broad outline of establishing a Learning Centre in Bellshill Academy, the exact focus on technology the Centre will adopt was determined by looking at areas of future development in industry and then working back to focus on skills development for various groups of learners. At present, Higher Education is working in partnership with industry to offer new degree/vocational courses to meet the demands of industry. However, there is a clear gap in provision below the level

of Higher Education. BeCel seeks to bridge this gap between school and Higher Education in the key areas of digital media.

- 2.4 Developing the Centre as a focus for excellence in the contemporary Digital Media and Arts will build upon existing skills and apply this expertise to the key areas of digital media. The facilities will provide a wide array of creative possibility, ranging from standard video and audio production to multimedia to cutting edge animation. The initiative will enhance both the formal and informal curriculum throughout S1 to S6, presenting new opportunities and relationships for learner and teacher alike. Centre Activities will include a Website; online newspaper; Cybercafe; enterprise clubs in digital media; training seminars. These activities will also be available out of school hours, seven days a week.
- 2.5 In choosing to base the Learning Centre in Bellshill Academy, cognisance has been taken of the fact that this is an Education Action Plan school in a Social Inclusion Partnership area. A new Head Teacher was appointed two years ago and, under his leadership, a number of proactive initiatives are underway. Two new ICT suites have been set up, allowing the use of Integrated Learning Systems for S1/S2 pupils, and the impact of the National Grid for Learning will see 54 PC terminals throughout the school, allowing all pupils access to e-mail, Internet etc. BeCel will enhance and complement all this, albeit using a different approach. It will also offer opportunities for staff development, thereby having a positive effect on staff morale.
- 2.6 A major outcome of BeCel will be the integration of community and school based needs, with the daytime focus driven predominantly by school needs and out of school hours learning driven by community education (approximate ratio: 58% community use, 42% school use). This reflects successful co-operative models used in other places within the Authority. Bellshill Academy already has a great deal of experience in this area, thanks to the Bellshill Partnership Project.
- 2.7 The establishment of such a facility in Bellshill, an area of high unemployment, cannot help but have beneficial effects on the local labour force and must be viewed as a vital strand in the development of a Community Learning Strategy. It will deliver learning opportunities for a whole range of post-school learners: young adults engaged in pre-vocational training; learners seeking to acquire or extend their qualifications; voluntary and community groups; and workers in the local area, or indeed throughout Scotland, where employers wish to take advantage of BeCel's training activities.
- 2.8 The development of external links with business, community agencies and the University for Industry through a variety of initiatives e.g. work placements, enterprise workshops etc. are core to the Centre's future existence. Companies such as OKI, IBM, VIS Interactive, SCOTSYS, BBC etc., have already expressed an interest in co-operating with the Centre in the area of digital media in contemporary arts, demonstrating their belief in the vocational potential of the project.

3 In conclusion

- 3.1 The BeCel initiative has emerged out of growing evidence that the development of self-esteem and personal confidence is the key to raising achievement. It offers an exciting opportunity to help young people develop skills which the normal school curriculum is unlikely to provide and represents a major strand in the authority's approach to *Raising Achievement for All*. It also goes a substantial way towards providing community access to lifelong learning.
- 3.2 A grant of £709,000, payable over 2 years, has been awarded by the Scottish Executive to establish BeCel as a Pathfinder Project. Subsequent to this, it is anticipated that the Centre will generate income via hire by local businesses for training courses; training courses for school staff; online courses; use of the Cybercafe; and use by Community Education. Sponsorship is also being sought from the private sector, with firm commitments from a number of firms to date.
- 3.3 It is intended that courses in digital media, developed by the Centre and accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, will be accessed throughout the whole of Scotland via the National Grid for Learning. Links with the business community, local and further afield, will be forged and strengthened - with the attraction of new businesses into the Bellshill area as a possible spin-off. There will be an impact on local unemployment rates by offering increasing opportunities with a clear focus on digital arts - a huge growth area. As a Pathfinder Project, the Bellshill Centre for Learning will serve as a model of good practice to other schools and authorities.

4 Recommendations

- (1) That the education committee notes the success of the bid to SEED.
- (2) That the education committee requests the Director to provide progress reports in due course.
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