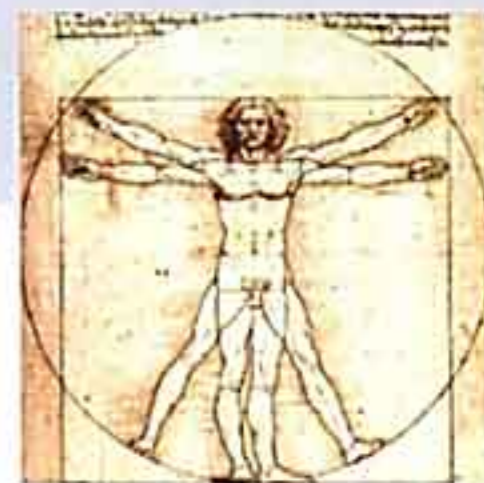


# The Leonardo Effect



Academic staff in St Mary's University College have been exploring new approaches to subject integration, the *Leonardo Effect*, that will encourage creativity in pupils' learning. In the article that follows, Deirdre Robson, Ivor Hickey and Mary Flanagan describe some of the results obtained so far.

On the 7th December 2007 the results of the *Leonardo Effect*, a UK wide pilot project to deliver 'revised curriculum' goals, were presented to an audience gathered from across the British Isles, in St. Mary's University College, Belfast. This pilot project was funded by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts.

Mick Waters, Director of Curriculum at QCA, gave the keynote address. He spoke of the crucial importance of creativity in children's learning and the underestimation in education of the opportunities for collaboration between the arts and the sciences.

The event focused on the results obtained from an experimental teaching methodology developed by art and science lecturers in St. Mary's. Recognising that new approaches for integrating subjects were being sought internationally, these lectures devised a method which they describe in pedagogic terms as 'synchronised integration.' The approach goes beyond the conventional concept of cross-curricular teaching, working at a much deeper level by identifying subject commonalities, and using joint learning outcomes. One teacher described it as, "completely different to the way I would normally teach, but it really works and you get the hang of it quite quickly." In contrast with cross-curricular teaching both art and science have equal importance.

Key to the whole venture was two days of 'hands-on' training for teachers prior to the launch of the pilot.

The *Leonardo Effect* pilot has achieved remarkable success which was communicated at the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 'event' in presentations from teachers and principals. Their views have been mirrored by: parents; pupils; government departments; inspectors; curricular bodies across the British Isles and coverage in the national press, on TV and at national education conferences.

In addition to supporting learning in science and art and developing children's creativity, the *Leonardo Effect* produced other desirable outcomes. Commitment to literacy showed dramatic improvement. One teacher described oral language development as, "going through the roof." Many teachers spoke of, "disaffected learners engaging with learning."

Encouragingly, principals have commented, "We have changed our whole-school planning" and "We plan to extend the methodology throughout the school."

Importantly, not a single child indicated that they would prefer to

return to their usual style of learning, "Made science more interesting – Big Time."

The results show that the *Leonardo Effect* is effective in delivering revised curricular goals at primary level. Post-primary results indicate that the model can be successfully applied, but the contextual challenges will require further investigation through a large scale KS3 pilot.

If you have any comments or would like to introduce this exciting method of teaching into your school please email: [info@leonardoeffect.com](mailto:info@leonardoeffect.com)

Initial results and the report from the pilot can be obtained on <http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk>

