

EQUALS Semi-Formal (SLD)

Curriculum Scheme of Work

Preview



The World About Me



Equals Semi-Formal (SLD) Curriculum Schemes of Work

The World About Me

Basic Principles

Preview - Some pages from the Basic Principles

This topic based Scheme of Work (SoW) entitled *The World About Me* is quite markedly different from the other SoW in the Equals Semi-formal Curriculum in that it is more about learning for learning's sake, rather than the more practical elements of the Equals SoW series such as *My Independence* or *My Communication* or *My Thinking and Problem Solving* or *My Play and Leisure*. Even *My Creativity* is about celebrating what learners might do and can do whilst engaged in opportunities for exploring self-reflection, self-esteem and self-confidence. Perhaps the reason for teaching *The World About Me* is best explained through the desire to extend learners' understanding of learning beyond that which is immediately apparent. When asked for example, where chips come from, it is perfectly feasible that most learners with SLD would reply, assuming that they are able to reply at all – from MacDonald's; or where milk comes from – the fridge; or where water comes from – the tap. The principles we are concerned with might therefore be regarded as presenting a holistic understanding of everyday events, activities and experiences and about making the connections between these events, activities and experiences.

It is however, very easy to assume that the very act of presenting learning through a topic based activity is sufficient to ensure an holistic understanding. This might well be the case for neuro-typical, conventionally developing learners, but not necessarily for those with SLD, because the key consideration must still be to reflect on how children with SLD learn. Imray and Colley (2017) noted that the defining learning characteristics of all those with severe learning difficulties who are consistently and over time, working academically between P4 and the starting levels of the UK National Curriculum and other similar curriculum models such as the Australian National Curriculums or a US Standards Based Curriculum, encompass:

- Communication difficulties
- Difficulties with abstract concepts
- Difficulties in concentration and attention

- Difficulties with both short term and long term memory
- Difficulties with sequential memory
- Difficulties with working memory
- Inefficient and slow information processing speed
- Insecure general knowledge
- Poorly developed strategies for thinking and learning
- Difficulties with generalisation and problem solving.

Further, these are not isolated difficulties, but work together to act as barriers to learning, especially with regard to making the connections necessary for a topic based SoW. To help overcome these individual and collective barriers, we have therefore stated some ***absolute essentials*** required of a topic.

1. **The topic, and indeed the presentation and teaching of the topic, must engage the learners.** If this sounds obvious to you as a teacher or school leader, then good, as that's one less teacher or school leader we need to convince.
2. **The topics are not related to age, key stage or academic ability,** though be warned, some topics (such as Food for example) will be better suited to P5 plus and will be quite challenging for learners working consistently and over time within P4, that is, at the lower (more complex) levels of severe learning difficulties.
3. **Primary (as in first rather than age) learning experiences need to be concrete and not abstract.** Resources and materials that are on the page or on the screen, whether this be TV or computer, must be regarded as being secondary and therefore supporting. This doesn't mean that we can't use secondary sources, but only as back up and only after the primary, concrete sources have been fully and repeatedly explored. For example, if we're talking about the sea, learners must visit the sea, paddle in the sea, touch the sea, smell the sea, taste the sea, ***before*** they look at references to the sea in books or film.
4. **Learning must be contextualised within the topic,** so that background experiences are essential for real understanding. Seasons will be explained better by going to the same spot in the same park once every month taking photos of the learners in that same spot and comparing all 12 photos back in the classroom.
5. **A key part of all topics are their potential for narrative.** That is, the learners' narration of their understanding of the topic rather than teachers narration to pupils. We would therefore direct your attention to the *My Communication* SoW, and the section under *Narrative*, because the real, concrete experiences that learners will undertake as a result of the topic will naturally provide considerable raw material. In addition to verbally (or through AAC aids) narrating interesting events and personal 'adventures', all learners should be making Topic/Project Books which involve

Equals Semi Formal Curriculum

SoW - *The World About Me*

Topic – Festivals

Suggested length of topic – one year

Preview - few pages

The term 'festivals' has a fairly loose association with all of the events which are suggested might make up a scheme of work here, since it is clear that for example, neither Remembrance Day nor Ramadan are festivals (though Eid-al-Fitr probably is). Nonetheless, our focus is aimed at making both religious and traditional (English) occasions meaningful to and for children, young people and adults with severe learning difficulties, and we have therefore taken a broad view of the term. The common theme is however, to bring a spiritual element to the occasion so that each one has a personal focus for each individual learner (what does this event mean for me and what can I learn from it?) and to try and to move beyond the notion that festivals are just occasions for eating, drinking and receiving presents. They are, or perhaps should be, times for reflection and our learners need to be allowed the opportunity to engage in such reflections as much as they are individually and collectively able to, if they are truly to be part of the wider communities around them.

It should also be noted that the list below is not definitive. Other occasions, especially religious occasions, may just as easily be substituted or added, provided that staff take care to come back to the central issue of facilitating and encouraging learners to ask themselves the key questions of '*what does this event mean for me?*' and '*what can I learn from it?*'.

Festivals

Remembrance Day	September - October
Christmas	November - December
Bhodi	January - mid February
Holi	mid February - March
Mother's Day	April
May Day	April and May
Father's Day	June
Summer Fete	May and/or June and/or July
Ramadan and Eid-al-Fitr	as per the Islamic calendar

LEARNING INTENTIONS	TEACHING ACTIVITIES	POINTS TO NOTE
<p>Learning about and from Christmas.</p> <p>Learning that the celebration of Christmas is about giving as well as receiving.</p>	<p>In the run up to Christmas, take part in as many class parties as you can - these could be the birthdays of any of the class members, including staff.</p> <p>Hold class discussions around the nature of the celebration so that all learners have an opportunity to involve themselves in what might happen at the party, such as birthday music and songs, food and drink, party hats, cards, disco music and disco lights, cakes with candles, party banners, streamers, bunting.</p> <p>Is there any way we can particularise the party so that it is special for the person who is having the birthday? This might mean that we have to find out what the birthday person really, really likes so that we can ‘theme’ the party around these things.</p> <p>Weekly topic time therefore needs to involve quite a lot of planning with learners finding out, preferably as a whole group, making special birthday cards based on the theme, planning special music based on the birthday person likes, making a giant picture/collage with all of the known likes represented on it.</p> <p>Use the word celebration synonymously with party, so that learners get used to hearing the word.</p> <p>Get the class to reflect upon and talk about times that were special to them - birthdays, weddings, meeting family, perhaps a football team winning a cup competition. How did they feel? What did they do? Did they eat any special food?</p> <p>Talk about Christmas Day being Jesus’s birthday. Jesus believed that God asks us to love everyone and not to fight anyone, so that the world can become a better place.</p> <p>We can personalise the spiritual element of this festival by getting the learners to ask key questions. Who do I love? Who loves me?</p> <p>Gather as many photos as you can of people known to each learner. These will obviously be individual to a large degree, so parents/carers will need to send in photos of as many family members and friends of the family as they can, making sure that each one is named, but these will need to be supplemented by everyone in the school. This is a lot of photos!</p> <p>All learners should spend time with these photos so that each picks as many as they want who they feel they love and who they believe loves them. There should not be a limit to this number.</p>	<p>Of all the festivals celebrated in the UK, Christmas (and probably Easter) are perhaps two that have become most divorced from their origins. This is especially so with Christmas being ‘what’s in it for me?’ and this topic has therefore tried to get back to the idea of giving and thinking of others, rather than just receiving and thinking of myself.</p> <p>The word celebration will be used in a number of other festivals, so it’s a handy word to know.</p> <p>Family photos are excellent resources for so many areas of the curriculum and should be highly prized classroom assets. They will need to be up-dated annually.</p>

	<p>Make a ‘very special person’ book with each very special person being given space for their photo and then some indication of the things that this person really, really likes doing through words/photos/symbols.</p> <p>Take one or two VERY special people, who will probably be parents, and prepare ideas in preparation for making/buying a very special present. It is always a good idea for parents to send in pocket money on a weekly basis, no matter how young the pupil, and the learner should be encouraged to save a portion of his/her pocket money for the present or resources towards making the present. Be clear with learners that this is a labour of love.</p> <p>Be clear with whoever are the recipients of these presents how much thought, time and effort has been spent on this activity, and that they will need to be fulsome in their praise and appreciation when the presents are opened on Christmas Day. If families don’t celebrate Christmas, the presents should still be opened and the praise still forthcoming, though it may not happen on 25th December.</p>	<p>These ideas sessions, leading up to the preparation for buying one or two presents will clearly need quite a lot of individualised support.</p>
<p>LEARNING INTENTIONS</p>	<p>TEACHING ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>POINTS TO NOTE</p>
<p>Learning about and from Ramadan</p>	<p>Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, the month when the first revelations of the Quran were given to Muhammed. It is celebrated by fasting during daylight hours, an act which is obligatory to all Muslims, except those who are ill or infirm.</p> <p>Ramadan is a time for reflection, with self-denial allowing us an opportunity to give thanks for what we have and to think of others as much as we can. Regular acts of charity are an essential part of the Islamic faith, but Ramadan affords the chance of additional and extra acts of charity.</p> <p>Charity is about those who have, giving to those who do not have. It is an important word to use.</p> <p>We can personalise the spiritual element of this festival by getting the learners to ask key questions. Who can I think of who does not have? What can I give them to help their lives?</p> <p>There are various options that classes and individuals might go for here, but two might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) spending time discovering information about the local food bank; visiting local supermarkets who organise such banks; perhaps getting the person in charge to talk to the learners or at least spend time in the classroom; donating some pocket money on a weekly basis so that the whole class can put items in the food bank; shopping for these items. If your school is near to a mosque, get in touch with the Imam to work with you. 	<p>Learners will need to start thinking about Ramadan and planning out their timetable at least a month before. This will give around half a term for the topic, but this may not be at the beginning if the half term, as Islamic months are based on the lunar cycle and therefore change every year.</p>

<p>Learning about and from Eid-al-Fitr</p>	<p>At least one visit to the mosque would be excellent. If not, national organisations such as the Salvation Army might be useful to contact. You might even persuade them to come in and play at the school!</p> <p>(ii) adopting a local, national (or even international charity such as Oxfam etc) to help in any way that you can; organising sponsored walks/runs around the playground; trampoline bounces (count the number); cake sales etc, etc.</p> <p>As a general point, it is important that individual learners see and understand that they are personally giving – their (pocket) money, their time and energy (walking around the playground), the proceeds from cake sales. This should not be tokenistic with parents or school staff doing all the work. There will of course be some learners, especially those working at the lower reaches of the SLD spectrum (P4 for example) who may not be able to understand this concept, but those on P5 and above should have some understanding that can be worked on. More able learners, those on P7 and above for example, may be able to understand the concept of giving up (as in fasting) in order to fund their charitable acts. This may be giving up chocolate, fizzy drinks, crisps etc during daylight hours and putting the money they would have spent to charitable use.</p> <p>After the last day of the month of Ramadan, indicating the first day of Shawaal, Muslims celebrate its end with Eid-al-Fitr. Another chance for a great celebration, with LOTS of food and drink!</p> <p>Time also to reflect on everything that has been given (and possibly given up) during Ramadan with a special whole school celebratory assembly where individual learners can have their charitable achievements recognised and quietly praised.</p>	<p>The concept of an Oxfam or Save the Children type charity would be especially relevant if there is an international crisis of some sort which is currently hitting the news. Unfortunately, there usually is!!</p>
<p>LEARNING INTENTIONS</p>	<p>TEACHING ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>POINTS TO NOTE</p>
<p>Learning about and from Holi</p>	<p>Holi is a Hindu festival that celebrates the defeat of both Holika, and her equally evil brother Hiranyakashipu, by Vishnu and Prahlada (Hiranyakashipu’s son). In many Hindu communities it is a night and day festival that begins with the bonfire of Holika Dahan (Holika was killed in a fire) with the next day being taken over by the Rangwali Holi, which is the festival of colours. Holi occurs in the Hindu calendar month of Phalgun, around the end of February to the middle of March.</p> <p>Holi signifies the arrival of spring, the end of winter, but it also celebrates the victory of good over evil, and is for many a festive day to meet others, play and laugh, forget and forgive, and repair broken relationships.</p>	

	<p>We can personalise the spiritual element of this festival by getting the learners to ask key questions. What ‘good’ can I do for someone else to help them? This might be a simple cleaning of someone’s car or doing their shopping for them and it is best if general classroom discussions can determine what these acts of kindness might be. Learners may spend some time asking people around the school if there might be something they would like done and this could extend out to the community around the school.</p> <p>This might develop into a revival of ‘bob-a-job week’ where scouts and girl guides used to do a job for someone and earn a bob (5p) for doing it. The bob was given to charity, and even though the amounts earned may well be small, this is not the point. This could be a real opportunity to raise the profile of those with learning difficulties in their local communities, and is certainly a way of meeting new people and spreading cheer.</p>	<p>It is recognised that this might not be feasible for all learners but this might be particularly appropriate for older (secondary age) learners, and especially for VI formers.</p>
<p>LEARNING INTENTIONS</p>	<p>TEACHING ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>POINTS TO NOTE</p>
<p>Learning about and from Remembrance Day</p>	<p>Although this is a day particular to the UK and both the current and former Commonwealth countries, versions of this day, when the nation remembers it’s fallen war dead, are common in many countries.</p> <p>Remembrance Day is held on 11th September as the day the hostilities of the First World War formally ceased. It is marked by the display of red poppies and by the observing of a minute’s silence at 11.00 on the 11th September.</p> <p>In 1915, John McCrae (1872-1918) a Canadian physician at that time fighting on the front line in Flanders, wrote <i>In Flanders Fields</i>.</p> <p>In Flanders fields the poppies blow Between the crosses, row on row, That mark our place; and in the sky The larks, still bravely singing, fly Scarce heard amid the guns below.</p> <p>We are the Dead. Short days ago We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, Loved and were loved, and now we lie In Flanders fields.</p>	