

## Project-based learning at Gladesmore Community School

Gladesmore Community School in Tottenham has been using Language Futures style approaches since the 2012/13 school year, first as an after-school club and, more recently, during the school day. Within one class, students are currently learning six target languages.

The school has a strong tradition of supporting language learning. At Gladesmore 51% of students have a language other than English as their first language, and a key aim of its Language Futures programme has been to support these young people to become confident linguists – learning new languages, as well as becoming literate and gaining qualifications in their home languages.

The school draws on a particular approach to project-based learning that is designed to help teachers ensure projects are content-rich and fully linked to the curriculum, and has been influenced by the Innovation Unit's [REAL Projects](#) programme and [High-Tech High](#) in San Diego. The languages team also works closely with colleagues in the school's drama department and have had training in [Mantle of the Expert](#), a dramatic-inquiry approach to teaching and learning. During 2014/15, the class focused particularly on two long-term projects.

### City Farm

Working in partnership with Hackney City Farm, students undertook a project to explore the history of city farms, how they are run (including the needs of animals), how city farms have been used and accessed over the years, and the impacts they offer the community. This project drew heavily on the Mantle of the Expert approach. Developed by Dorothy Heathcote in the 1960s, Mantle of the Expert involves the creation of a fictional world where students assume the roles of experts in a designated field. By treating young people as responsible experts, the approach aims to increase their engagement with learning and confidence – supporting them to become proactive researchers and supporting critical thinking skills.

Students together drafted a letter of support for the City Farm to the Mayor of London, and produced and distributed a publicity leaflet in each of their target languages. Between them, students working on this project took on and researched expert roles as city farm coordinators (including budgetary responsibilities), communications and audience development officers,

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campaigns managers, and designers, and had to negotiate between them the remit of each role and who would take it on.

## **Food: healthy and unhealthy eating, Fairtrade, and the role of the European Union in regulating our food**

Building on their learning about animal care and the origins of the food we eat, students' final project of the year ran from Easter throughout the summer term. This project gave the opportunity for students to explore complex political issues, and offered rich written and spoken language opportunities. Following a period of research and debate, including a number of local research trips (to the Science Museum, the Comic Museum), each student produced an informational comic using present and past tenses. These were exhibited at the school. In addition, 18 students prepared a presentation and series of questions for MEP Jean Lambert, which they delivered to her at the European Parliament in Brussels.

The classroom practice has evolved over time. Teaching staff have developed a clear structure for each in-class session, managing work across the different language groups by ensuring clear objectives and success criteria, and including key questions / vocabulary.

*It's hard work but very rewarding. The students are beginning to apply the skills they are learning in a range of different areas. Many of them are comparing the new language with the linguistic experience they already have; this is a really thrilling process to see.*

*Sam Whear, Head of Community Languages*

Each session now starts with a basic question and answer session in each language group. This aims to improve each student's listening and speaking and give them regular opportunities to formulate questions and manipulate language in their target language.

At the end of Year 8, the end of their second year studying using Language Futures approaches, eleven students were entered for a GCSE. All eleven achieved results between grades A\*-B. The class is continuing in the 2015/16 school year, and other students will sit GCSEs in summer 2016. Many of the students who have already experienced exam success will also go on to take a second languages GCSE next year.

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