Curriculum for Excellence

Professional Development
Support Materials

Rich Tasks

Primary and Secondary Schools
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Facilitator’s Guide

Introduction

This Guide supports the continuing professional development of staff in primary schools and education centres. It focuses on Rich Tasks and considers some of the underpinning principles of Curriculum for Excellence. This Facilitator’s Guide offers a suggested format for delivering a two-hour CPD session.

The activities and approaches contained within the Guide are designed to support a whole school, stage or team approach to CPD. They provide opportunities for discussion, reflection and collaboration amongst colleagues.

Facilitators should be aware, however, that the following session may be customised easily to focus on particular aspects of the Rich Task approach.

Audience

This programme is relevant for all who work within schools and education centres and the activities are designed to facilitate a whole school, departmental or team CPD session. This programme has particular relevance for members of staff with responsibility for leading Curriculum for Excellence developments and also for classroom practitioners.

Background reading and preparation

Facilitators should be familiar with the relevant sections from key publications including

- Building the Curriculum 3
- Principles and Practice (ie, general sections relating to the 8 curricular areas)
- Curriculum for Excellence website (Learning and Teaching Scotland)

Video materials

The Disk accompanying this Guide contains a range of video clips to support professional development in Rich Tasks. These short films help to increase knowledge of key concepts, principles and practices associated with Curriculum for Excellence, and some videos illustrate how Scottish schools are putting these ideas into practice. It is recommended that facilitators be familiar with these video clips in advance of the CPD session.
Structure of CPD session

The structure of this CPD session assumes that participants will have access to the video clips described in each activity. The videos are an integral part of the session and facilitators can present them in two ways:

1. By playing the videos from the accompanying Disk;
2. By downloading the videos as MP4 files from Learning Curve’s Curriculum for Excellence web site and saving them on a computer, ready for playback.

www.curriculum-for-excellence.co.uk

PowerPoint Presentation

A specially prepared PowerPoint presentation is contained on this CD ROM. This presentation helps facilitators to:

- promote group discussion;
- present and summarise key points and issues;
- support self-evaluation and action planning.

The PowerPoint presentation can be easily customised to reflect, more specifically, the focus of the CPD session.

Acknowledgements

Learning Curve Education gratefully acknowledges the permission given by West Dunbartonshire Council to use the work of their schools as the basis for some of the illustrative case studies. We are also grateful to the wide range of educationists, writers, researchers, practitioners and young people who have contributed to this resource.
Rich Tasks - CPD Session

Time: 2 hours

Resources

- Video clips contained on the accompanying Disk
- PowerPoint presentation “Rich Tasks.ppt”
- Computer, speakers, data projector and screen
- Flipchart and pens

Aims

1  To understand the key principles behind the Rich Task approach to learning and teaching.

2  To be aware of key elements and attributes associated with Rich Task design.

3  To identify opportunities for developing Rich Tasks in this school.

Time Allocation

The following activities provide a suggested pathway through this CPD session. The time allocated to each activity may vary depending on the time available and the particular focus of the session, but the following suggested time allocations provides a framework for achieving the main aims of the session within 2 hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Videos: Rich Tasks</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rich Tasks Attributes</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Videos: School Illustrations</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Building a Rich Task</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Action Planning</td>
<td>25 minutes</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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Rich tasks  © Learning Curve Education 2009
Activity 1     Welcome and introduction

Facilitators should share the aims of the session (these are also contained within the PowerPoint presentation).

1  To understand the key principles behind the Rich Task approach to learning and teaching.

2  To be aware of key elements or attributes associated with Rich Task design.

3  To identify opportunities for developing Rich Tasks in this school.
Activity 2  Video clip – ‘Rich Tasks’

A good way to start this CPD session would be for participants to view a short film which explores the concept of Rich Tasks.

Rich Tasks

The rich task approach is often considered to be one of the hallmarks of interdisciplinary learning and teaching. Originally emanating from Queensland, Australia, rich tasks provide teachers and learners with new classroom methodologies that encapsulate some of the main aims of Curriculum for Excellence. This film explains what is meant by a rich task, reviews some of the approaches and highlights some of the perceived benefits.

Facilitators should invite the whole group to discuss this video, and clarify any points arising (see also PowerPoint slides). Alternatively, participants may work in smaller groups to promote more discussion and reflection.

Possible Questions:

1  The Rich Task approach has a number of underpinning features;

   • Authenticity and relevance
   • Interdisciplinary learning
   • Learners are able to demonstrate knowledge and skills
   • Variety of assessment methods

   (a) What makes a learning task ‘authentic’ or ‘relevant’?

   (b) What features of a task make it ‘interdisciplinary’?

   (c) To what extent do we enable learners to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in our day-to-day classroom work?

   (d) What are the various and different forms of assessment might be used as part of the learning process?

The Facilitator should make participants aware that the Rich Task approach has been adopted by many schools in Scotland because there is strong evidence that it increases the level of motivation and engagement in learners, and also raises levels of attainment. The approach also reflects many of the aspirations of Curriculum for Excellence.
Summary of key points arising from introductory films

One of the features of Curriculum for Excellence is a Rich Task approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

The rich task approach emerged as part of the New Basics programme developed in Queensland, Australia over the past 10 years.

Although rich tasks were originally founded upon principles of assessment, the rich task methodology has developed in a way that promotes interdisciplinary and cross-curricular approaches to learning and teaching.

Rich tasks are typically used as a framework for designing a project or block of work, which integrates different curricular areas and covers a range of different learning experiences and outcomes.

Much of what makes a task ‘rich’ is the environment in which it is presented. This includes the nature of the learning activity itself and the roles that learners are encouraged to adopt.

In summary, a task might be considered rich where:

• It is based upon an authentic and relevant task
• It is multi-dimensional - involving more than one learning experience or outcome
• It provides opportunities for learners to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding
• It promotes a range of different assessment methodologies

The Rich Task approach has been adopted by many schools in Scotland because there is strong evidence that it increases the level of motivation and engagement in learners, and also raises levels of attainment.
Activity 3  Rich task attributes

The earlier film identified broad features associated with Rich Tasks. In this activity participants can drill down further, by considering some of the characteristics often attributed to a task that is said to be ‘rich.’

Task 1  Participants should identify a recent task (perhaps a project, theme, topic or unit of work), and assess the extent to which that task incorporated the following attributes or characteristics. (Activity may be carried out individually, or in departmental/stage groups).

A pro forma is provided on page 16 which participants can use for recording responses.

Questions: To what extent did the task?

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>provide cross-curricular or interdisciplinary learning experiences?</td>
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<td>(b)</td>
<td>offer authentic and real-life contexts for learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>enable learners to demonstrate knowledge and understanding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>provide opportunities for learners to perform skills or tasks?</td>
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<td>(e)</td>
<td>help students to make connections in their learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>use a variety of different assessment approaches?</td>
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<td>(g)</td>
<td>involve learners in making decisions about how and what they learn?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(h)</td>
<td>involve learners in testing, proving, explaining, reflecting and interpreting?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(i)</td>
<td>promote discussion and collaborative learning?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(j)</td>
<td>involve investigation, research and discovery?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(k)</td>
<td>foster creativity and original thinking?</td>
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<tr>
<td>(l)</td>
<td>cater for different styles of learning?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Task 2  Participants should assess the overall extent to which this recent task or learning experience might be described as ‘rich’ (ie, when evaluated against the attributes listed above.)

Task 3  Reflecting again on the learning task, which of the attributes listed above (in particular) might make that task a richer experience for learners?
Activity 4  Play videos: ‘Rich Tasks – illustrations’

Participants should view one or more of the following films. These show how some schools have embedded Rich Task approaches within learning and teaching.

Clydebank High – A Rich Task
Story telling provides the context for inter-departmental planning and interdisciplinary learning in this secondary school. Teachers, students and school leaders discuss how collaborative working between Modern Languages, History and ICT forms part of the school’s emerging Curriculum for Excellence.

Clydebank High – Collaborative Learning
Eco Design provides the context for interdisciplinary learning in this secondary school Art department. In this short film staff describe how a rich task based on eco-fashion forms part of the school’s emerging Curriculum for Excellence.

Kilbowie Primary – Joining the Learning
The Very Important Bear topic illustrates how this primary school has used cross-curricular planning as part of the school’s emerging Curriculum for Excellence. Teachers, children and school leaders discuss the experiences and outcomes of this motivating theme.

St Kessog’s Primary – A Whole School Theme
Sports provides the context for cross-curricular planning and interdisciplinary learning within this primary school’s emerging Curriculum for Excellence. In this illustrative film, school staff discuss how a sporting theme can cover a broad range and outcomes.

Facilitators should invite the whole group discuss this video and clarify any points arising (see also PowerPoint slides). Alternatively, participants may work in smaller groups to promote more discussion and reflection.

Possible Questions:
Facilitators should invite the group to discuss the illustrative video/s and clarify any points arising. The following questions might help to promote discussion.

1. What features of Rich Tasks are evident in this illustration?

2. Are there examples of this type of approach in our school?

3. What might our school learn from this example of a Rich Task?
Activity 5  Building a Rich Task

(a) Primary school scenario – pages 10-11

(a) Secondary school scenario – pages 12-13

PRIMARY SCHOOL SCENARIO

Anti-Bullying Education

For many years, your school has covered the topic of bullying in Primary 7. This topic, which is usually delivered over a 4-week period, has used largely the same approaches to learning and classroom resources over the years.

The topic is largely based around a programme comprising worksheets and discussion.

The P7 teacher typically leads the learning, providing information about bullying, identifying different types of bullying, talking about the effects of bullying and outlining the school’s anti-bullying policy. The children are largely passive recipients of this information and advice. They answer questions posed by the teacher.

Children then watch an information video about bullying, made over 20 years ago. They answer questions about the film to test their recall.

A Guidance teacher from the local high school attends the school on one occasion to dispel a few myths about bullying in secondary schools and offer advice about making the transition to S1.

Although there are some opportunities for group discussion, the main pupil activity is completing a Bullying booklet. This involves answering factual questions, recording information, completing word searches and finally testing their knowledge with a bullying quiz.

Pupils who complete the booklet earlier than other children, produce an information poster about bullying, although there is no clear aim or learning outcome associated with this final activity. Pupils undertake a short summative test at the end of the topic. There are no other assessment methodologies.

A recent inspection of your school identified anti-bullying education as an area requiring particular improvement. The report states that:

‘ . . . the current provision lacks authenticity and relevance; fails to engage learners and relies on learning and teaching approaches that do not meet the needs of all learners’. 
Task 1: A Rich Task approach (Primary)

Develop a new approach to the P7 Bullying topic that embodies some of the Rich Task approaches to learning and teaching. Suggest a range of ideas, or approaches that would make the schools’ anti-bullying provision a richer learning experience for pupils.

- What learning experiences might increase levels of motivation and engagement in learners?
- What could be done to make the Bullying topic more authentic and relevant?
- Are there modern or contemporary issues associated with bullying that might be relevant and bring the curriculum up-to-date?
- What might be done to make the Bullying topic more interdisciplinary in nature? What other experiences and outcomes might be considered other than the obvious Health and Wellbeing ones?
- What approaches might enable children to be more active in their learning?
- What might be done to enable learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding?
- What approaches might give children more responsibility and autonomy in their learning?
- What creative activities might pupils be asked to undertake?
- What kinds of collaborative learning opportunities might be included in when planning this Bullying topic?

Task 2: Identify assessment methodologies (Primary)

(a) Identify a range of methods of that might be used to assess pupils’ learning.

(b) Now map these assessment methods to some of the learning activities in your revised Bullying topic. To what extent is it possible to broaden the scope of assessment in this educational experience?

Task 3: Planning considerations (Primary)

From the ideas generated, how might you go about planning a new ‘Bullying’ topic? What are the challenges in integrating a variety of ideas into one coherent topic or theme? What issues might there be around the development of resources or teaching materials?
SECONDARY SCHOOL SCENARIO

Anti-Bullying Education

For many years, your school has covered the topic of bullying in S1. This topic, which is usually delivered over a 4-week period, has used largely the same approaches to learning and classroom resources over the years.

The topic is largely based around a programme comprising worksheets and discussion.

Guidance teachers typically lead the learning, providing information about bullying, identifying different types of bullying, talking about the effects of bullying and outlining the school’s anti-bullying policy. Students are largely passive recipients of this information and advice. They answer questions posed by the teacher.

Students then watch an information video about bullying, made over 20 years ago. They answer questions about the film to test their recall.

A police officer attends the school to speak to an S1 assembly to speak about the legal aspects of bullying and talk about a bullying incident that happened some years ago in the community.

Although there are some opportunities for group discussion, the main student activity is completing a Bullying booklet. This involves answering factual questions, recording information, completing word searches and finally testing their knowledge with a bullying quiz.

Students who complete the booklet earlier than other learners, produce an information poster about bullying, although there is no clear aim or learning outcome associated with this final activity.

Students undertake a short summative test at the end of the topic. There are no other assessment methodologies.

A recent inspection of your school identified anti-bullying education as an area requiring particular improvement. The report states that:

‘... the current provision lacks authenticity and relevance; fails to engage learners and relies on learning and teaching approaches that do not meet the needs of all learners’. 
Task 1: A Rich Task approach (Secondary)

Develop a new approach to the S1 Bullying topic that embodies some of the Rich Task approaches to learning and teaching. Suggest a range of ideas, or approaches that would make the schools’ anti-bullying provision a richer learning experience for pupils.

- What learning experiences might increase levels of motivation and engagement in learners?
- What could be done to make the Bullying topic more authentic and relevant?
- Are there modern or contemporary issues associated with bullying that might be relevant and bring the curriculum up-to-date?
- What might be done to make the Bullying topic more interdisciplinary in nature? What other experiences and outcomes might be considered other than the obvious Health and Wellbeing ones?
- What approaches might enable students to be more active in their learning?
- What might be done to enable learners to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding?
- What approaches might give students more responsibility and autonomy in their learning?
- What creative activities might students be asked to undertake?
- What kinds of collaborative learning opportunities might be included in when planning this Bullying topic?

Task 2: Identify assessment methodologies (Secondary)

(a) Identify a range of methods of that might be used to assess students’ learning.

(b) Now map these assessment methods to some of the learning activities in your revised Bullying topic. To what extent is it possible to broaden the scope of assessment in this educational experience?

Task 3: Planning considerations (Secondary)

From the ideas generated, how might you go about planning a new ‘Bullying’ topic? What are the challenges in integrating a variety of ideas into one coherent topic or theme? What issues might there be around the development of resources or teaching materials?
Activity 6  Action planning

Participants should identify future actions that the school should consider in order to develop Rich Tasks. This can be done as a whole staff exercise or in smaller group sessions.

Step 1

The first task is to identify up to 5 priorities for developing Rich Tasks within the school. A proforma for identifying and listing priorities is provided on page 17 of this Guide.

Step 2

The second task is to take one of these priorities and produce an action plan for developing this aspect of Curriculum for Excellence. This would include, for example:

• The aim associated with this priority
• The planned or desired outcomes
• Key tasks, processes and resources
• The personnel involved
• The timescale for each outcome

A proforma to record planning for implementation follows on page 18 (also available as an MS Word file Improvement proforma.doc contained on accompanying CD.)

The facilitator might wish to collate and present these responses as part of a plenary session.
**Activity 7  Plenary**

The aims of the plenary session are:

(a) to summarise key points and actions arising from the CPD session. Participants can be encouraged to ask questions, clarify their understanding and make additional observations and comments;

(b) to prioritise key areas for development as part of the school’s future improvement planning process;

**Follow up activities**

As part of follow up work, participants should consider CPD sessions on the following related Curriculum for Excellence themes in this series.

(a) INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

(b) PLANNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

It should be agreed that such follow up activities form part of the school’s collegiate time.
Evaluating a recent learning experience or task

To what extent did the task or learning experience ....

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rich Task Attributes</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>To some extent</th>
<th>To a large extent</th>
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<tr>
<td>(a) provide cross-curricular or interdisciplinary learning experiences?</td>
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<td>(b) offer authentic and real-life contexts for learning?</td>
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<td>(i) promote discussion and collaborative learning?</td>
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<td>(k) foster creativity and original thinking?</td>
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<td>(l) cater for different styles of learning?</td>
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# RICH TASKS

## Key priorities or areas for development

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<td>Priority or development aspect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intended outcomes</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Key Tasks/Processes/Resources</th>
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