In this issue...

Issue 2 a h 2009

The aim of the new diplomas is to give young people the knowledge they need to go on to university, work or apprenticeship with the right combination of academic rigour and practical learning. Content for three more diplomas (Phase 4 – humanities, science, languages) was published for consultation last month. The design of the programmes aims to give learners understanding of the subjects alongside real-life, hands-on skills.

The diplomas have the backing of leading universities. According to Dr Donald Henderson, Imperial College:

'The new diplomas in Science, through

member of staff similar to those of one colleague who famously said, 'Just tell us what to do and we'll do it!' However, such initiatives are unlikely to survive in this climate, especially if you change roles.

Laissez-faire leadership

If you do get your fingers burned when introducing a proposal, you may be advised that the answer is to consult with staff. You take on the advice, consult and find there is no apparent consensus. In such circumstances, it is easy to take a laissez-faire attitude and just allow colleagues to get on with their own thing. However, as a committed G&T coordinator who wants to do the best for your pupils, it is possible to compensate for this lack of a coordinated G&T approach and replace it with lots of out-of-school activities which you organise yourself. This is sometimes described as the outside-in method of G&T delivery. While you are providing worthwhile opportunities for the children, this is a bolt-on method, only sustainable through your own personal efforts and likely to be unsustainable by the school as a whole upon your promotion or absence.

Transactional leadership

Another solution is to look for a reward that may

ess n a sh ts

This series looks at classroom strategies for G&T coordinators and leading teachers to share with colleagues. This month, Mike O'Neill describes how to use 'Thinking Graphs'

ti it Thinking Graphs
p e t All
e d e s: 2, 3 and 4.

T i e ta Wa te

Thinking Graphs is often used as a main body activity and a time period of 15 to 20 minutes would be an appropriate amount to allocate for an example such as the one shown below.

uip hef Students working individually, in pairs or in small groups.

ti it e iew

Most teachers would associate graphs with subjects such as maths and science, but all subjects make use of graphical information. In maths and science, activities that utilise graphs often involve students having to read the axes and find a value on the y-axis that corresponds to another value on the x-axis. Despite the fact that being able to 'read a graph' is a necessary skill, using the graph in this manner does not pose a great challenge to the students' thinking. The Thinking Graphs activity, however, allows students to think in a more divergent manner.

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Students, individually, paired or grouped in threes or fours, are provided with a number of statements and a graph on A3 sized paper. A good Thinking Graphs activity will contain statements that can be placed in a number of places on the graph, although the students have to be able to justify why each statement goes in each place.

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Students in a KS3 science lesson have been studying the topic of distance-time graphs. This has involved them using graphs to describe different types of motion and to calculate values for the speed of a vehicle at a particular point in time. The Thinking Graphs activity asks students to consider the speeds and heights involved in a bungee jump, placing the statements where appropriate on the graph. There may be more than one place where each statement can be placed; as long as students can justify this then they will have performed the task correctly.

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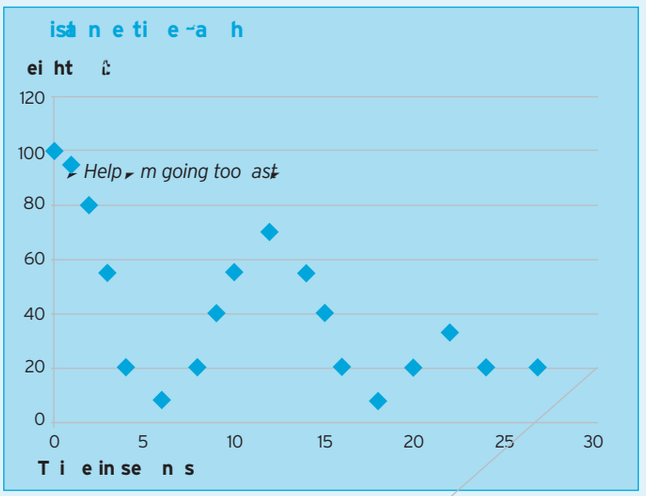
The following suggestions show where Thinking Graphs activities can be used in other subjects:

- In a history lesson about the First World War, students could be given a graph showing the number of British ships lost 1914-18 and a graph of the number of U-boats in use during the same time. Statements could relate to people losing their jobs, cricket pitches being dug up to grow vegetables, the German surrender, British military tactical changes, women receiving black-edged telegrams.
- In a geography lesson, students could be provided with a graph that shows how the temperature of a country has fluctuated over a 100-year period. Statements referring to global warming, use of renewable and non-renewable fuels, flooding, population changes and other environmental factors could be on the statements.
- In business studies, a graph showing the value of share prices over a five year period could be used. Statements referring to wars, recession, supply and demand, company take-overs, job losses, bankruptcy could make up the statements.



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- a focus on thinking towards multiple solutions
- an opportunity for teachers to conduct 'ephemeral' formative assessment that involves listening to students thinking out loud
- assessment of students' understanding of key words related to a topic as they verbalise their understanding
- opportunities for kinaesthetic work, as this activity will involve the manipulation of materials on paper or card
- if used in conjunction with an interactive whiteboard, the activity can be designed to be interactive as students come to the board to drag their statement to a relevant place on the graph
- a chance for creative thinking to happen and the generation of higher-order open questions
- Socratic questioning as students question each other about the best place for a statement to be placed on the graph
- opportunities for students to work independently or collaboratively.

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Yes. An activity such as Thinking Graphs can be used as a homework exercise. To increase the demand of the task, or to give the activity a different slant, ask students to design their own graph and statements. They could do this for the same topic or try and adapt the idea to another area of the work they have covered.

Whatever stage you're at in terms of developing G&T provision in school, it's always useful to leave your immediate domain once in a while to see the bigger picture, share ideas and look for new inspiration. The Education Show runs from 26 to 28 March at the NEC Birmingham and provides an excellent opportunity to find out what's on offer in terms of student resources and staff training (www.education-show.com).

Time is always an issue, but carefully planned visits to national exhibitions like the Education Show can provide valuable CPD and make a direct impact on the quality of your work. Planning is important because without it, you risk the prospect of trailing around a huge exhibition hall, seeing lots of exciting stands and different resources, collecting lots of catalogues and 'freebies', but not actually achieving very much.

Before you go, think about your provision plan for G&T and where gaps exist in resources. Ask colleagues for a wish list: there might be particular pupils who would benefit from additional opportunities provided by YGT membership, attendance at a masterclass or new resources in school. Make a list of what you hope to find and consult the floor plan (see the website above). Be prepared to talk to the exhibitors – if they can't help you directly, they will often point you in the right direction, even if it involves a competitor.

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I've suggested some starting points below for your audit and planning, with some 'not to be missed' points of interest at the show.

- Is there a good variety of external events for G&T pupils (summer schools, visits, enterprise weeks, debating competitions and maths/science challenges)? Use a section of the school's website to market the G&T opportunities to parents of current and prospective pupils. Don't just rely on print: look at developing podcasts. Have a talk with Softease on stand M27 about Podium.
- You could consider forming a focus group where gifted and talented pupils can suggest ways of enhancing provision. Talk to Teachers TV (stand T10) about developing and recording pupil voice.
- AQUILA Magazine's thought-provoking articles and challenging puzzles make it a valuable resource for G&T children seven to 13-years old. Monthly topics are expanded through English, science and maths, developing children's thinking skills with a range of activities. There are features on environmental issues, history, geography, astronomy, crafts and philosophy, as well as cross-curricular challenges. Teachers can photocopy the monthly topic and puzzle pages for classroom use and engage their pupils in AQUILA's projects and competitions. See stand PZ-G62.
- Look for a hands-on approach to learning for young children at Teaching Off The Wall (stand EY A45) and Learning Resources Limited (stand E20).
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The City GATES Needs Analysis Tool is an ambitious project (see www.citygatesneedsanalysis.co.uk/). Its aim is to encourage a broader spectrum of gifted and talented pupils to apply to the most sought-after universities and the most demanding degree courses.

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For teachers:

'Its All about Learning' 10th National Conference for LAs

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NACE conference for local authority directors, advisers, inspectors, SIPs, cluster leading teachersand NACE consultants.
www.nace.co.uk/nace/conferences

Analysing data for school improvement

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Gain a deeper understanding of the implications of data, improve your use of data management tools and initiate informed intervention strategies to raise standards at your school.
www.teachingexpertise.com/conferences/analysing-data-school-improvement-birmingham-3799

Developing very able students at post-16

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The conference will help delegates create strategic and personalised provision to develop very-able students as independent learners, motivated to succeed in exams and progress to top universities.
www.teachingexpertise.com/conferences/developing-very-able-students-post-16-4131

Thinking Skills

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David George leads a one-day course on how recent developments in brain science relate to teaching and learning and how thinking skills can be integrated into curriculum delivery.
www.primeprofessionalconferences.com/courses/21/thinking-skills

Engaging Boys in Education

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White working class boys are still achieving significantly lower grades than their female classmates and peers from different social or ethnic backgrounds. This is an opportunity to explore the barriers to boys' achievement and receive practical advice for overcoming the anti-education culture that exists amongst teenage boys.
www.cpd.info/boys/indexTEX.html

4th National NACE Challenge Award Conference

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Useful ideas and successful models to introduce challenge into everyday lessons based on the NACE Challenge Award Framework.
www.nace.co.uk/nace/conferences

Enrichment ctivities or T Pupils is a free weekly e-bulletin from the publishers of *T pdate*. It provides stimulating thinking, discussion and extension activities for use in and beyond the classroom. To subscribe just send an email with 'Enrichment Activities' 01 TD-0.026 Tc0.026 Tw(or G&)76(T PupiHan email &i 0 . T)106 9P7iHan e

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