

Presentation on RE-silience Project – Geoffrey Penzer

www.re-silience.org.uk

The RE-silience project was designed to increase teachers' confidence in addressing contentious issues in the RE classroom, particularly those issues linked with violent extremism. The project was funded by the Department for Education and it ran for two years, up until March 2011. Now that the funded period has ended, the project team is looking for ways to ensure the materials created for the project will continue to be used.

Schools who signed up to RE-silience were asked to complete a self-evaluation questionnaire which looked into how confident teachers were when tackling certain topics such as terrorism, religious extremism, homosexuality and gender equality. Each participating school was given a mentor, who worked with the school to build teachers' confidence. Schools also had access to 'gateway documents' which provided concise information and advice for teaching individual topics. There were also 'signposts' to help teachers find further information.

The gateway documents will soon be available to access from the RE-silience website without the need for a password; when they are available we will let you know!

Presentation on 'The Holocaust Explained' website – Richard Goldstein

www.theholocaustexplained.com

Launched on Holocaust Memorial Day 2011, 'The Holocaust Explained' is a website designed specifically for students to use independently to learn about the Holocaust. Its content and design are both tailored specifically to the requirements of Key Stage 3 pupils and it closely follows the National Curriculum. It has a glossary of 600 words (both Holocaust terms and general terms) and it includes over 700 "media assets" (video testimonies, pictures, maps and audio clips) all of which are available to copy and save from the site without charge.

We had an interesting discussion as to where Religious Education and Holocaust Education overlap, and how to deal with schools where Judaism is taught solely through the Holocaust.

Policy Update

Please see the attached PowerPoint presentation for details. We discussed the inaugural Celebrating RE month which has been a real success. Several reps reported of events that took place in their areas, but it was evident that not all SACREs had been made aware of the month. It is likely that Celebrating RE month will become a bi-annual event. If you did hold an event and haven't yet done so, make contact on the website (www.celebratingre.org) and create a legacy page for your event.....

The English Baccalaureate battle continues, and EDM about the omission of RE has now reached 102 signatures! (<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-11/1375>) – the issue was recently debated in an Education Select Committee in Parliament and it seems that we might still make a change for the coming summer. NATRE have looked in depth at the potential impact for the subject if RE is not included. Again, we will keep you updated.

Discussions

Delegates shared news and issues from their areas with the group. Amongst the issues discussed were:

- non-participation in RE and withdrawal from visits to places of worship
- coping with the loss of RE advisors and support from councils in general (e.g. SACRE clerks). This problem is prevalent across the country as the government forges ahead with plans to cut out local

authorities as the middle man and to provide as many services as possible directly between central government and schools. The loss of advisors is not just happening in RE but across many subjects. In Harrow, steps have been taken to deal with the problem by asking schools to self-evaluate their RE, by asking schools to give presentations in SACRE meetings (both teachers and pupils) and by establishing 'Chairs Groups' made up of one person from each committee who meet in between each main SACRE meeting to continue work.

→ The need to join forces to save money and resources is happening at all levels, several SACREs have come together to create Common Agreed Syllabi and these have been very successful.

→ in some areas, Professional Development Centres (PDCs) and Multi-faith Centres are also being closed – again, SACREs will have to think of ways to cope, perhaps by offering places of worship or communal building for meetings.

→ There is no-one from the Jewish community standing for the NASACRE Executive this year. We need to think ahead prior to next year's NASACRE AGM and if anyone is interested in standing then please let us know!

→ Some areas are struggling to cope with the demand from schools for synagogue visits. The BoD can run training to try to build confidence so that more people are able to lead these tours – or we might be able to find volunteers who are willing to travel so please be in touch if needs be!

→ In Waltham Forest, the SACRE have been asked to produce a policy regarding time off for pupils and staff for religious observance. At present, this policy states that staff can take a maximum of three days for religious observance. It is important that any such policy which is produced incorporates an understanding of the nature of observance in Judaism, and the variance in levels of observance within our community. There is a useful document on the Board's website entitled 'Jewish Life and Customs' which may be of use in discussions on this issue – <http://www.boardofdeputies.org.uk/file/FamilyLifeCustoms.pdf> - and ACAS also have useful information on their website - <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1856>

AOB!

You can keep track of news from the Board on our website (www.bod.org.uk – due to be relaunched in an improved format very soon!) and also on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Board/287488061783>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/#!/boardofdeputies>)