

Johnstons of Elgin and Elgin Academy



SCILT's Business Language Champions programme helps schools and businesses to build exciting and sustainable partnerships that equip young people with the international communication and employability skills they need for their future careers.

Background

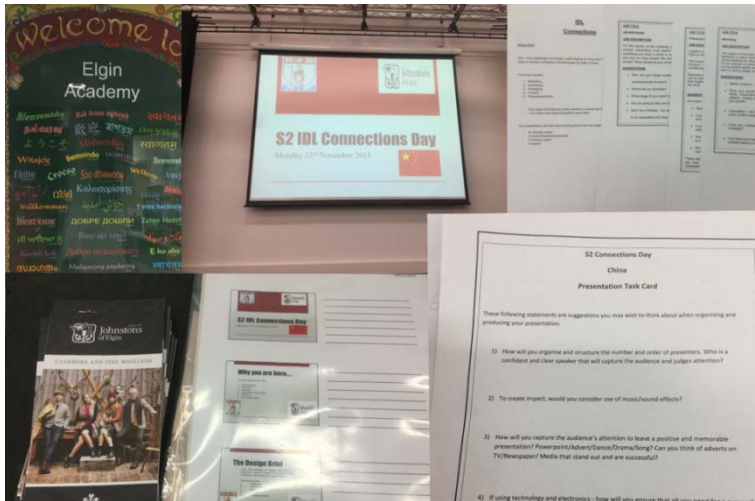
This Case Study exemplifies Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) in S2 at Elgin Academy, in particular the effective combination of Chinese and business links as part of a skills based project in the broad general education.

Elgin Academy is situated in Moray and has 1032 pupils. The school serves a mixed catchment area in the town of Elgin. There are five associated primary schools which, together with Elgin Academy, form the Associated Schools Group. The school also has an IDL working group made up of teachers from across the school. For more information on the school, visit the [Elgin Academy website](#).

Aims and skills to be developed through the project

The school consulted parents, primary and secondary school pupils and employers in order to determine the skills to be developed across the Associated Schools Group and throughout the broad general education. Over the course of a year, up of 100 people were consulted through four consultations and the skills identified were:

- communication
- creativity
- teamwork
- application of knowledge
- resilience
- interpersonal skills



Session 2015-2016 saw the initial rollout of projects supporting the development of these skills. The school held two IDL project days in S1, S2 and S3 and each addressed different skills as well as seeking to measure progression. Progression in the development of these skills was measured by the differing complexities of the tasks involved in each project. The Connections Day was a pilot project day involving S2 pupils.

Partners

CISS and the Modern Languages Department at Elgin Academy worked in partnership with the staff at Johnstons of Elgin.

Johnstons of Elgin

Johnstons of Elgin produces luxury cashmere goods including woollen and cashmere cloth, clothing and accessories. The company has mills in Elgin and Hawick and employs 790 people. Johnstons of Elgin has a presence in over 50 countries, and linking with the company demonstrated to pupils that languages and cultural awareness are necessary in the textile industry.

Project

Staff from Johnstons of Elgin visited Elgin Academy as part of the Connections Day, with the aim of developing S2 employability skills and their understanding of Chinese language and culture. The entire S2 were set the challenge to plan and create a new product for Johnstons of Elgin, aimed specifically at the Chinese market.

Pupils spent the morning in groups to discuss and develop their ideas. They had access to a range of resources, including examples of packaging and marketing, as well as support from the Hanban teacher and CISS staff. They also had access to ICT. They developed advertising, and marketing strategies, packaging, finance plans and ideas for shipping goods, all in preparation for delivering pitches to a “Dragon’s Den” in the afternoon.

Eleven presentations were made to the Dragon's Den judging panel, which included the Head Teacher, Learning and Development Manager for Johnston's of Elgin, Marketing Assistant for Johnston's of Elgin, and the Hanban teacher for the Morayshire Confucius Classroom Hub. Each group gave a presentation using song, PowerPoint, role play and adverts they had developed to market their product in China.



Developing language and cultural awareness

The young people posed and considered a range of interesting questions while preparing their marketing strategies. They considered issues such as age and gender of the target market, the Chinese climate, traditions and festivals in China, and the popularity of tartan products in China. They also took into account Johnston's of Elgin's Corporate Social Responsibility agenda as well as looking into items produced by Johnston's of Elgin's competitors. The real-life context allowed the pupils to develop their Chinese and expand their vocabulary for making introductions and greeting people in a formal business setting. In addition they learned about important aspects of Chinese culture and contemporary life in China. Their understanding of the business world and business terms was also enhanced.



Impact

At the end of the Connections Day, pupils were asked to evaluate their skills and reflect upon those they had used and developed as part of the task:

“I loved building a relationship with the Hanban teacher on the Connections Day and it was good to continue learning Chinese phrases useful in a business setting. Most of all, I developed my knowledge of Chinese culture and the differences between Chinese culture and my own. I also had an opportunity to develop my core skills and I enjoyed the team work element and the competitive nature of the task.” (S2 pupil)

The school was very appreciative of their partnership with Johnstons of Elgin and commented that the business partner had made this task more real and relevant to the pupils. The two representatives from Johnstons of Elgin commented upon how much they had enjoyed the day and were delighted with what the pupils had managed to achieve. They also said they had gained some excellent ideas from the pitches of the pupils to take back to the company:

“It was interesting to hear the perspectives of young people, particularly their views on different types of selling techniques and the importance they attached to utilising social media. We will be going into China once more and particularly into the young market. This has changed our perception on how to deal with young people in China. For us it’s been something that allows us to find out how young people think. It also allows us to help nurture employability skills directly with the pupils for their and our future.” (Learning and Development Manager)

Next steps

Pupils will continue studying Chinese over the next year and further develop language skills and cultural understanding. The project will be repeated again next year with the new S2 and the existing S2 will take part in a similar project, within a new context, when they are in S3.

This year's winning team will visit the Johnstons of Elgin mill to gain a greater understanding of how cashmere is produced from raw material to finished product. Johnstons of Elgin will share the project with the Sales Director, who has responsibility for existing and future operations in China, and use the outcomes to support further developments. The relationship between the school and Johnstons of Elgin has now been firmly established for sustainable future partnership working.

