

Closing the Gap... Curriculum Development

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Until recently, the PE department had been delivering both GCSE PE and BTEC PE, directing students towards each course based on their attributes. The structure of our Key Stage 3 delivery was effective in terms of providing students with the skills and knowledge required within the practical element of the GCSE course. In this, students are assessed on their practical ability in a range of activities. Therefore, building on students' knowledge and skills throughout Key Stage 3, successfully prepared them for the demands of this element. However, during recent years we have moved away from GCSE PE and found BTEC PE to be better suited to our cohort of students. Therefore, there was and is a need to adapt our Key Stage 3 curriculum to make stronger links to the requirements of the BTEC course at Key Stage 4. There is an age old debate in PE departments about the practical Vs theory balance at Key Stage 3. Whilst it is agreed, it is important to create a link between the content taught in both Key Stages there is also a need to keep this as practical as possible. During the curriculum working party; discussions took place and I read literature around how the curriculum should be built towards clear end points and that there needs to be evidence that learning is built towards a goal. There should also be evidence in the curriculum that students are being prepared for the next stage of education.

In his article, Curriculum Design, in the SecEd Magazine Matt Bromley talks about the importance of the intent, impact and implementation of what we teach. He says schools need to show evidence of "how teachers check pupils' understanding effectively, identifying and correcting misunderstandings, and how teachers ensure that pupils embed key concepts in their long term memory and apply them fluently". With this in mind it lead us as a department to think about which elements (sports taught) of our current Key Stage 3 curriculum best lent themselves to the introduction of some of the theoretical concepts of BTEC PE, in particular the Unit 1 onscreen exam. This was then added into the curriculum mapping documents, with the objective that the introduction of key terminology and definitions as early as possible and within a practical environment would help to embed this knowledge in the long-term memory of our students.

The exam element of the BTEC course covers Components of Fitness and Fitness Testing. To not disrupt the delivery of individual sports at Key Stage 3 it was decided that the relevant fitness components would be covered and fitness tests carried out within the umbrella of these activities. In his article, Matt Bromley also refers to the importance of checking understanding effectively, identifying and correcting misunderstandings. Whilst trying to improve the curriculum provision and introducing students to content at an earlier stage I thought this would also be a good opportunity to develop literacy and thus allowing us to assess students understanding. In his book, closing the Vocabulary Gap, Alex Quigley talks about the importance of helping students develop better vocabulary, so that they can meet the demanding content of the qualifications. Homework tasks have been designed to allow this, familiarising students with better subject specific vocabulary, to be set alongside the content taught in the practical Key Stage 3 lessons. Lockdown also presented me with an opportunity to set home learning with more regularity and to introduce students to some of the key terminology and definitions in the BTEC PE syllabus. Students have been set reading and comprehension tasks using Microsoft forms. The way these questions have been designed requires students to engage in the text, to help them to answer the questions. In the new academic year, these homework tasks will compliment and reinforce the content being taught, when hopefully we will be back teaching practical lessons again!

