

Pilot project: summary report

This summary report provides essential background, findings and learning from the Leading Through Values (LTV) pilot project. A full project report is available to download from the project web pages at www.learningthroughvalues.org/leading.html

For further information relation to any of the content in this summary please contact the LTV project coordinator, Rob Bowden, on 07814 873402 or by email: rob@learningthroughvalues.org

1. Introducing the LTV pilot project

The Leading Through Values (LTV) pilot project was developed by an alliance of parties interested in the educational potential of values for learning and teaching about Bigger Than Self (BTS) issues (see box right).

The project sought a small sample of primary schools with whom to trial some initial ideas as to what a values and BTS approach to learning might look like and what this might offer to formal education. The particular aims of the project were to:

- ➔ work with school leaders to raise the profile of values based active citizenship, community engagement and engaging young people with Bigger Than Self (BTS) issues in schools.
- ➔ highlight the role that project partners can play to support schools in achieving this.

These aims were to be achieved through 5 specific and inter-related objectives stated as follows.

1. For school leaders to recognise the importance of developing pupils' core (intrinsic) values, and then relate this to educational vision and school ethos.
2. To link a values-based approach to active citizenship and community engagement, and highlight BTS issues as an effective context for such learning.
3. Create more opportunities for active citizenship and community engagement by young people.
4. Demonstrate the variety of ways that external (NGO) parties can support this work.
5. Evidence the benefits of this approach to the rest of the schools sector and key educational policy makers.

Big issues

There are many issues that may feel simply too big to deal with, but that is not a reason to ignore them! For us the big issues include those relating to:

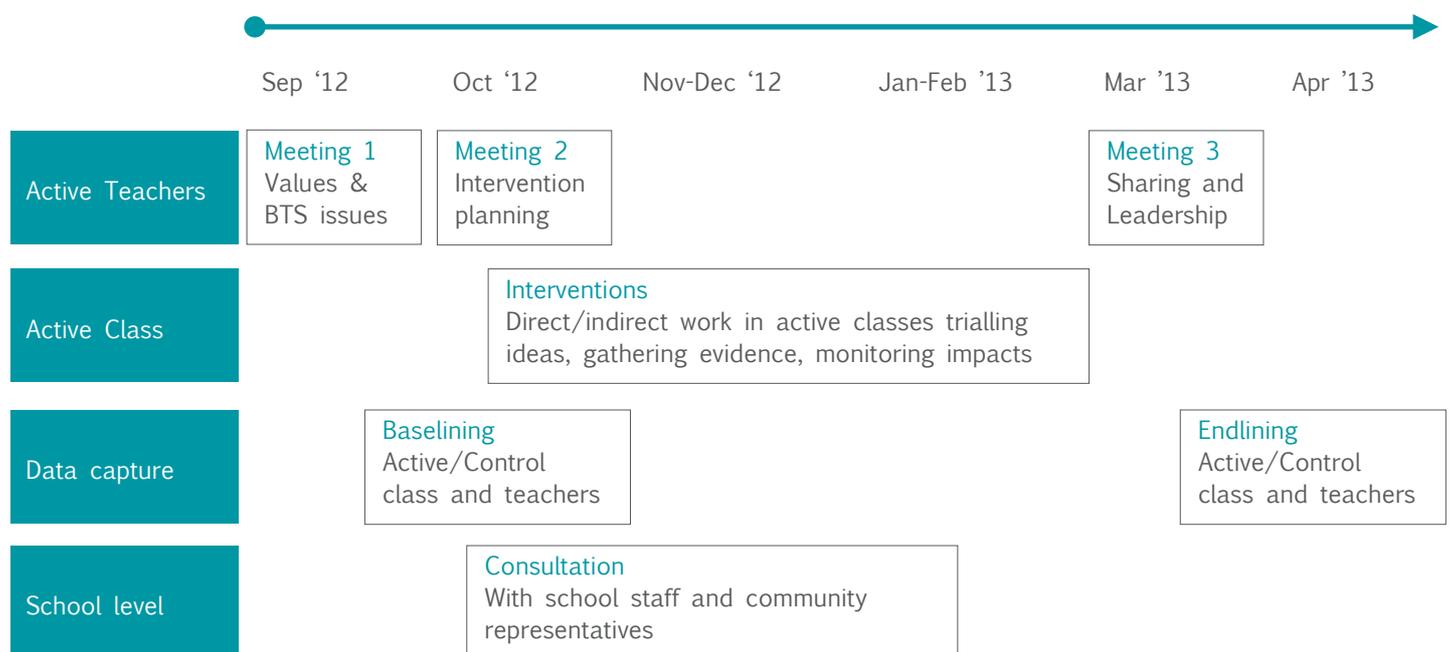
global poverty
sustainability
humanitarianism.

Such issues are sometimes known as Bigger Than Self issues, but the terms Global, Complex, Controversial and Universal are also used. To a large extent the term does not matter, but the skills, dispositions and ability to consider these issues, to form an opinion, and to take relevant action does. We believe values are at the heart of this.

2. The LTV project pathway

LTV is a modest pilot with inevitable limits on both the depth and breadth of what could be achieved. Within these limits the project sought to work with a range of schools and recruited 9 pilot schools with varying socio-economic, demographic, geographic and performance characteristics. For pragmatic reasons, all schools were from the Midlands region spanning an area between north Birmingham and south Sheffield. Another pragmatic consideration was to work with just a single 'active' class within each school, but to use a 'control' class in each as a check on the projects' impact vis-a-vis other initiatives coinciding with the project.

The diagram below provides a summary of the project pathway experienced by all schools and the approximate timings.



3. Measuring impact

A range of methods were used to provide indications of project impact on learners and learning, teachers and teaching and on the wider school community/environment:

- ➔ baselining and endlining the learners' values and their concern about Bigger Than Self Issues using two participatory activities
- ➔ teacher surveys on Values Education and its connection to Bigger Than Self Issues
- ➔ teacher interviews (filmed) on the process and its components
- ➔ observations and artefacts from the active class interventions
- ➔ learning journals of delivery practitioners and active teachers
- ➔ contributions to and outcomes of full cohort project meetings
- ➔ school and community insights drawn from consultation sessions in schools

4. Key findings from the pilot project ...

... in relation to learners

- ➔ When given a choice of 15 values, 66% identified an intrinsic value as the most important
- ➔ Learners in 6 out of 9 active classes showed an increase in intrinsic values.
- ➔ Recognition of Bigger Than Self (BTS) issues has increased and deepened. Issues identified with social justice increased in frequency by 59% and in breadth by 93%.
- ➔ Of issues identified as significant there was a 38% decrease in those associated with concern for self and a 22% increase in those associated with concern for others and the wider world.
- ➔ Learners involved in the project have been observed by teachers, headteachers and governors as showing improved levels of engagement and interest in learning.
- ➔ Marked improvements in the speaking and listening skills.

... in relation to teachers

- ➔ Increased confidence in the ability of primary learners to engage with complex and controversial issues.
- ➔ Increased understanding of values, including their own, and of the importance of values in teaching and society.
- ➔ Greater willingness to include BTS issues as part of their day-to-day teaching.
- ➔ More awareness of the available support for teaching BTS issues and values education.
- ➔ 5 out of 7 active teachers describe a shift in pedagogy and teaching philosophy due to involvement in the project.
- ➔ Of the active teachers, 71% believe strongly that values education needs to be linked to local community participation.
- ➔ 86% of active teachers strongly agree that values education helps learners cope with the difficulties of modern life.

... in relation to school leadership

- ➔ 5 out of 9 schools have stated a commitment to using values and Bigger Than Self issues as a core driver of school improvement.
- ➔ A more explicit values language is key to greater understanding of Bigger Than Self issues.
- ➔ All schools have identified the need to discuss greater community engagement.
- ➔ 6 out of 7 leaders expressed the importance of external support in helping them to engage in values and Bigger Than Self issues.

5. Key learning from the pilot project ...

... in relation to learning through values:

- ➔ The active development of a values language in the classroom is key to deepening learners' understanding of and engagement with values and BTS issues.
- ➔ Connecting values and BTS issues to the 'day-to-day' learning (as opposed to an add-on) supports learners to begin identifying these links for themselves.
- ➔ The most successful learning was observed where teachers 'walk the talk' and use values to support a more active pupil voice in the classroom environment.
- ➔ A safe space in which learners can confidently express their thoughts and ideas without judgement is essential for critical engagement.
- ➔ Learning through values has a direct and positive impact on classroom behaviour and on the attainment of learners.
- ➔ Supporting the evolution of values through classroom dialogue that creates ownership is essential to the sustainability of learning through values.

... in relation to teaching and leading through values:

- ➔ Values training is critical for the effective implementation of learning through values.
- ➔ The direct or indirect support of leadership is a major factor in the success of learning through values.
- ➔ Teachers who are supported to take risks and 'let go' achieve more, and gain greater confidence in these approaches than those who 'play it safe'.
- ➔ The engagement of an external provider and/or resources to support values and BTS approaches has a significant impact.
- ➔ The most successful teachers are those who were able to critically reflect on their own values and on the values that permeate and govern their professional role in school.
- ➔ The opportunity for peer learning around values and BTS issues is critical for teachers' own development and reflection in an area of complex and controversial learning.
- ➔ Teachers need structured reflection time to unpack the true meaning and potential of learning through values.
- ➔ Connecting values and BTS issues to existing curricula and planning is empowering for teachers.

6. Next steps ...

- ➔ To identify and design an effective process for scaling the learning in the project from an active class to a whole-school, with specific consideration of the leadership requirements.
- ➔ A dedicated portal for teachers to access information/resources/share ideas/identify opportunities for continued values and BTS work.
- ➔ Deeper engagement with age-appropriate values language, developing the circumplex to be effective for younger people.
- ➔ Deeper engagement with the desired values of a 21st century school and how these fit with the circumplex and with the agendas of external parties and the local community.
- ➔ Auditing and signposting existing resources to support values learning and BTS issues.
- ➔ Creation of a methodological toolkit for effective delivery, monitoring and evaluation of values/BTS education.
- ➔ Professional courses for school leaders/teachers/governors on values education and BTS issues.
- ➔ Dissemination of ideas, findings and critical engagement with varied perspectives and audiences.

7. Further information

The full report used to compile this summary is available in PDF format at www.learningthroughvalues.org/leading.html

If you would like to know more about any element of the LTV project and/or the findings and learning outlined above then please contact the LTV project coordinator, Rob Bowden:

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This summary and the full project report have been written, compiled and designed by Lifeworlds Learning on behalf of the Values in Schools Alliance (Oxfam, British Red Cross, Think Global, Practical Action, National Children's Bureau, Lifeworlds Learning)