Welsh Baccalaureate links to Cultural Organisations
engage Cymru research pilot project

Wrexham’s case study:
Oriel Wrecsam gallery & Ysgol Bryn Alyn High School, Gwersyllt

Oriel Wrecsam case study by Learning & Engagement Officer Honor Pedican, summer 2014
Introduction

engage Cymru is part of engage UK, a membership organisation representing gallery, art and education professionals in the UK and over 20 countries worldwide. engage promotes access to, enjoyment and understanding of the visual arts through gallery education.

A 2014 engage Cymru research pilot project, were visual arts and education establishments worked together in delivering elements of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification, with the intention of developing models of best practice.

engage Cymru provided opportunities to meet with the other local authority officers involved in other counties and see presentations by WJEC’s Sian Coathup and Researcher Robin Clutterbuck. Sian has responsibility for advising on the Welsh Baccalaureate curriculum. Robin was the researcher and worked on a similar research project for Museums, Heritage, Archive and Library Services. He presented these case studies.

In this case, Oriel Wrecsam gallery worked with Ysgol Bryn Alyn High School in Gwersyllt, Wrecsam.

The Learning & Engagement Officer Honor Pedican had first contact with the schools Welsh Baccalaureate Coordinator Sandra Davies (following a letter that had been sent to all education establishments in Wrexham that delivered the Welsh Baccalaureate). Sandra Davies is also the Head of Business Studies at the school.

In the first meeting it was agreed that the project would be used as a taster for up to x15 Year 9 students. Honor discussed the elements of the Welsh Baccalaureate that she saw potential for the gallery to best support the curriculum. These included Wales, Europe and the World (particularly Elements 2 & 3), aspects of Personal & Social Education, Work Related Education, Essential Skills Wales & Wider Key Skills.

Plans about designing products for the Oriel Wrecsam gallery shop, presented by the chosen project artist / illustrator Desdemona McCannon, were also agreed. However, close to the start date of the project activities, Desdemona had to pull out, due to illness in her family.

Therefore, Honor Pedican stepped in to become the lead artist, as well as project manager. Honor adapted the original plans to suit her own textiles / applied arts practice and Sandra willingly approved the changes.

It was decided that Honor would work with the group in the school, on two full days and the group would then visit the gallery (with her) on a third and final full day. This gave the school more time to inform parents about the project and gain their consent for the gallery trip.

No specific Welsh Baccalaureate areas would be targeted but the project would natural link with various Core aspects. Instead the project would be a ‘taster’ in preparation for the groups Year 10 start.

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The gallery offers work experience and volunteering opportunities. On the gallery visit there would be an opportunity to get an insight into gallery staff roles. In future academic years, the students would be welcome to use Oriel Wrecsam to assist with elements that include Wales, Europe and the World, Work Related Education or their Individual Investigation.
Day 1 (13 March)

At the school, Honor was introduced to Head of Art Mr. Rowlands and other staff in the Art Department. She was also allocated an Art classroom for the two days. The group consisted of x14 students, from different form groups, to be ‘off timetable’ in order to attend for full days. Note: One student could not attend due to a school football tournament.

Honor introduced the project and led the students through short tasks were they analysed the products already for sale in the gallery shop. She had A4 colour photographs of the shop and a box of selected merchandise for the students to consider. Students were also asked to consider what the artists/designers needed to think about when making and selling their artwork. The group were given worksheets and small sketchbooks to record their findings.
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Honor demonstrated a fabric technique to produce unique resist based textile pieces. The group then set about creating their own textiles, using the technique.
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The group were able to evaluate the day and their artwork, alongside others, when all the finished work was brought together at the end of the day and comments were added to a flip chart.

Honor scanned and used Photoshop to produce transfers for mugs, pencil cases and bags. It would be ideal that the students be taught this process. Due to time and access to software constraints this was not possible.

Examples of artwork by the Year 9 students

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Day 2 (29 April)

Honor recapped on Day 1, bringing back the groups textiles and presenting them with their fabric transfers (printed on sparkly paper) for their bags and pencil cases (also provided). Note: Honor had invited the students to personalise their sketchbooks and several had done this with book coverings of their choice.

Between the first and second day, Honor had also sent the resized images (from the original textiles) to artist Carol Udale. Carol had made ceramic transfers from the designs and now joined us, with her machine to add the students’ designs to high quality porcelain mugs.

The pencil cases, bags and mugs were completed, in preparation for the gallery visit the following day.
Students were also asked to complete researcher Robin Clutterbuck’s feedback forms (that were to be filled in both prior and after the gallery visit).

Note: A mix up came to light, because one of the students had not labelled their artwork. This led to not having the correct mug transfer prepared. However Honor worked to correct this, with Carol’s help, to ensure the student also had a mug with her own design.
Day 3 (30 April)

The group arrived with teacher Avril Burns with responsibility for Agriculture at the school. Note: One student did not attend as she had not returned a signed parents consent form. Others who were absent on Day 1 or 2, were now present.

Honor prepared the following plan for the day:

**Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 – 10</td>
<td>Welcome &amp; tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 10:15</td>
<td>Break (Sarah &amp; Jake finish off/have a go of missed techniques)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 – 10:30</td>
<td>Look at how artists market themselves in Oriel Wrecsam’s shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 – 12</td>
<td>Design &amp; print marketing flyer/postcard [pre-booked set of x14 library pcs, upstairs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 1</td>
<td>Lunch [rooms / green]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2:45</td>
<td>Gallery based activities [students place and photograph their own items in the shop]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oriel Wrecsam staff Q&amp;A session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45 – 3</td>
<td>Evaluations completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The day went to plan, with the students being given a tour and talk by Honor, of all the gallery spaces, from her Learning & Engagement Officer perspective. These included Welsh National Opera’s celebratory exhibition of their three year residency in Wrexham and work produced by children and young people involved in Criw Celf at the gallery.
The young man that had missed the first day had the opportunity to try out the practicals and the accompanying Horticulture Teacher also enjoyed having a go.

Students were able to see the shop set-up and specifically the artist/designer made products for themselves. They were encouraged to notice the additional things that the artists/designers had provided to help market themselves (e.g. provide additional information on labels / postcards, that included bilingual text).
Students were given memory sticks with their own digital designs on them and had the opportunity to produce flyers/posters to help promote their own products, in the library computer suite, within the same building.
The WNO exhibition included a box of props (with a sign welcoming visitors to dress up and take photographs, through the accompanying frame). This provided an entertaining activity, while the group took turns to place and photograph their own products in the gallery shop.
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Honor had invited staff to join the group, in the gallery, for a question and answer session. The staff talked about their career paths and what led them to take up positions at Oriel Wrecsam gallery. Students were encouraged to ask Honor and the two Gallery Assistants questions about their training and what their current job roles entailed. They also heard about work experience and volunteering opportunities at the gallery.
Feedback

Feedback from the project was very positive and included the following comments:

Teacher:
- ‘A fantastic opportunity’.
- ‘This was an experience that they wouldn’t get in school’.
- ‘The course fitted really well with Welsh Bacc. Team Enterprise - Putting together a business idea and understanding the process of working toward an enterprising goal. Key Skills – Working with Others / Improving own Learning & Problem Solving. Providing the year 9 students with an opportunity, will give them an introduction to the tasks they may face as part of their Welsh Bacc course, and also an insight into developing the skills they will need.’
- ‘...fantastic to also take part in activities away from the classroom.’
- “The work will be followed up during their GCSE Art course and Welsh Bacc course’
- ‘All preparation was done by Oriel Wrecsam – fantastic organisation and support provided.’
- ‘The interaction and relationship with the artist was extremely positive and engaging’.
- ‘I have been extremely impressed by the whole project, and feedback from the pupils has been extremely positive.’

Students:
- ‘I found out what really happens in galleries’.
- ‘I found out that art is not just about drawing but about being creative and enjoying it’.
- ‘The best bit was photographing our products in the shop’.

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I enjoyed making the mugs because the outcome was awesome. And I’ve finally learned the process of printing on mugs - Sublimation machine.

The Artist was really helpful. She was happy, joyful and always positive. She was energetic and enthusiastic.
Summary

This was part of a wider 20013/14 engage Cymru research pilot project that aimed to develop models of best practice between visual arts and education establishments delivering the Welsh Baccalaureate.

The early opportunities engage Cymru provided gave officers an insight into the Welsh Baccalaureate curriculum and an idea of what the researcher would require and produce as the end result. Researcher Robin Clutterbuck’s report is available from the engage website: www.engage.org.uk

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Plans about designing products for the Oriel Wrecsam gallery shop, presented by the original artist were agreed. However, the artist had to pull out, due to illness in her family. Honor Pedican stepped in to become the lead artist, as well as project manager and adapted the original artist’s plan to suit her own practice. She worked with the group in the school and at the gallery.

At the school, Honor was allocated an Art classroom for the two days. The group consisted of x14 students, from different forms. The students were led through tasks were they analysed existing products in the gallery shop. They recorded findings on worksheets and small sketchbooks. Honor demonstrated a fabric technique to produce unique resist based textiles. The group then creating their own textile pieces and evaluated the day, when the work was brought together, added comments to a flip chart.

Honor scanned and used Photoshop to produce transfers for mugs, pencil cases and bags. It would be ideal that the students be taught this process. Due to time and access to software constraints this was not possible.

The second day saw the students add their transfers to the different products, in time for the gallery visit. Students were also asked to complete feedback forms.

The third and final day went to plan, with the students being given a tour and talk of all the gallery spaces, (by Honor from her Learning & Engagement perspective).

Students were able to experience the shop, noticing the additional things that the artists/designers had provided to help market themselves, produce their own marketing flyers/posters and place and photograph their own products in the gallery shop.

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On the gallery visit there was an opportunity to get more insight into career paths and gallery staff roles.

KS3/4 teachers/lecturers and students are welcome to approach Oriel Wrecsam gallery about how the gallery may best support and enrich the delivery of the Welsh Baccalaureate course in their school/college.
Acknowledgements

Avril Burns ........................................ Teacher, Bryn Alyn High School, Gwersyllt
Robin Clutterbuck ................................. Museum & Gallery Learning Consultant
Sian Coathup .............................. Regional WBQ Development Officer, WJEC
Sandra Davies ................................ WBQ Coordinator, Bryn Alyn High School
Honor Pedican ................................. Learning Officer, Oriel Wrecsam & freelance Artist
Angela Rogers .................................. engage Cymru Coordinator
David Rowlands .............................. Head of Art, Bryn Alyn High School, Gwersyllt
Carol Udale ................................. Artist, Flintshire
Brian Whiteley ................................. Headteacher, Bryn Alyn High School, Gwersyllt

And the Year 9 students:

Caitlin
Chelsea
Courtney
Elysia
Emily T
Emily W
Georgia
Grace
Jake
Keira
Luke
Sarah
Seren

For more information about the work of engage, go to www.engage.org/