



Fashion Café

at Sawtry Community College

Often our subject is seen as splintered separates that only make joined up sense when we do the mapping exercise and decide which units cover which bits of National Curriculum. However, sometimes it happens that a great opportunity comes along and helps bind our separate elements together. At Sawtry Community College, Julia Jones brought together that opportunity as part of her Gatsby Teacher Fellowship year. Here she takes up their story.

One of the problems faced in Design and Technology is the students understanding of the different areas of the department. It is often not seen as a full department, with different areas being segregated away from the rest, and sometimes (except from department meetings) teachers do not get the opportunity to discuss ideas and strategies to bring things forward.

At Sawtry, we decided to try and see whether it would be possible to put together a project that allows students to work independently in separate subjects in the Department, yet be able to pull all the work into one large scale project. This is where the Fashion Café came about. The idea was to incorporate every student in a year group, work with them and produce an event with real, useable and viable products that have a purpose. There was a deadline, with customers that expected a certain standard/level of service.

The project was embedded in Year 10 over 4 months and what was important was that we covered as many aspects of the exam board syllabus requirements as possible. To develop and use design briefs, detailed specifications and criteria in relation to product development and in particular manufacturing in quantity, quality control and assurance, a wide range of graphic techniques and use of ICT. Importantly this project was all about solutions for clients and consumers rather than designing for self.

All of the Design and Technology areas were involved as part of the Fashion Café from Electronics, Food Technology and Graphic Products through to Resistant Materials and Textile Products. Each area was responsible for manufacturing different parts of the Café that was subject specific to them.

The first job was to put the students into working groups of 5 or 6, ensuring that each group comprised mixed gender and ability. The café had an overall theme that D&T staff decided upon:
MUSIC - Folk, Dance, Classical and Rock.

In Food Technology, mass production was the main part of this area. Students were given a broad outline of what they needed to make, then developed for themselves how to make it into a new product. All students came up with different ideas, and then discussed these ideas in each group, deciding what flavours, colours and textures were best. The food arrived and had to be stored in a safe area. It had to be prepared and cooked and then stored again and reheated. The final parts of the cooking were completed in the school canteen during each evening.



📷 The students set up the stage and backdrop

Most of the ambience was created by Graphics work. We bought large MDF boards and used them as a backdrop to the stage for the fashion show. Students designed what they thought would suit the theme, and translated that onto the boards. The students also designed 3D menus that again reflected the atmosphere. In electronics the students worked together with graphics in order to produce the menu displays. Each display had a circuit inside that lit up various points of the menu.

3D Menus for the table tops 📷



In Resistant Materials after a number of design changes It was decided to mass produce plain, yet identical shapes that could be used for salt and pepper, as well as a candleholder of a similar design. And in the textiles area the students gave the waiters/waitresses a corporate identity. They designed and made corporate clothing that was worn on each evening. They also batch-produced beanie buddies that were related to the different types of music that was used as part of the theme to the evenings.



There were 4 types of beanies produced 📷
Each of them were given a name -
Clarissa, Melvin, Eric and Bono.



We approached a local department store to loan clothes for the fashion aspect of our evenings. We had a clear idea of what we wanted from them. Their staff measured the students and met the students so that they could compare the students in their clothes for each evening. They brought a range of outfits with them that reflected the type of music that went with the café.

The fashion Café lasted over four evenings and started each evening at 6pm and including food and entertainment and the two halves to the show lasted until 8.30pm each evening.

This type of project was the most enjoyable, valuable, enthusing, exhausting, rewarding, exciting and stressful project we have been involved in. Students will never forget the project and how they enjoyed working in Design and Technology. Many have used their experiences as a case study in their major projects in Year 11. Their involvement in real citizenship projects are obvious, having to get on with each other, ring companies and talk to people whom they have never met. They also looked at financial implications of decisions they made; being aware of costs of equipment and materials they were using to make the products. Many of the decisions were made on the spur of the moment because a situation comes up that needs responding to rather like real life!

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