

**Business Language Champions 2007-08:
A report by the Regional Language Network
West Midlands**

Summary

The RLN West Midlands has had a very successful year in delivering the Business Language Champions programme across the region and significantly exceeded project targets. Twelve new partnerships were created and languages uptake increased at six of the partner schools. Twenty four pieces of press coverage, publicising partnership activities as well as promoting the Business Language Champions programme, appeared in local papers and other publications.

Aims

- to create six partnerships between schools and local businesses
- to organise activities between partner schools and businesses to increase awareness of importance of languages beyond the classroom
- to increase languages uptake in partner schools
- to increase awareness amongst pupils, parents, teaching staff and management about the importance of language skills in the world of work
- to devise a PR campaign to promote the programme and partnership activities
- to create case studies of each partnership to use as examples of best practise
- to disseminate information on the programme, such as press releases and case studies, to all participants and the RLN network of contacts
- to encourage schools to create new resources based on their partnership activities for future use

Twelve new partnerships were created and each participated in at least one activity, notably:

- Years 9, 10 and 11 students at Trinity School were visited by two business coaches from Bromsgrove-based Action Coach and took part in language-based presentations and discussions.
- Mr Recanati, general manager of Lyon-based Rousseau took time out from a business trip to the UK to visit Prince Henry's High School and deliver presentations and take questions from students.
- Weston Road High School held a languages day and invited three RLN providers to deliver presentations as well as organising language taster sessions.
- Years 9 and 11 pupils at Harris School listened to a presentation from the director of Positive G before holding mock interviews, writing e-mails and organising a trip – all in French.
- Nineteen Year 9 students from the Coleshill School visited BMW's Hams Hall Plant, where they toured the site, talked to staff who use languages and took part in activities devised by teaching staff and the company.
- Over eighty Year 9 students at Arrow Vale High School took part in language-based presentations and follow up activities with their partner company, Oakland International.
- Mark Hall, Export Sales Manager for Siak Transfers, spent a day at Queen Elizabeth's Mercian School talking to Year 9 pupils about his experience of using languages, before getting pupils to write e-mails and create advertising slogans in French.
- Angela Maxwell, Director of Acuwomen and one of the region's most successful entrepreneurs, visited Paget High School, Kings Norton Girls' School, Kenilworth School and South Bromsgrove School to talk in specially prepared assemblies and lessons about her experience of using languages, why business value language skills and how such skills benefit the individual. Students were split into groups to put questions to Angela which they had prepared in advance.
- Year 9 French and Spanish students from Lyndon School took part in a languages morning, learning about translation careers, the use of languages in business and then participated in a languages quiz, delivered by Liz Athey, Operations Manager at Roevin Translations.

Existing partnerships:

BLC activities continued at St Augustine's Catholic High School, as representatives from their partner company, Oakland International, visited to deliver presentations to current Year 9 students.

Collaboration with other organisations

In addition to establishing partnerships between business people and schools, the RLN WM has also been developing partnerships with other organisations.

- On 5th June the RLN WM gave a presentation to a group of West Midlands teachers on the Business Language Champion programme as part of a Comenius CPD event to promote the initiative and to support teachers in working more effectively with local businesses.
- The RLN WM is also a key member of the steering group for West Midlands Routes Into Languages. On 10th June RLN WM Business Language Champions and RintoL jointly organised a “World of Work” day featuring a talk and activities with Angela Maxwell, one of the RLN WM Business Language Champions.

Results

Languages uptake increased at half of our partner schools, notably:

- Language numbers more than doubled at Paget High School in Burton
- The number of German students at Coleshill School doubled, whilst those opting to take French also increased, by 60%
- The number of German students at Queen Elizabeth's Mercian School almost doubled and French uptake increased by 10%
- There was an increase in the number of French students at Trinity School
- Kenilworth School reported a 5% increase in all GCSE language classes for September 2008-09

Uptake was maintained at Prince Henry's High School, Weston Road High School and Kings Norton Girls' School.

In those schools where language numbers had fallen, language departments reported encouraging changes in attitudes towards the importance of language learning amongst pupils, other teaching staff and management.

Testimonials

The following quotes are taken from feedback forms and e-mail communications with schools and businesses in the aftermath of BLC activities.

Reaction from schools:

"We are pleased with the increase in numbers at KS4. Following our involvement in the programme we have developed a series of lessons, examining Languages in the Workplace, to use with Year 9 students."

Amy Hawthorn, Head of Languages, Queen Elizabeth's Mercian School

"Feedback from participating students has been really positive and although it did not influence their option decisions many commented that they viewed the event as an enhancement to their French studies."

Stephanie Anderson, Head of Languages, Harris School

"Senior management were impressed by the students' involvement on the day as well as their positive attitudes."

Stephanie Anderson, Head of Languages, Harris School

"Angela's presentation was warmly received, not only by languages staff but also by pastoral staff and tutors who were present in the assembly. A number of them noted how inspirational Angela was and commented on the usefulness of exposing students to such enthusiastic people."

Jane Brandist, Head of Languages, Kenilworth School

Reaction from students:

"It made me want to do languages more so I can get a better job in the future."

"Really good, it made me think twice about choosing a language for my options."

Pupils from Kings Norton Girls's School, following their BLC activities.

Reaction from companies:

"The day was well planned and the students engaged in the activities offered with enthusiasm. They were clearly interested to hear the needs of businesses and be assured that their future skills were in demand."

Gisèle Pellegrini, Director of Positive G

"It was good to see how inquisitive the pupils from Coleshill were. They made good use of the opportunity to put questions to the BMW associates who work here and, I believe, gained a real insight into the kinds of career paths that are open to people with language skills."

Jason Reakes, Corporate Communications Manager, BMW

PR Campaign

During the course of the 2007-08 BLC programme the RLN created and issued press releases and accompanying photographs to relevant local newspapers, magazines and other publications.

26 pieces of press coverage were secured, notably:

- Trinity School and Action Coach partnership activities, to coincide with European Day of Languages, appeared in the Redditch Advertiser, Bromsgrove Advertiser and Worcestershire Whub
- Mr Recanati's visit to Prince Henry's High School featured in the Worcester News and UKTI's Export magazine
- The partnership between Harris School and Positive G was publicised in articles featured in the Rugby Advertiser, Rugby Observer and the ITI Bulletin
- Oakland International's presentations at Arrow Vale School were publicised in the Redditch Standard, the Oakland International website and on modernselling.com
- Articles about Coleshill pupils visiting BMW appeared in the Coleshill Gazette and Coleshill Echo, with a follow up release, detailing the increase in uptake, appearing in the Coleshill Herald
- Siak Transfers and Queen Elizabeth's Mercian School partnership activities were publicised in the Tamworth Herald
- Angela's Maxwell's input at Paget High School was publicised in the Burton Mail and Burton Trader. A follow up article, following the increase in uptake, was also published in the Burton Trader
- Kings Norton Girls' School partnership with Angela Maxwell featured in an article published in the Birmingham Post
- Roevin Translations' partnership with Lyndon School featured in the Solihull Observer
- Last year's partnership between St Augustine's Catholic High School and Oakland International continued to flourish in 2007-08 and four pieces of press coverage were secured in the Redditch Standard and Redditch Advertiser

All press releases were also featured on the RLN West Midlands website and e-zine as well as being disseminated to the wider network. A case study of each partnership has also been created and these will appear on the RLN WM website in due course as well as being disseminated amongst the wider network as examples of good practise.

Looking forward

Following a very successful Business Language Champions programme in 2007-08, we plan to take the programme forward next year, on a strategic level, through:

- Collaboration with Routes into Languages – Angela Maxwell spoke at a RintoL event in June 2008.
- Continued collaboration with Comenius West Midlands – Chris Everall spoke at several Comenius Network meetings in 2008 and Frances Pallett and Angela Maxwell will be presenting at a Subject Leaders conference in the autumn term.
- Delivery of ‘Teach the Teacher’ sessions – to inform teaching staff, school management, governors and careers advisors about the programme and to advise on the best ways to work with local businesses. The first session is scheduled for 5 November 2008.
- Expanding upon the recognition of the BLC/RLN name as the first point of contact for schools wanting to work with businesses and businesses wanting to give something back to the local community – through further PR campaign.
- Creation of an online BLC resource bank – a free downloadable bank of BLC resources - available from the RLN website, including sample activities used in past and existing partnerships and tips for schools on contacting and working with businesses.
- Continued collaboration with other organisations – such as linking in with UKTI through articles in their Export magazine.

Report compiled by Regional Language Network West Midlands, please contact Frances Pallett, Programme Co-ordinator, on 0121 329 3297 for further details.