

Edinburgh College student ambassadors help school pupils achieve their creative potential



City school pupils are unshackling their imaginations and getting help to explore creative careers thanks to a project set up by two Edinburgh College Graphic Design students.

College students have set up the Creative Ambassador Project, where they go into schools to work directly with students in Art and Design classes to give them the benefits of their own creative and education experiences.

The students – Niamh Curran and Holly McNie, both 19 and studying HND Graphic Design – set up the pilot project with prize money from local graphic design firm ThreeBrand. ThreeBrand, which is an official partner of Edinburgh College’s Graphic Design course, challenged college students to come up with ways of engaging school pupils about careers in art and design. Niamh and Holly’s pitch was judged the best and they received cash to set up and manage their project.

The students have worked with five Edinburgh secondary schools so far – Broughton, Tynecastle, Drummond, Trinity and Holyrood, with Castlebrae also lined up and another couple interested. They are running six

workshops in art and design classes at each school until May. With support from classmates, they are helping the pupils develop their creative skills and explore education and career opportunities. Using their own experience of trying to decide how to pursue their creative interests, they are able to support the students to make their own informed choices.

Niamh said: "At school I wanted to do something creative but I wasn't sure what courses were available and what I needed to do to get into them. It can be hard to figure out what's best for you and what you need to do to get there, so we wanted to help other young people who are making these kinds of decisions now. I realised that college would be the best choice for me as it's really practical and that's how I like to work. It's important to us to help the pupils decide what will work for them

"The kids seem to really enjoy the workshops and we're able to build good relationships with them. We understand what they're going through as it wasn't long ago that we were in the same place.

"Since we ran the first workshops in January at Broughton High School the project has snowballed and more and more schools are expressing interest in taking part, so it's really exciting. It feels good to be able to help them; to work together with the schools and the art teachers, and to be part of something through Edinburgh College that's making a difference to pupils."

As well as helping the pupils, Niamh and Holly are also learning how to manage a project, presenting to large groups, dealing with finances and gaining experience as educators.

Edinburgh College Graphic Design lecturer Helena Good said: "We were keen to look at ways where we could better facilitate and strengthen the important links between schools, colleges and employers. We set out to develop a process that met the needs of all parties, from a pupil's initial interest to guiding teachers on how to access support, through to offering actual contact with employers. At its core the framework for engagement aims to provide a resource that is relevant and accessible, and ensures pupils attain their full potential."

Tynecastle High School art teacher Shionagh Primrose said: "This is an exciting and innovative project that is not only an invaluable resource for our students but also for staff. It offers students direct access to real-world opportunities outside school and a chance to get a feel for life in the world of design. I am excited at what my students will gain from this and, indeed, myself from the experience."

The initial stages of this pilot project were so successful that further funding was required to complete the testing of the concept. A successful application was made to the Edinburgh College Development Trust, an independent charity set up in 2014 to enhance the contributions Edinburgh College makes to the communities it serves.

Dr Allan Colquhoun, chair of the Edinburgh College Development Trust, said: "This is just the type of pilot project that the trust likes to fund. It is an excellent way to improve the students' employability by giving them real experience which will undoubtedly help them access excellent careers in the future as well as exposing the pupils to career opportunities."

Gary Fortune-Smith, ThreeBrand managing director, said: "Creative, enthusiastic and passionate people are the lifeblood of the graphic design sector. To be involved at such a grassroots level and be able to help Edinburgh College shape the future of the industry is very exciting."

The success of this pilot project means it could be used as a model for other departments within the college.



The school pupils will also undertake a creative industries module at Edinburgh College, which will be delivered online through the course blog: www.welovedesignetc.info.

The best 20 submissions will be showcased at the Graphic Design course industry night on Thursday 1 June at the Dovecot Gallery in Edinburgh. And in June they will come to the college to work with graphic design students on a live design project set by the Edinburgh, Midlothian & East Lothian Developing the Young Workforce Regional Group. This will give them the opportunity to work with mentors from local graphic design agencies, who are official partners of the college and work closely with students.

Edinburgh College and Spartans inspire youngsters with football

Edinburgh College has teamed up with Spartans Community Football Academy to give students new skills and confidence through the power of sport. Using the beautiful game as a learning tool, students are building core and essential skills through a partnership with Spartans.

The students are on the Entry to Sport course, which supports young people who may find it hard to make the transition to adult life. It equips them with the personal, social, literacy, life and employability skills that will enable them to move on in their lives and progress to further studies or employment.



The new Spartans link uses football as a method to help the students develop in these areas. The idea is that the sports and football theme, which includes practical activities, is a fresh way of gaining the skills and knowledge usually delivered in a traditional classroom setting.

Working with staff from the college and the Spartans Community Football Academy, the students undertake a series of football-related challenges, projects and activities, including football training sessions and other practical tasks. The learning and assessment plans match the regular core

skills classes – in communications, ICT and numeracy – but with content themed around sport and topical sporting events and news.

Classes are delivered at the college and the Spartans Community Football Academy, where the students are enveloped in football culture and do their football training. Practical football sessions with Spartans coaches help them develop their teamwork and confidence.

The course culminated in a challenge match between the students' team – Edinburgh College Eagles – against Spartans Connections, Spartans' disability team. The students planned and organised the game themselves. The hard-fought match was won by Spartans Connections.

Lecturer David Hiddleston, who set up the course, said: "We wanted to try something a bit different, to expand how we reach different groups of students. We thought there were so many lessons they could learn from sport, which we could deliver in a fun, accessible, challenging and rewarding way. It's been more successful than we could have hoped and the students have been absolutely inspired by working with Spartans. They're really motivated to learn and all of them have shown significant improvements in their core and essential skills, with teamwork, timekeeping and employability all increasing massively.

"Spartans have been amazing. They've really understood and bought into what we're trying to do, and have thrown themselves into this. Football and sport can be such an inspiring influence in young people's lives in so many ways and this project is showing just how positive a force it can be."

Garry Betts of Spartans Connections said: "We're delighted to work in partnership with Edinburgh College. The more links we can make in north Edinburgh to make our community better is in all our interests. The Entry to Sport project is a fantastic idea – we hope that it will continue each year and other projects can spring from it.

"It was a great learning experience for us as much as the college. Let's hope that we can continue to grow together in the future."

Sky Sports' Living for Sport initiative, which supports sport in education, is supporting the project in partnership with the Youth Sport Trust. It has provided a mentor for the students – international fencer Keith Cook, whose career haul includes six Commonwealth medals, a European team bronze medal and a British Championship.

Keith said: "The Entry to Sport course has been a fantastic opportunity for everyone involved. Through sport you can learn skills that can be transferred into other areas in your life to help you unleash your potential. Sport has the ability to bring people together and show us the ups and downs. It can help us learn about mental toughness, resilience, people skills, stepping out our comfort zones, planning for success, developing ourselves and being the best we can be."

Entry to Sport student Finn Gray said: "One of the good things about the project with Spartans is that it makes studying more like real life. We covered working as a team, time management and making up training plans."

Blog – entry2sport.wordpress.com

Twitter - @entry2Sport