



## KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE

### LOUGHBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL AND TSOLO HIGH SCHOOL IN SOUTH AFRICA

Sustainability is a key factor of Link Community Development's (LCD's) work, and it appears that Loughborough High School have truly taken this on board in their link with Tsolo High School in South Africa. LCD makes this link possible, helping with the exchange of letters, and acting as a point of contact for both schools.

An independent day school for 600 girls aged 11-18 in the centre of the town, Loughborough High School is keen to get the most from their link with Tsob High School in a rural area of South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. Founded only in 2005, Tsolo High School has 222 students from the ages of 14 to 18. Loughborough High School's Link Committee ensure that all members of the school are involved with the link, and in September 2007 held 'Africa Day' for the incoming year 7s, to tell them of the link with Tsolo High School.

*'The aim for our link is to exchange cultural and historical information, to establish pupil links through pen pal letters, and to explore the role of education in raising living standards and tackling problems such as HIV/AIDS.*

*We also want to increase the students' awareness of some of the different customs in South Africa and highlight the differences and similarities between the British and South African cultures'*

Rebecca Lewis, Link Co-ordinator, Loughborough High School

The link was set up by Rebecca Lewis, as she had been involved in an LCD link at her previous school and Loughborough High School has been very creative in projects and activities that maintain the link. One unusual activity was the creation of an African Garden. Through this, pupils learnt techniques and tips for growing various plants at school but also had an insight into how weather and environmental conditions can inhibit a farmer. The success of this activity also led to the formation of Garden Club.



Africa Day, for the year 7 pupils who have just joined the school was established as a re-occurring key event in September 2007. The purpose of this day is to introduce the new pupils to the school's link with Tsolo High School, and help them understand how it will, over the course of their school careers, benefit them, as well as the children at Tsolo High School.

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#### LINK SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

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Through the course of the day, the new pupils created African masks in art class, learned African songs in music, and improvised to African music in dance class. Local musicians were also brought in to teach the children traditional African drumming. A large part of the day was devoted to the design and creation of a traditional African outfit from various materials such as foil and brightly coloured plastic, followed by a fashion show of these outfits, while a member of each group explained their reasoning for the design.

To ensure that the link is successful, its formation was announced by Rebecca Lewis in a whole-school assembly, and the link is maintained and driven forward by a 10-strong committee. To promote and ensure

awareness of the link, there is a display in the foyer of the school, maintained by two sixth form representatives, and information regarding link-based events is published in the school magazine and on the school's website. Also, many of last year's activities are being continued at Loughborough High School on a regular basis, such as Africa Day, or an annual year 8 disco to fundraise for Tsolo High School. The fact that these events have now become part of the yearly school calendar will make this already strong link even more robust.

*The Year 8 pupils engaged in a correspondence exchange with pupils at Tsolo High School, initially sending the children letters and information about their school. The responses they have received were extremely moving and informative letters, which our students have thoroughly enjoyed receiving. These letters have helped the students in Loughborough High School understand the differences and similarities between themselves and the pupils of Tsolo High School.*

Rebecca Lewis

Loughborough High School has added value to its curriculum through the inclusion of South Africa in many subjects, and Rebecca Lewis feels that the link 'opens our students' eyes to the reality of what is happening around the world, and this brings a deeper element to the curriculum.' By making the subjects real, they have made their content more valuable to the children. Bridget O'Connor, the Head Teacher at Loughborough High Schools welcomes this opportunity to experience the culture of another school, and says they very much look forward to being able to exchange further ideas and resources to enrich the curriculum.

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