

Young Journalists' Launchpad: Pan World News

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Who says journalism is just for adults? When you first realise that publishing companies actually operate like chaotic beehives, it all becomes much easier to understand – especially from a child's perspective. This is how I managed to translate the mechanics of a busy newspaper office to 100 children aged 9-11.

I explained how the journalists and designers buzz around collecting pollen to show the queen bee and then wait for her editorial seal of approval. This enabled young people from Downside Middle School, on the Pan Estate in Newport, to grasp what had previously seemed to be a very distant and adult world. Thanks to funding, which came from Creative Partnerships and the Isle of Wight Council, 100 young people produced a four-page newspaper pullout that was published in the Isle of Wight County Press in July, with an impressive readership of 180,000 people. And, they did it in just over two weeks.

The project aimed to produce a self-sustaining newspaper that would raise awareness about global issues as well as nurture intercultural understanding. This was neatly encapsulated into the newspaper subtitle, Island Children's World Views. The emphasis was on creating a unique learning experience, where the students entered into a different learning environment without actually going any-where. They participated in inspirational games and activities and were given the opportunity to use Adobe Creative Suite software, digital cameras and tape recorders. For example, the designers created the title, logo, illustrations and studied typography and layout skills, while the journalists learned all about interview techniques, creative writing and photojournalism.

Using the 32 countries in this year's World Cup as a departure point, the students 'travelled without moving' to their chosen destination and enquired about the world beyond the Isle of Wight. Importantly, stories covered a range of subjects, from the Asian tsunami, to the experiences of teachers working at the school and a behind the scenes report about the Isle of Wight's music festival. Students from all schools on the island and all over the world are invited to participate, including their 'pan-pals' set up via contacts with schools in Nepal.

Contact: Pan World News

Email: editor_panworldnews@yahoo.co.uk

or Rosie Sanders via Positive News

Tel: +44 (0)1588 640022