

## The James Beane Integrative Approach

In Y5-8 at St Cuthbert's College, we use educator, James Beane Integrative Approach to enhance the girls' learning. Beane is a Professor at the National-Louis University in the United States and a school reform "coach". He is an expert on the middle years of schooling and the author of several books on curriculum integration and democratic education, aimed at capturing and exploring students' deep interests and developing their self-esteem.

This interdisciplinary pedagogical approach shares similar understandings about student learning to those of the Reggio Emilia approach, and is especially relevant in the middle years when children begin to have deeper questions about the world and the issues we face as citizens.

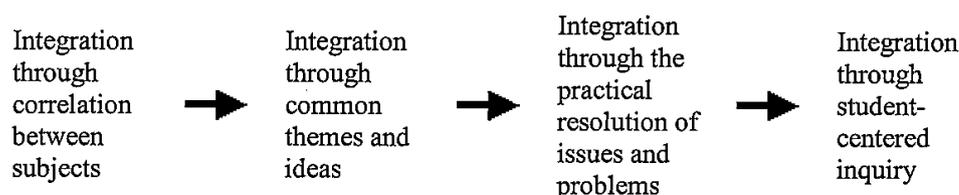
Curriculum integration occurs when students experience and understand connections. The concept of curriculum integration offered by James Beane (1998) involves four major aspects:

- **The integration of experiences** uses both past and new experiences to help students understand and solve new problems.
- **Social integration** is based on personal and social issues that can be identified in, and developed from, the students' world. Social integration assists students to apply new ideas and understandings to their daily lives and to the lives of others.
- **The integration of knowledge** involves being aware of the 'big picture' of learning. When knowledge and skills are connected, rather than fragmented, students begin to see situations as real to themselves and the world they live in.
- **Integration as a curriculum design** occurs when students and teachers explore, gather, process, refine and present information about topics they wish to investigate without being constrained to a specific learning area.

Integration as a curriculum design has several other features:

- Problems and issues of personal and social significance guide curriculum.
- Learning experiences are designed to integrate knowledge in the context of its use.
- Knowledge is developed and used to address relevant issues, not in preparation for future tests – complex human issues are rarely limited to distinct curriculum areas.
- Learning activities involve the application of knowledge in real-life settings, where students can experience problem solving and the intricacies of social interaction.
- It serves to provide motivation, interest and involvement of students in their own learning. Students are able to direct their own learning within a structured framework. This allows for each student's learning to be personalised. It is not a one size fits all model.

There are four key approaches that students can take towards integration (adapted from Brown and Nolan 1989)



This approach acknowledges the complexity of real-life issues today's students are grappling with, and has built-in flexibility that enables girls to apply one or all these types of integration on their learning journey.

Here is a link to the James Beane Curriculum Integration website should you wish to explore the James Beane approach further; <http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/extension/ci/beaneonci.html>

#### References

Beane, J. (1996). Curriculum integration. Designing the core of democratic education. New York and London: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Brown, M.T. & Nolan, C.J.P. (1989). Getting it Together: Explorations in Curriculum Integration, Out of Class Activities and Computer Applications. Massey University, Palmerston North.

