

Student ambassadors help schools groups unleash creativity



Left to right – Rebecca Banks (Tynecastle High School); Holly McNie (Edinburgh College student); Tasnis Miah Tynecastle High School); Niamh Curran (Edinburgh College student)

Two students from Edinburgh College have led a campaign to engage schools students with careers in Art and Design. 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, which is an official partner of Edinburgh College's Graphic Design course.

The project involves Niamh and Holly going into schools and working directly with art and design classes. So far the project has seen the students work with 5 secondary schools in Edinburgh –Broughton, Tynecastle, Drummond, Trinity and Holyrood, and they still have a visit planned to Castlebrae.

Niamh and Holly, along with other students from their course are using their knowledge and experience, running six workshops in art and design classes to help encourage creativity while raising awareness of careers in the art and design industries.

Niamh understands the pressure that comes from choosing your next step after school and used this to inspire the project. She said : "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.”

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 the 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.

With a great initial response from students and more schools showing an interest the project has secured extra funding 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.”

The project is also helping Niamh and Holly to develop other skills such as how to manage a project, presenting to large groups, dealing with finances and gaining experience as educators.

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.”