



## Meeting the Cross Curricular Challenge

*A Small-Scale Research Initiative between London, England and Dublin, Ireland*

This information has been taken from the reports provided by:

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### Aims

- ✚ To see how cross-curricular and cross-national collaboration could work to promote positive citizenship
- ✚ To explore how teachers could address common curricular challenges across national borders

### Actions

The project was between two schools in Dublin and two in London. The teachers involved were:

- ✚ Sandeep Phagura, Corelli College, England
- ✚ Kathryn Moore, St Dominic's College, Ireland
- ✚ Michelle Springer, Thomas Tallis School, England
- ✚ Suzanne Ryan, Holy Faith, Ireland

Two of the schools were from inner-city London and two from Dublin. Although the schools were similar in many ways there were some key differences – the Irish schools were more faith based and single sex (female) while the English schools had more ethnic diversity and were co-educational.

The project started at the Five Nations Network conference in Cardiff in November 2010. The teachers shared information about the different curricula needs. It became clear that working with younger age groups would be best in terms of consistency of teaching over the summer break and that identity was a common theme that Citizenship lessons used in both jurisdictions. Five lessons on identity were planned and completed:

- ✚ An introductory lesson
- ✚ Two team-teaching lessons (involving exchanges between the English and Irish teachers)
- ✚ A bridging lesson
- ✚ An evaluation lesson

#### [Introductory lesson](#)

The teachers taught this lesson in their respective nations. Students discussed and recorded ideas on identity and what it means to be English and what it means to be Irish. The source and accuracy of their ideas were also discussed. Students from each nation then introduced themselves to each other through the [exchange of postcards](#).



“This pupil-led project looked at a challenging issue from the perspective of two different national identities and a multitude of individual identities.”



*What does it mean to be Irish? What does it mean to be English?*

### Team teaching lesson (England)

The four teachers team-taught classes in the two schools in London. The teachers from Ireland played films that they had made of their classes to give the students a sense of the reality of communicating with someone in a different place. This worked very well.

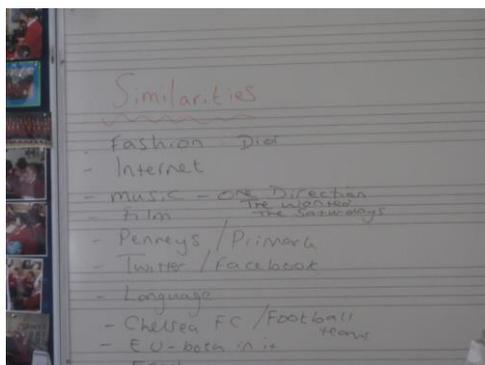
The lessons took place the day after the [historic visit to Ireland by the Queen](#), giving the students a real link to current events.

The students were able to discuss their identities in a real life context and this has assisted greatly developing a new teaching unit on Identity and Diversity.



### Team teaching lesson (Ireland)

This lesson gave Irish students the opportunity to ask questions and know that their counterparts in England were as eager as they were to communicate. This visit was able to utilise some of the resources that had been created as a result of the first lessons.



*Ireland and England. What do we have in common?*

The next stage involved a bridging lesson with the teachers' own classes and then a visit by the English teachers to Ireland for the final evaluation lesson.

*“...teaching young people within different curricular frameworks and in different jurisdictions...allowed the participants to become aware of assumptions in their own teaching practice.”*

## Outcomes

### Main outcomes for pupils:

- ✚ Experience of cross-national communication
- ✚ Encouraged broader ideas about identity
- ✚ Opportunity to challenge commonly held stereotypes through real communication
- ✚ Realisation of essential commonality whilst still being able to appreciate differences

“The students were very enthused by the prospect of communicating with students from another country. The photos and video footage made the whole experience even more real than the exchange of materials.”

### Outcomes for wider professional development included:

- ✚ Sharing experience, ideas and teaching methods
- ✚ Gaining different perspectives on common issues and themes
- ✚ Development of resources and a unit of work on identity
- ✚ Teaching in different contexts
- ✚ Working organically

“It was a very worthwhile experience to see day to day life of the same job but in a different country. Much was very similar and yet there were subtle differences – the conversation between the four teachers was fascinating and am sure will continue to be.”

The teachers shared their findings in a [presentation](#) at the Five Nations Network 2011 conference in Dublin and through an [online blog](#), which outlines the process that was taken over the course of the year between the teachers and schools.

### Lessons learned that might be of value to others in the Five Nations Network

“As the [first] exchange occurred late in our school year – just before exams – there was little time afterwards for any awareness to spread beyond the class involved; school newsletters etc. having gone to print.”

“May is not a good time of year in Irish schools for external projects.”

“The use of technology and social media to share ideas and bring students closer to each other and allow teachers the opportunity of meaningful planning together is definitely something that should be further explored... One of the aims of the project which wasn't realised was the desire for other colleagues to try [such a collaboration] for themselves and then to share their own experiences on the blog that was created. For this to happen in the future it is essential that people are incentivized in some way or shown more fully how to participate.”

### Challenges and areas for development

- Staying in contact after the first meeting without having formed any firm idea of who would do what or how things would progress.
- Busy schedules, different term times and exam times and technological difficulties, which made communication difficult in the initial stages of the project, as well as finding mutually convenient times for visits and team teaching
- Not being able to fully utilise social networking media, such as Facebook. This would have provided an ideal forum for regular communication and an easy exchange of thoughts and ideas, both for the teachers and students. However, this requires all participants to be trained in its use and feel comfortable using the medium.

### Scope for expansion and replication across the five nations, and future possibilities

- Expanding the project into other subject areas and challenging issues
- Replicating the process across different age groups and national or regional locations
- Further exploration of the use of technology and social media as a learning tool, to share ideas, bring students closer to each other and aid teachers in the planning stages.