Sharing Classrooms: Deepening Learning

A practical guide

for

schools and teachers

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Who this is for and how to make the most of it

This resource is for all teachers and coordinators with responsibility for implementing Entitlement Framework arrangements. It follows a sequence from practical preparations through to managing relationships in the classroom, but it's designed so that you can dip in and out of any part, as appropriate, depending on where you are in the lifecycle.

Sharing classrooms can be an extremely rewarding experience for both staff and learners. It presents learners with an opportunity to study previously unavailable subjects, meet peers from different backgrounds and cultures, learn first-hand about difference and tolerance, and through the experience, come to better understand their own identity.

For schools and staff, it's a chance to compare and improve professional practice, share teaching and learning strategies with peers on regular basis, and create a larger pool of resources and support to draw from.

We hope you find these materials useful, whether you're just starting out or are continuing your journey of shared provision.

The Writers

By real teachers from shared classrooms

In 2011, in order to meet the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, five teachers from different schools and regions of Northern Ireland found themselves teaching in shared classrooms for the first time.

Later, while taking part in the Sharing Classrooms: Deepening Learning (SCDL) training during 2011 and 2012, they realised how useful it would have been to have had a practical resource to guide them and their school through this unfamiliar terrain – something with quick and easily accessible classroom strategies and support activities. From these discussions this resource emerged.

The SCDL team would like to thank all the teachers who have participated in SCDL training and, in particular, those who authored this resource:

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If you're planning or currently teaching in a shared classroom situation and would like advice, please feel free to email our writers. They'd be happy to help.

We also welcome feedback and suggestions on this site and its content. Please send any feedback or requests for follow up support to:

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Getting Ready

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

Sharing classrooms can be an extremely enriching experience for everyone involved. However, it also presents challenges.

Lots of planning is required to meet everyone's needs and ensure that:

- participating schools are aware of policies, procedures, their roles and responsibilities;

- all stakeholders are clear on arrangements;

- learners feel comfortable at the host school;

- host learners feel comfortable sharing a classroom with visiting learners; and

- everything goes smoothly.

A Winter Start for an Autumn Term

Most of you will share your first classrooms at the start of the school year. In these cases, to adequately prepare, we suggest that you begin meeting with your partner schools in the previous winter term. Your goal should be to have all of the preparatory details agreed and delegated as well as practical arrangements organised or in place before summer break. Doing so will help prevent nasty surprises, costly mistakes, student discomfort and firefighting during the first term of shared classes.

In addition, we suggest that you hold your first shared activities, (lessons on difference and an Induction Day), with participating students in June before the first shared term. Schools who've done so tell us this smooths the transition for the young people involved.

Transportation

Getting students to class safely

Many factors will affect your choice of transportation between schools, as well as the travel logistics: the distance between your schools, the time of day the shared course begins and the age and ability levels of the students are just a few.

Staff from all schools in the partnership should discuss the issues, agree the best approach, create contingency plans, and clearly allocate roles and responsibilities for transportation coordination.

Suggestions

☐ Discuss the ages and abilities of the travelling learners and whether these present special considerations. Can one transport solution fit everyone's needs?

☐ Think about the time of day the shared class(es) begin. Does this mean students will travel from their school to the host school, or straight from home to the host school?

☐ Investigate the options available in your area and decide which method is best for your situation. It might be bus, taxis, train, carpool, or even on foot.

☐ Determine and document the cost as well as who will bear that cost.

☐ If you opt for automotive transport, agree exactly where the students will be picked up and dropped off and at what times.

☐ Discuss and decide how to handle instances when a student misses the bus. What will your notification procedure be, who will be the contact point at the host school, what will that student do (and where will he or she go) at their home school until their next class, and how will they get back to their home school if they miss their transport.

☐ Make someone responsible for arranging the transport and liaising with the transport provider on an ongoing basis.

☐ Create a back up plan, just in case the transport provider goes out of business or is unable to fulfil its duty.

☐ Agree a process for cancelling transport in unexpected circumstances (whether initiated by host school or home school) as well as how you will you notify students and the partner school.

☐ Obtain written permissions from the learners' families for the travel arrangements.

☐ Assign staff members with the responsibilities for arranging transport to and from schools, cancelling transport in unexpected circumstances, permissions regarding method of transport to school, etc.

Scheduling

What's happening when?

The day-to-day running of schools can be very different (even those in close proximity), and rarely are two schools' calendars synchronised. For example, INSET training days, school closures and class timetables vary. Yet when sharing classrooms, differences of a little as five minutes can have a big impact on coordination between campuses.

When examining schedules, closely review and consider the impact of each other's events calendars, daily timetables and assessment periods to ensure minimal disruption to both schools and the learners.

Suggestions

☐ Exchange and record planned holidays and closures.

☐ Exchange your assessment schedules. On what dates do classes break for exams revision?

☐ Exchange planned school events that disrupt the normal schedule, like field trips, religious services, school visitors (theatre companies, science road shows), etc. Decide whether these are dates that students will/will not travel to the host school for class. Decide whether class will commence in their absence. Discuss how they will get and make up missed work.

☐ Share and review each other's normal daily timetable. When does school begin and end? When do periods start and finish? How much time is there between classes for students to make their way to their next destination. Use this information to agree times for the shared classes. Remember to leave enough time before and after for students to travel from their home school and return afterwards in time for their next class.

☐ Decide when Senior Management from both schools will meet and how often to review arrangements, deal with issues and sustain a successful partnership.

☐ Identify each partner schools reporting schedule and, if necessary, agree a new one to fit in the reporting of shared classes.

Policies & Service Level Agreements

The documentation of collaboration

Sharing classes and resources should be a formal affair. This means sharing all relevant policies and documentation related to learning, progress, achievement and safety. This also means producing new documentation specifically for the partnership.

It needn't be excessive, but to ensure that everyone shares the same understanding, you should create formal records that itemise the policies that will be applied, the processes that you've agreed on, dates and deadlines for reporting or convening, and who will be responsible for what when.

Suggestions

Policies

☐ Follow the host school's Child Protection Policy at all times.

☐ Discuss which staff in the schools should be informed if a child protection issue arises with a visiting learner.

☐ Agree that in the event of an issue, both schools will be informed.

☐ Make sure the host school's teachers know the contact details for the other school's designated Child Protection Officer.

☐ Apply the host school's Behavioural Policy when learners are visiting that campus.

☐ Examine whether there are any significant differences that should be brought to the visiting learners' attention. Who will present these: the home school or host school? In what format and when?

☐ In the event of a behavioural or academic issue, teachers should agree how any sanctions will be followed through.

☐ Follow the host school's first-aid procedure.

☐ Both schools should be clear on pupil expectations and forecast grades.

☐ Discuss and clearly document assessment policies and procedures, including the host school's expectations, pupil tracking, etc.

☐ Work out what will happen in the event of a planned teacher absence or the closure of one school. Is it possible to leave sufficient work for the visiting learner to complete?

Processes

- [ ] Decide when Senior Management, teachers and coordinators from your schools will meet to review arrangements, deal with issues and sustain a successful partnership.
- [ ] Identify each participating school's reporting schedule and, if necessary, agree a new one to include the reporting of shared classes.
- [ ] Agree the different kinds of information that will form records for pupil tracking, for example achievement, attendance, effort, etc.
- [ ] Decide how the information will be recorded and shared, and by whom. What will the key dates be for sharing info with your partner school(s)? What format will you use to share that information with the learners (print, email, secure web page?)? Which school will report the information to the learners?
- [ ] Discuss and clearly document the host school's expectations for success. (Other schools may use a different structure/strategy of assessment than you). If issues arise, parents will likely approach their home school's administrators for answers, and having this information to hand will be helpful.
- [ ] Decide what the arrangements will be for purchasing learning materials and resources for shared classes.
- [ ] Agree how and where visiting learners should enter the host school. For example, to fulfil statutory Child Protection and Health and Safety duties, you may want to require visiting students to sign in and out at reception in the host school on _every_ visit. If so, plan regular checks (probably by Entitlement Framework Coordinators (EFCOs)) to make sure that this is being done and that learners who fail to sign in are spoken to personally (by the EFCO in their home schools).
- [ ] Discuss and agree how changes to practical arrangements will be communicated to visiting learners by the host school–both planned and unexpected ones. Emails? Phone calls? Letters? Notes at reception? Failure to inform them of changes, even accidentally, may leave visiting students feeling unwanted, disillusioned or disengaged.

Additional Resources

[Appendix 1: Exemplar Service Level Agreement](#)

Creating a Welcoming Space

Rolling out the welcome mat

Changing schools can be difficult for a learner, even if it is only once or twice a week. New peers, new teachers and new surroundings with different traditions and attitudes can make students feel insecure and out of place. This can affect their learning in class.

So host schools should work to make visiting learners feel welcome, comfortable and included in their new campus and classrooms. By ensuring access to campus facilities, making simple aesthetic additions and other small efforts, host schools can make them feel more at home and set the groundwork for a great year.

Suggestions

Access & Introductions

- [ ] Plan a meet-and-greet at each home school before the start of the new course(s) so the learners' first encounter with the host teachers is on their home turf. Some schools have held this the June before classes begin and found it to be a worthwhile ice-breaker.
- [ ] Plan an induction day at the host school to welcome visiting learners and introduce them (and possibly their families) to the new environment they'll be learning in. Schedule this for before the course begins, perhaps in June.
- [ ] Arrange for them to have full access to the school cafeteria at break and lunch times. Do you need to register them on your cashless system? How will you get that information to them? Who will be responsible for it? Are there rules about cafeteria use they need to know? Rules about taking food from the cafeteria to class and common areas, etc?
- [ ] Organise access to computer suites, libraries and study halls. Ensure they have a working password to use ICT equipment and prepare instructions on how to add printing credits.
- [ ] Inform cafeteria, library, study hall and ICT suite staff that visiting learners may stop by.
- [ ] Arrange access to the host school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), internally and externally. It could prove very useful when the two schools' timetables do

not readily coincide or when lessons are missed due to unforeseen circumstances.

☐ Plan and schedule suitable inductions in these areas as well as introductions to the staff working there.

☐ If you place assignments on the school Intranet, ensure visiting students are provided with log in details so they can retrieve this information.

☐ Establish a mentoring programme for visiting learners in the host school. Invite them twice per term to individual sessions with their designated mentor (probably the class teacher or EFCO). Schedule the sessions in the timetable to protect them. See Appendix 2 for an exemplar mentoring proforma. Consider offering this to home learners in shared classes, too.

Adapting Physical Spaces

☐ In the host school, create displays in central, high-traffic areas that feature colours and symbols from the learners' home school.

☐ Prepare welcome displays in the shared classrooms that include the learners' names. These could also be shared displays that blended host learners with visiting learners to make all in the classroom feel welcome.

☐ Arrange a special waiting area where visiting students can gather before class begins.

☐ Review classroom layouts. Explore how you can use the space to promote inclusiveness.

☐ Be aware of physical barriers. Are there learners with disabilities? Can learners access the shared classrooms easily? Do tables and equipment need to be adjusted? Do learners with vision impairments need to sit closer to the whiteboard?

☐ Remember, as you change the environment to environment to put visiting learners at ease, you risk upsetting or alienating those from the host school. Consider what you can do to ensure that ALL the learners participating in the shared classroom are comfortable with the learning environment.

Additional Resources

Appendix 2: Exemplar Mentoring Proforma

Pupil Tracking

Recording and sharing student performance

All learners need their progress tracked effectively. However, recording and exchanging information related to pupil tracking becomes a little more complicated when sharing classrooms:

- Visiting students need feedback at appropriate times and places.
- Examinations and homework must take place at times that suit all schools involved.
- Host teachers need to share information with partner schools in a format and timeframe that suits everyone, without giving themselves lots of extra work.

Clear, honest discussion early on, careful preparation and good documentation will help make this easier.

Suggestions

☐ Discuss and clearly document the host school's expectations for success. (Other schools may use a different structure/strategy of assessment than you). If issues arise, parents will likely approach their home school's administrators for answers, and having this information will be helpful.

☐ Discuss what the host school will track as part of pupil tracking. Achievement only? Attendance as well?

☐ Decide how the information will be recorded, by whom and what the key dates will be for sharing information with the partner school(s) and learners. Some exemplar tracking sheets are provided below.

☐ Identify each participating school's schedule for reporting attendance, coursework, exams, and so on. If necessary, agree a new one that includes the agreed dates for the reporting of shared classes.

☐ Develop a student-friendly explanation of the host school's assessment procedures and plan how to provide this to visiting learners, perhaps as part of the Learners' Handbook or an Induction Day, so they are aware of the host school's expectations relating to how homework is set, what happens if it's late, who to contact with questions about assignments, etc.

Additional Resources

Data & Permissions

Gathering the necessary details and okays

It's important to share information about any personal circumstances that may impinge on a young person's learning and achievement. Home schools should do this only on a need-to-know basis – following their practices for pastoral care and other relevant policies.

Also, remember that (in most cases) the permissions on file at a home school will not be transferable. To be on the safe side, host schools should collect their own set of written permissions relating to things done on their campus, by their staff or for their school's use. Examples include participation in off-site field trips, enrichment activities, etc.

Suggestions

- [ ] If necessary, ensure that relevant staff at the host school are aware of each visiting learner's medical history – illness, mobility issues, allergies, etc.
- [ ] If necessary, disclose to the host school any family situations that could affect learning or the learners' safety (for example traumas, restraining orders, etc.).
- [ ] Share information on visiting learners' support needs in the classroom, for example accessing Special Educational Needs (SEN), English as an additional Language (EAL), etc.
- [ ] Share the learners' emergency contact details. These may be needed in instances of illness, accidents or closures.
- [ ] Get written permissions for each visiting learner's data protection rights & copyrights, so the host school may take and publish photos of learners, re-use their coursework in teacher training materials, etc.
- [ ] Obtain written permissions from parents/carers for the learners to leave their home campus and travel to the host school.
- [ ] Request permission to allow the host school's nurse to administer medication when necessary.
- [ ] Seek permission to email or text learners and/or their families, to alert them to closures, key events, their results, etc.

Communication Strategies

Spreading the word and getting buy-in

With so many stakeholders involved, implementing your plans effectively will require you to communicate their elements clearly and completely with the relevant people at the right times. This includes parents and carers, the learners themselves, as well as relevant staff at all participating schools.

Suggestions

With parents and carers

☐ Create a [Learner's Handbook](#) for visiting students and their parents that includes details on policies, class and assessment schedules, contact details for the host school, travel arrangements, and so on.

☐ Plan a parents' evening at the host school that is co-hosted by both schools. Consider also inviting staff from the home school as well as members of the Boards of Governors.

☐ Plan to hold parent-teacher meetings with the parents/carers of visiting students, to inform them of their child's progress in the shared course.

☐ Prepare evaluation forms for the learners so throughout the year you can gather feedback on the shared-classroom experience and measure improvement. Include opportunities for them to offer positive feedback as well as suggestions for improvement. Include questions on how often they use additional facilities and how access could be improved.

☐ Agree on what dates the evaluation forms will be issued.

With school staff

☐ Share all new policies, procedures and Service Level Agreements with all staff who will be affected by them at all participating schools. This may include the Entitlement Framework coordinators, Pastoral Care/Year Head coordinators, subject teachers and Heads of Departments, examinations officers, and Home/School Liaison Coordinators.

☐ Brief substitute teachers on shared classroom arrangements and procedures.

☐ Exchange email addresses and phone numbers with the schools you are partnering with to enable frequent liaison and encourage good working relationships.

☐ Regular, accessible communication with your 'mirror images' in the partner schools will set a positive example for your school's staff to follow.

- ☐ Schedule regular meetings with you partner school's counterpart (at least every six weeks).
- ☐ Organise collaborative staff training days (at least at the start and end of the academic year) and a collaborative staff entertainment event to help build and enhance relationships between the staff of partner schools.
- ☐ Decide who will compile the feedback from learners' evaluation forms and who the results will be shared with. At minimum, teachers in shared classrooms should receive the results so they can review their current practice in light of the responses.
- ☐ Have easily accessible copies of visiting learners' timetables available to staff at the host school. Use these to guide 'chance', informal meetings with visitors at reception/in the corridors/in the canteen – to make them feel welcome and build relationships.

Induction Day Prep

Getting ready to meet and greet

An Induction Day is a nice, less-formal way for host schools to welcome visiting learners, familiarise them with the campus and staff, share information about the school and begin to build relationships before the course begins. Consider holding this before September to reduce learner anxiety and allow a slow transition.

Suggestions

☐ Plan to invite learners from the host school who will be attending the shared course. This will give both sets of learners the chance to meet, learn names, remember faces, and briefly get to know each other.

☐ Arrange a tour of the classrooms and shared facilities that the visiting learners will use. For any areas with secure entry, demonstrate how to enter these spaces and what tools are needed (such as passwords, key cards, etc.).

☐ Create a seating plan for each shared classroom that will maximise collaboration between the learners. Then during visits to the classrooms on induction day, plan to have the learners sit in their assigned seats. This will help them get familiar with the room and discover who they'll be next to when term begins.

Additional Resources

[Appendix 6: Deepening Learning in Ballynahinch](#)

Learner's Handbook

All the info they need to know

Visiting learners in shared classrooms have lots of 'new stuff' to get used to: new facilities and layouts, new teachers and new rules. To give them all the information they need to make a successful transition to the shared learning environment, schools should collaborate to produce a Learner's Handbook and issue this before the start of term. It will give the learners something to refer to should issues arise, and it will give you a useful resource to direct parents and learners to.

Suggestions

Assessment information

☐ Include the host school's Assessment Policy, as they may use a different structure/strategy than the visiting learners are familiar with. For example, explain how homework is set, what to do if homework is late, who to contact with questions about assignments, etc.

☐ Highlight any significant differences between this policy and their home school's assessment policy.

☐ List the assessment and reporting schedule for the shared courses, including details of assessment phases and the requirements throughout the academic year.

☐ Clearly explain the host school's performance and assessment expectations.

☐ Clearly describe what's expected of the learners and the grades forecasted.

General information

☐ Explain where they are to enter the host school and any sign in requirements.

☐ Explain how they will be informed when changes arise, for example transport issues, class cancellations and so on.

☐ Offer details on which facilities they are welcome to use, including the times these are available and how to gain access to them. These may include the canteen, study halls, libraries and ICT suites.

☐ Include a map of the host school with key locations highlighted, for example shared facilities, assembly points in the event of a fire, toilets, the shared classrooms, the first aid point, etc.

☐ Include photos of key staff members, for example teachers of the shared classes, shared classroom coordinators, first aiders, and SMT.

☐ Highlight any extracurricular activities, clubs or societies they may take part in at the host school.

☐ Consider adding a Parents Section with brief information on who to contact in the host school to report illness or absence and to discuss their child's progress, behaviour, parent-teacher meetings, etc.

Scheduling information

☐ Create a calendar that details both schools holidays, special closures, events and trips, etc.

☐ Include both schools' working timetables.

Travel information

☐ Specify how learners will travel from their home school to the host school, including drop-off and pick-up times and locations.

Policy and procedure information

☐ Include relevant school policies from the host school, for example their Child Protection Policy, Code of Conduct Policy/Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, etc.

☐ Clearly explain the rules for use of mobile phones and other personal communication devices during school hours and examinations.

☐ Clearly outline any policies related to dress code, hair and make up, non-uniform days and/or the wearing of certain symbols (if applicable).

☐ If appropriate, provide details on the host school's first-aid procedure.

☐ Highlight who at their home school to talk to if they have an issue or concern about something that's happened in their shared classroom.

☐ Explain the contact details and procedure for reporting absence and illness.

Declaration of acceptance

☐ Include a sign-off form for parents/carers that declares they have read and understand the Learner's Handbook and are aware of the school's policies.

Preparing Your Learners to Deal With Difference

Fostering appreciation, respect and tolerance

Genuine differences, preconceptions and misconceptions between partner schools can influence how well everyone involved in the shared-classroom experience gets along. This is true for both staff and students, as well as whether schools from different religious backgrounds are partnering, selection-based schools are partnering with non-selection schools, town with country, etc.

All participating schools should make time before the start of term to discuss and explore the topics of self-identity, difference, empathy and tolerance. Form teachers, pastoral care staff, head teachers or subject teachers could lead exercises. Explorations of self-identity can build pride and self-confidence that may prove useful in the new, shared dynamic. Explorations of difference can help increase understanding, appreciation for and respect for people from the other school.

Suggestions

Exploring differences within your own school

☐ Help your learners to think about and discuss their preferred learning styles. Have they encountered any barriers in their day-to-day school life that could be avoided? What is the distribution of styles in the group? Discuss whether having different preferences makes them better/worse than others? Why/why not? (This self-awareness will also allow them to speak knowledgably with the teacher of the shared classroom about their learning needs.)

☐ Explore and discuss the different beliefs represented in your school. These could be religious and cultural differences or even ethical differences. You could start by taking tallies of superficial differences (such as left-handed v. right-handed/ satchels v. backpacks) and work up to more sensitive and significant differences (such as vegetarians vs meat eaters). Look at the distribution of people in the groups and discuss how everyone feels about people in their own school who are different than themselves.

Exploring differences between partner schools

- ☐ Use assemblies or relevant lessons to discuss the ethos of the partner school. Host schools should have this discussion with all year groups, as all year groups may come into contact with visiting learners.
- ☐ Display the statemented ethos of the partner school in a public places, for example the foyer, classrooms, etc.
- ☐ Invite learners who'll be sharing a classroom to discuss any experiences they have had with learners from the partner school. Sort them into second-hand stories and first-hand experiences, positive and negative, alike and different, etc.
- ☐ Have your learners investigate their school and the partner school(s). Find information on the history of the schools. Research the significance of the uniforms (colours, styles, etc). Examine the symbolism of both schools' crests. Review and discuss the similarities and differences between the schools.
- ☐ Use statistics from a local business to show how work forces in the local area are often made up of past learners from both schools.
- ☐ Plan a project that researches the cultural and religious makeup of the school and wider community using statistics.
- ☐ At host schools, allow learners in all year groups to discuss how we can use knowledge about the ethos of visiting schools to make all learners feel included in school life.

Fostering conflict management skills

- ☐ Plan and deliver conflict management lessons before term starts, possibly via your Personal and Social Education classes. This could be delivered by your school's staff, in collaboration with your partner school's staff, or by external experts. Introducing this concept can better equip your learners with vital life and work skills that they can use both within and outside of school.

Encouraging support from the rest of the student body

- ☐ Introduce a 'Host of the Year' award and provide a reward that meets with real enthusiasm (as opposed to merely a trophy), for example a sports shop voucher, music shop voucher, free/part funded place on a desirable school trip. Publicise it quite early in the academic year to encourage them to support and embrace the collaborative experience.
- ☐ Arrange for members of the host school's Student Council to visit the shared classroom for a few minutes. This sets a positive example for others at the host school to follow and gives the Council a chance to introduce themselves, to

welcome the visitors on behalf of the student body, articulate their support for the shared class initiative, and to explain how the visiting learners can bring issues to the Council's attention.

Activities

Our Own Diversity and the *Cultural Quiz* in the [Building Group Identity Activities](#)

Getting On With It

Putting your plans into action

This section is mainly for teachers in the shared classrooms.

After induction, your aim should not just be to sustain embryonic relationships created during the induction process. Your goal should be to deepen these as curricular learning and understanding are taking place.

After all, comfortable relationships in your classroom, and between you and staff from the partner schools, are likely to enable learners to learn better. Abraham Marlow explores this in his [Theory of Motivation](#).

The two focuses (relationships and curriculum) can often work harmoniously and in tandem with one another. But sometimes, it may be necessary to further nurture, and possibly even prioritise, the relationships focus. Knowing when to intervene or change focus will require your keen observation, purposeful management, encouragement and facilitation.

Induction Day

Kickstart a great year together

An Induction Day at the host school (ideally before) the start of term is a terrific way to let staff and learners meet informally, get a feel for what the shared classroom will be like and get the shared experience off to positive start. Remember to invite learners from the host school too. Allowing them to briefly meet visiting learners informally now will plant the seed for relationships during term time.

Our section on planning offers advice on how to prepare for an Induction Day. Below, we offer a few tips for the day itself.

Suggestions

The reception and orientation

☐ Consider having teachers of shared classrooms or learners from the host school meet the visiting learners at the entrance.

☐ Openly invite and encourage visiting students to use all facilities offered in order for them to feel a part of school life

☐ Carry out the tour of the classrooms and shared facilities that the visiting learners will use. Consider having host learners accompany or even lead the tour. Demonstrate how to enter secure spaces they'll have access to.

In the shared classroom

☐ Have the learners sit in their assigned seats. This will help them get familiar with the room and discover who they'll be next to when term begins.

☐ Conduct an ice-breaker activity. Choose one that suits their age group.

☐ Facilitate informal conversations between learners and encourage them to discuss their previous experiences and hopes for the current academic year (If possible provide tea/coffee facilities to promote a relaxed environment).

☐ Have the teacher introduce him/herself and the subject. This is a good opportunity to outline the specification and assessment schedule for the shared classroom and distribute copies of the Learner's Handbook to the visiting learners.

Activities

[Ice-breaker & Introduction Activities](#)

The First Day of Shared Class

Making the first day comfortable and informative

Use the first day in the shared classroom to introduce the learners, establish a welcoming atmosphere and discuss everyone's hopes, expectations and issues.

Suggestions

☐ Meet visiting learners on their first day and accompany them to the classroom. This might be at the main entrance or their special waiting area.

☐ Allow extra time to for everyone to settle down and acclimatise in class.

☐ Carry out some ice-breaker activities to get all learners interacting and sharing with each other. (See below).

☐ Allow learners to discuss their preferred learning styles or any barriers they have encountered in their day-to-day school life. This might be through group discussion or a more formal activity. Together, come up with ideas for how to avoid these barriers. Remember that it's not just visiting learners who can benefit. Learners from your own school may not have had this teacher before or may have transferred from another school.

☐ Clearly explain what you expect of them in terms of behaviour, effort, fulfilment of his/her full potential, homework, group work, communication, time-keeping, etc.

☐ Reassure them that it's okay to ask you for help when they need it and explain how you'd like them to do so (personal request before, during or after class; e-mail; via link office personnel, etc).

☐ Remind them of which facilities they are welcome to use, including the times these are available and how to gain access to them. These may include the canteen, study halls, libraries and ICT suites. Perhaps take them on a quick walkabout to remind them how to get to each.

☐ End the first day's session by identifying individual hope, fears and expectations. Encourage learners to respond to each other's comments.

☐ After class, review what you learned and prepare to adapt to the different styles. Be aware that visiting learners may need time to adjust or be introduced to approaches that are not familiar to them. There is often a particular style of 'doing things' in one school and that it may not be the same across all schools, even in the same town. You may need to tweak your style of delivery to help accommodate them until they settle.

☐ Consider whether changes to the classroom's layout or seating plan are needed in light of the new insights in order to maximise learning in the shared classroom for all learners.

Activities

[Ice-breaker & Introduction Activities](#)

Exploring Diversity, Identity and Values

Starting to understand themselves and the new faces around them

Sharing classrooms may create a mix of learners with quite different backgrounds, traditions and values. Helping learners to appreciate their own identity builds self-confidence and pride. Hearing first-hand about the identity and values of others can build understanding and respect for other perspectives.

By exploring these topics sensitively and openly *during the first days and weeks of class*, you can help your learners see difference in a positive light, create a space where your learners can share information without fear of criticism or put-downs, and help everyone to work together more effectively.

Suggestions

- ☐ Explore everyone's identities and values. Start with an informal chat to test the level of knowledge between the learners and find out who knows what and how much. See *Human Bingo* in the [Ice-breaker & Introduction](#) Activities section for starter question ideas.
- ☐ After this initial discussion, introduce the idea of a Classroom Contract: a set of guidelines that will govern all further discussion and interaction within the group. What rules can they all agree to? This isn't just effective for the group during relational times. It's also beneficial for actual classroom work.
- ☐ Make sure that you and all learners sign the contract. Have it in plain sight during all sessions and refer to it as necessary.
- ☐ Discuss ownership of the classroom. Is it just for those who wear the uniform of the host school, or is it for all members of the class? How should the answers to these questions affect the look of the room?
- ☐ If one hasn't been created in advance, allow the learners to create a shared display within the classroom or maybe even outside the room in the corridor to make all learners in the shared classroom feel welcome. It could depict the many identities and values in the class *or* focus on those shared by all.
- ☐ Share the school's policies on diversity and inclusion with your class.

☐ Remember, as you work hard to make visiting learners feel welcome, you risk upsetting or alienating the students from your own school. It is important to ensure that ALL the learners are comfortable with the learning environment.

Additional Resources

[Ice-breaker & Introduction Activities](#)

Promoting Inclusiveness

No learner left behind

It's not just important to welcome visiting learners. It's also important to acknowledge and embrace the diversity in the classroom and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Suggestions

☐ Familiarise yourself with anti-bias methodologies. See Appendix 7 for advice.

☐ Be aware of your learners' religious and cultural celebrations when planning lessons. Note key religious dates in your diary.

☐ Review your class layout regularly. Consider changes you could make to promote inclusiveness. For example, how does the layout affect everyone's ability to be heard, join in, lead, etc?

☐ Explore ways of connecting your subject and resources to the diversity of your learners as well as their interests and experiences. For example, explore different cultural recipes in Home Economics or use local governmental or religious landmarks as catalysts for discussing differences during Geography, etc.

☐ Allow learners to express their knowledge and understanding about their learning in ways that reflect their individual and collective religious, ethnic or cultural perspectives: for example through collages, wordels, subject murals, etc.

☐ When appropriate to teaching and learning contexts, draw attention to your school's policies on diversity and inclusion.

☐ Manage discussion and comments to ensure language used by learners is appropriate and non-discriminatory.

☐ Include a Comment Box in your class so learners can pose questions they're nervous about asking in front of the group. These might be about a topic, activity or policy. The box could also be used for submitting ideas on how to improve the class. Use the suggestions and questions to open discussion.

☐ When questions arise (from the Comment Box or in the course of discussion) invite your learners to offer and lead responses. This can encourage broader sharing, peer support and avoid the impression that you are the expert on all topics.

☐ Designate a set day to encourage questions from your learners and ensure that review of learning and feedback becomes an integral part of your class' way of working.

☐ Observe the workings of the group and use feedback sessions and questionnaires to measure everyone's satisfaction with inclusiveness at reasonable intervals.

Don't wait for a problem to appear, and don't wait until the end of term to find out what worked best. Use this feedback to develop lessons that best benefit those taking part.

☐ Listen attentively to all learners' opinions and contributions. Be sure to observe their non-verbal communication, too.

☐ Celebrate diversity within the school through displays and assemblies.

☐ Divide class duties equally between all members of the class – and as far as possible, try to tweak the class schedule to allow for this, especially if visiting learners are likely to arrive late or leave early.

☐ Gently and gradually ease your learners into 'mixed' (representative of all participating schools) groups and pairs. Instead of using a simple numbering strategy to divide them, try some of our pairing activities to get more random and mixed results.

Activities

Pairing Activities

Building Relationships & Trust Activities

Building Group Identity Activities

Additional Resources

Appendix 7: Anti-bias Methods

Ongoing Tracking

Recording and reporting on performance throughout the year

While summative assessment is essential for measuring what your class learned from past lessons, ongoing tracking (or formative assessment) is important for monitoring what they're learning (or failing to understand) *during* lessons. Taking stock and recording your learners' performance at intervals throughout lessons will shed light on what's working, what's not, what ideas need further explanation and exploration, and where you can improve your provision.

Suggestions

- ☐ Make sure you get a copy of each visiting learner's pupil profile. Do not presume that all learners are starting from the same place in terms of knowledge, skill level or ability.
- ☐ You already have a range of techniques that you use to develop learning in your classroom, but it's still a good idea to find out as much about your new learners' previous experiences of learning and assessment approaches.
- ☐ Prepare to adapt to very different styles. Visiting learners may need time to adjust or be introduced to approaches that are not familiar to them. There is often a particular style of 'doing things' in one school, and that may not be the same across all schools, even in the same town. Be aware that your style of delivery may need tweaked to help accommodate visiting learners until they settle.
- ☐ Be up front with learners about what assessments they will be doing and when. This information should already have been provided through the [Learner's Handbook](), but remind them at appropriate intervals.
- ☐ Use feedback to help you understand your learners' experience and levels of understanding.
- ☐ Allow your learners to provide constructive feedback on assessment tasks periodically. You could end up with great ideas or tweaks that you can use in future terms. See [Appendix 8]() for an evaluation process used in seven schools.
- ☐ Regularly, formally report back to your EFCO about how the class is progressing (perhaps by every mid-term). This is an opportunity to celebrate successes,

articulate any concerns and anticipate potential difficulties down the line. See [Appendix 9](#) for an exemplar proforma.

Additional Resources

[Appendix 8: Consulting With Learners](#)

[Appendix 9: Shared-Class Teacher Reporting Proforma](#)

Building Trust

Fostering confidence in each other

Trust between teachers and learners (as well as between the learners themselves) is essential to deepen their learning about the subject and each other. It helps everyone collaborate effectively and enhances understanding. Strive to build a level of trust that is both workable and purposeful.

Suggestions

☐ Discuss the topic of trust as a group. What does it mean in their lives, both inside and outside of the group?

☐ Look trust issues have affected relationships throughout the world. Ask them for current examples.

☐ Explore the language of feedback. Explain the difference between constructive criticisms versus destructive words. What are the benefits of one over the other? Link this appropriate use of language to the concept of trust within the classroom. Then build into your future lessons a period for giving and asking for feedback. (Only engage in peer assessment once much work on confidence, trust, positivity and comfort building have already taken place.)

☐ Carry out some of the trust activities included in this resource. The earlier in the term you begin these, the more time you'll have to strengthen and benefit from trust in the group.

☐ Include occasional short sharing/mixing activities exclusively aimed at developing and nurturing relationships within the classroom. These don't need to lead into an associated curricular-based task. In fact, holding these activities without a curricular task will show learners that you regard classroom relationships as important in their own right.

☐ Remember that the room is the most important element during trust exercises. If possible, make sure that it is neutral. Try to avoid using public venues like the school hall. Also make sure that there is as much space to move around as possible. Clear clutter, extra desks, chairs, etc.

☐ Don't force participation in trust activities. Abstaining from some of the exercises does not mean that person cannot be trusted; most learners will eventually join in if you provide gentle encouragement and support over time.

☐ Arrange occasional opportunities for the group to spend time outside of the classroom, for example workshops, trips out, a visit to the other school, a fundraising activity, etc.

Activities

[Building Relationships & Trust Activities](#)

Removing Barriers to Learning

Listening to learners to improve provision

While many teachers collect learner feedback, it's sometimes collected too late to implement changes and address any issues raised. If you'd like to act immediately to change, there are a number of strategies you can use to elicit feedback from your learners, both formal and informal.

Perhaps the most obvious way is to ask the students questions directly. If classes are small and interactive, and there is mutual trust and respect between you and your learners, then posing questions directly to the class may be feasible. However, if there is no scope for anonymity, some may feel uncomfortable voicing less-popular opinions publicly.

Whichever method you choose, evaluate the workings of the group at reasonable intervals. Don't wait for a problem to appear, and don't wait until the end of a lesson (or the term) to find out what worked best. Use regular feedback sessions or questionnaires to develop your lessons to best benefit those taking part. Here are a few strategies that address these issues yet still permit quick and easy collection of feedback from students.

Suggestions

<u>Feedback on learning and lessons</u>

☐ Write three open questions on the board, print them in a questionnaire or discuss them as a class. Limiting it to three provides a manageable amount of feedback. The questions could be along the lines of the following:

- What was the most useful thing you learned today?
- What was the best thing about today's class?
- How could I change my teaching to help you learn more from this class?

☐ Include subject-specific questions as needed, such as:

- Which of the set pre-readings was most helpful in preparing for today's class?
- How did today's computer learning task help you understand the concept of...?

☐ If your class if particularly large, take only a sampling of feedback at a time. For example, say:

- Every fifth person fill out this questionnaire. In a few minutes I'll ask you to pass your questionnaire to the back of the row so I can collect them. While those people are filling out the questionnaire, would the rest of you...

☐ Allow group responses. This is a useful alternative to sampling in larger classes. Divide the class into groups of 5–10 students and collect the collated responses to the questions from each group after they've discussed them.

☐ Use the '3 Clear, 3 Muddy' approach when you want to discover which concepts still need reviewing. Ask your learners to write down three critical points they have most clearly learned from the class and the three points they are still most unclear about.

Feedback on the shared experience

☐ Don't focus only on subject-specific and lesson-related feedback. Let them complete frequent evaluations on the progress of the collaborative partnership so they can provide positive feedback and identify areas for development.

☐ Also provide opportunities for visiting learners to discuss how often they avail of host-school facilities and how the school could enhance access to facilities.

Acting on feedback

☐ Show your learners that you actually value their opinions and views by telling them what actions you will or will not be taking based on their feedback. This will encourage continued feedback in future. Try revealing your plans at the beginning of a subsequent class or via notice boards. One framework for sharing such information is to explain:

- which suggestions will be acted upon and how;
- which suggestions you would like to act on but are unable to and the reasons why; and
- which suggestions you will not be acting on and why.

Working Creatively with Controversial Issues

Transforming controversy into a positive learning opportunity

In shared classrooms, when certain topics arise, the mix of different traditions, cultures and beliefs can sometimes result in a portion of the class believing their understanding, account, or way of doing something is 'right' and that their class counterparts' are 'wrong'. But these controversial issues shouldn't be shied away from. Instead, they offer a chance to explore our own perspectives and better understand others'.

However, open-mindedness, forgiveness and tolerance won't magically appear. Learners will need your support to understand and see the value of other perspectives, even if they ultimately never agree with them. Your challenge is to guide them through an exploration of controversial topics that is even-handed and without judgement, defensiveness, or superiority from anyone in the class. If you're successful, you'll be helping them develop tolerance and respect when dealing with opinions that differ from their own.

Suggestions

☐ Ensure you have a positive working relationship with your learners to encourage open and honest conversations.

☐ Remind everyone about active listening, confidentiality and the class contract.

☐ Encourage learners to seek clarity and ask questions.

☐ Facilitate paired and small group discussion before whole group discussion, using the Class Contract as guidelines.

☐ Explore ways of connecting your subject with controversial issues. For example, the 2012/13 flags protests could be explored as part of a lesson on citizenship and the right to peaceful protest. The pros and cons of conflict-tourism could be explored as a module on regional economics. Changes to public benefits could be discussed as part of work on money management.

☐ If appropriate, warn your learners before introducing controversial or sensitive issues to lessons. This will improve their readiness and how confident they feel

about discussing the topic openly and honestly. For example, you might end a class by saying 'Next time, we'll focus on X and the different viewpoints and contexts related to that topic.'

☐ When a lesson or topic is likely to give rise to disagreement and possible conflict, be upfront about this possibility. This will ensure that conflict can be seen as an intrinsic and natural part of deeper learning.

☐ Carry out the some activities from *Working with Challenges* below to explore issues, and then use an *Endings* activity to reflect on what was learned and close the lesson.

Activities

[Working with Challenges Activities](#)

[Endings Activities](#)

Dealing with Conflict

Restorative approaches to the rescue

Conflict can arise at any time: between learners from the same school, learners from different schools, over controversial topics or over an incident at lunch. Learners may respond to these conflicts with anger, pride, hurt, shyness, defence mechanisms, guilt, loyalty or even triumph.

To deal with disagreements and conflict effectively in the shared classroom, use restorative approaches. These will help learners develop the skills to deal productively with conflict and teach them to share accountability for behaviour and consequences.

Suggestions

Preparing for conflict

☐ Be aware of the different *types* of conflict that may arise in a shared classroom and the potential *sources* of conflict. A type of conflict might be differences in values – what learners from different schools may feel to be important or valuable. A source of conflict might be commemorative events. Outline strategies for how you may deal with them constructively and to deepen learning.

Acting as the facilitator

☐ Become familiar with restorative language and how to use it during conflict situations. See [Appendix 10](#) for examples.

☐ Ensure that there is appropriate time to carry out restorative discussions with those involved.

☐ Allow all parties to tell you their version of the 'story' uninterrupted.

☐ Use active listening techniques: show that you are listening, provide feedback, defer judgement and respond appropriately.

☐ After they have finished their account, ask the other party involved to use 'I statements and recount what the first party just said, to show that they heard how the other person perceives the problem. For example, 'I hear that it upset you when...', 'I understand that to you it looked like..', etc. Then have the second party involved tell their version of the incident, and have the first affirm they

understood it using 'I' statements. You may need to model the affirmation process for them.

- [ ] Remain impartial. Do not place blame or take sides.
- [ ] When discussing an incident, ensure your focus is on the issue and not on the individual.
- [ ] Affirm the problem and guide the learner or the whole group to find a workable compromise or agreement.
- [ ] Acknowledge when something has been difficult for the learner to say or hear or when attitudes/opinions have changed, and provide affirmation (for example, 'That was very honest of you').
- [ ] Encourage those who think they are unaffected by the problem to reflect, thereby encouraging all learners to take ownership for the group's behaviour and to learn from the experience.
- [ ] Ensure that all those involved in the discussion are clear about what has been agreed, including specific actions or responsibilities to be taken forward.
- [ ] If appropriate, document any incidents and communicate these to relevant staff
- [ ] Establish a peer-mediation programme in your school, so learners can facilitate conflict resolutions.

<u>Group reflection</u>

- [ ] Once the situation has 'calmed', use the experience to reflect on what skills the learners used to overcome the problem.
- [ ] Find appropriate activities that can change the mood and allow the learners to 'let off steam' after a challenging topic or discussion. (See the Activities section).
- [ ] Celebrate your learners' achievements and the conflict management skills that they have developed.

Additional Resources

Appendix 10: Examples of Restorative Language

Joining forces to achieve more

Sharing classrooms isn't the only way to positively interact and partner with nearby schools. Even if your school is able to support a subject, collaborating with other schools can provide many enriching experiences for staff, learners and their families. It can enhance their sense of community, foster new friendships, create larger groups with more impact and, in some cases, allow schools to achieve more together than would be possible apart.

Sharing School Events & Activities

Building inter-school bonds through joint events

As the saying goes, 'the more the merrier'.

Suggestions

- ☐ Co-host Christmas and spring concerts.
- ☐ Have your Music departments collaborate to put on a joint a carol service.
- ☐ Put on joint drama productions.
- ☐ Merge your PTAs to increase the helping hands available, skills to draw from and scale of your fundraisers.
- ☐ Organise joint charity events. You could even add a friendly competitive element to increase student-body involvement and resourcefulness. Perhaps a student or teacher has a special cause that has affected them and the schools could support them, such as charities that help with meningitis, Action Cancer, Macmillan Nurses or leukaemia.
- ☐ Hold a students and staff fund raising coffee morning in each staff room.
- ☐ Set up a Fairtrade tuck shop.
- ☐ Share a visiting speaker for a particular year group or subject, for example local authors visiting your joint English classes for a question and answer session.
- ☐ Put on a shared formal/dance for sixth formers.
- ☐ Enter into joint enterprising ventures, such as seasonal cards for sale, mothers/father's day gifts for sale, DVDs of joint musicals or talent competitions, a Rolo for £1.00 with message on Valentine's day, etc.

Sharing Educational Visits

Taking shared experiences on the road

Shared educational visits and trips can be a great way for both schools and learners to strengthen relationships. Not only can these deepen learning in subjects, but by making them shared, inter-school experiences, learners can practise leadership and reconciliation skills in new contexts with new people.

Here are a few suggestions for History & Citizenship, Religion, Media, Physical Education, Careers, Art, English, and Maths classes. Appendix 11 offers a template for planning these excursions.

Suggestions

Contact these local services to arrange subject-related field trips and in-school visits.

General Team-Building

Adventure Tours NI

Lurgaboy Adventure Centre

Bushmills Activity Centre

Woodhall Kilrea

Share Centre in Lisnaskea

History & Citizenship

Caring for the Environment – with Causeway Volunteer Centre

Volunteers will come to your school and work with learners to create spaces of natural beauty or rejuvenate tired greenhouses or flower beds.

Citizenship workshops – with The Red Cross
Staff will help learners set up various work stations, such as 'how to set up a refugee

camp' or 'child soldiers. Or enjoy workshops where learners cook, dance, draw and paint together.

Family Tree Project – with PRONI or Facing the Past, Shaping the Future
Research the history of your families during WWI and WWII. Many will discover relatives who fought side by side.

Shared Heritage Tour – with Belfast City Sightseeing
See mutual history and traditions come alive. The tour showcases themes and stories that demonstrate that our communities have more in common than separates them.

How Our Government Works – with Stormont
Tour the Parliament buildings, take part in a mock election, conduct a Q&A session with MLAs, and more.

The Titanic Story – with Titanic Belfast®
The museum's educational facility brings key aspects of social history, industrial developments and engineering advancements to life through scale replicas, multimedia displays, digital interactive displays, moving images and sensory experiences.

Derry City Walls Tours – with Derry Visitor and Convention Bureau
Learners can gain a greater understanding of both communities' history of conflict and how far the City of Culture has come today. Tours present key periods in the city's history, including the Siege of Derry**,** Emigration**,** Famine in Ireland, both World Wars**,** Easter Rising**,** Civil Rights Marches**,** Bloody Sunday**,** Ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement**.**

Dublin City Tour – with Dublin Sightseeing
See history come to life from the bullet holes in the GPO from the 1916 Rising to Government Buildings on Merrion Square West.

Political and Military History – with Collins Barracks Museum
Originally an army barracks, the buildings are now the National Museum of Ireland. Explore containing original artefacts from all the main historical events in Ireland.

Political and Penal History – with Kilmainham Gaol
Now an unoccupied gaol, its exhibits cover some of the most heroic and tragic events in Ireland's emergence as a modern nation from 1780s to the 1920s.

Battle of the Boyne – with Boyne Heritage Museum
This visitor centre now provides updated education packs for learners. Free work books are also available to help young visitors learn about the Battle of the Boyne while viewing the exhibition.

Croke Park Stadium Tour and Museum
Explore the GAA's contribution to Irish sporting, cultural and social life since its formation.

The Irish Political System – with The Dail Eireann
Give your learners insight into public affairs, democracy and Ireland's political system through the Office of the House of Oireachtas. Education Officers are available for classroom visits, and school tours of Leinster House can be arranged.

Lobby for Change – with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Show your learners how they can affect positive change for themselves and their communities.

Visits to Council Offices or PSNI stations
Contact your local council offices or PSNI and ask for a tour and a question and answer session with elected members/officers. The PSNI deliver many workshops ranging from the dangers of social networking to drugs, alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Religion

Attend Ecumenical Service
Contact your local diocese office or Church community and they will be very willing to facilitate this. Here's one example of such a service.

Joint 'Parish Projects'
Work with another RE Department to come up with success criteria for the learners.

Share Guest Speakers
Schedule guest speakers so they may visit classes in both participating schools on the same day.

Visit Primary Schools
Start a 'Faith Friends' programme. In pairs, go into primary schools to be witness to their faith or carry out a project on each other's faith, culture and traditions.

Media

Visit the World of Radio – on the Cool FM Bus
Learners work together to edit and produce their very own radio show on a topic of their choice. They can also make a show at the actual Cool FM studios and interview the Radio Presenters.

Get Dramatic – with the Big Telly Theatre Company in Portstewart
This Company works with learners to produce a drama piece on a topic of their choice or perform a play highlighting an issue current to their curriculum.

Physical Education

Take Part in Cross-Community Sports – through the GAA
The Cúchulainn Cup, Ulster GAA's flagship cross-community project, brings together young men from non-GAA backgrounds through the medium of Gaelic Games and promotes good community relations. Learners compete in a Gaelic Game of two halves, one of hurling and one of Gaelic Football.

Build Leadership Skills Through Basketball – with Peace Players International
This ground-breaking peace-building and leadership development curriculum uses basketball to bring children together and teach them proven tactics for improving their communities. Cross-community sports camps are also available

Dance classes, [cheerleading](), fitness classes (like Zumba, kick-boxing, circuits, etc), five-a-side soccer tournaments and a shared sports day are other ways to share physical education experiences.

Careers

Share trips to university open days, careers conventions and interview days.

Work together to arrange shared work placements

Art

Attend art workshops – via your local museums
Contact your local Museum Service to ask about free art workshops and exhibitions, as well as opportunities to take part in or view Cultural Fusions projects.

Sharing Extra-Curricular Activities

Hosting hobbies, clubs, sports & more

Combining interest groups is a great opportunity to bring small school groups together, use resources more efficiently, and support a broader range of student interests.

Suggestions

☐ Create a shared formal committee to plan your annual sixth-form dance.

☐ Share your international trips: ski trips, Paris trip, School Aid Romania Trip, etc.

☐ Combine your Pupil Voice/school councils.

☐ Support learners from both schools who want to work with food/waitress complete the compulsory Food Hygiene Certificate. You could do this as part of Home Economics.

☐ Co-sponsor a new sport or athletic team.

☐ Establishing a Giving Club to support learners interested in doing charitable work or starting community programmes. You could create an annual award to recognise the student who has had the most community impact that year or made a great effort in participating in cross community relations.

☐ Start a shared Buddy Reading or Class Monitor programme where sixth form learners mentor young learners or act as a class monitor for a first-year group.

☐ Share an Essential Skills Literacy or Numeracy class.

☐ Support a join Peace Choir/Folk Group.

Activities

Learning together by doing together

Pairing Activities

- Blind Date
- Breakfast Items
- Starburst Sort

Ice-Breaker & Introduction Activities

- Welcome!
- 10 Minute Random Draw
- Alphabet Exercise
- Change Places
- Human Bingo

Building Relationships & Trust Activities

- What's in a Name?
- Assumptions
- Spaghetti Conversations
- Revolving Circles
- Apple Game
- Guess Who
- Back to Back

Building Group Identity Activities

- Contracting
- Our Own Diversity
- Who's the Leader?
- Commonalities
- Cultural Quiz

Working With Challenges Activities

- Values Continuum

Endings Activities

- Wool Web
- Plus, Minus, Delta
- Letter to Self
- Affirmation

Pairing Activities

Use these activities to create pairs and groups for activities/lessons.

Blind Date

Use this activity to put learners into random pairs.

Instructions

1. Print the following grid, cut it up into individual strips, fold them and place them in a container.

2. Have each learner draw one out.

3. Give your learners five minutes to look at the identity on their paper and find their Blind Date partner in the room! (Having a timer set during the activity to alarm at its end may help to inject increased momentum!)

4. Once everyone has found their partner, you could allow time for each pair to offer clues about who they are and let the rest of the class guess their identities (time permitting).

5. Once all identities have been shared, the class is organised in ready-made partnerships for paired curricular work.

6. (When students have done this activity a couple of times, it could be varied to require them to locate their partners by not using either the strips of paper or their voices!)

NB: Where teachers hope to deliberately partner up students from different schools, they could edit and print the Identities grid accordingly. For example, by dividing up the pairs into 'Partner one' and 'Partner Two' groups and then printing these off on to different coloured paper.

Variation: To deliberately partner learners from different schools, you could edit and print the Identities grid accordingly. For example, divide up the pairs into 'Partner one' and 'Partner Two' groups and then print these off on to different coloured paper, giving one colour to visiting learners and the other to your school's learners.

Breakfast Items

Use this activity to create random groups.

Instructions

1. 'Label' different sections of the room (with a relevant word poster, or even better a relevant image poster) according to breakfast options such as: Ulster fry/cereal/tea and toast/coke and crisps/nothing/etc.

2. Give your learners two minutes to move to the breakfast label that most appropriately describes his/her experience of breakfast that morning.

3. Once they are all in position, allow another three minutes for the people at that breakfast label to share the following details with all of the others in his/her 'group': his/her name, locality and the story of his/her breakfast today.

4. At the end of the three minutes, check in with a few learners to see how well they have really listened to and learned about their neighbours.

5. At the end of the activity, the class is likely to be either already mixed ready to start a group activity, or almost there. Tweak accordingly and then give the group its new task.

Starburst Sort

"Starburst" fruit-flavoured sweets offer a tasty and easy way of sorting learners into groups according to colour/flavour. The simplicity and appeal of this sorting activity never fails!

Instructions

1. Open a few packets of Starbursts and place in a container.

2. Invite learners to come draw one sweet out and return to their desk.

3. Draw out a little discussion about why they selected the colours/flavours they did. It's an easy way of helping build a positive class atmosphere and deepening class knowledge of one another.

4. Explain that today they'll be working in groups and ask them to gather with those who selected the same sweet they did.

Ice-breaker & Introduction Activities

These activities are best suited for use during the first few days of the shared class.

Welcome!

Use this activity at the beginning of term to encourage everyone to engage with the word and concept of 'welcome'. The goal is to get your learners interacting and expressing themselves, create an overall feeling of 'welcome', generate an inviting environment, and model an inclusive and participative approach.

The activity works best if woven into the informal greeting period before the start of class.

Instructions

1. Create a more social and interactive environment by playing background music, providing snacks or refreshments, etc.

2. Before learners arrive, write the word WELCOME in large letters in the middle of the flipchart. Make sure a range of marker pens are available at the flipchart.

3. As learners arrive, invite them to add or contribute words to the flipchart that roughly mean 'welcome' or 'hello' in English or in other languages, for example 'bonjour' (French) or 'failte' (Irish).

4. As class begins, together discuss the words on the chart and take suggestions for additional words to add.

5. Ask everyone who wrote a word to identify themselves, tell the class their name and which word they added, and identify its meaning and country/language of origin to welcome everyone and develop an atmosphere of participation and inclusion.
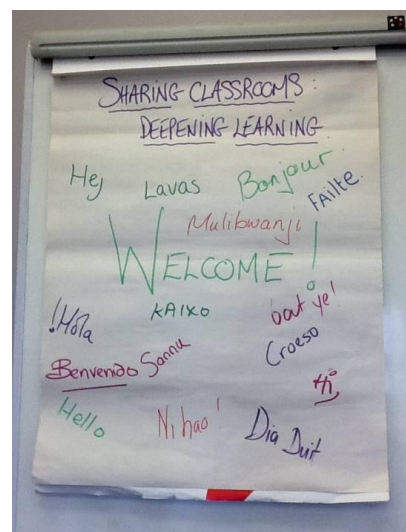
10 Minute Random Draw

Use this activity at the start of class to help your learners reveal small details about themselves. Feel free to participate yourself.

Instructions

1. Before class, cut up the following statement starters, fold them over and place them in a container.
2. At the start of class, have your learners position their chairs in a circle.
3. Ask everyone to randomly select (and without immediately disclosing the contents to their peers) one of the little miniature strips of paper from the container.
4. When everyone has drawn, go around the circle and ask each learner to share his/her starter statement and its personal ending to the whole circle.

Statement Starters
1. My favourite ever hairdo was…
2. My worst ever hairdo was…
3. My greatest claim to fame so far is…
4. My worst habit is…
5. My best habit is…
6. My favourite breakfast cereal is…
7. If I were a cartoon character, I would be…
8. The last gig/concert I went to was…
9. The first gig/concert I went to was…
10. What makes me laugh is…
11. What makes me cry is….
12. My favourite colour is…
13. My favourite weather is…

14. My favourite season is…
15. If I was let loose in a chocolate shop, I would buy…
16. If I won a free trip to anywhere in the world, my destination of choice would be…
17. My cooking talent extends to…
18. I hate the sport of _____ because…
19. If I ended up in "I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!", my greatest challenge would be…
20. My proudest Sports Day memory from primary school is…
21. The worst film I ever saw was…
22. My favourite TV show is….
23. The best words to describe my homework desk are…
24.   Without doubt, the greatest board game ever is…
25. My most humorous childhood memory is…
26. My earliest childhood memory is…
27. My favourite ever homework was…
28.   If I was a teacher, I would…
29. If _____ were an Olympic sport, I would be an Olympic champion!
30. I will have made my first million pounds by the time that …

Alphabet Exercise

This activity gets everyone talking, moving, listening, exploring identity and tuning in to issues of diversity and 'all kinds of difference'. Use it to encourage and model inclusion, participation and the sharing of creative ideas.

Instructions

1. Create a series of personal questions the students could answer. Include some that will begin to highlight diversity within the group, such as the following:

   - What's the meaning and origin of your name?

   - Where were you born (in what town or city)?

   - What's your favourite food?

   - What's the best book you've ever read?

   - What's the best concert/sports match/event you've ever been to?

   - Where would your ideal holiday destination be?

   - What school did you go to?

   - If you could live anywhere in the world for a year, where would it be (in which city or country)?

2. Scatter alphabet letter cards over the floor, ensuring there is enough space for several learners to gather around each one.

3. Explain that when you ask a question, each person needs to go and stand next to the first letter of their answer. Once there, they should introduce themselves to anyone else standing at the same letter (or at a letter close by) and share their answers. Invite them to discuss their preferences, choices and views to draw out the diversity and views about difference in the group.

4. Conclude by asking your learners to reflect on why they think you asked them to do the activity. Discuss what they saw happening, how they felt and what they heard. Draw together their observations to emphasise the many different personalities and influences in the room and how these might be useful to learning.

Change Places

This activity is about having fun and affirming difference. Use it to encourage learners to mix, co-operate and begin to feel comfortable with one another.

Instructions

1. Arrange your learners' chairs in a circle.

2. Have one person begin without a chair and stand in the middle.

3. Explain that at the end of this game, they'll need to remember what they heard and saw, so attention to detail will be important.

4. Explain that their aim is to find a free chair by calling out a statement such as 'Change places if you have brown eyes' or 'Change places if you've never had a pet'. These statements should focus on obvious or impersonal things about your learners. Everyone that the statement applies to has to leave their seat and find a different one. The last person to find a seat will be the next one to stand in the middle and make a new statement.

5. After some time, suggest more personal statements that will help your learners get to know one another better, for example 'Change places if you have a sister', Change places if you've never had a pet', or 'Change places if you're feeling nervous/excited about starting this course.'

6. Consolidate the learning by asking everyone to say something the exercise has taught them about another learner.

Human Bingo

This activity encourages conversation about a wide range of topics within the group.

Instructions

1. Draw a grid divided into 15 squares and write a statement in each one, for example:

   - 'Find someone who goes to a different school than you.'

   - 'Find someone who plays the guitar.'

   See sample, overleaf.

2. Give each learner a copy of the grid, and challenge them to get the signature of a person for whom each statement is true. Set a limit on the number of squares that can have the same signature, depending on the number of learners in your class.

3. When they have finished, encourage them to discuss to think about differences and commonalities within the group.

Variation: Use the activity to get feedback on the effectiveness of your teaching and your learners' understanding by using statements related to your subject. These might include, for example, 'Find someone who knows Pythagoras' Theorem', or 'Find someone who can conjugate être'.

Bingo Sheet

Find the following people in your class and write their name(s) in the appropriate square

Two people who have been to Spain on holiday	Two people who both enjoy the topic of *(subject topic name)*	Someone who is able to list 5 key points about *(subject topic name)*	Someone who can touch his/her chin with his/her tongue	Two classmates with the same work/career ambitions
Someone who is able to list 5 key points about *(subject topic name)*	Two class members who have a creative hobby	Someone who likes country music	A class member who is able to explain *(this section of) the subject specification* to you	Someone who studies in another "shared classroom"
A female classmate who likes science-fiction films	Someone who went to your primary school	One person who was afraid of Halloween as a child	Three people who have a second forename	Someone who plays guitar
One person who hopes to continue his/her study of *subject name* beyond this Key Stage	Two people who have a birthday in the same month as yours	Someone who has won a prize in a draw	Someone who goes to a different school than you	Two people who both find the topic of *(subject topic name)* difficult

Building Relationships & Trust Activities

These activities are best suited for building familiarity and trust. Once the meeting and greeting period has passed, use these to encourage your learners to share more personal and significant information about themselves.

What's in a Name?

This activity is an opportunity for learners to meet and greet each other. It encourages them to reflect on the meaning and significance of their names, as well as sharing something of their sense of identity. Use it to help them begin to find their 'voice' and become comfortable within the group. It also works well as a lead-in to Alphabet Exercise.

Instructions

1. Ask your learners to form a circle and introduce themselves, saying what they know about their names. For example, you could give these prompt questions:

   - What does your name mean?

   - Why were you given that name?

   - Where is it from?

   - What do you like or dislike about it?

   - Do you have a nickname?

2. If your learners are not already wearing name badges, they could write and stick on badges while they are speaking.

Variation: Have your learners answer the questions about their names in pairs. Then ask each person to introduce their partner to the whole group.

Assumptions

This activity allows you to explore how and why we make assumptions about each other. It gives learners an opportunity to discuss the feelings associated with their assumptions. You can make links to themes such as stereotyping, judging, categorising and characterising people or groups, and discrimination.

Instructions

1. Ask your learners to form pairs, ideally working with someone they have only recently met.

2. Give out copies of the Assumptions Worksheet, and ask each person to complete the sheet of 14 questions about their partner. They should do this without speaking and with as little non-verbal communication as possible, focusing only on the task. You may choose to play music quietly in the background.

3. When everyone has finished, ask the pairs to discuss their answers and find out how many they got right.

4. Use the following questions for debriefing and reflection, making notes on a flipchart:

   - What information did you use to make your decision?

   - What triggers/visual clues did you use?

   - Why did you make the assumptions/judgements you did?

   - How did you feel about being asked to answer these questions about someone you hardly knew?

   - Did you censor your answers to limit the possibility of 'offending' the other person?

   - Why do we make assumptions/judgements about others?

   - Is it right or wrong?

   - Does it inevitably lead to prejudice and discrimination?

5. Facilitate a general discussion. Allow your learners to express their feelings and explore the reasons for and dynamics behind the assumptions we make about each other, and their particular resonance in Northern Ireland.
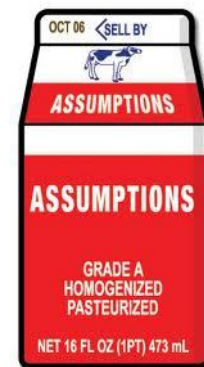
Making Assumptions

Look at your partner and write the answer to each question in column 1. Make your best guess. In column 2, write a short note about why you think your guess is right. Then, check your answers with your partner. Tick the box if you were correct.

Question	Why do you think that?	Tick each correct assumption
Does your partner prefer the cinema or the theatre?		☐
What's their favourite city or country?		☐
What's their favourite food?		☐
Do they play a musical instrument?		☐
Where do they come in their family (sibling order)?		☐

Are they more interested in politics or religion?		☐
Name a personality they admire from politics, TV, film or sport.		☐
What's their favourite season?		☐
Do they prefer social media, newspapers or books?		☐
What type of post-primary school did they go to?		☐
Would they consider themselves Catholic, Protestant or Other?		☐
Would they consider themselves British, Irish or Other?		☐

Do they believe in God and/or are they religious?	69	☐
Do they prefer shopping, cooking or DIY?		☐

Spaghetti Conversations

Use this activity to encourage learners to share information about themselves that they would like to volunteer to the group.

Instructions

1. Cut up different lengths of string and place them in a pot. Ensure that there are more pieces of string than there are learners.

2. Write prompts on the board about areas of their lives that your learners could discuss.

3. Invite them to take a piece of string each. They must talk about themselves for the length of time it takes them to wrap their piece of string around two fingers.

Revolving Circles

This activity facilitates introductions and early conversations. Its purpose is to help the group relax and share information in an informal way.

Instructions

- Have your learners form two circles of equal numbers, one inside the other.

- Ask the two circles to move around slowly. The inside circle (the interviewers) should move clockwise and the outside circle (the interviewees) anticlockwise.

- When you say stop, each interviewer should ask questions to the person standing opposite them. Ask them to find out three things that they don't already know.

- Have everyone start moving again. Next time you say stop, there should be new pairs of interviewers and interviewees.

- Repeat this process as often as you wish, then ask the interviewers and interviewees to swap roles.

Apple Game

Use this activity to illustrate and prompt discussion on how our words can affect people.

Instructions

1. Bring two apples and set them in the middle of a circle made up of six to eight learners.

2. Pick up one apple, say something mean to it (for example 'I hate you and I don't want to be around you'), then drop it to the floor.

3. Ask the next person to pick up the apple, say something mean to it, and drop it again.

4. Continue around the table a couple of times, with everyone taking turns to be mean to the apple and drop it.

5. Cut that apple in half and lay it in the centre of the circle, allowing it to brown. Take the other apple and, as each learner takes turns to hold it, have everyone else in the group compliment or affirm the person holding the apple.

6. Continue until everyone has been complimented by everybody else.

7. Lead your learners in a discussion of how being complimented felt:

   • Were compliments easy to receive? Why or why not?

   • Was it easier to be mean or to give compliments? Why?

Guess Who

This activity helps learners share interesting tidbits about themselves and learn new facts about their classmates.

Instructions

1. Print out the table on the next page and cut it up into individual "Guess Who" boxes. Ensure there is one for each learner in the class.

2. As homework, invite your learners to reflect on and complete the idea with a personal response. Ask them to keep their fact secret and let them know that their response will be shared with the class later. This will help ensure they select something suitable for sharing.

3. At the start of the next lesson, collect the completed and folded-over statements from your learners and place them in a container. Draw out one at a time, read it aloud, and invite them to guess the author's identity.

4. When you've shared every statement, revisit each one, this time inviting the owner to claim ownership of it. You could also allow the learner to expand on their fact in more detail, time permitting.

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Guess Who: A little known fact about me is…

Back to Back

This activity is very good for alerting learners to the importance of eye contact and appropriate body language in meaningful communication.

Instructions

1. Place your learners in pairs and ask them to arrange their seats back to back and slightly removed from other pairs.

2. Set a timer to alarm at the end of five minutes.

3. Explain that when you start the timer, they must discuss how they spent the previous weekend with their partner, providing as much detail as possible, BUT WITHOUT EVER TURNING AROUND OR LOOKING AT THEIR PARTNER.

4. When time is up, ask a number of pairs to share what they learned about their partner's weekend.

5. As a class, discuss the activity. What did they think about talking and listening without seeing the other person's face? How did the position of the chairs affect their ability to remember facts and descriptions? How did it feel as a speaker not being able to see the listener's face? How did it feel as a listener not being able to see the speaker's expressions or gestures? D

6. Next, ask them to change partners and repeat the activity, this time with the pairs facing each other.

7. How was the activity better, worse or different this time? How did being able to see each other change the experience as a speaker and a listener? How did it make them feel? What affect did it have on recall?

8. As a class, draw some conclusions about why looking at people when speaking and listening matters.

Building Group Identity Activities

These activities are best suited for team building.

Contracting

In this activity, learners develop their listening, negotiation and diplomacy skills as they devise a set of basic guidelines that the group agrees to follow. Use the final guidelines throughout the term to create a safe space in which your learners will be able to explore and discuss emotive and potentially controversial issues in subsequent activities.

Instructions

1. Gather ideas from the group about 'ground rules', or ways of being together that will enable everyone to participate, learn and enjoy the experience. Write these ideas up on a flipchart, checking with the person who suggested each one that you have expressed it as they intended. You could discuss:

   - the value of phrasing the ground rules in positive language, for example 'We will…' instead of 'Don't…';

   - how long the contract should be (six points or fewer is generally best); and

   - strategies for different age or ability groups, for example using pictures or symbols instead of words and phrases, and/or finding ways to highlight key words.

2. Check for understanding: ensure that everyone understands what the suggested statements mean or look like in action.

3. Check for agreement: using a 'negative poll', ask the group, 'Is there anyone here who can't agree with something written in the contract?' Once you have agreement, check back with the group whether they noticed the process you worked through, particularly the value of the 'negative poll' rather than asking
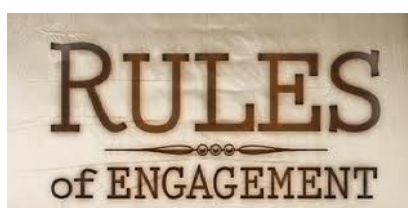
'Does everyone agree?' No one can answer on behalf of everyone; the 'negative poll' allows people to answer for themselves. It gives permission to say 'No' and raise a question at this early stage, rather than it becoming an issue later on.

4. Display the contract throughout the session, and refer back to it when appropriate. Remind the group that what they have drawn up is a 'starting point'; as the class works and stays together over time, they should revisit, develop and amend the contract as necessary (for example when a new learner joins the class or at the start of a new term).

Our Own Diversity

This activity develops learners' awareness of the diversity in their lives. It can help them understand of how prejudices and perceptions impact on more people than they might expect.

Instructions

1. Put up four large sheets around the room, with a different heading on each one:

   - Race and Ethnicity;

   - Religion;

   - Gender and Sexuality; and

   - Physical and Mental Disability.

2. Encourage your learners to think about how people they know could be grouped under the headings. For example, a learner who knows people who are 'Presbyterian', 'Buddhist' or 'Catholic' would write these words on the 'Religion' sheet.

3. Tell your learners that if someone else has already written their word on the sheet, they should put a tick beside the word instead of writing it again.

4. Ask them not to comment on what other learners have written.

5. When everyone has finished, ask these questions:

   - Do you find anything interesting or surprising about the different categories?

   - Is it difficult to write down words/groups under certain categories?

   - Is there more or less diversity in their lives than expected?

6. Explore how, for example, using humour at the expense of certain groups might affect a larger number of people in the class than they would have expected.

Who's the Leader?

In this activity, the group must work as a team to outsmart an observer. Use it to lead in to a discussion about identity and outside influences, and how easy or difficult it is to discern why people in groups act as they do.

Instructions

1. Have your learners form a circle and ask a volunteer (the observer) to leave the room.

2. Together, choose a group leader. The leader should start a series of actions, for example toe tapping, standing on one foot, clicking their fingers or waving a hand. The rest of the group must copy the leader without giving away his or her identity.

3. Invite the observer to come in and work out who is leading the group. Give them up to three guesses before you choose a new observer and leader.

4. Draw the learning from the activity by asking your learners to comment on the relevance of this exercise, for example how groups form and function in real life.

Commonalities

Use this short activity to explore how much learners have in common with each other and help build class identity.

Instructions

1. Divide the class into two teams.

2. Set a time limit, and challenge them to find things that all members of their team have in common and to write that common thing down. For example, if everyone in the group as a sister, they'd write 'have a sister'.

3. Award one point for each thing they have noted down. Give bonus points for unique or funny commonalities.

Cultural Quiz

Use this activity to explore culture and attitudes by reflecting on symbols.

You can present it as a quiz or a discussion. Remind your learners of the Class Contract before you begin.

Instructions

1. Find and print a picture of each item listed below (or other relevant cultural symbols) and place each in a hat:

• Claddagh Ring	• Scripture Union Logo	• Poppy
• Shamrock	• Easter Lily	• Crucifix
• Red Hand	• Stormont	• Murals
• St Bridget's Cross	• Cross	• Irish Dancer
• Lambeg Drum	• Boy's Brigade Badge	• Bowler Hat
• Police Officer	• Bodhran	
• Ulster Scots logo	• Harp	

2. Place your learners in pairs, and ask each pair to draw out a term.

3. Without relying on the internet or reference materials, give the pairs time to discuss and identify:

   - what each symbol is;
   - where they might see it;
   - what they know and don't know about it; and
   - what makes them feel comfortable/uncomfortable.

4. If neither learner in the pair recognises their symbol, let them ask another pair for input.

5. Then, as a class, discuss the following:

   - Where do we get our information?
   - How do we get our information?
   - Is it useful to know more about symbols?
   - Do people feel more comfortable with some and less with others?

- Can symbols be shared in Northern Ireland?

6. End the lesson by drawing together what you've all learned from the exercise and linking this to the area you are studying.

Working With Challenges Activities

These activities are useful for when you want to prepare learners for upcoming lesson topics or events that could be emotional or controversial.

Values Continuum

This activity helps generate discussion on a controversial issue. It encourages learners to listen to others' opinions and to develop reasoning skills.

Instructions

1. Read out a statement that will provoke different viewpoints, for example:

    * 'Talking about differences causes more problems than leaving them alone.'

    * 'Violence is never justified in protests, neither by protesters nor by police.'

    * 'It's not a school's responsibility to tackle sectarianism or racism.'

    * 'There's no place in the classroom for political and religious views.'

    * 'Religious, political and cultural symbols should be kept out of the classroom.'

    * 'A public figure who makes racist remarks should be banned from public office.'

    * 'I would feel comfortable discussing homosexuality in my classroom.'

2. Ask your learners to decide how they feel about the statement you have read and to write a number from 1 to 5 on a piece of paper: 1 means 'strongly agree' and 5 means 'strongly disagree'.

3. Next, ask your learners to discuss the statement with, in turn:

    * someone who shares their viewpoint (and wrote the same number);

    * someone who wrote the number above or below theirs; and

    * someone who had a very different view.

4. When they have finished all three discussions, ask the class:

    * how many of them changed their viewpoint during the exercise;

    * what led them to change their mind; and

    * what they gained from the process.

Variation: Mark out a continuum on the floor with cue cards. Place 'strongly disagree' at one end of the room and 'strongly agree' at the other end. Read out a statement, and ask your learners to move to the point on the continuum that best represents their opinion. Give them some time to tell those standing nearby why they stood where they did. As a class, discuss why there are variations in their opinions. After the discussion, allow them to reconsider their opinions and move to another position along the continuum, if they wish.

Endings Activities

These activities can be useful to you and your learners on a number of levels. They can help you evaluate understanding and learning, gauge engagement and participation, and help bring the class back together if they've been in paired or group discussion. This is your change to give final instructions, answer questions and round off the lesson/class.

Wool Web

This activity gives learners an opportunity to evaluate and comment on what they have learned. It also uses the image of a web to illustrate to your learners that there is a network of support available to them in the future.

Instructions

1. Ask the whole group to stand in a circle.

2. Holding a ball of wool, say something that you have found particularly useful or memorable about the programme.

3. Throw the ball of wool to someone else in the group, keeping hold of the end. That person should add their comments, keep hold of the strand of wool and throw the ball to the next person.

4. When everyone has had a chance to speak, there should be a web of wool linking everyone in the group. Highlight that this represents the network of support we all have in developing approaches to dealing with issues the group has been discussing today.

Variation: Pass an object around the circle, and ask everyone to take turns to complete the sentence 'One thing I will take away from today is...' Encourage your learners to speak only when they have the object.

PLUS, MINUS, DELTA

This is a quick, alternative way for learners to evaluate and comment on what they have learned. Present it at the end of the lesson, or position it in a corner for learners to add comments to throughout a topic/lesson.

Instructions

1. Prepare a flip chart page. Divided into three sections and in each draw one of these symbols: $+$, $-$, Δ. The Delta can signify either what your learners didn't understand *or* what they want to change about something in order for them to learn better.
2. Explain the purpose of the chart to the class and
3. Remind them to record brief comments, as appropriate
4. Review the chart together and deal with their comments appropriately.

Variation: Invite your learners to also tell you what aspects of the topic they'd like to learn more about. It's a great way to discover their areas of interest, which topics most pique their interest and ideas for extending the learning.

Letter to Self

This reflection activity gives learners an opportunity to record a personal note to themselves at the end of the session – an 'aide memoir' or prompt for future action.

Instructions

1. Give each person a piece of paper and an envelope, and invite them to write a letter to themselves starting with 'Dear [their own name]'.

2. In their letter they should:

    *   describe a goal they want to achieve (could be long term or short term);

    *   specify a time frame for achieving the goal;

    *   list some basic actions they plan to take between now and then to move towards their goal (For example if goal is to go to Alton Towers this summer, actions might be to research admission and travel costs, ask/convince mum and dad, pick a date and save money.); and

    *   name the date on which they'll revisit their letter/goal to check their progress.

Affirmation

This activity is great for building self-esteem and celebrating learning. In it, everyone receives a sheet with positive feedback written about them by everyone else.

Instructions

1. Give each learner a piece of paper. On it, they are to write their name and draw an outline of their hand.

2. Have each learner pass their page to person on their left, who should write something positive about them. For example, they might write an example of how that person contributed to the class learning, a skill they have noticed or an attitude they have appreciated. Encourage them to be specific and not use comments like 'he has a nice smile'.

3. Keep passing the pages around until each learner has had an opportunity to write a positive comment about everyone else and the sheet makes its way to its owner.

4. Give your learners time to read the positive comments, then invite each to share their favourite compliment from the page.

5. End by pointing out how valued and important everyone is and how they all contribute to making class successful and enjoyable.

Appendices

Extra support materials to help you on your way

Appendix 1

Exemplar Service Level Agreement

[Area Learning Community]
Service Level Agreement
[Academic Year]
Between

School name

Author:	
Version:	
Date:	

This Service Level Agreement is between the schools/colleges in the Area Learning Community and all parties agree to abide by the terms established within this document.

Signed: Date:

Principal/Director

Signed: Date:

Principal/Director

Signed: Date:

Principal/Director

Signed: Date:

Principal/Director

Signed: Date
Principal/Director

Signed: Date:

Principal/Director

Signed: Date:

Principal/Director

Signed: Date:

Principal/Director

Service Level Agreement

Signatories

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose of Document

This document represents an agreement between the schools/colleges in the _____[Area Learning Community]_____.

1   The purpose of this agreement is to:

- define the roles and responsibilities within the schools;

- define the pastoral care responsibilities for each of the parties;

- define the arrangements for CEIAG (Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance);

- define the funding arrangements; and

- define the curriculum parameters.

2   Changes to the Service Level Agreement

Any changes to the Service Level Agreement for the delivery of Entitlement Framework must be agreed by all parties.

3   Academic Calendar

An agreed schedule of dates will be established by the end of August 20[XX] and will be available from each partner.

4   Funding

The Entitlement Framework (EF) will be financially supported by the EF Support Formula (DE). The minimum and maximum number of students per class will be as deemed appropriate by individual partners.

5   Curriculum Management:

The Learning Provider will provide:

- a scheme of work by 31st of August 20[XX];

- a final timetable of classes by 31st of August 20[XX];

- an induction programme for pupils covering facilities, rules, health and safety requirements, child protection procedures and administration arrangements;

- an induction/learner's handbook;

- an induction programme for staff to include schools' link staff, subject teachers and classroom assistants; and

- identified link personnel for all courses.

The Home School will:

- provide a learning agreement signed by the parent/carer of any student taking a course of study to the Learning Provider;

- ensure that a risk assessment of any proposed curriculum provision with another Learning Provider premises has been conducted;

- assure that any course for an external qualification is an approved course;

- provide an estimate of the numbers of students participating in each course with the learning provider by June 20[XX] and confirm this by 31st of August 20[XX]; and

- ensure that an induction session is conducted with students before they attend the learning provider.

6   Registration and Examinations

The Learning Provider will:

- provide to the Home Centre precise and accurate details of all modules and examinations relating to the taught curriculum;

- liaise with the Examinations Officer of the Home School(s) to ensure that pupils are entered correctly for the appropriate examinations;

- assess and internally verify pupils' work; and

- submit work to the validating body for moderation, as required.

The Home School(s) will:

- ensure that all pupils are entered correctly for the appropriate examinations and modules;

- will act as the examination centre, where appropriate;

- inform the Provider, at the earliest opportunity, of any special examination requirements for individual pupils; and

- inform the Provider of all examination outcomes within one week of the outcomes becoming available.

7   Liaison

Regular liaison (at least termly) will take place between the Home School and Learning Provider link teachers to review student progress and other pertinent issues.

The Learning Provider will:

- identify a member of staff with responsibility for each programme, with details (full staff name, job title, contact telephone number and email address), to act as the liaison manager with the other participating school(s);

- ensure the liaison manager forwards the pupil information/data transferred from the home school to the relevant staff, i.e. subject teacher(s) and SENCO;

- maintain confidentiality on all personal information on students presented to it by the home school and will inform members of staff on a need to know basis;

- provide staff to attend consultation evenings with parents as agreed; and

- provide reports on each student's progress as agreed.

The Home School will:

- identify a member of staff as the liaison manager, with details (full staff name, job title, contact telephone number and email address), to act as liaison manager with the other participating school(s);

- ensure that the liaison manager transfers a list of participating students, with accompanying relevant student data/information, from their system to the liaison manager in the Learning Provider;

- provide a list of participating students to the SENCO who will identify students on the SEN register and supply additional information to be transferred to the learning provider link teacher;

- provide opportunities for parents of students to attend parent consultation evenings; and

- provide a process for the provider to contribute to a report on each student's progress as agreed in the quality improvement arrangements.

8   Agreed Services/Resources

The Learning Provider will:

- ensure that all teachers/lecturers are appropriately qualified;

- provide alternative and meaningful provision in the event of lecturer/teacher absence;

- provide appropriate learning materials, stationery, accommodation, and equipment; and

- maintain confidentiality on all personal information on pupils' medical and behavioural needs presented to it by the Home School and will inform only those members of staff who need to know.

The Home School will:

- ensure that adequate arrangements are agreed with the Provider to facilitate the supervision of 14–16 year old pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs.

9   Pastoral Care

The Learning Provider will:

- ensure that appropriate child protection and equality policies, in-line with current legislation, are in place; and

- provide a designated Child Protection Officer.

The Home School will:

- obtain written parental permission for their son/daughter to participate in all aspects of the programme and retain these in the home centre;

- ensure that appropriate child protection and equality policies, in-line with current legislation, are in place;

- ensure that the pastoral care systems of their school are accessible to pupils accessing courses via other providers;

- ensure 'Use of Images' permission forms are accurate and current; and

- provide relevant personal information if a pupil has a medical or behavioural need which may impact on their participation in the programme.

10   Monitoring of attendance

The Learning Provider will:

- check and record pupils' attendance on arrival;

- email attendance registers to all participating schools following registration and at designated times throughout the day; and

- provide suitable arrangements for the management of student illness during the day.

The Home School will:

- notify the Learning Provider in advance of any pupil absences for other planned school activities and advise of any discrepancies between agreed pupils in attendance and actual pupils attending; and

- monitor the attendance registers and take appropriate disciplinary action in the event of students failing to attend.

11 Disciplinary Procedure

Students will adhere to the rules, expected behaviour, dress code and disciplinary procedures of the learning provider while in their care.

The Learning Provider will:

- manage all issues relating to general behaviour and will notify the home school of an issue which would initiate disciplinary action under the disciplinary procedures of the learning provider for further action.

The Home School will:

- follow through the standard disciplinary procedure and notify the learning provider of the outcome.

12 Pupil Supervision

The Learning Provider will:

- supervise pupils whilst they are engaged in learning activities agreed with the home school;

- provide adequate supervisory arrangements for all other times; and

- in the event of accident or illness, the learning provider will inform the home school immediately and complete an accident/incident report form (a copy of which is to be sent to the home school).

The Home School(s) will:

• take responsibility for any incidents or unacceptable events that occur whilst the pupils are on the Providers property; and

• upon any information relating to an illness or accident, the home school will advise on the action to be taken thereafter in accordance with its policy.

13   Monitoring of achievement and feedback

The Learning Provider will:

• liaise regularly with the Home School(s) to ensure that all students are completing on-going course requirements.

The Home School will:

• ensure that their students are meeting the course requirements and deadlines; and

• inform the Learning Provider of student progress.

14   Quality Assurance

The Learning Provider will:

• ensure that a member of staff is identified to manage the process of quality assurance;

• organise meetings to review progress on a termly basis having regard to key dates relating to internal verification or assessment deadlines;

• provide formal feedback on achievements to meet the requirements of school reporting procedures; and

• carry out an annual review and evaluation of all courses provided, focusing on: attendance levels, achievement of target qualification/level(s), pupil satisfaction and lecturer/teacher feedback.

The Home School will:

- provide projected grades for each student prior to the commencement of the course;

- provide relevant academic information including Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and KS3 results, as appropriate;

- provide a comparison of projected grades, grades achieved in EF course and grades achieved in other courses; and

- carry out an annual review and evaluation of all courses, focussing on the following outcomes: qualifications attained; pupil satisfaction. parent/Coordinator feedback; and any other school comment.

The _____ Learning Community Planning and Review Committee will review all outcomes.

15   Insurance

The Learning Provider will:

- ensure that relevant indemnity is in place for pupils whilst on their premises or undertaking any activities directly related to their programmes of study.

16   Transport

The Home School will:

- co-ordinate transportation required to facilitate collaboration; and

- determine responsibility for pupils taking their own cars.

17   CEIAG

The Learning Provider will:

- offer appropriate support for CEIAG as requested by the home school.

The Home School will:

- offer appropriate support for CEIAG.

18 Health and Safety

The Learning Provider will:

- take responsibility for ensuring pupils use personal protective equipment (PPE) and for the induction of pupils through a health and safety programme.

Appendix 2

Exemplar Mentoring Proforma

The same proforma should be used by all schools within a partnership.

[Insert ALC logo, and the two school crests]

Student Name: Date:

Year: Meeting Number:

Home school:

Entitlement Framework Co-ordinator in home school:

***Host school:

Entitlement Framework Co-ordinator in host school:

Subject taught in host school:

Teacher in the host school:

Does this student have an IEP/any SEN? (Please insert Yes/No) ┌─────────┐
                                                               └─────────┘

If yes, please give details

………
………
……

***What progress do you consider yourself to be making in your collaborative subject?

………
………
………
………
………………………………………………………………………………………………

Recent Assessment Result(s):   ┌────────────────────────────────────┐
                                    │   │
(Include marks and grades)   │   │
                                    └────────────────────────────────────┘

How do you find class work for this subject?

....
....
....
....
....

How do you find homeworks for this subject?

....
....
....
....
....

Contents of your Running Log of Thoughts and Feelings about class-related activities:

....
....
....
....
....
....

Any additional queries/concerns raised by the classroom teacher?

....
....
....
....
....
....

Target Mark and Grade in next Assessment:

What are you going to do to ensure you meet these targets?

....
....
....
....
....
....

Anything the teacher-mentor is going to do as a result of this meeting:

……

……

……

……

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Student
Signature:……

Teacher-Mentor
Signature:……

Appendix 3

Exemplar Tracking Sheet

Review Date:							
Student Name	**Home School**	**Course Provider**	**Subject & Level**	**Projected Grade**	**% Attendance**	**Grade to Date**	**On Target? (yes/no + action)**
John Smith	Wilson Prep	Valley Integrated	GCSE Geog	B	95	C	Yes
Sue Small	Wilson Prep	Valley Integrated	GCSE Geog	A	40	D	No – Report to head and parents

Appendix 4

Exemplar Record of Progress

Subject:	Geog					Year:	2013		
Teacher:	Mr. Kirkland					Assessment:	March Assessment		

Student Name	Baseline Grade	Target Grade	Grade Achieved	%	Class Average	Above Target	On Target	Below Target	Additional Comments

Appendix 5

Exemplar Retention & Achievement Record

ALC:						Year:	2013			
Academic Year:						**Assessment:**	March			
Date/Level of Provision:							Assessment			

Home School	**Provider**	**Course Title**	**# Students Enrolled**	**# Students Completed**	**% Completed/ Enrolled**	**# Students Achieved A*–C**	**# Students Achieved A*–E**	**% Enrolled Achieved A*–C**	**% Enrolled Achieved A*–E**

Comments on Targeted Achievement:

Explanatory notes

Number of students enrolled = students enrolled at the date of the census.

Course title should indicate year group.

Achievement for BTEC levels 2 D*, D , M and P should be equated to grades A – C at GCSE levels.

Occupational Studies level 2 Pass should be equated to GCSE A* to C and Level 1 to D to G.

Appendix 6

Case Study: Deepening Learning in Ballynahinch

As part of the Ballynahinch Area Learning Community, The High School Ballynahinch & St Colman's High School agreed to run a series of collaborative classes in Child Care and Health and Social Care. The initial aim of the collaboration was to increase each schools' provision of subjects as part of the Entitlement Framework and increase the career pathways available for pupils in each school.

Both Schools have a long tradition within Ballynahinch for serving each of the two communities. The High School Ballynahinch is a controlled school with a tradition of catering to the Protestant Community, whereas St Colman's High School is a maintained school, which traditionally caters for the Catholic Community. However what united the two schools was a willingness to reach out to each other and develop stronger educational links for the benefits of their pupils.

Early assumptions and discoveries

When the two schools began their collaborative classes, they believed the issues that needed to be considered were practical in nature, for example arranging transport between schools, timetabling and preparation of reports for pupils of a different school. However, they soon began to realise that many more issues would need to be considered beyond just logistics.

In the initial stages, some pupils expressed concerns about entering the other school and feeling uneasy moving through the school in a different uniform. They talked about how they were unsure of where to go when in the new school. In the classroom, they didn't know where to sit and generally felt uneasy, nervous and unsettled. Also, teachers felt they needed time to familiarise themselves with the link school's Pastoral Care system and their approach to issues concerning attendance and punctuality.

Teachers also admitted that they thought collaboration was about getting pupils seated and down to work. There was a focus on the subject and not on the pupil. No real consideration was given to the emotional and social needs of the pupils or how nervous they may have been. The teachers soon realised that to create a more inclusive learning environment, they needed to implement a different approach. They needed to put the pupil's concerns, hopes and expectations at the heart of the collaborative experience and provided all pupils a chance to develop meaningful relationships built on trust and respect.

To develop their new programme, they enlisted the help of the Sharing Classrooms: Deepening Learning project team. Initially the project manager and lead facilitator consulted with the schools to agree their specific development interests and needs. Together they agreed and source a bespoke programme of training and support for the partnering schools.

Ballynahinch's Training and Support Programme

Step 1 – Teacher Training

A teacher from each of the schools attended three days of training, which focused on, amongst other things, whole-school and group preparations to support shared classrooms, and designing and facilitating induction.

Step 2 – Action Planning Session

A teacher from each school attended an action-planning day with a SCDL facilitator. The day focused on developing an induction programme ranging from introductory sessions for learners in each school to a joint parent information evening.

Step 3 – Individual School Introduction Sessions

Facilitated workshops with the learners were held in each school. These directly addressed their hopes, fears and expectations. These sessions were intended to prepare them for the joint session that would bring them together with learners from the partner school.

Step 4 –Shared Classrooms Induction Day

Held in Ballynahinch Market Place, a neutral venue, learners from both schools came together for the first time. During the session they talked about their hopes and fears for the collaboration and worked on building relationships and developing a sense of teamwork.

Step 5 – General Whole-School Awareness Sessions

The teachers involved took assembly, explaining to the whole school why learners from another school are here and what they could do to make the visitors feel welcome.

Step 6 – Parent Information Session

Learner's parents who were involved in the collaboration were invited to an evening, again in a neutral venue. At the event, they were informed about the induction process and were given the opportunity to discuss their own hopes and concerns.

Step 7 – Joint Teacher Training Session

Teachers and classroom assistants from each school came together to learn about effective partnership working. During the day, they worked on building relationships, confronting and discussing concerns about collaborative working at the teacher level, and considered the key principles of effective partnership working. They then spent time in departments discussing ways of working more closely together.

Successes

Evaluation demonstrated that due to the induction programme, learners developed closer relationships and had higher levels of engagement during lessons and during group work in particular, with all learners feeling generally more at ease within the shared classroom. The teachers observed learners openly mixing with each other, sharing ideas and providing each other with support and encouragement. They felt learners were happier and more settled, with some even expressing an interest in learning more about each other's cultural and religious backgrounds.

"Relationships in the class are clearly better since we introduced a structured induction programme. Pupils know each other better, they know each others names and they interact more with each other. They will chat and are much more willing to share ideas on issues in class."

Angela Casey, Teacher
The High School Ballynahinch.

"On a class outing, pupils from each school sat together and chatted in their different uniforms, so much so that a member of the public in passing commented that we needed more of this in society."

Mary Joyce, Teacher
St Colman's High School, Ballynahinch

Future Plans

Building on these successes the teachers have already planned more joint sessions between the learners, teachers and parents – to continue building relationships but also to encourage everyone to explore deeper issues around cultural and religious differences and similarities. Also the two main teachers are enrolled for one of the project's accreditation awards: The Certificate in Exploring Skills in SCDL.

The two schools now have a clearer understanding that effective collaboration is not just about policies and procedures; it's about bringing people closer together. They now recognise that they can only achieve this by removing the social, emotional and cultural barriers that separate them.

Both schools are now looking to their future collaborative work with a greater level of understanding and sense of optimism.

Appendix 7

Anti-bias Methods

You can avoid unintentional bias by:

- not highlighting a particular set of facts or evidence in a way that gives it greater importance than other equally relevant information;

- actively encouraging learners to offer alternative or contradictory interpretations of information;

- making clear that you are not the sole authority on matters of fact or opinion;

- helping learners to distinguish opinions and value judgements from facts;

- opening up opportunities for all learners to contribute their views to a discussion, and not giving more favourable attention to some than to others;

- challenging any consensus of opinion that emerges too easily;

- involving parents in a balanced combination of social and formal events; and

- valuing difference and its importance in avoiding cultural bias.

Carrying out an audit of the school environment may highlight areas that need to be reviewed in order to convey an anti-bias approach. Policies, practices, displays, books, equipment and visitors are all possible areas for review.

Appendix 8

Consulting With Learners

Don't measure the success of your collaboration merely by means of assessment results. Also take into account the learners' impressions and levels of satisfaction. This programme was used to evaluate the experiences and opinions of a group of learners from seven different schools. A summary of their responses is available from bkells@nicie.org.uk

9.30am	**Arrival/Welcome/Introduction**
9.45am	**Icebreakers**
10.15am	**Graffiti Wall (Whole Group Creative Exercise)**

- What is it like being in a classroom with pupils from other schools?

10.45am   Discussion Groups 1 (small mixed groups of 5/6)

- What are the advantages of pupils from different schools coming together in shared classrooms?

- What are the disadvantages of pupils from different schools coming together in shared classrooms?

11.15am   Opinion Wall (Whole Group Creative Exercise)

- How much do you know about why different schools are working together?

- How comfortable do you feel when people from a different school are in the same classroom?

- How comfortable do you feel when going into another school for a shared class?

- How welcome do you feel when going into another school for a shared class?

- How welcome do you make pupils from other schools visiting your school for a shared class?

- How much sharing with other local schools would you like to see happening in the future?

11.30am   **Break**

11.45am   **Discussion Groups 2 (small mixed groups of 5/6)**

- What helps learning in shared classrooms?

- What hinders learning in shared classrooms?

- How could shared classrooms be improved?

12.15pm   **Agree or Disagree Lines (Whole Group Exercise)**

In addition to the curriculum:

- When pupils from different schools are in the same class together, we build relationships with people from different backgrounds.

- When pupils from different schools are in the same class together, we learn about each other's cultures and traditions.

- When pupils from different schools are in the same class together, it breaks down barriers between people from different religious backgrounds.

- When pupils from different schools are in the same class together improve relationships between different communities

12.45pm   **Evaluation of the Focus Group/Next Steps**

1.00pm   **Lunch**

Appendix 9

Shared-Class Teacher Reporting Proforma

TO (Entitlement Framework Co-ordinator):

FROM (Teacher name):

DATE:

Year and Subject of Shared Class:

General comments on the academic progress of the class

Individual learners or issues causing concern (regarding academic progress)

General comments on the behaviour and effort of the class

Individual learners or issues causing concern (regarding behaviour and effort)

General comments on the attitudes/relationships within class

Individual learners or issues causing concern (regarding attitudes/relationships within the class)

Concerns about any particular learners' attendance or punctuality

Any other concerns or thoughts for the future

Successes of the class to date

Appendix 10

Examples of Restorative Language

A restorative approach seeks to make, maintain and repair relationships. Strategies are used to resolve conflict in a way that offers support to all parties involved and builds skills along the way. Key to this is the language used to draw out what occurred and why. The focus is not on who's right and who's wrong, who's the victim and who's to blame, but rather why each party felt the way they did, how their actions affected others, how they were affected, and what they will agree to do to remedy the situation and avoid a repeat of it in future.

Restorative approaches work best when they are part of a whole school approach taking into consideration the values and culture of a school.

Here are some examples of questions you can use to help all parties understand:

- why they and others acted or spoke as they did; and
- how to move towards resolution.

Restorative Questions

- What happened?
- What were you feeling / thinking at the time?
- What do you think / feel about it now?
- Who has been affected by what has happened?
- In what way?
- What impact has this incident had on you and on others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Appendix 11

Planning Template for Shared Educational Trip

Name of schools:	
Start Date of project	
End Date of project:	
Total Cost of project	

Activity description
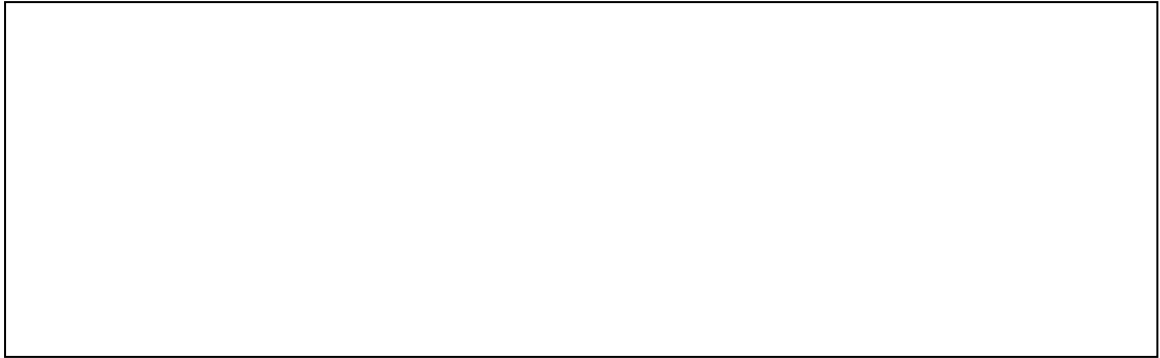
Aims

Objectives

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Intended outcomes

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How it links to the schools' sharing classrooms collaboration

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Intended impact/legacy