

Key Stage 1 Years 3 & 4

# An Introduction to the Ideas for Connecting Learning (ICLs)



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As part of its remit the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has developed support materials to assist teachers in the implementation of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. The Ideas for Connecting Learning (ICLs) form part of these resources.



## What are the ICLs?

The ICLs provide a range of active learning experiences that assist teachers in making the Northern Ireland Curriculum come alive. They are a means of developing the overall aim and objectives of the curriculum and the principles that underpin it: Connected Learning, Cross-Curricular Skills Development and Assessment for Learning. A selection of ICLs are available for Years 4 & 5, 5 & 6 and 6 & 7.

These ICLs have been developed for Years 3 & 4. They support teachers by:

- setting out a topic to cover four to six weeks of learning and teaching;
- focusing on one aspect of the overall revised curriculum objective;
- providing opportunities for assessment;
- providing opportunities for developing children's Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities;
- setting out a range of active learning activities linked to the curriculum objective; and
- connecting learning across the Areas of Learning.

## Who developed the ICLs?

The materials were developed by CCEA and written by practising teachers from across all five Education and Library Boards and officers from a range of educational partners. To enhance and broaden the ideas within the ICLs, a variety of external agencies contributed to their development. Some schools were invited to trial the materials which provided invaluable feedback to CCEA throughout the process.

## Why were the ICLs developed?

The ICLs were developed to support teachers with the implementation of a more flexible curriculum. The aim was to highlight how the Areas of Learning within the curriculum can be connected through successful topic work. The ICLs provide a wide range of suggested learning intentions, activities and resources that could help teachers plan topics that were relevant to the needs, interests and abilities of children. Whilst they provide useful suggestions they also stress the importance of incorporating children's ideas. These can be used as starting points or for pursuing a topic in more depth.

## How will the ICLs help me?

They provide a selection of ideas that can be connected across the curriculum. Choice has been built in by offering a variety of potential pathways that you may wish to take when developing a topic. The ICLs identify possible learning intentions and provide active learning experiences and strategies that are all closely linked. The materials illustrate how the skills of Communication, Using Mathematics, Using ICT and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities can be incorporated into a topic. In addition, the ICLs list a number of useful resources that can support and enhance learning.

## Does our school have to use all of the ICLs?

No, select only appropriate topics and those that are relevant to the needs and interests of the children in your class. The ICLs not only provide suggested contexts, but also illustrate the key principles underpinning the Northern Ireland Curriculum. These can be easily transferred to any topic you choose to explore, for instance, one particular teacher who trialled the ICLs selected ideas from two ICLs and merged them into a new topic generated from the children's interests.

## Do I have to cover ALL the content in the ICL?

No, the ICLs should be viewed as a menu of suggested learning activities designed to help you connect learning across the curriculum. There is no requirement to cover all or any of the content. Indeed, there are so many learning activities within the ICLs, it would be impossible to cover everything!

## How do I choose an ICL?

You, the teacher, know best the interests of your class. Use this knowledge to inform your choice of topic. If you or the children are not genuinely interested in the topic, effective learning and teaching will be hindered.

# How to use the 'Ideas for Connecting Learning' (ICLs)

## STEP 1: SCAN THE ICLs

When you have read these guidelines, scan the ICLs. This will give you an overview of the topics available. Select an ICL that's best suited to the interests and learning needs of your children. The ICL provides a wide range of ideas for investigating each topic across the Areas of Learning. You may at this stage want to select and highlight the aspects that you feel would be appropriate to explore with your class.

## STEP 2: DECIDE ON YOUR LEARNING INTENTIONS

Learning intentions are central to the content of each Area of Learning. Identify the learning that you might want to develop through the topic. You may want to adjust these to suit the learning needs of your children.

## STEP 3: CARRY OUT AN INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

This will give you a good insight into what the children already know about the topic and what attracts their attention, helping you decide together which aspects to explore in more detail.

## STEP 4: EMBRACE THE FLEXIBLE NATURE OF THE ICLs

You can select the aspects that you want to use, delete those that you do not want to use, expand on areas or add alternatives. Remember to involve the children in the planning for the learning. They sometimes have the best ideas!

## STEP 5: PLAN WHEN, WHAT AND HOW YOU WILL ASSESS

It can really help children to know what is expected of them if you involve them in creating agreed success criteria. This means that you agree together in advance the focus and nature of the assessment, which in turn depends on which of your learning intentions you want to emphasise at any given time. It can also help children improve on their learning if your feedback tells them where they have succeeded and what they need to focus on in order to improve their work.

## STEP 6: DECIDE WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO RECORD AND REPORT

To keep your work manageable you may decide to record significant observations in relation to progression in skills and knowledge. Over time this will inform future planning and help you make judgements about what you need to pass on to colleagues, parents and children. Ask yourself - 'What important observations do I record in order to build a holistic picture of the child?'



Below outlines the range of ICLs for Key Stages 1 and 2.

<p><b>Years 3 &amp; 4</b></p>	<p>School's Cool Houses and Homes Safe and Sound Let's Celebrate Bugs, Birds and Beasts Whatever the Weather</p>
<p><b>Years 4 &amp; 5</b></p>	<p>Journeys Mighty Me Once Upon A Time Life in the Recent Past</p>
<p><b>Years 5 &amp; 6</b></p>	<p>World in Motion The Blue Planet A Journey Through the Year Where I Live</p>
<p><b>Years 6 &amp; 7</b></p>	<p>Wonderful World Eco-Warriors Needs and Wants Thinking Through the Past In the News Around the World</p>

