

Key Stage 2 Years 6 & 7

An Introduction to the Ideas for Connecting Learning (ICLs)



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

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 Revised 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 revised 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 is available for Years 4 & 5 and 5 & 6, and more are on the way for Years 3 & 4.

In addition, four Thematic Units have been developed for Years 6 & 7. These 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;
- 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 revised Northern Ireland Curriculum as mentioned above. 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 the content, in fact you do not have to cover any of it if you wish. 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 really 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.

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

Case Studies

During 2007 a number of schools took part in a trial of the Year 6 & 7 ICLs. One of the intended outcomes of the trial was to ensure that a number of case studies were developed in order to share good practice across Northern Ireland. The case studies shown here were written by the teachers involved in the trial. They illustrate how the pilot schools adapted the ICLs in order to make best use of existing resources in their school and local area. They show how teachers combined their own ideas with those from the ICLs to create topics that were motivating and which catered for the particular interests, needs and abilities of the children in their class.

Glenwood Primary School, Belfast

Lough View Integrated Primary School, Belfast

St Mary's Primary School, Dunsford

St. Teresa's Primary School, Belfast

St. John's Primary School, Moy

St. Joseph's Primary School, Tyrella

Glenwood Primary School, Belfast

Background

Glenwood Primary School is a large inner city school in Belfast and has been involved in a large variety of curriculum initiatives including: the Enriched Curriculum, Digital Curriculum, Linguistic Phonics, Comet Project, ICT Accreditation, Assessment for Learning, Primary Movement and Pupil Profile. At the time of this pilot the pupil numbers were 457.

ICL

We chose 'Eco-Warriors' as we felt that we could engage the children's interest in this area. We decided to focus in on the theme of 'The Rainforest' with the intention that the children would guide and develop their own learning as well as finding this a stimulating theme to create an enterprise initiative.

Planning

We decided to plan the first two weeks as a stimulus for the children. Activities covered all areas of the curriculum including PE. Only the first two weeks were planned, as it was intended that these would produce a starting point for the children to take an active part in the planning process.

Planning for the initial two weeks did not take long. The planning for the entire ICL was on one manageable page and it was simple to go back and add planning for the other four weeks as the children developed their own learning intentions, wants and needs.

Weekly plans were also created so that we, the teachers, could focus on home learning, differentiation and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities. This preparation was vital to our success.

Starting points

As already stated the first two weeks were planned out for the children as a stimulus for the whole project. We began with a photo/sound PowerPoint presentation and then gave the children an opportunity to 'think, pair, and share' in small groups, discussing areas that they would like to learn more about based upon the theme. We also took the children on a trip to the Botanic Gardens and Tropical Ravine where the children were able to experience a 'rainforest'.

By the end of the fortnight the children had started to discover that the destruction of the rainforest was a global problem. They carried out a survey of parents and friends and concluded that they wanted to raise some money. They decided who they were going to donate money to and set out the activities they were going to organise to raise the money. They also decided that they wanted to tell all the children in Key Stage 2 and parents about their findings in the form of an assembly.

Development

In the last four weeks of the ICL we split our time equally between focusing upon the children's own learning about the rainforest and organising the Enterprise.

The children chose to learn about animals of the rainforest, its native people (and how the destruction of the forest affects them), the big companies who are pushing for more land in the Amazon basin and the global effects of the rainforest destruction. The children also had an opportunity to taste and 'score' a variety of tropical fruits. They learned in a variety of ways including research using books and internet, hands-on experience, video, debating, news reports, fact finding, writing letters and discussions at home.

The children organised the Enterprise by dividing themselves into groups: - management, finance, advertising and publicity and workforce. Each group took their responsibility very seriously. The project culminated in a morning of selling toast and scones, a day-long funfair in the hall, a colouring competition and a short factual assembly complete with a drum performance and Haka dance! Although this sounds complicated, it all ran very smoothly as the children were well prepared and it cost very little as the publicity group kept reminding everyone, 'We're doing this for the rainforest not to win a prize!' We raised nearly £500, which we donated to the World Wildlife Fund.

Evaluation

Teachers

- Planning time was very beneficial as it allowed us to focus upon developing ideas that ensured children had opportunities to display their Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities, develop their Mutual Understanding and create their own Enterprise in a totally cross-curricular theme.

- We enjoyed watching the children grow in confidence and the different roles they naturally demonstrated. We used a variety of Assessment for Learning techniques to aid the children's development and to encourage progress.

Children

- The children really enjoyed the freedom of the ICL, the decision-making and working as a team for the final goal.
- They enjoyed seeing the results of their labours and were delighted with the amount of money raised.
- They were pleased to be able to use their animal research to support work they were doing as part of the CCEA ICT Accreditation Scheme.
- Both classes enjoyed all the learning tasks and activities set for them often not realizing that learning had taken place.

Parents

- The parents were pleased to be involved from the outset of the ICL as we sent a letter home explaining what would be happening during the following six weeks and encouraged them to participate as much as they were able.
- Children were delighted to involve their parents in homework, either by answering a questionnaire or by responding to their child's explanations of rainforest destruction. The comments from home were always positive and boosted confidence.
- The parents were invited to watch the assembly and the turnout was very encouraging. As teachers, we had positive feedback from parents saying how much they had learnt from their children and how worthwhile the ICL had been.

Lough View Integrated Primary School, Belfast

Background

Lough View Integrated Primary School is located in Castlereagh, Belfast and has been involved in numerous curriculum initiatives including Fundamental Movement Skills and the Year 5 ICLs. They are also working with partner schools to bring a group of South African children to Northern Ireland. Lough View is currently working towards gaining the British Dyslexia Association – Dyslexic Friendly School kitemark and promotes a 'Healthy Body, Healthy Mind' approach. At the time of this pilot the pupil numbers were 450.

ICL

We chose the ICL 'Needs and Wants' for two reasons. Firstly, Lough View was hosting a group of South African children at the end of June and it was felt that such an ICL would not only help to increase their awareness of their own needs and wants but would also help them understand the needs and wants of other children from a range of different countries. Secondly, it was felt that the enterprise approach provided an opportunity to develop the skills and capabilities required to work with others in a real context.

Planning

We created activities based on topics suggested and we expanded on them to ensure that all areas of the curriculum were covered. We thought carefully about skills we wanted our pupils to learn and the capabilities we would like them to develop throughout this ICL. Once we were clear on these we began planning. The main learning intentions were already stated in the ICL. The planning document provided was really useful as we could clearly see what we had done and where we wanted to go. We also created weekly plans which included differentiated home-link activities. These plans helped us to focus on the skills and capabilities that we wanted our children to achieve. Detailed planning was crucial to the success of the ICL.

Starting points

As our main starting point we asked the children to discuss and define what they thought the terms 'NEEDS' and 'WANTS' meant. They defined both and provided examples. They were able to identify that humans had a range of basic needs that are necessary for survival. They were encouraged to use a planning board and come up with a range of questions that they would like answered based on

their understanding of 'needs' and 'wants'. The planning board and the discussion which accompanied it led to personal research at home, in the library and on the Internet with parental support. The children were very keen to link in with their South African school and so they decided to compare and contrast diet and exercise with that of their own. However, they were aware that many of these children would be from very disadvantaged areas and so they decided to investigate their own diets but include food which grows or is made in countries such as South Africa.

Development

We focused on three main areas:

1. Comparing and contrasting the life of a Year 7 child in Northern Ireland with that of a young person in Africa.
2. Investigation of diet. We investigated breakfasts throughout the world and compared and contrasted what children eat in seven different countries.
3. The setting up of a breakfast club in Lough View – children nicknamed it 'Lick your L.I.P.S' as each letter of LIPS stands for the initial letter of Lough View Integrated Primary School.

We developed areas one and two by linking The World Around Us, literacy, RE and circle time. We discussed evidence obtained through the use of videos and we also set up a video conference link with South African teachers who will be visiting Northern Ireland. It actually surprised us how little the children initially knew about their chosen area but this really helped develop their curiosity and personal research skills.

The children then decided that they would set up and run a breakfast club – points of which go towards shared activity between themselves and the South African children. They identified the key skills required to ensure that they worked well together and wrote up an agreed charter for their breakfast club. They then investigated roles within a company; a parent came in to discuss the roles within his business. The children created a job vacancy board then held mock interviews for each position available.

The children's skills in ICT were greatly improved through use of spreadsheets, advertising campaigns and menus created. The class completed a price comparison task to ensure that they purchased at the lowest price possible to ensure a good profit margin.

We were impressed by the children's confidence and willingness to complete the tasks set and also their desire to ensure that everyone in their team was working to their full potential.

Evaluation

Teachers

- Planning days were of great benefit.
- The Assessment for Learning techniques used were fundamental to teaching the skills and capabilities.
- The range of activities allowed the children's ideas to be followed through.

Children

- LOVED taking part in the ICL – they have shown an increased awareness of what industry is like to work in.
- Their confidence has greatly increased too because of the profit they made.
- They are willing to do this type of activity again!

Parental Involvement

- Parents have commented on children's awareness of offers and shopping around for the best deal.
- Parents welcomed projects linked to the breakfast club and encouraged children to carry out research in shops and within their own homes.
- Overall participation in this pilot provided us with a very enjoyable and worthwhile learning experience. Next year we hope to plan a Garden Centre Company which sells plants etc.

St Mary's Primary School, Dunsford

Background

St Mary's Primary School is a small rural school located in Dunsford, Co Down and has been involved in numerous curriculum initiatives including the Enriched Curriculum Pilot, the Years 3, 4 & 5 ICL Pilot and the Assessment for Learning Pilot. At the time of writing, the pupil numbers were 86.

ICL

I chose the ICL 'Eco Warriors' because the issues it addresses are very topical and appear regularly in the media, suggesting that pupils would have some prior knowledge. I feel that these issues are very important in our everyday lives. By addressing these issues in school, we are promoting the objectives of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum by assisting children to be able to make positive and informed decisions now and in the future.

Planning

As Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities are central components of the curriculum, I decided to focus on 'Working with others' and 'Being Creative'. Working with others encourages children to develop their skills of collaborating, sharing and co-operating whilst working as part of a group. Being creative encourages the children to seek out questions to explore, problem solve and make ideas real by experimenting with different designs, acts and outcomes.

Assessment for Learning (AfL) was again used as a tool to evaluate the learning process. Children were encouraged to use various methods of peer and self-evaluation to ascertain the degree to which learning intentions had been achieved.

Learning intentions were clearly outlined using a WALT board at the start of each session and children's input was used to derive appropriate success criteria. The ICLs did provide learning intentions but we adapted these for our own specific needs when planning.

Starting Points

At a very early stage we devised some key questions, which could be answered over the six-week period.

What is an eco-warrior?

How can we become eco-warriors?

Do we always appreciate our environment?

The use of the planning board gave the children an opportunity to share their ideas and have an input into their learning. We put the key questions onto our planning board, for example, *What we know? What we want to find out? What we need? How can we find out more? How are we going to arrange our classroom? How will we show our learning?* It was important at this stage to guide the children's ideas and make the link between what I, as their teacher, wanted from the ICL and what they wanted to find out.

Development

We began the ICL with a 'thought shower'. This allowed me to assess the children's knowledge and plan my route through the ICL. I used a range of questioning both open and closed to extract information. I discovered that the children were aware of recycling as it was common practice in many homes and is a regular feature in local media.

Throughout the Eco-Warrior ICL, the planning board was used to monitor progress and celebrate success. Whilst keeping children on task. We initially focused on the rainforest theme of the ICL. Over the six week period we studied what life is like in the rainforest, its location, climate and physical features. The children designed warrior masks and created a rainforest environment, including a wall hanging and rainforest sounds. This was an inspirational piece of work and captured the interest of children throughout the school. We then explored the issue of deforestation leading to global warming. We encouraged the children to investigate at home, in the library and using the Internet. The children were able to reflect and comment on how this will affect their lives in the future.

As we were involved in the Enterprise Approach to the ICL we decided upon a campaign focusing on composting. When organising our campaign, the children decided on what roles and responsibilities there needed to be. Our campaign included designing posters, leaflets and slideshows on the benefits of composting within our school. Children had to work together and compromise when important group decisions were made on things such as layout, slogans and pictures.

We arranged a 'Composting Work Shop' with Janet McIlvenna, Environmental Officer from Down District Council. This was a fantastic chance for the children to see how compost is made. Each class within the school now adds to the compost bin daily.

We visited the Drumnakelly landfill site and the recycling centre in Castlewellan. The children were shocked by how dumping household rubbish has such a disastrous impact on our environment. The smell was horrendous! The key message from our visit to the recycling centre was – 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle' and the importance of protecting our environment for future generations.

Our campaign proved very enjoyable for all concerned (and the children's favourite place at break-time was around the compost bin!).

By establishing a non-intrusive environment, the children felt comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas with classmates. This environment was established by reinforcing the classroom rules, which include respect for others, listening and sharing.

I feel the overall objectives of the ICL have been met. However, on evaluation I feel some improvements could be made to enhance children's learning experiences. Although the 'campaign' to promote the generation of homemade compost was successful, I would try to incorporate a trade such as selling potted plants using the compost that had been produced.

St. Teresa's Primary School, Belfast

Background

St. Teresa's Primary School is a large inner city school in Belfast and has been involved in a large variety of curriculum initiatives including piloting the Enterprise Story Sack in Year 4. At the time of this pilot, the pupil numbers were 448.

ICL

The ICL selected was 'In The News'. The reason for this was because the Year 6 class had already been involved in a reading project linked to the Irish News and it was felt that this ICL would complement the work already going on. The school is also situated in close proximity to the main office of a local newspaper and this provided an opportunity for a work place visit.

Planning

Once the topic had been agreed with the class the children were then split into groups and a 'Stick Debate'* was used to let children discuss their ideas, plan how they wanted to proceed with the project and what they wanted to learn. We used a Post-it collection* to collate the information from each group. A process called 'The Ideas Funnel'* was then used to prioritise areas that the children considered to be of most relevance or interest. Children's ideas were displayed on a large KWL* grid. The intention being to refer to this grid as the project developed.

Acting as facilitator, I used the grid to design a six week plan in which activities were made explicit under the headings of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. Opportunities for developing Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities were highlighted. I also identified gaps and these were addressed within the plan. Learning intentions were later shared, discussed and agreed with the class.

Starting Points

The starting point was to discuss the question 'What does In the News really mean?' and 'How is news reported?'. From this, the children identified the names of all the newspapers that they were aware of and sorted these into local and national. They also looked at newspapers to identify the main features, look at headlines, advertisements and the different sections that each paper had. In groups, the children decided to carry out research into the different jobs involved in the production of a newspaper. One group wanted to find out about how printing had changed over the last one hundred years. Another group wanted to see how communication had changed and

how this had an impact on how news was reported. As a class, the pupils decided to arrange a visit to the local newspaper where it was hoped they would be able to acquire the relevant information for their group project. A questionnaire was prepared by the pupils in advance and forwarded to the newspaper.

Development

Following the visit to the local newspaper it was decided that the class would look in more detail at how advertisements were presented within the newspaper and the use of persuasive language. The children gathered a variety of ads, focusing on company logos, catch phrases and slogans. They had great fun attempting to identify a range of logos and slogans. The children then designed their own advertisements to accompany a made-up product of their choice. They also worked in groups to plan, write and perform their own advertisements, which they then performed for the other groups within the class.

As the class wanted to include the element of trade in their enterprise. As it was close to St. Patrick's Day they decided it would be a good idea to sell shamrocks to the staff, pupils and parents and so the 'Super Sonic Shamrock Company' was born. Their first problem was how to raise the money to get started. They did this by selling shares to parents and relatives. They then sourced a supplier by contacting a local florist that was owned by a parent of a pupil in another class. The children then designed posters, flyers and wrote sales pitches, which they presented to the other classes. Throughout the course of their venture, the children kept detailed records of sales, costs, income and profits, which formed the basis of the pupils' work on data-handling, money, averages and problem-solving. In addition to this, the children had the opportunity to use a range of ICT resources to record and present their work.

The Super Sonic Shamrock Company sold in excess of 600 pots of shamrock and made a profit of over £300. After considering their social responsibility, the children decided that they wanted to purchase lunchtime play equipment for each class. Shareholders were rewarded with a 20% dividend on their initial investment.

Throughout the six-week topic, the children were able to refer to the planning board, which allowed them to plan ahead and set targets. It also gave the children the opportunity to discuss their work with their peers and to think about what was going well and what they were finding difficult.

To conclude, the children were asked to reflect on their overall learning. They worked in groups to produce a slide show in which they described what they liked about the topic of 'In the News'. They described in detail the history of newspapers, the different jobs that are involved in producing a newspaper and the different sections that are contained within a paper. They stated that they really enjoyed working together - they didn't realise how much work they were doing because all the subjects were linked together and it was fun.

The children got a real sense of pride about their work and seemed highly motivated. This may well have been due to the fact that they felt they had control over their own learning. They had planned what they wanted to learn about and could see a real purpose for their learning.

Evaluation

Pupils were highly motivated to learn. They worked really well in groups and were very helpful and supportive of each other. They seemed to instinctively draw on each other's strengths.

If I were to teach this topic again, I would consider looking at how other media present the news, for example, television. I would also consider taking a more in-depth look at the different jobs people do within the media. I would like to consider the possibility of setting up a school newspaper and explore all the opportunities that this would present.

* See Active Learning and Teaching Methods booklet

St. John's Primary School, Moy, Case 1

Background

St. John's primary school is a small town school located in Moy, Co Tyrone. In addition to this pilot we were previously involved in the pilot of the 'Make it Real Game'. At the time of this pilot the pupil numbers were 192; 10% of which have English as a second language.

ICL

I chose the ICL 'Wonderful World' as I felt it was very relevant and close to the children's own personal experiences. The ICL provided children with opportunities to explore and observe the world in which they live, reflecting on how it is always changing.

Starting Points

I started with a focus on The World Around Us. I asked the children what they knew about the Seven Wonders of the World. We then discussed what we would like to know about them and where we could get information on them. We also talked about how we could present our findings to others in an informative and interesting way.

Planning

The main learning intentions were set out clearly in the ICL and success criteria was shared on a regular basis to ensure understanding. As the ICL required children to work in groups a lot of discussion was based around the skills necessary to create a successful working team. The children were excited and enthused. Each group was tasked with researching information about the Seven Wonders of the World. We located each wonder on a large world map, discovering how they were chosen.

Development

The groups were given access to art material and over a period of four weeks produced a variety of posters, leaflets, travel brochures and artwork displaying their findings. Some of the ideas produced were very creative, one group asked me to take a photo of them in front of a plant - they were pretending they visited the Hanging Gardens of Babylon! The children were clearly managing information and working cooperatively with others most of the time.

Due to the constraints of the Year 6 curriculum I would have liked to spend more time on this ICL. The natural progression would have been to select the Seven Wonders of the Moy area and district. I had intended organising a school trip to our local attractions of the Argory and Palace Stables. This would have led into a travel brochure for tourism in our area, linking with persuasive writing in Language and Literacy. The children could have used traditional and digital sources and resources to research these locations further. I would also have liked to consider researching the apple industry (from Palace Stables) where connections with healthy eating could be made (linking to Personal Development and Mutual Understanding).

Evaluation

The children thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the topic. They learnt how to work as a group fostering attitudes and dispositions of personal responsibility, tolerance, respect for other team members and their ideas. Children were clearly challenged and engaged due to the active and hands-on approach used throughout the ICL. It is essential to spend time planning with the pupils - I can see this being a worthwhile project.

St. John's Primary School, Moy, Case 2

Background

St. John's primary school is a small town school located in Moy, Co Tyrone. In addition to this pilot we were previously involved in the pilot of the 'Make it Real Game'. At the time of this pilot the pupil numbers were 192; 10% of which have English as a second language.

ICL

I chose the ICL 'Life in the Recent Past' as it supported what had already been planned for Year 7 and I knew that the children would be particularly interested in it.

Planning

This ICL was completed in the six weeks leading up to Easter. The bulk of the planning was already in place, so we thought about the skills that we wanted children to learn during the project. This involved creating a timeline and inserting activities to assist the learning.

Starting Points

The class had worked the previous term on the Irish Famine, they had read "Under the Hawthorn Tree" and were in the middle of "Fields of Home". We used these novels as a stimulus to discuss how life has changed over the last 150 years. We began to raise key questions and eventually decided to focus on "How health has changed?" We followed this up with a topic web and looked at each subject area, trying to find a link with healthy living and if the link was too tenuous, we forgot about it.

Development

Once the children understood what they were going to find out about, they discussed the idea of including the rest of the school and the wider community. They decided that they would begin a campaign to encourage other children to eat more fruit at playtime. A healthy eating policy already existed but we felt this was a good opportunity to revive interest, so they planned that at Easter they would host an assembly for the other six classes, with a fruit tasting session.

The ICL provided opportunities to develop learning across a range of areas within the curriculum. We linked Language & Literacy with The World Around Us and decided to look at famous Victorians and the legacy they left us. Our planning included biographies and autobiographies. This was a good link to research the life of Florence Nightingale.

A biography was produced, a group worked on a power point presentation and another group created a questionnaire. The class then used the BBC Victorian website to research other famous Victorians and present this to the rest of the class.

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding

We looked at a balanced diet as our main theme, then we extended this to include the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. Speakers from HAZ NI (Health Action Zone) were invited to come in and speak to the class. We also participated in the "Love for Life Day" and discussed issues relating to health. The class in groups planned a menu of fruit that they could provide for the other classes in the school. They also had to think how they could impart this knowledge to the other pupils and how to adapt this information for the different age groups.

ICT

The children developed their ICT skills by designing invitations and posters to invite the rest of the children to the assembly.

The Arts

'Life in the Recent Past' lends itself to fabulous art and design activities so the children completed an embroidery activity, some choosing to embroider fruit and healthy mottos. In addition to this, we looked at the work of William Morris, and they designed and produced their own wallpaper print. There were ample opportunities to produce posters and flyers advertising the healthy eating campaign.

Outside Agencies

This ICL provided opportunities for a range of class visits. The children decided that they would like to visit the Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh. They completed the Old World, emigration and New World experience. During the day we looked at the conditions and food which were available to children 150 years ago. The children really enjoyed the experience, this trip linked in very well with the 'Life in the Recent Past' ICL.

The pupils also completed a four week programme at the 'An Creagan' Centre in Kildress, where they explored how society was organised 4,500 years ago and compared it with life today. They also looked at the children's charter and compared the

St. Joseph's Primary School, Tyrella

rights of children now with the past. The core of the programme involved the children becoming aware that they are responsible citizens and developing respect for cultural differences in an ever-changing world.

Evaluation

The pupils really enjoyed the experience and felt that they were learning more. They were enthused by the topic and this created a good atmosphere in the classroom. The physical layout of the classroom was not conducive to group work but we managed to overcome this successfully. The most rewarding experience was the children's response to the trip to the Ulster American Folk Park at Omagh. They were really engaged in the learning and enjoyed sharing their knowledge with the staff. I feel that taking the learning out of the classroom made it real and totally worthwhile. The downside to this is the expense, but the ICL would not have been as good without the visits to the Ulster American Folk Park and the Creagan Centre.

Background

St Joseph's Primary School is a small rural school located in Tyrella, Co Down. This was our first involvement in a pilot study and it has been very enjoyable and beneficial. At the time of this pilot the pupil numbers were 75. There are four full-time teachers and one part-time. All classes are composite.

ICL

I chose the ICL 'Eco-Warriors' as it fits in with the topic of rainforests which I had already planned to use. The content of the ICL was appealing and it provided a wide range of cross-curricular ideas which I would not normally use when teaching this topic. The theme of 'Eco-Warriors' is a current topic of interest and as the future generation, it is important to make children aware of their effect on the environment and how they can look after it.

Planning

Planning involved the children throughout the whole process. We used a planning board which provided us with a focus and direction. The children were actively involved in identifying things that they wanted to learn about. We discussed what they wanted to find out, how they were going to find out, who could help them etc. Using this outline planning I identified a starting point and planned activities for the ICL topic for a six week period. I expanded some of the areas such as Science to add a little more depth to some activities. The learning intentions were identified using the ICL so the plan didn't take long to piece together. The format on one page was clear, although I soon discovered that it was a working plan and had to be amended on our journey through the rainforest.

Starting Points

As a starting point, I used a big book: 'Life in the Rainforest'. Using this as a stimulus for discussion we identified many different things we wanted to learn about. Using the Internet and atlases we identified the location and type of various rainforests and began our journey through the rainforest. There were excellent links to all Areas of Learning and the children's enthusiasm was apparent throughout the whole project.

Development

The ICL provided opportunities to develop learning across a range of areas within the curriculum.

Language and Literacy:

Persuasive writing - making posters to advertise our rainforest shop;
Creating an advert to sell their original smoothie (ICT);
Evaluating adverts;
Discussion writing- examining 2 sides of an argument;
Report writing- tribes of the rainforest; and
Writing in response to rainforest stories.

Mathematics and Numeracy:

Co-ordinates;
Weight - weighing the fruit for the smoothies;
Capacity- how many millilitres for 1 smoothie?
How many for 10?
Percentages – what % of each fruit is used per smoothie?
Reading temperatures-, rainfall- calculating average, minimum, maximum, range; Creating graphs;
Symmetry- butterflies; and
Money- working out the cost of smoothies, what is the cost of making them, profit, etc.

The World around Us:

Place:

Where are the Rainforests? Using atlases to locate rainforests and continents;
Plants and animals in the locality and comparing with those in the rainforest; and
Sorting materials from the rainforest.

Interdependence:

Plant growth- experiments and fair testing;
Food chains and food webs; and
Products from rainforest- fair trade.

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding:

Healthy Eating - fruit, balanced diet.

The Arts:

Music- listening to the sounds of the rainforest, composing rainforest sounds and music;
Tribal Masks – research tribal masks and make own using plaster of Paris; and
Rainforest collage.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities:

Working with Others - organising and setting up a rainforest shop; and

Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making - choosing the best option for the rainforest natives when they are faced with destruction of their homes, explaining options and weighing up pros and cons.

Evaluation

The pilot has provided an excellent opportunity for us to gain an insight into the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum. The project has benefited our whole staff and has motivated us in terms of changing our classroom practice and implementing new skills and capabilities into our daily teaching. I enjoyed using the connected learning approach, the day seemed to go so fast as everything was connected and there was a real sense of satisfaction as the children were totally engaged in their learning.

I have continued to use a planning board, share success criteria with the children and use the Two Stars and a Wish strategy as an integral part of my Assessment for Learning. The most positive experience was the success of the rainforest enterprise. The children were so enthusiastic about setting up the shop and preparing the advertising campaign. I was really proud of them, they achieved so much and it was very rewarding to see the end result.

Both the children and I thoroughly enjoyed the learning experience we embarked upon. There was a real buzz within the classroom and the children were constantly talking about their work. They have learned to be more cooperative while working in a group and have benefited from adopting roles. They worked so hard to set up the rainforest shop, they were so engaged in the planning stage and there was a definite sense of achievement as the day was a great success and they made over £100 for Trocaire. Their level of enthusiasm was evident throughout and the level of self-esteem and confidence was definitely raised.

The parents were invited to come into school for the rainforest workshop, they commented on the children's excitement and the fact they were constantly talking about their work on the rainforest at home. Both children and parents enjoyed this learning experience.

