

Creating an intercultural environment

Experiences and ideas provided by teachers

The physical environment

- ❑ Maps or posters show the countries or flags represented by the school population. In many cases a large map is hung in the entrance area of the school. Ribbons or threads connect the countries of origin of students to the location of the school.
- ❑ A display of flags from different countries
- ❑ The word 'welcome' is written on a poster, coloured paper etc. in the languages known by students in the school (including of course English and Irish).
- ❑ Notices throughout the school are representative of the languages spoken by the students
- ❑ Students make a map of their own country to hang in the language support room and give a short talk about that country
- ❑ Pictures, photographs, currency notes, postage stamps, front pages of newspapers etc. from different countries are used to make a display
- ❑ A display of national costumes or photographs illustrating them
- ❑ Projects produced by newcomer students are displayed in the corridors – religions, countries, cultural traditions etc.
- ❑ Current events used as a basis for geography projects and students from the countries represented talk about their country
- ❑ Information about national days, holy days and holidays put on posters – e.g. Chinese New Year
- ❑ Art work and crafts of different ethnic origins displayed
- ❑ Photographs and displays of events that are important to the school are presented in a way that newcomers can understand – school tours, feast days, Halloween etc.
- ❑ For the main Irish festivals (Christmas, Easter, St. Patrick's Day, Halloween etc.) signs and information are put along the corridors in the different languages represented in the school
- ❑ Charts to show the numbers of students of different nationalities in the school
- ❑ Intercultural day with displays of work about Ireland and other countries
- ❑ Posters about events for adults, parents etc. presented so that they can be understood by all
- ❑ Photographs and recipes for foods from different countries
- ❑ Books available on different cultural festivals, celebrations etc.
- ❑ Photographic records

In general the posters, displays, artwork, books etc. are used to show the colour and richness of difference but the basic 'sameness' of people from different cultures.

Activities that encourage interaction between native students and newcomers

- ❑ Choir and music
- ❑ School tours
- ❑ Group art sessions
- ❑ Projects on a range of mainstream topics (e.g.history, geography)
- ❑ Games and PE
- ❑ Cooking
- ❑ A buddy system
- ❑ Concerts
- ❑ Introduction of newcomer students with a discussion about where they come from
- ❑ Study of different festivals
- ❑ Inviting newcomer students to bring an English-speaking friend to the language support class from time to time (using the buddy system)
- ❑ Hurling and football matches
- ❑ Sponsored walks

- ❑ Participation in local festivals, parades etc.
- ❑ International language day with words, songs, poems etc.
- ❑ Ecumenical prayer week used to include children from all religious backgrounds
- ❑ Inviting speakers from different countries to talk about different, relevant topics – e.g. landmines in Africa, racism in South Africa etc.
- ❑ Seating newcomer students with native students
- ❑ Using assembly for presentations, songs, language, costumes, drama, stories from other countries
- ❑ Swimming
- ❑ Language games
- ❑ Project World – native students finding out about the countries that newcomers are from
- ❑ Presentations about students' interests, hobbies, families etc. (all students)

Occasions that bring parents together to increase understanding

- ❑ Explaining invitations to school activities to encourage parents to attend
- ❑ Introducing parents of newcomers to one another to encourage communication
- ❑ Social nights in refugee/dispersal center
- ❑ Night courses for parents – IT, cookery, art and craft, aromatherapy – attended by parents from all cultural groups (good attendance by parents of newcomers)
- ❑ One World Day – food, clothes, paintings, drama etc. from different countries
- ❑ World Book Day
- ❑ Cake sales and open days
- ❑ Language classes for parents provided free of charge for 1.5 hours per week
- ❑ Supervision of activities by parents

- ❑ Ethos committee made up of parents from different cultural groups/nationalities

- ❑ Parent Association meetings

NOTE: A number of teachers highlighted the need to make invitations, notices of events etc. as clear as possible for those parents who have little English.

Activities that support communication between teachers/school and parents

- ❑ Parent teacher meetings
- ❑ Clear enrolment procedures and forms
- ❑ Pictorial report forms (see IILT Teachers' Manual)
- ❑ All school events – carol service, plays etc.
- ❑ Meeting arranged with representative group from Muslim community and new Muslim parents
- ❑ Visit to Mosque arranged by school followed by lunch at Mosque
- ❑ Picture-based booklet with school times, schedules and routines
- ❑ 'Flavours of the World' event organized by parents who cook their traditional dishes and teachers and parents enjoy an evening together
- ❑ Teachers making enough time to speak to parents who cannot communicate rapidly
- ❑ Presence of language support teacher at school occasions
- ❑ Local librarian requested to provide information session on how to use the library
- ❑ School notes explained by language support teacher or with supplementary notes
- ❑ Bulletins for parents at regular intervals on all aspects of school activity
- ❑ School newsletter is used in language support class as a resource and explained to students so that they can tell their parents
- ❑ Sometimes interpreters are necessary to support communication