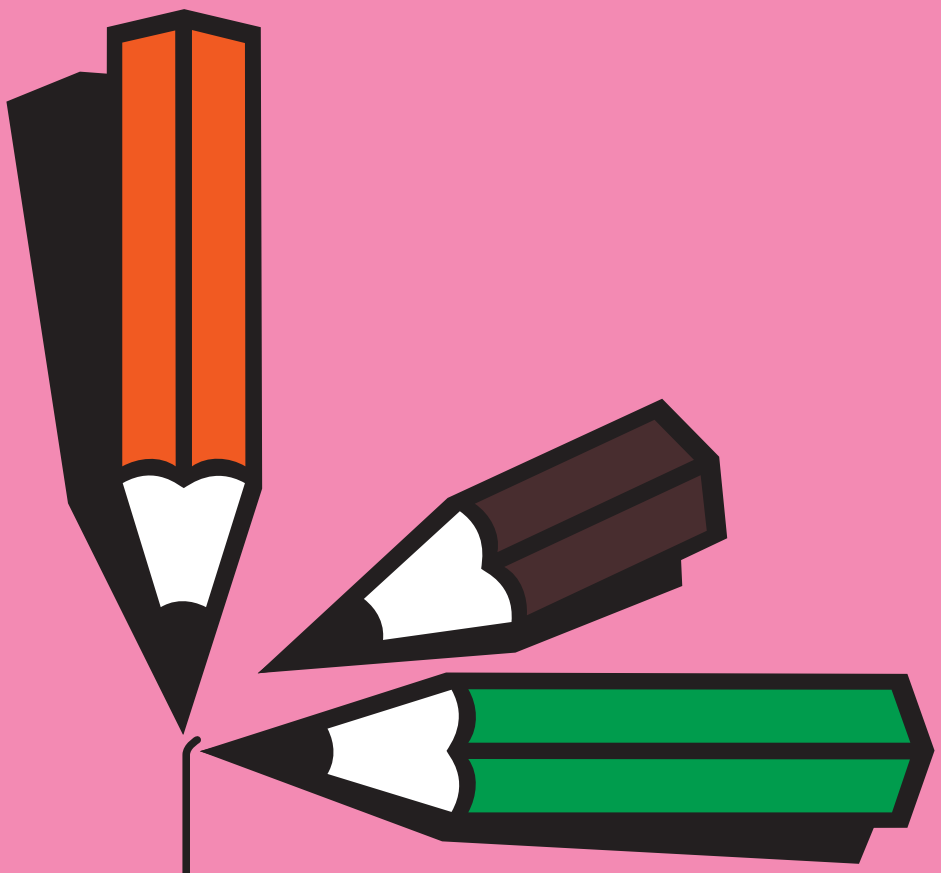

Joined-up

Developing Good Relations in the School Community

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This resource has been produced with the financial support of:

Department of Education
International Fund for Ireland Community Bridges Programme
The Ireland Funds

THE CORRYMEELA COMMUNITY

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NORTHERN IRELAND COUNCIL FOR INTEGRATED EDUCATION
Educating Children Together

Department of Education
www.deni.gov.uk

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

THE IRELAND FUNDS

Joined-up

Developing Good Relations in the School Community

Nichola Lynagh & Mary Potter

This resource seeks to promote effective teaching and learning practice, and to provide guidance for exploring some of the more controversial issues which emerge in ways that are appropriate, safe, and create positive learning experiences.

Joined-Up:
Developing Good Relations in the School Community

ISBN: 1 873739 30 3

Published March 2005 by
The Corrymeela Press
8 Upper Crescent, Belfast
Northern Ireland, BT7 1NT

Text © Nichola Lynagh (NICIE)
& Mary Potter (Corrymeela), 2005
Illustrations © Fishbone, 2005

Design by Fishbone

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Grateful acknowledgements must go to everyone who assisted in the development of this resource.

IN PARTICULAR, WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

- Kathryn Edgar, Tony Gallagher, Bernie Kells, Yvonne Naylor and Mediation Northern Ireland for their specific contributions to sections of the resource;

- Sharon Bell, Pat Blackman, Harry Greer, Ruth Hodgins, Pauline Lewsley, Peter McCreadie, Terry McMackin, Roisin Marshall, Matt Milliken, Emily Stanton and everyone else who participated in the consultation process;

- All the schools and teacher education bodies which helped us in the development of materials;

- Fred Vincent, Sam Bell, Joy McKnight and others who assisted with editing, design and production;

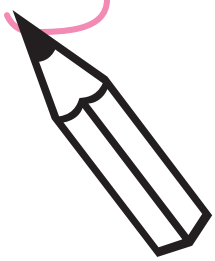
- Corrymeela and NICIE and for their support and assistance throughout the process of writing and producing the resource;

- The Department of Education, the International Fund for Ireland Community Bridges Programme and The Ireland Funds for their financial support of the resource and its development.

The promotion of good relations is about breaking through the denial and avoidance of the Northern Ireland conflict and acknowledging its impact on the community and organisations working within it. It is also about actively recognising the challenges faced by people in Northern Ireland who are members of minority ethnic communities and minority religious faiths and the additional difficulties that they may encounter. Good Relations challenges sectarianism and racism, promotes equality, develops respect for diversity and raises awareness of the interdependence of the people and institutions within Northern Ireland. It states a public commitment to these beliefs and continually seeks ways to build on them for the future.

DEFINITION DEVELOPED BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL.

contents



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Introduction

introductory

What is the purpose of the resource?

- To support schools in developing a whole school approach to building good relations throughout their school community.

- To provide school senior managers, teachers and teacher educators with guidance and resources to support them in developing effective active learning approaches for exploring controversial and difficult issues with children, young people and adults.

- To encourage you, as school senior managers, teachers and teacher educators, to reflect on your own understanding and ongoing learning as you consider how best to enable children, young people and adults within school communities to explore these themes.

Schools are situated at the heart of communities, playing a crucial part in the lives of children, young people, and the adults who work within them or come into regular contact with them as parents, visitors, etc. These children, young people and adults do not leave their 'outside' lives at the school door when they arrive, but bring with them a wealth of life experiences and learning.

Whether they are acknowledged or not, all the life issues and struggles of identity, relationships and community are present within the school setting. The Northern Irish experience of the conflict has added a particular dimension to this, one which schools are often reluctant to address, given the difficult and divisive issues which it can raise. Other aspects of life, such as the increasing diversity of ethnicity, culture and beliefs within Northern Ireland society, bring valuable opportunities for learning, including more challenging themes such as the experience of prejudice and discrimination.

This resource explores these issues as an essential part of learning how to live in society, specifically in the contested and transforming society of Northern Ireland. The issues that tend to be avoided or kept hidden ('taboo' subjects) may be the very ones that most need to be explored. The resource seeks to promote effective teaching and learning practice, and to provide guidance for exploring some of the more controversial issues which emerge in ways that are safe and appropriate, and which create positive learning experiences for children, young people and adults alike. It recognises that the most effective structure for this is a whole school approach where there is a shared ethos and commitment to being a respectful learning community, which values all its members as well as those outside.

Section 75 of the Equality Legislation (Northern Ireland Act, 1998), along with other human rights' frameworks, such as the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, provide a broader context of good practice, and should be further supported by a holistic, best practice approach to Child Protection.[1] The revised curriculum with its overall emphasis on values and skills builds on earlier work developed through Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU),[2] and offers clear opportunities for these themes to be explored, particularly in the areas of Mutual Understanding in the Local and Global Community (Primary)[3] and Local and Global Citizenship (Post-Primary).[4] Work in these areas can also be enhanced further by the opportunities offered by the Department of Education's Schools Community Relations Programme,[5] which encourages partnerships between schools as well as creative exploration of relevant themes within individual schools.

While recognising that this can seem like a huge additional area of work for schools, the resource focuses on principles of effective practice, which support positive ethos and high quality teaching and learning across every dimension of school life.

Who is this Resource For?

The resource was specifically developed to provide more training and support to student teachers, teachers, school senior managers and others involved in education, enabling them to feel more confident in exploring controversial issues with their colleagues or pupils, particularly those relating to identity, diversity and conflict, and to create an appropriate context for this work.

The ideas contained in the resource have been developed and tested over the past number of years in schools, teacher education institutions and Early / Continuing Professional Development contexts. The resource also draws on experience gained in youth and community work settings.

Among other possibilities, this resource would be useful for:

- *teachers working with their classes;*
- *a principal, Education & Library Board (ELB) advisor or external facilitator working with a team of teachers and / or support staff;*
- *two or more schools working together on a community relations programme;*
- *a tutor working with student teachers;*
- *ELB advisors working with Beginning Teachers;*
- *ELB advisors or external facilitators working with a group of school governors or parents;*
- *a principals' cluster group.*

1 Department of Education Circular (1999 / 10), Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection; Volunteer Development Agency (2000), Our Duty to Care: Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People, Belfast, VDA.

2 CCEA (1997), Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage: Cross-Curricular Guidance Materials, Belfast, CCEA.

3 CCEA (2002), Primary Values, Belfast, CCEA.

4 CCEA (2003), Local and Global Citizenship: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools, Belfast, CCEA.

5 DENI (2002), Review of the Schools Community Relations Programme, Bangor, DENI.

How can the Resource be Used?

We have tried to distil usefully, some of the key aspects of this kind of work. In some cases, this means that we only touch on areas which could fill several resource packs in themselves – the resource list at Appendix One will point you to places where you can find out more, if need be.

The resource takes a 'how to' approach, recognising that people will come to the resource with different experiences and learning. Some will find it useful to work through the resource from start to finish while others may choose to focus on particular sections.

Wherever the starting point, it is crucially important to give some attention to the overall ethos and approach before launching into the controversial issues dimension of the work.

Within each section you will find (if applicable):

Questions for Reflection
These can be used individually or as the basis for group discussion (in a tutorial setting, a staff team development setting or governors' / parents' session, etc.).

Theory into Practice
Based on real life examples, these scenarios and suggestions provide the opportunity to think about how the ideas in different sections could be used.

Sample Exercises and Resources
Examples of activities and resources to support groupwork and whole school development.

Session Outlines / Lesson Plans
Examples are given for Foundation Stage, Key Stage One, Key Stage Two, Secondary and Adult – but many of the activities within them can be adapted to suit various ages.

Checklists
These provide general points to think about in preparation for an individual session / lesson or a longer programme / module.

Definitions and Explanatory Notes

IDEAS TO GET STARTED

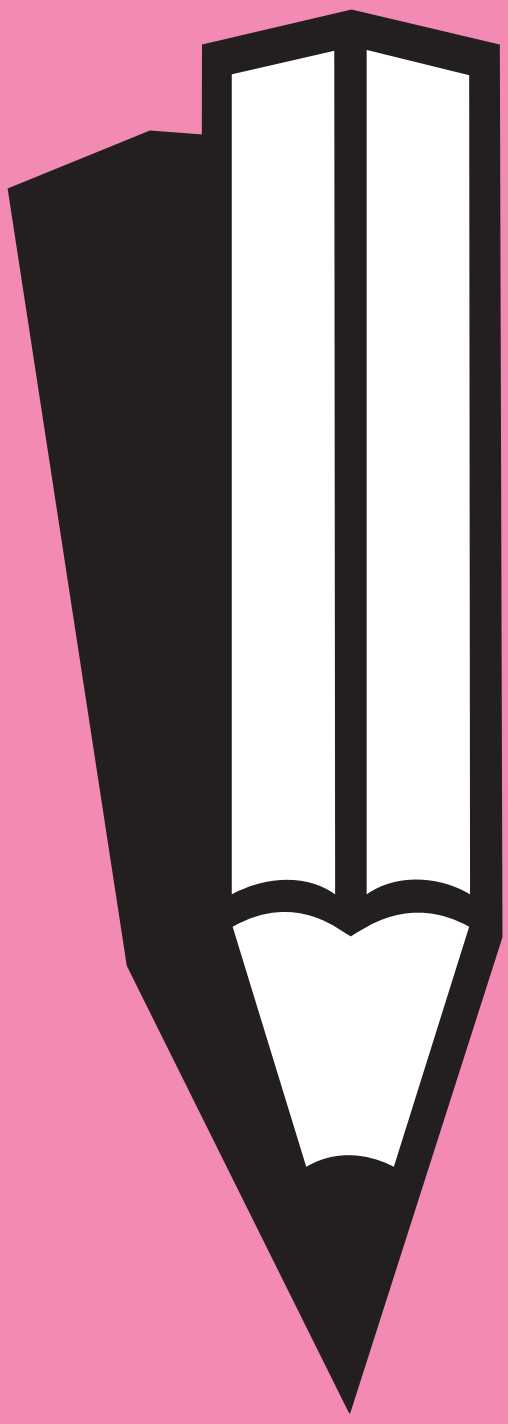
- *Start by skimming through quickly, taking in headings and key points.*
- *Choose sections that look particularly relevant to your situation.*
- *Begin at the start and work your way through to the end, using the Questions for Reflection to develop your thinking.*
- *If this kind of work is unfamiliar to you, work through it with an experienced colleague or mentor who can provide support.*
- *Try out some of the activities.*
- *Summarise the key points for someone else.*
- *Persuade someone to summarise it for you!*
- *Use it as a training resource with colleagues.*
- *Use it as an aspect of your Early or Continuing Professional Development, or of your Professional Qualification for Headship.*
- *Use it for bedtime reading!*

As you consider using the resource, bear in mind some of our starting premises:

- Learning is most effective when it is gained through active engagement in the process.
- Learning is about making connections, and understanding its application across a range of situations.
- Positive learning involves taking appropriate risks.
- Learning requires us to reflect, so that we can consolidate what we have learnt and put it into practice.

There are a lot of ideas and materials in this pack, but do not feel overwhelmed if many of these are new to you!

Take the ideas a step at a time, trying out what you feel confident about, and taking the appropriate risks when you feel ready for them.



Understanding the Context

Teaching and Learning in a Contested Society

People talking without speaking

People hearing without listening ...

'Fools,' said I, 'You do not know

Silence like a cancer grows.'

LYRICS FROM: SIMON, P. (1964), SOUNDS OF SILENCE.

understanding the context

1.0
Introduction

Northern Ireland is a curious place. Since 1969 over 3,600 people have died as a consequence of political violence. Since the mid 1990s there has been a peace process of sorts, but people are still being intimidated and killed, and shared political institutions have spent more time in suspension than in operation.

Despite the significant reduction in political violence in recent years, there is still a close relationship between people's religious or community background and:

- *the political party they vote for;*
- *the type of school they attend(ed);*
- *the area in which they live;*
- *their social and cultural preferences;*
- *the names they give to their children;*
- *the way they pronounce the letter 'h'!*

Northern Ireland remains a deeply divided society. In fact, there is some evidence that the level of segregation in our society is getting wider, almost as if it is easier and safer to live apart than to develop a shared future. Recent evidence reveals that children are beginning to show preference for symbols of 'their' community, as young as three and four years old.[1]

This research suggests that entering school for the first time represents a significant milestone in the life of any child. It is likely to be the first time that many will begin to interact with larger numbers of other children and come under the influence of older peers. The report came to two broad conclusions:

- Children, from the age of three, should be encouraged to explore and experience a range of different cultural practices, events and symbols and to appreciate and respect difference and cultural diversity.

- From the age of five, children should be encouraged to understand the negative effects of sectarian and racist stereotypes and prejudices and to be able to identify them in their own attitudes where appropriate.

This clearly points out the role education can play in supporting children and young people to learn about themselves and others. It is complemented by the statutory requirements of the curriculum.

In all cultures people avoid talking about things that would make life difficult. Northern Ireland is not, of course, unique in this regard. There are secrets; taboos that are not talked about but are not forgotten. The reason for this behaviour is usually benign – people do not want to cause upset or hurt, to get into an argument, or to put themselves at risk. These adaptive behaviours are often so ingrained in our lives that we do not recognise them. We might, however, question whether this 'silence' is the best way to deal with the legacies of division and conflict in our society.

1 Connolly, P., Smith, A. and Kelly, B. (2002), Too Young to Notice, Belfast, Northern Ireland Community Relations Council.

The Concept of Northern Ireland as a Contested Society

A stable society is understood to be characterised by people sharing a common sense of identity. Within this a high degree of support and unanimity is accorded to state institutions and the institutions of law and order.

A contested society is one where there is no shared sense of identity and people have traditions / loyalties which can be exclusive and unlikely to accommodate difference.[3]

Derick Wilson et al. cite the example of experienced teachers on a residential course who spoke of how they had not met 'in depth' with people from other traditions. The opportunity to hear about the lives of others brought up in a different culture / tradition was completely new for them, a silence was broken.[2] When we hear one another sharing openly a new reality comes between us. We begin to marvel at the separated lives we often lead here.

We live a so-called 'normal life' in the midst of a 'troubled society'. Social structures and inter-group relations have all been impacted by polite behaviours, divisions, fears, hostilities and segregation in contexts such as:

- *family and friendships;*
- *neighbourhoods and public spaces;*
- *school and youth experiences;*
- *church and culture;*
- *sports and recreation;*
- *the workplace;*
- *government, politics and law;*
- *ethnic groupings.*

There are at least three main reasons why it is important for schools and the wider education system to try to break through this 'sound of silence':

1 It is difficult to see how we, as a society, can solve the legacies of division and conflict unless we find a way to talk about those legacies. It is not enough to ask people to forget about the past, but neither should we become prisoners of the past.

2 Evidence reveals that people find it liberating and enlightening to break through these silences. We often make assumptions about others, but when we are given opportunities to listen genuinely to other perspectives we can begin to develop better and more informed understanding.[4]

3 It has long been a matter of policy that schools and teachers have a responsibility to promote better community relations, tolerance and reconciliation among children and young people.

2 Morrow, D. and Wilson, D. (1996), Ways Out of Conflict: Resources for Community Relations Work, Coleraine, Understanding Conflict Trust.

3 Adapted from a concept developed by Derick Wilson et al.

4 Morrow, D. and Wilson, D. (1996), Ways Out of Conflict: Resources for Community Relations Work, Coleraine, Understanding Conflict Trust.

Within our political world decisions have been designed to encourage inclusion and a peaceful society. A pattern of developing a new society can be discerned, not just in the Belfast Good Friday Agreement, and Section 75 of the Equality Legislation (Northern Ireland Act, 1998), but in a raft of decisions taken by the British and Irish Governments, Secretaries of State, devolved government departments and other public bodies.

Section 75 places the duty on all public bodies to pay due regard to the promotion of equality under nine different categories, and to promote good relations among people of different religious or racial backgrounds and political beliefs. These categories are as follows:

- *sexual orientation;*
- *age;*
- *gender;*
- *disability;*
- *dependents;*
- *marital status;*
- *racial group;*
- *political opinion;*
- *religious belief.*

Whilst this does not include schools, it does include the Department of Education and teacher training institutions, and it highlights the need to be advocates for good practice in relation to the legislation.

1.1
How has the Education Sector Responded to the Conflict?

There have been many attempts to address these issues through education. In the 1970s some teachers organised contact projects between schools. In the 1980s the Department of Education created a special fund to support this work. During the same period, groups of parents started to establish new Integrated schools for Protestant and Catholic pupils and teachers. In the 1989 Education Reform Order the themes of Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage were established as compulsory parts of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, and the government took on a commitment to support the development of Integrated Education.

Throughout these years exemplary initiatives have been carried out by schools and committed teachers. Research indicates, however, that the overall contribution of schools has been limited. The consensus is that education could and should do more to contribute to the improvement of community relations and the promotion of reconciliation and tolerance.

It was partly for these reasons that changes were made to the Northern Ireland Curriculum. These changes include the Local and Global Citizenship module for Post-Primary schools and revised curriculum for Foundation Stage, Key Stages One and Two, i.e. Personal Development Strands One and Two: Personal Understanding and Health, and Mutual Understanding in the Local and Global Community.

Local and Global Citizenship is based on the following key themes, which are addressed in local, national, European and global contexts:

- *diversity and inclusion;*
- *equality and social justice;*
- *democracy and active participation;*
- *human rights and social responsibility.*[5]

5 CCEA (2003), Local and Global Citizenship: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools, Belfast, CCEA.

These themes are not seen as separate but as closely interrelated aspects of citizenship. The aim is to support pupils in investigating the themes and in developing their capacity to be active and participatory citizens within the Northern Ireland context.

Some teachers will be given specialist training in Local and Global Citizenship, but all those involved in education need to be aware of the positive role they have to play. Most significantly, they can and should help children and young people feel comfortable with difference, whether it is defined in terms of religious or political outlook, ethnic or racial identity, gender, disability, etc.

The revised primary curriculum aims to empower children to develop their potential. It aims to support children to develop as:

- *individuals;*
- *contributors to society;*
- *contributors to the economy and environment.*

The Mutual Understanding in the Local and Global Community strand encourages the exploration of diversity and allows for development of the concept of citizenship.

These changes to the curriculum create further opportunities for schools and the wider education sector to contextualise the support they can offer to children and young people. They also support the school to address the issues of managing diversity in an ever-changing society with increasing levels of racism and sectarianism, and to reflect the ethos of the school in all its practice.

1.2
How can the Education Sector Address Issues of Diversity?

Education can have a role in preparing children and young people to be at ease with diversity, including:

- with people from different ethnic traditions to their own;
- with people from different religious and political outlooks;
- around people of a different gender orientation;
- around people with different levels of physical and mental ability.

These aims can only be achieved if the reality of the contested society is acknowledged by all within the school community.

This can be done by reflecting upon our understanding of our experiences of life in Northern Ireland, which have shaped us as individuals. On a practical level we need to create spaces where children, young people and adults can meet in a new way, so that change is a positive experience and is not forced or contrived. People need to understand each other in an atmosphere of trust, so that they can speak freely without the anxious politeness which so easily generates sectarianism or racism. A useful place to start this process could be with:

- *your whole staff team;*
- *your department or Key Stage group;*
- *your class;*
- *parents / carers;*
- *governors.*

If the Questions for Reflection are used with different groups, they will need to be adapted to suit each particular one.

Questions for Reflection

What do you feel has been the impact of the conflict on:

- *the education sector as a whole;*
- *society;*
- *the school;*
- *children and young people;*
- *you, personally (and professionally)?*

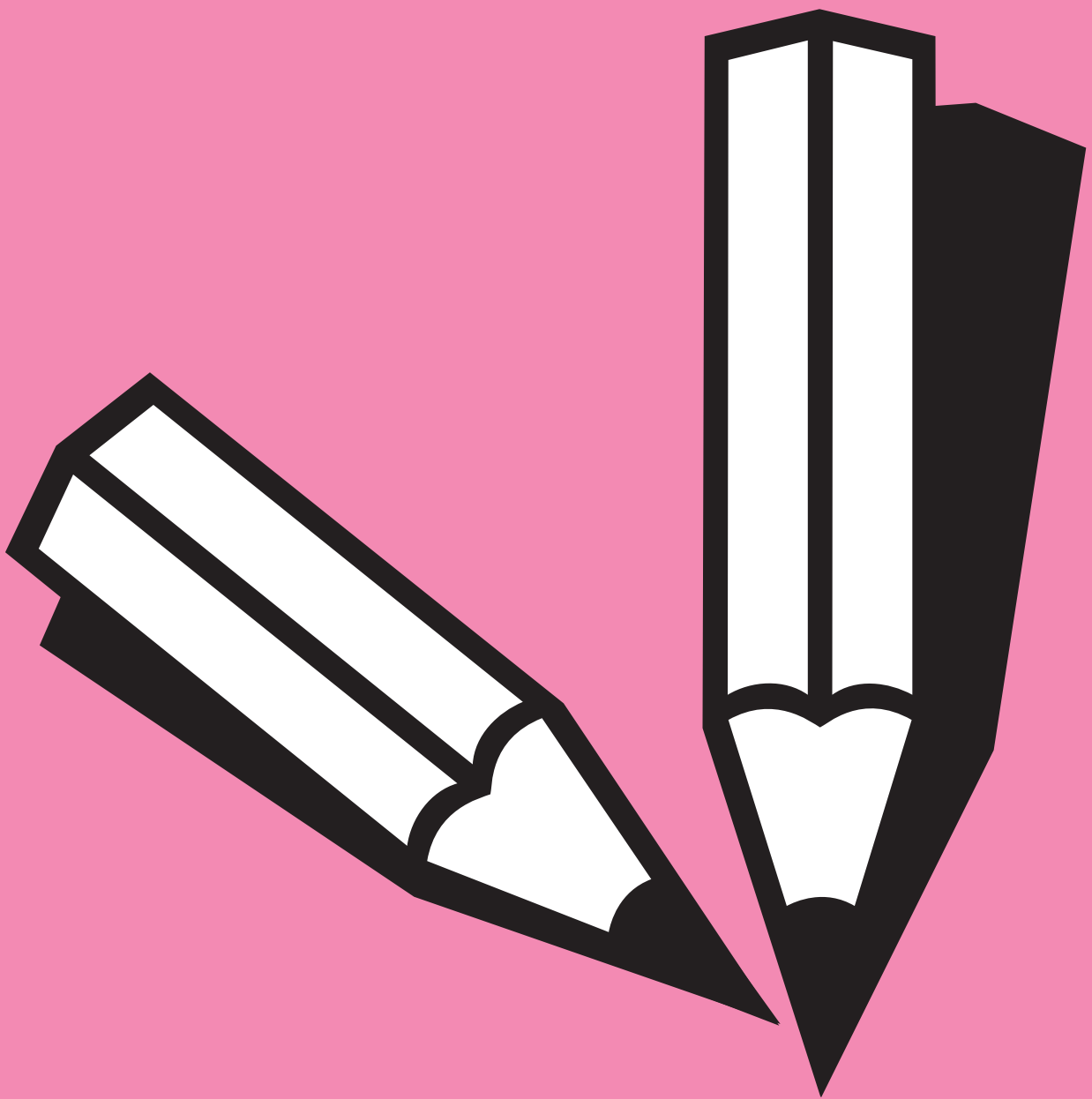
What things do people tend to be private about or have as taboos in Northern Ireland?

Should we be private about certain things?

Are there certain things that are private in the classroom / school?

How can the education sector meet the challenge of contributing to the creation of a peaceful society based on equity?

Does the school see itself as having a part to play in this?



Creating an Inclusive Learning Community

A Whole School Approach

'Genuine learning occurs in the context of our lives, and the long-term impact of any new learning depends on its relationships to the world around us.'

SENGE, P. ET AL. (2000), *SCHOOLS THAT LEARN*, LONDON, NICHOLAS BREALEY PUBLISHING.

creating an inclusive learning community

2.0
What is an Ethos?

Every school has its own ethos in the sense of a dominant pervading spirit or character that finds expression in the behavioural habits of those who are part of it. An ethos is, ideally, owned by the whole school community.

It has both overt and hidden dimensions and is expressed and developed best through 'a shared dialogue on the core values of the school community and the daily practice, which tries to reflect these values'.[1] An ethos is more perceptible to visitors or new staff / pupils as we often adapt to the circumstances we are in and become blind to old habits.

A school ethos should be:

- *based on agreed core values;*
- *reflected in the structures / relationships in the school;*
- *reflected in the curriculum and other working practices of the school;*
- *reflected in school policies;*
- *reflected in the relationship with the wider community;*
- *reflected in the practices of all within the school community.*

It is important to ask whether the school's practice mirrors its mission statement or whether there is a dichotomy between theory and practice?

If values are compartmentalised so that they only exist in certain subjects then the school has not developed a community built on values of fairness, diversity and interdependence (recognition that we are in relationships with a whole spectrum of individuals and communities). The message pupils may receive is that these values are only 'real' in Personal Development / Local and Global Citizenship and that they do not have a role in all aspects of school life.

What is Diversity?

All environments have diversity within them, but for a school the challenge is how to respond to the visible and invisible layers of diversity surrounding it.

Diversity is not simply a 'positive good, it is a necessary element of education.' Senge et al. suggest that the diversity of ideas which comes from the diversity of people is one of the best ways to create the necessary condition of learning. Fostering this diversity of ideas and engaging 'with the individuals who brought with them their diverse personal and cultural histories can contribute to a vibrant intellectual education'.[2]

1 Furlong, C. and Monahan, L. (2000), School Culture and Ethos: Cracking the Code, Dublin, Marino Institute of Education.

2 Senge, P. et al. (2000), Schools That Learn, London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Questions for Reflection

Does the school see 'diversity' as a guiding principle, or has it become a 'catchword'; is it advocated to achieve equity?

What plans are in place for the school to be active in contributing to an inclusive and diverse society?

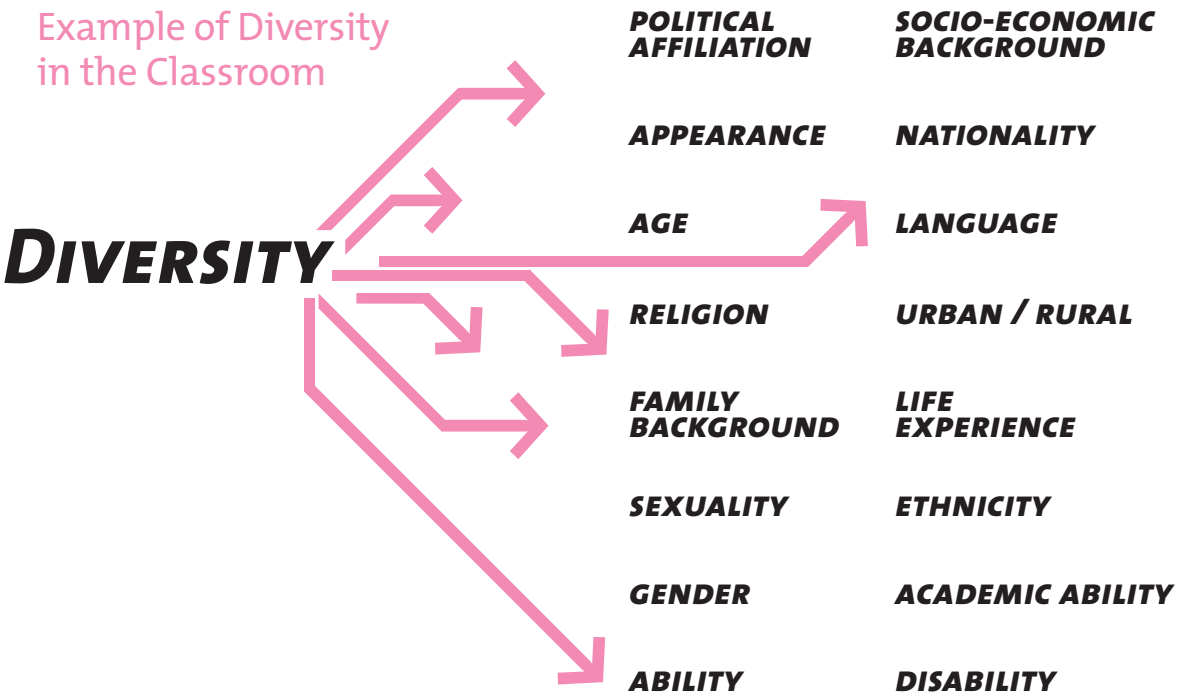
To explore this question it will be important to reflect upon what contributes to a diverse environment: what do we understand diversity and inclusivity to mean?

If an environment exists:

- *which is inclusive;*
- *which is equitable;*
- *where individuals are valued and respected;*
- *where trust is built;*
- *where open and diverse discussion occurs;*

then there will be possibilities for positive relationships and the development of new skills and relevant life learning.

Example of Diversity in the Classroom



What is a Culture of Inclusion?

A culture of inclusion describes a place which appreciates the diversities within it. It requires commitment from a number of areas in the school and it will take significant time, depending on the current climate.

Inclusion involves increasing the learning and participation of pupils, staff and other adults in the school community, and minimising barriers which may stand in their way; it is a set of never-ending processes.

Inclusion in education:

- Inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society.
- Inclusion is concerned with fostering mutually sustaining relationships in schools, between schools and between schools and communities.
- Diversity is not viewed as a problem to be overcome, but as a rich resource to support the learning for all.
- Inclusion is concerned with improving schools for the staff as well as for the pupils.
- Inclusion involves restructuring the culture, policies, practice in schools so that they respond to the diversity of pupils / staff.[3]

Questions for Reflection

How does the school respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse and pluralist society?

What kinds of diversity are in the school?

How do you know when you are in a diverse environment?

When do you feel diversity is a good thing and can add value to learning and when does it become negative?

Does recognising diversity lead to greater fairness?

Can several identities exist at the same time within the school community?

How do pupils and staff (including support staff) relate? Do people treat each other with respect and dignity? Are opportunities for demonstrating a caring and supportive attitude provided?

Has the staff discussed the school's hidden curriculum?

What strikes visitors as they enter the school:

- *Religious symbols and emblems?*
- *Pictures of successful work / school teams?*
- *Pictures of class groups?*
- *Pupils' artwork?*
- *Are the symbols displayed in the school inclusive or exclusive?*

Has the school a competitive ethos or co-operative / collaborative ethos? How is this manifested?

Are opportunities for exercising responsibility provided for the pupils and for the staff?

3 Adapted from Booth, T., Ainscow, M., Black-Hawkins, K., Vaughan, M. and Shaw, L. (2000), Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools, Bristol, CSIE.

2.1
A Whole School Approach

For some time there has been widespread agreement among educationalists that collaborative school development and planning is a powerful means of promoting school effectiveness. Increasingly, schools are engaging in ongoing whole school planning in order to create optimum learning environments and to embed fully key initiatives and effective practice, for example:

- *any new procedures;*
- *curricular provision;*
- *teaching and learning values;*
- *teaching and learning strategies;*
- *self-evaluation;*
- *good relations.*

A whole school approach enhances the school's ethos and work and is effective in as far as it includes all who make up the school community.

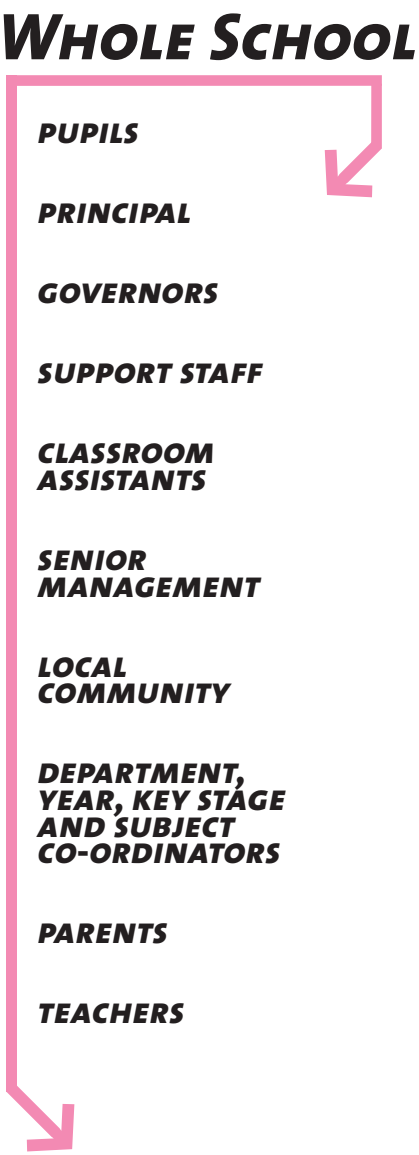
The whole school approach is essentially a process in which policy and plans evolve from the ever-changing and developing needs of the school community. This approach takes into account the school's uniqueness in terms of its:

- *teaching and support staff;*
- *pupils;*
- *governors;*
- *parents / carers;*
- *support structures;*
- *local context / community;*
- *availability of resources, etc.*

This approach supports the whole school to manage diversity effectively and build on the principle of inclusivity.

Who is Involved in a Whole School Approach?

As stated earlier, a successful whole school approach requires the involvement of all the stakeholders. The extent to which individuals will be involved will depend on their role within the school.



What is a Whole School Approach?

A whole school approach is a statement of the educational philosophy of the school, its aims and how it proposes to achieve them. In practical terms, this can be described as a school plan; a written resource which facilitates a co-ordinated development within the entire school community.

Such a document can only be arrived at through a process of interactive and collaborative dialogue within the broader school community, which is continually reflected and acted upon as practice and learning emerges.

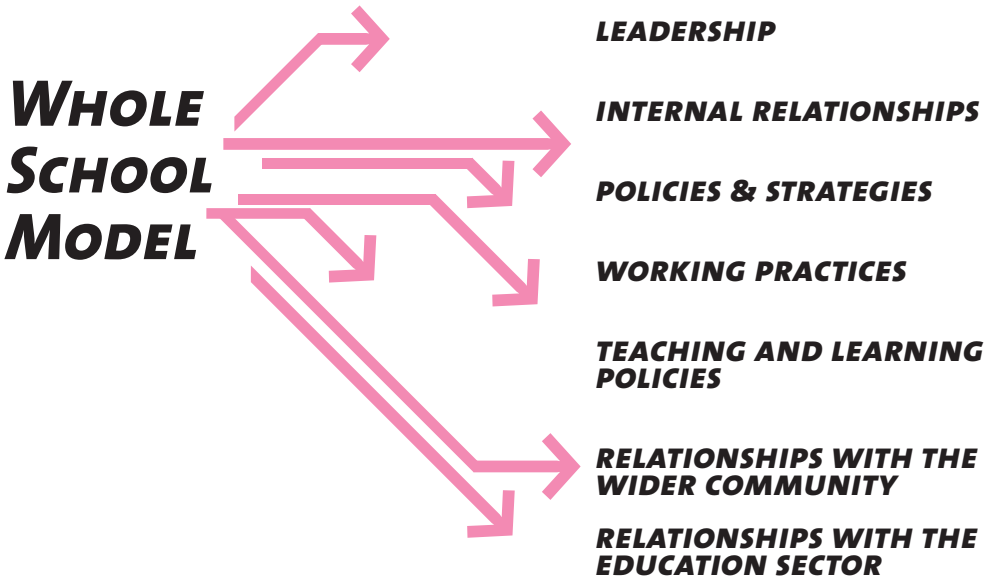
The whole school approach should contain some basic principles at its core:

- a commitment to an ethos / culture based on fairness, diversity and interdependence;
- opportunities for involvement of the entire school community in the development and planning processes;
- creating a climate to ensure the ownership and development are encouraged and sustained;
- monitoring and evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of, and the learning within, the approach.

Essential to the school plan is that it should describe how the school can prepare children and young people for a multicultural, diverse and inclusive society and support the practice of democratic life.

What is Involved in a Whole School Approach?

Leadership
This refers to the management structures (what are they; who has access to them?) and the need for growth in its own understanding and capacity to think in terms of relationships



and negotiating differences: for example, to what extent does management demonstrate a vision of inclusiveness?

Internal relationships
These are the foundation of a good school community. Structures need to be put into place to allow relationships to develop and promote a culture of inclusion. To develop a whole school approach to self-esteem, culture and ethos, staff need to reflect on their own practice in the school. Staff need ongoing professional development.

Policies and strategies
These need to be designed to support a diverse and inclusive environment, for example, a policy / strategy on good relations which could include managing diversity, promotion of understanding, respect and tolerance, symbols / emblems, inter-school projects, positive behaviour, pastoral care, etc. Reflection is needed on what policies / strategies currently exist in the school. How are these tested / monitored and do all the stakeholders know the reasons for these policies and strategies?

Working practices
These show how effective the school is at practising fairness. This will involve reflecting on, for example, the:

- *curriculum;*
- *teacher - pupil dialogue;*
- *meeting pupils' needs;*
- *pastoral care;*
- *personal and social development;*
- *environment – classroom, school, foyer, etc. – is it welcoming?;*
- *pupil morale;*
- *positive discipline;*
- *extra-curricular activities;*
- *sports day;*
- *assemblies;*
- *self-evaluation system.*

Teaching and learning policies
These reflect the school's understanding of the concept of learning; the values which underpin the approaches to teaching; the styles and methodologies used in teaching adopted by the school; the aspiration of developing autonomous learners; the need to take into account the range of intelligences; learning styles; the impact of teaching a diverse group of individuals; and the practice of self-evaluation.

Relationships with the wider community
These show the school identifying its place in the wider community, acknowledging the relationship it has to it and creating strategies to enhance relationships with the school's potential partners, for example, the business and voluntary sectors.

Relationships with the education sector
The school does not exist in isolation from the educational changes that are happening around it and the drive to forge partnerships with other educational bodies. The school needs to be aware of whom they make links with and for what reasons.

2.2
Building an Inclusive Learning Community

Strategies to build a whole school approach must facilitate reflection on existing practice and design practical steps which build on the culture and ethos of the school. The change process must be seen to be integrated into the school development plan and not separate or additional. A framework may include the following. (This is not, however, a blueprint and may need to be adapted to suit the uniqueness of each school.)

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

This process supports the school in learning about itself. It actively creates opportunities for growth and learning, which will enable the school to contribute to a society, which is struggling to build inclusivity.

This process, detailed below, is designed to support the school and all the stakeholders within the school. It can provide you with a focus and a starting point. There may, however, be different starting points that suit your situation better. The process must be owned by the leadership of the school.

EXTERNAL FACILITATOR

This could be an ELB advisor, a Regional Training Unit officer, a representative of the voluntary sector, a mentor, another principal, etc. The role of an external person is to support the school to engage in the discussions that need to happen for a true reflection. The external person also brings new networks, ideas and experiences that challenge the insularity of the school and may enrich the learning.

Some useful points in selecting an external facilitator:

- The school needs to be clear about what they need from an external person so they have clear parameters in which to work and be accountable.

- The person needs to have a good understanding of change management and of the education sector.

- The person needs to be effective in group management and facilitation skills.

- The person needs to be an individual with whom the school feels comfortable and trusts.

ESTABLISHING A DEVELOPMENT GROUP

This is a group which will act as a driver for the process of change and the implementation of a whole school plan / approach.

The group is made up of people from diverse levels of the school and must include the voice of the pupils in some form, enabling them to make a meaningful contribution to the process. It could, for example, include a member of the senior management team, two teaching staff, two support staff, a member from the administrative team, two parents and a Board of Governors' representative.

It will take some time for this group to gel and to establish a set of agreements for how the group will work together, so this must be taken into consideration in thinking about a time-frame.

The role of the group is to ensure the process of change is implemented and remains a priority for the school. It also creates a working space which role models 'good relations' and supports a whole school philosophy.

Some useful points to take into consideration when establishing the development group: [4]

- Establish criteria for membership of the group. It is important to invite those who are initially sceptical or opposed to this process as well as those who are committed.

- Membership of the group should have an upper limit, depending partly on the size of the school.

- The external person should facilitate the group until the group members gain an understanding of the process.

- Communication internally and externally should be discussed and agreed; as should how the group will communicate their function, their learning and deliberations.

- Meetings should be clearly structured.

Questions for Reflection in the Development Group

How should this journey / process begin?

Who needs to be involved and when?

How are those from the wider school community to be engaged?

Can the process connect with the school development plan / vision?

How will we manage the time commitment?

How will we monitor the progress and maintain the changes?

Can we identify an external evaluator?

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

It is important to know where the school's starting points are and to value what is already being achieved. A useful way to do this is to carry out a school audit which provides you with a baseline of information. This will also assist you in your monitoring and evaluation as you will be able to reflect on where you have come from and where you want to go to. Further details on this are provided in the guidance material which follows.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

For full exploration of the purpose of evaluation, see Developing a Model for Self-evaluation (Section Six).

Points for consideration:

- The audit will provide baseline information, which can form your performance indicators.

- Keep all records of meetings / consultation.

- Evaluate all meetings / development sessions, using, for example, minutes, feedback sheets from participants, etc.

- Review practice based on the evaluations and include any updated practice, for example, policies, lesson plans.

- Keep copies or a record of all resources used.

- Keep a record of all external facilitators, consultants, etc. who have assisted.

- Check that you are receiving input and feedback from all members of the school community, including children and young people.

- Complete the audit again after, for example, six months or a year to measure progression.

4 Adapted from Eyben, K., Morrow, D. and Wilson, D. (2003), A Framework for Organisational Learning and Change, Coleraine, Future Ways.

2.3

Creating an Inclusive Learning Community: Guidance Material

Establishing a Shared Vision, Values and Mission Statement

Elements of the Visioning Process

- Take into consideration all stakeholders.
- Develop an agreed set of values, a vision and a mission statement.
- Implementation includes the strategy, plans, procedures and key actions that will form an action plan.
- If you enable the individual to grasp / contribute to the vision, change will be less insurmountable / scary / disconcerting.

Those who anticipate the future are empowered to create it.

John F. Kennedy

Vision
Description of preferred future, which the school wishes to create. A vision statement should include your basic strategy on how you want to achieve your mission. It should include your spoken and unspoken hopes and dreams. Your vision should inspire and touch you.

Values
Values are the principles, the standards, the actions that people in a school represent, which they consider inherently worthwhile and of the utmost importance. Values are the meaning we attach to things. People act from their values, and different people value different things. Shared values provide everyone with a common direction and guidelines. These values, in turn, should underpin policies, practices and standards for the group.

Mission Statement
This answers questions such as:

- *Why do we exist?*
- *What do we do and for whom?*
- *How are we unique?*
- *What is most important about our work?*

Some see things as they are and ask 'why?', I dream of things that never were and ask, 'why not?' G. B. Shaw

SAMPLE VISIONING EXERCISES [5]

Below are guidelines and then some examples to stimulate individuals thoughts regarding their vision.

- *Focus on what really matters to your school.*
- *Focus on imagining what is happening.*
- *Focus on what you want to create.*
- *Avoid how to make it happen.*
- *Avoid today's problems.*
- *Avoid what is not working.*

1 You are in a lift with an education inspector, you have one minute to convince her / him of the benefits of the vision you have for your school.

2 Imagine achieving a goal that you deeply desire. There is no proper way of answering this and no measurable way to win or lose. Playfulness, inventiveness and spiritedness are all helpful. Imagine accepting into your life the full manifestation of this goal.

What does it look like?
What does it feel like?
What words would you use to describe it?

Now pause and consider your answer to the first question. Did you articulate a vision that is close to what you actually want?

SAMPLE VALUES EXPLORATION EXERCISES

1 Using the series of quotations listed below, which can be spread around the room, ask individuals to select one or two quotations which mean something to them and say something about the values in which they believe. Reflect on these quotations and ask individuals to identify the practice relating to those chosen. Ask how this practice is evidenced in the school, classroom, canteen, playground, parent meetings, Board of Governors' meetings, etc.

Quotations to Consider:

It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion. The other is mere business.
Mohandas K. Gandhi, activist (1869-1948)

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poet (1807-1882)

Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.
Paulo Freire, educator (1921-1997)

There would be no society if living together depended upon understanding each other.
Eric Hoffer, philosopher and author (1902-1983)

A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.
Greek proverb

To have doubted one's own first principles is the mark of a civilized man.
Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., poet, novelist, essayist and physician (1809-1894)

Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in.
Alan Alda, actor and director (1936-)

5 Adapted from Senge, P. et al. (2000), Schools That Learn, London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

The secret of life is honesty and fair dealing. If you can fake that, you've got it made.
Groucho Marx, actor and comedian (1890-1977)

The truth is rarely pure, and never simple.
Oscar Wilde, writer (1854-1900)

No two persons ever read the same book.
Edmund Wilson, critic (1895-1972)

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.
Mohandas K. Gandhi, activist (1869-1948)

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.
Oscar Wilde, writer (1854-1900)

If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?
Alexander Solzhenitsyn, novelist, Nobel laureate (1918-)

Live as if the change you want to see has already come.
Mohandas K. Gandhi, activist (1869-1948)

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.
Margaret Mead, anthropologist (1901-1978)

No child on earth was ever meant to be ordinary, and you can see it in them, and they know it, too, but then the times get to them, and they wear out their brains learning what folks expect, and spend their strength trying to rise over those same folks.
Annie Dillard, writer and poet (1945-)

Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow.
Abraham Lincoln, U.S. President (1809–1865)

I tell you, the more I think the more I feel that there is nothing more artistic than to love people.
Vincent Van Gogh, artist (1853–1890)

To try to improve society is not worldliness, but love. To wash your hands of society is not love but worldliness.
Sir Frederick Catherwood, former vice-president of the European Parliament (1925-)

2 You could get individuals to reflect on some of the following questions in small groups and feedback their responses:

- *What do we stand for?*
- *What behaviours would mirror these values?*
- *How do we treat each other, pupils, parents, Board of Governors, community etc.?*
- *What core values are most important to us?*
- *How do we want to treat each other?*

These answers should spark a discussion which supports the identification of the most important values.

3 Write the values in the school prospectus onto A4 paper and ask individuals in small groups to arrange the statements in a pyramid with the most important at the top and the least at the bottom. Ask individuals to reflect on the pyramid, how they made their decisions and what values held some tension for the group. Encourage the group to explore how these values relate to their practice within the school and all those involved in the school.

SAMPLE EXERCISES FOR THINKING ABOUT A MISSION STATEMENT

Groups have experimented with developing an image of the future – their vision – without referring to their mission. The image tends to become impractical when it is not grounded in the specific mission of the school. The mission statement should say who you are and why you are passionate about it. The mission is directly linked to a broad analysis of the school and its environment. Make it short – try not to have more than three sentences.

A mission statement might include statement starters such as some of the following:

- *We believe that ...*
- *At this school we are committed to ...*
- *Our school community is ...*
- *Our aim is to ...*

Carrying Out a School Audit

An audit is a tool which can gauge levels of need under a specific theme. It is important for the school to test the underpinning values, to map out the current reality in terms of how individuals feel in relation to fairness, diversity and interdependence.

This mapping out of the realities must take into account all aspects of school life, for example:

- *curriculum;*
- *leadership;*
- *relationships internally and externally;*
- *policies and strategies.*

Such a tool must gather the feedback from all sections of the school community. The audit could be done through a number of methods such as one of, or a combination of, the following:

- *written questionnaires;*
- *focus groups;*
- *circle time;*
- *drama or art-based activities.*

See Appendix Two for a Sample School Audit

Priorities for Development

In order to draw up priorities, the development group examines and analyses the contributions from everyone who has been consulted. This is a large amount of work and, therefore, needs to be shared, especially if it is a large school. The external facilitator is a useful resource for this process.

It may be desirable to keep the information gained from the different stakeholders of the school separate initially so that the differences can be genuinely explored.

As the issues are identified, further information may be required to provide a clearer picture. The finalising of priorities must consider the needs of each of the stakeholders within the school so that the voices of the least powerful are not lost. It is not simply a matter of including those issues which are most commonly stated.

It is inevitable that there will be a short-term and long-term list of priorities. The development group must explore the implications of each priority so that a realistic action plan can be agreed. This is particularly important in relation to reviewing the progress of the implementation.

Implementing Change

Key areas for practical change need to be identified and a development plan drawn up to implement these changes. This should outline distinct tasks, identify those responsible for carrying them out and indicate clear deadlines.

Action Plan

What are the areas for reflection?

What are the strengths?

What do we need to do to effect improvement?

What evidence will we seek to monitor the changes?

What resources will we need?

Who will be involved?

How long will it take?

STARTING POINTS

Making the Task of Change more Manageable
After you carry out the audit you might want to focus on one aspect of school life rather than dealing with all the potential learning from the audit at once. Break it down into manageable chunks which can be incorporated into the school development plan and focused on over a set period of time, for example, a year.

The Process can Start in Many Places

- It might start by looking at the individual classroom climate / ethos where a reasonable question might be: *How can the classroom environment foster self-esteem, positive interpersonal relationships, independence and interdependence?*

- Or it might start with the teaching and learning process where the question might be: *What strategies has the teacher built into the learning and teaching process to ensure opportunities for the development of the whole person?*

- Or equity of opportunity might be the starting point: *What strategies are in place to ensure true equality of opportunity for all, by which individual aspirations may be recognised, encouraged and achieved?*

- Or the promotion of positive behaviour: *How does the school become a place where care and trust are emphasised above the constrictions and threats, where each person is asked to live up to the ideals of kindness, fairness and responsibility?*

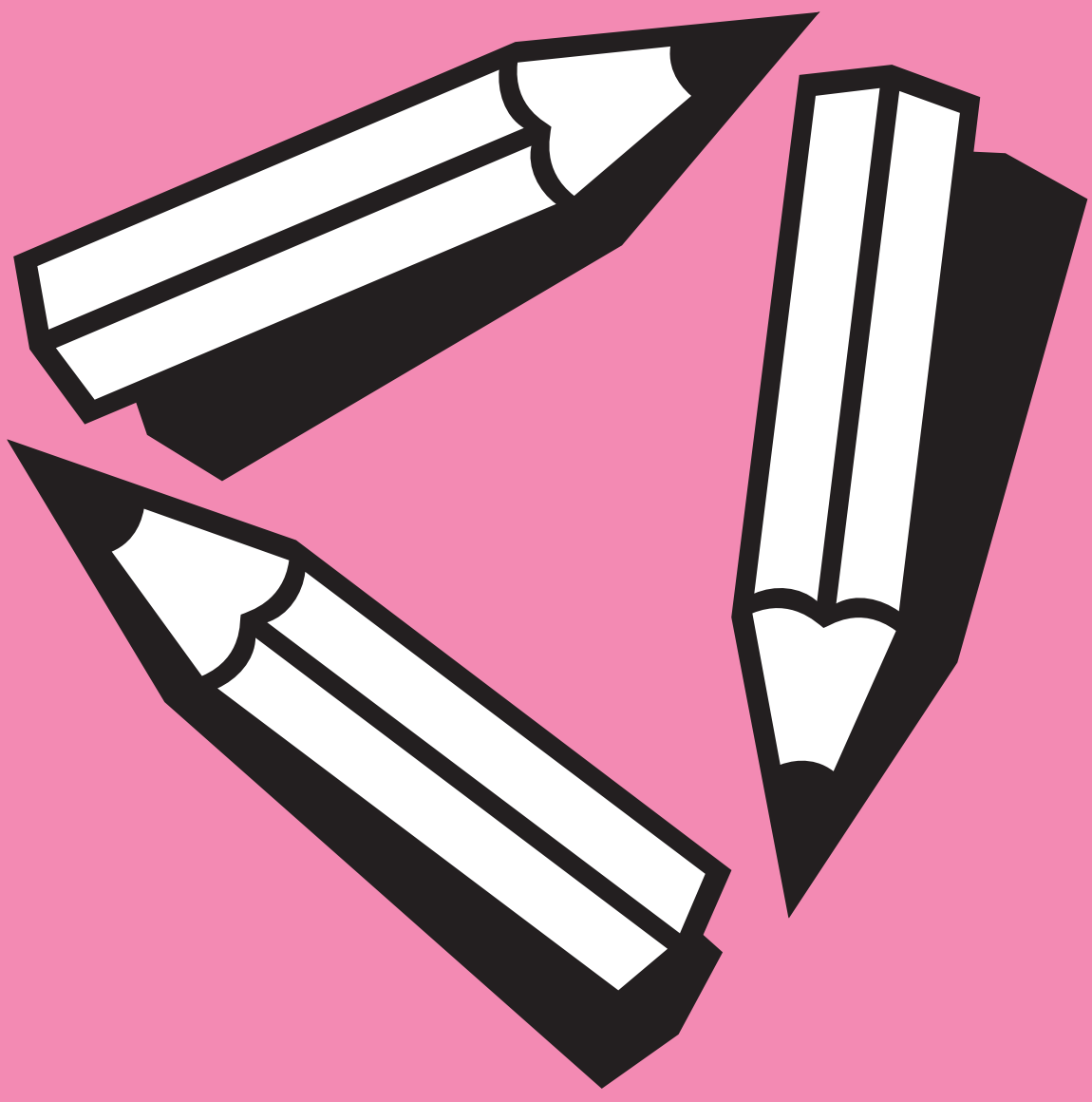
- Or the environment of the school: *How can members of the school contribute to and enhance the school environment for the mutual benefit of all?*

- Or lines of communication: *How can attention to the nature of communications within the whole school community reflect key ideas such as respect and mutual trust and promote positive relationships?*

- Or leadership: *By what processes does a leader, whether of the school, subject department, classroom or group within the class, ensure a climate of co-operation based on trust and high regard?*

Process Summary:

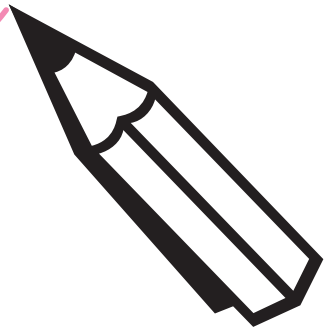
- *Decide to make a start.*
- *The whole school approach is an ongoing, self-evaluative, learning process.*
- *Clarify understandings of key terms, for example, 'school' and 'curriculum'.*
- *Keep pupil development at the heart of all planning.*
- *Evaluate progress against set targets.*
- *Celebrate strengths.*
- *Think, discuss, consult, collaborate.*
- *Give and receive honest feedback.*
- *Ensure the revised action steps are supported, monitored and reviewed.*
- *Invite objective viewpoints.*
- *Continue evaluating and re-evaluating.*



Building a Positive Learning Environment

Using Groupwork and Facilitation

building a positive learning environment



3.0 Introduction

This section looks at the use of groupwork and facilitation as a way of working, which supports the development of a positive learning environment. The purpose of the section is to:

- provide some definitions and explanations of key terms;
- suggest some general guidelines for using groupwork and facilitation with children, young people and adults;
- look at the benefits and possibilities of another facilitator (co-working);
- encourage personal reflection and preparation on the part of facilitators (this could be a teacher, a senior manager, an ELB advisor, etc.);
- explore how groups work, thinking about the individuals who make them up and the interactions between them;
- consider how the facilitator can best support group members and enable them to learn;
- suggest some guidelines for responding to behaviour which is 'challenging'.

3.1 Groupwork

People come together in groups for all kinds of reasons, and there are many examples of work in groups within a classroom / school setting. These might include a:

- *teachers' Key Stage meeting;*
- *department staff meeting;*
- *group of pupils working on a project together;*
- *teacher working with her / his class;*
- *parents' group meeting;*
- *playground supervisors' training session;*
- *senior management team discussion;*
- *Board of Governors' meeting.*

Any of these gatherings might involve a groupwork dimension which in this context has a specific definition as outlined below. Circle Time is a highly structured example of this kind of groupwork which is already widely used in schools.

Groupwork

Groupwork occurs when a number of people gather together to participate in a purposeful process for which there is likely to be one or more facilitators.

The Process:
everything which takes place within the group: how things happen, the relationships and interactions involved, etc.

The Facilitator(s):
may come from within the group, or be an external person drawn in because of her / his particular experience or skills. The groupwork process will ideally have a clear beginning, middle and end to achieve its purpose. At its most effective, the process is likely to involve:

- *clarity of purpose / aim and expectations;*
- *self-reflection;*
- *listening to different perspectives;*
- *the expression of ideas and feelings;*
- *learning from each other;*
- *exploration of personal and group values and beliefs.*

While the group may set out to complete a ***task*** together (for example, drafting a mission / vision statement for the school, giving a group presentation to the class, developing a series of positive behaviour strategies), a greater emphasis is placed on the groupwork ***process*** rather than simply on completing the task itself.

This kind of groupwork is an invaluable methodology for exploring themes which draw on people's life experiences, attitudes and beliefs, because it:

- is based on an inclusive and democratic ethos;
- is relational and interactive;
- encourages co-learning, i.e. the facilitator can learn from group members and vice versa;
- is not dependent on 'right' answers or factual expertise, it encourages investigative approaches.

The benefit of all of these dimensions has been highlighted within Local and Global Citizenship guidance materials.[1]

Questions for Reflection

What groups do I belong to as a member or as a facilitator or potential facilitator?

What tasks are these groups focused around?

What aspects of the group process am I aware of?
- *how people relate to each other?*
- *how individuals participate?*
- *the facilitator's style of working?*
- *body language?*
- *other aspects?*

Does the process involve the aspects outlined in the previous box? What demonstrates this? How can we measure this?

How do I participate in the group as a learner?

What am I learning through my involvement in the group(s)?

1 CCEA (2003), Local and Global Citizenship: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools, Belfast, CCEA.

3.2
The Facilitation Process

The Role of the Facilitator

A facilitator is essentially an enabler. Through her / his interaction with group members and attention to the group process, s/he enables group members to participate effectively and to achieve the agreed purpose of their time together.

While group members are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, and to participate in planning and evaluating programmes, it is ultimately the facilitator's responsibility, in conjunction with the group, to:

- keep the group focused on the overall purpose of the session;

- ensure that an inclusive setting and atmosphere are maintained in which people feel safe enough to participate.

This needs to be built on the facilitator's personal and programmatic preparation for work with the group. The facilitator's role will include the following specific elements:

- Building trust within the group. This is likely to mean spending time working together on building relationships before focusing directly on the programme / session's theme.

- Developing ground rules with the group, and appropriately calling group members back to these when necessary. See Section Five (Developing a Contract / Learning Agreement).

- Ensuring clarity about the group's purpose and objectives for their time together, whether this is for a particular session or a series of sessions / module.

- Avoiding jargon and abbreviations which may confuse, exclude or alienate some or all group members. Do not assume that group members, even if they are colleagues, have had access to the same information, documentation, etc. which you have had. If you need to use particular jargon, etc., respectfully check out that group members understand the meaning and context.

- Establishing an atmosphere of respectful listening and ensuring that everyone gets the opportunity to speak without interruption if they want to.

- Maintaining and demonstrating fairness, making sure that no one person or group dominates the discussion or activities but that everyone has the opportunity to be heard and to participate.

- Giving attention to the process. This includes:
  - *being aware of body language and 'mood' within the group;*
  - *recognising reactions and allowing them to be expressed appropriately;*
  - *assisting effective communication between group members, if necessary;*
  - *being sensitive to things which may be difficult for people to say or to hear;*
  - *being aware when someone is experiencing strong feelings but is unable to express them vocally within the group;*
  - *being sensitive to when a group needs a short break for whatever reason;*
  - *attending to conflict within the group.*

- Modelling an enthusiastic and interested approach right from the opening remarks, and keeping an eye on the energy levels within the group. It is useful to have some calming and re-energising strategies ready, in case they are required.

- Choosing appropriate activities for different age groups, abilities (physical, language and literacy, etc.), cultural contexts, genders, etc.

- Working at an appropriate pace for the group, building on their previous experiences and learning. Allowing time to develop the issues being explored – do not be afraid of silence, and do not cut people off too quickly, as they may feel dismissed and lose interest.

- Expressing milestones, summing up the process to date, and helping the group to reflect on what they have achieved so far and what remains to be done.

- Highlighting and seeking alternatives to expressed opinions so a range of perspectives can be heard, points of agreement reached where appropriate, and ways forward discovered.

- Enabling the group to take new directions or move on if they get stuck in a particular discussion. This might be through asking some open questions or through introducing a new activity that will help people to approach the theme from a different angle.

- Bringing the group back to the core purpose / theme if the discussion becomes inappropriately sidetracked (but avoid steering towards a predetermined outcome which you have decided the group needs to reach).

- Being flexible with the programme so that changes can be made in line with group needs.

- Being aware of the time available, structuring it appropriately and making sure group members know how much time they have for particular activities or discussions.

- Limiting your own vocal contributions, bearing in mind that you are facilitating the learning of group members and are, therefore, a different kind of participant. This also means being comfortable with silences, and not filling them unnecessarily with your own voice.

- Being aware of your own learning process, being prepared to listen openly to constructive critique, suggestions and group members' evaluation of sessions / lessons.

Questions for Reflection: Preparation for Groupwork

How can I establish an appropriate atmosphere for the group to work in?

What will I need to do to ensure that all group members feel safe to participate?

How will I ensure a balance in the participation of group members?

How will I need to speak and act in order to demonstrate fairness?

How comfortable am I with silence? Do I sometimes rush on too quickly? If so, what strategies can I use to manage this better?

How will I ensure that the purpose of the group's time together is appropriately met? Am I personally clear about the group's purpose?

What strategies can I use to start and end the session effectively?

What will I do if energy flags within the group?

How attached am I to the lesson / session plan? Have I room to be flexible if necessary?

Roles for Facilitators

None of us comes to the task of facilitation from a neutral position, because we all have our own set of values and beliefs. In most circumstances, however, the facilitator is expected to maintain a high degree of objectivity and fairness in order to ensure that all group members, with all of their different life experiences, feelings and views, feel valued and able to participate equally in the group process.

Having clearly set this baseline, it is sometimes appropriate for the facilitator to take on a particular role in order to enhance the group's learning or to challenge their thinking in a new way. It is important that these roles are taken on self-consciously, for a specific purpose and time. It also needs to be done in a way that signals this to the group, and lets them know that respect, fairness and the other group ground rules have not been set aside. A number of possible roles (and there are many others) are outlined below.[2]

2 Adapted from BAA / Nottingham Project, Teaching through Controversial Issues, Nottingham, BAA.

Facilitation Roles

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	PITFALLS
NEUTRAL FACILITATOR	Enabling the group to explore a range of viewpoints without stating your own opinion.	As you are clearly not taking sides, this can help facilitate an open exchange of views.	No one is 'neutral', so pretending that you are can be unhelpful to the development of trust within the group.
ADVOCATE	Raising perspectives which are the authentic beliefs of other individuals and groups.	Represents alternative views and experiences which may not be represented within the group. This can also stimulate responses, and demonstrate that there are equally strong (and possibly valid) positions which do not match with their own.	Can leave the group confused as to what you actually believe.
DECLARED INTERESTS	Begin by declaring your own position so that the group knows your views.	May help the group understand that you cannot be neutral. They need to give your views the consideration that they would give to anyone else's.	Some may be dismissive of your views because of your stated position at the outset (i.e. they associate a whole list of characteristics and opinions with the ones you have expressed). It may inhibit group members who disagree with your views.

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	PITFALLS
ALLY	Supporting the views of a particular sub-group or individual (usually a minority) within the group.	Can really help people who are intimidated in a minority position, can help them express and clarify their position.	As you are not necessarily expressing your own views, this can be misleading. The minority group may feel pressured to speak when they are not ready.
OFFICIAL VIEW	Letting the group know the official position of your employer / organisation / statutory authority / the law / etc. This might not be your own view.	Can help the group understand the context in which you and they are working, and any limitations which this may set.	Group may sense any contradiction between your views and the 'establishment' ones which may not always be helpful, as it may raise tensions which may be difficult to resolve.
CHALLENGER	Through questioning, challenging views being expressed, encouraging people to justify their position.	Encourages people to think about their opinions, gets them used to challenge in a relatively safe environment.	The challenge could be too much for someone who already finds it difficult to speak within the group. If challenged, they may be reluctant to speak again.

All of the roles outlined above can have their uses within a groupwork setting. In each case it is important to weigh up the possible advantages and pitfalls, and the specific appropriateness or otherwise for a particular group and programme at a particular time.

Questions for Reflection

Can I think of situations where some of these roles might be useful in my facilitation?

Do I sometimes take on any of these roles without intending to?

What are the particular characteristics of the group with which I am working that I need to bear in mind in deciding to take on any of these roles?

Are there additional advantages or pitfalls for these roles that I can envisage within my particular circumstances?

Are there other roles that I can imagine that might be useful to me?

What do I need to do to ensure that I maintain respect, fairness and the other ground rules at all times within my facilitation?

Managing Change

One of the key areas of responsibility for the facilitator is the management of change within the group. Among other possibilities, this could take the form of changes in:

- *the membership or facilitation of the group;*
- *the way group members relate to and interact with each other;*
- *your relationship with group members;*
- *the group's purpose and direction;*
- *attitudes, opinions and behaviour of group members;*
- *or a combination of the above.*

In order to support group members in engaging positively with change, it will be important that the facilitator:

- affirms and encourages group members, individually and as a group;

- maintains a positive perspective on what can be learned from or gained through change;

- helps the group to recognise the value of past experiences and learning, but not to remain stuck in them;

- assists the group in describing and reflecting on the present situation, and to make connections across their learning;

- explores with the group any unwillingness or uncertainty about moving forward;

- encourages the group to think creatively about future possibilities and ways of working towards them.

It is important to bear in mind that the facilitator also needs opportunities to de-brief and to receive support.

In exploring controversial issues relating to diversity, such as prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination, it is highly likely that it will involve attitudinal challenge and change for at least some group members. In these circumstances, it will be important:

- to appropriately notice and affirm learning that has taken place;

- not to rubbish or condemn previous attitudes and beliefs;

- if those who have changed or those who have not are in a small minority within the group, not to isolate them or cause them to feel unsafe or vulnerable;

- to be aware that these changes often involve a level of risk, for example, in terms of peer, family or community relationships, and ensure that they are given appropriate support. See Beyond Programmes: Learning for Life (Section Seven).

NB. All attitudinal change is likely to involve some level of risk-taking and personal vulnerability, for example, because previously held beliefs may now be seen as wrong or because it may involve stepping out from the crowd. At a certain level, this risk-taking and vulnerability, if handled positively and supportively, is part of what allows the learning to take place. However, if the risk level is high, the support available must be correspondingly so.

Questions for Reflection

How do I feel about change in general? Do I usually feel comfortable with it, or threatened by it?

Am I aware of potential changes within the group's experience?

How can I support the group in responding positively to these changes?

Is there particular support needed by group members with regard to attitudinal change?

Do I need support (for example, resources, a co-facilitator) myself in order to provide these kinds of support to the group?

What strategies can I use with the group to reflect on the changes which may have taken place?

The Facilitation Process: Managing Change

Outlined below are a number of scenarios, based on real life examples, for you to consider how the theory of managing change might translate into everyday practice. Drawing on the ideas within the Managing Change section and elsewhere in the resource, how might you respond to the situations outlined below?

Alternatively, or additionally, consider examples from your own experience – reflecting on them now, what might you do the same and what might you do differently?

1 A new pupil joins your class in March. You are aware that s/he has struggled with some behavioural issues in her / his previous school.

How can you best support her / his positive integration into the class group?

2 The school's Parents' Group has previously had an almost exclusively fundraising role. Now you (as principal / senior management team) would like them to also act as a consultation focus group to provide input and feedback to staff who are revising some of the school's key policies. The Group has agreed, but members are unsure of their ability to do it.

How can you assist them with this transition?

3 Up until now the staffroom in the school has always actually been the 'teachers' room'. As you (principal / senior management team) develop a whole school approach, you want to change this so that the room is welcoming for all staff.

What can you do to build a sense of team among staff, and a shared wish for this to happen?

4 A new teacher has joined the staff in your department / Key Stage team, and makes it known that they are gay / lesbian.
As department head / Key Stage head, you become aware of explicit and implicit prejudice among other staff which is making it difficult for the new teacher to settle in.

What can you do to address this?

3.3 Co-facilitation: Working Together

There will be times when it will be valuable to work with a co-facilitator (such as a colleague, a youth worker, an ELB officer), for example, when you:

- want to try something for the first time;
- want to try something more challenging and invite someone with more experience in that area or way of working to give you some support;
- are planning to explore more controversial issues with a group and feel that another facilitator's perspective and support would be beneficial;
- are working with a group in which a significant number of members are dealing with particular pastoral or behavioural issues;
- want to divide a large group into smaller facilitated groups for particular sessions or activities.

For Co-facilitation to be Productive and Creative:

- Each facilitator needs to be aware of and value the contribution of the other(s).

- Each facilitator needs to be very clear about their role and contribution.

- All facilitators need to be clear and in agreement about the purpose of the group.

- All facilitators need to be prepared to discuss fully conflicts, tensions, feelings, etc. which may be raised through their joint work and group experience.

- All facilitators need to be willing to value their differences in perceptions, styles and approaches.

- All facilitators need to collaborate, share, trust and talk to each other in and out of the group setting. The ability of the group to share and to deal with conflict and interpersonal issues is directly related to how effective the co-facilitators are at this.[3]

Benefits and Complications

When deciding whether co-facilitation is the best approach for your work with a particular group, being aware of some of the benefits and complications may help you make that decision.

THE BENEFITS

- It increases the resources available to the group and can be enriching. For example, male / female, older / younger, different backgrounds, or just two different people with different ideas and styles of facilitation.

- It may provide a model of co-operation which is useful for group members' learning.

- It reduces the pressure on the facilitator because there is a shared responsibility for guiding the group, feeding in observations, ideas and information, responding to group needs, etc.

- The two facilitators can take responsibility for different emphases. For example, one might promote the task to be achieved while the other promotes the positive relationships within the group.

- It can provide mutual support and enjoyment for the facilitators if they are compatible and work well together. Sufficient time spent preparing together will give some indication of compatibility and ensure that both facilitators go into the group session feeling confident about the way they plan to work together.

- It can add weight to the leadership of the group so that it is more seriously regarded.

- It can increase the effectiveness of the facilitators' reflection, evaluation and personal learning as the two facilitators can give each other feedback and reflect together on the experience.

- It can free one facilitator to observe without distraction or other responsibilities and feed back these observations to the group.

- It can free one facilitator to look after any unexpected event or crisis while the other attends to the group process as a whole.

- It can offer a novice the opportunity to learn through mentoring or two novices to learn together.

3 Adapted from J. Benson (1997), Working More Creatively with Groups, London, Routledge.

THE COMPLICATIONS:

- It can involve irksome and unnecessary extra planning. Joint preparation and evaluation is essential, so it is important to be aware of the additional time this may take.

- Co-facilitators are a role model of collaboration, trust and a creative relationship, so a lot is at stake if the partnership is not successful. Group members will very quickly become aware, for example, of any discrepancy between the values being promoted in the ground rules and the way the two facilitators interact with each other.

- Conflict between facilitators can undermine the group and its purpose, causing anxiety and splits within the group. It is, however, important to note that total agreement and harmony can give a message to group members that conflict is 'not OK'.

- It is essential to clarify roles and responsibilities when there is more than one facilitator.

- The facilitators may have to consult each other within the group when on-the-spot responses / decisions have to be made.

- It can be more expensive in terms of time, people and money. In some situations, co-facilitation may simply not be an option.

Preparation for Co-facilitation

AGREEING PURPOSE AND PROCESS FOR WORKING TOGETHER

- What does each facilitator see as the core purpose of the group's time together?

- What are each of the facilitators' hopes for the group's time together?

- What ways can the facilitators support each other? Are there particular concerns that one or other of the facilitators has about the work?

- How will the facilitators communicate with each other during the session when, for example:

  - *one facilitator wants the other to take on the main leadership for a while, or for a particular activity / discussion?*
  - *there is a pastoral or behavioural issue which requires a response?*
  - *they need to 'check out' the mood within the group, one facilitator feels that the group needs a break, etc.?*
  - *the facilitators themselves need time out to discuss something?*

NB. It will be important to sit where you can see each other!

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- What roles / responsibilities will each facilitator undertake? For example:

- *Who will open and close the session, lead particular activities or discussions, facilitate group evaluation, etc.?*
- *Will one facilitator take more of a lead while the other takes on the task of observation and feedback if this is needed, or will they alternate?*
- *Who will keep an eye on timekeeping?*

NB. Even if you are not facilitating at a particular point, you need to participate in ways that will continue to enable group members' learning. If you respond first to all of your co-facilitator's questions or 'jump in' to take leadership in an unfacilitated small group, for example, you will be undermining your co-facilitator's work and limiting opportunities for group members to participate and learn.

- Are there key ground rules which each facilitator feels will be important for facilitation as well as for the group as a whole? What atmosphere do you want to try to create when the group begins?

- What needs to be said to the group so that they are clear about who the facilitators are and what their roles / tasks are?

- What practical planning needs to be done? Are there particular resources each facilitator needs to bring / prepare?

EVALUATION

- When will the facilitators meet to debrief, give each other feedback and do any written evaluation, etc. that is required?

Co-facilitation: Working Together

Outlined below are a number of scenarios, based on real life examples, for you to consider how the theory of co-facilitation might translate into everyday practice. Drawing on the ideas within the Co-facilitation section and elsewhere in the resource, how might you respond to the situations outlined below?

Alternatively, or additionally, consider examples from your own experience – reflecting on them now, what might you do the same and what might you do differently?

1 You are about to embark on a groupwork-based programme exploring prejudice and discrimination within the local community with your class group / staff group. This is a new way of working for you and within your budget you have the option of asking a local youth worker with experience in this kind of work to co-facilitate with you.

What would be the possible benefits?
What would be the possible complications?
Are there other facilitation possibilities?
Based on these factors, what do you decide?
Why have you made this decision?

2 You become aware of some parents' lack of familiarity and resulting unease with one of your new school policies. They find it jargonistic and feel that they could have been consulted. You want to facilitate a meeting for them but are aware that some of their frustration is aimed at you as principal / co-ordinator with responsibility for the policy. You have the option of co-facilitating this meeting with the chairperson of your Board of Governors, or of inviting in an ELB officer as an external facilitator. Both of these people are knowledgeable and supportive.

What would be the possible benefits?
What would be the possible complications?
Are there other facilitation possibilities?
Based on these factors, what do you decide?
Why have you made this decision?

3 As caretaker / secretary / playground supervisor / classroom assistant you have just returned from an intensive Child Protection / Safeguarding training course. Your principal would like you to share this learning with all the staff in the school and is confident that you will do a good job. You know your material, but feel very nervous about facilitating a session for your peers and senior management team. You have the option of asking a staff member from another local school, who also did the course, to co-facilitate, and then you would also work with them in their school.

What would be the possible benefits?
What would be the possible complications?
Are there other facilitation possibilities?
Based on these factors, what do you decide?
Why have you made this decision?

3.4 Personal Preparation for Facilitation

'Teachers affect eternity: no one can tell where their influence stops.' Henry Adams

Each one of us is shaped by our life experiences, the people around us, and numerous other factors. Each one of us has a value base and belief system which affects the way we view the world and relate to other people.

Given the powerful position which facilitators hold within a group, it is important that this is recognised, and that they understand what they are bringing, both positive and negative, to their facilitation role.

Values are:

'principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as reference points in decision-making or the evaluation of beliefs or action . . .' [4]

Values and Self-reflection

All facilitators need to give honest attention to their own value base, life experiences and attitudes. This process of self-reflection means exploring thoughts, attitudes, feelings, reactions, etc. It involves recognising and acknowledging how these impact on, among other things:

4 Taylor, M.J. (1998), Values Education and Values in Education, London, Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

- how I relate to pupils, parents and colleagues;
- the teaching and discipline styles I use;
- the information I choose to share about particular historical or contemporary events and situations;
- anxieties I may have about exploring certain issues.

Values are not restricted to religious education, assemblies, pastoral care, etc. although these may be the places where they are made most explicit. The whole ethos of the school will be shaped by the dominant values within it, just as the ethos of each classroom is likely to be shaped largely by the values of the teacher. It is important, therefore, to be aware of these and of their implications in practice.

These values:

- are conveyed in teaching and learning processes;
- are embedded in school structures, management, policies, language and relationships;
- can be both explicit and implicit;
- can be 'substantive values' (such as honesty, respect) and 'process values' (such as reflection, caring);
- reflect the values and structures of society and the education system, including curriculum, inspection and assessment approaches.[5]

Questions for Reflection: Value Base

What do I believe is the purpose of education?

What are the values that underpin my work as an educator?

What are my assumptions about children / young people, colleagues, other adults in the school community?

What are the most important things I bring to the classroom / school?

What are the most important things the children / young people bring to the classroom / school?

What values am I conveying through my way of working? Are these the ones I intend to convey? Am I consistent? How do I know this?

Building Support Structures

A Whole School Approach is the most effective structure for enabling staff, pupils and others in the school community to explore themes, some of which might be contentious, that may arise relating to diversity, within the Citizenship framework. See Creating an Inclusive Learning Community: A Whole School Approach (Section Two).

A whole school approach to which all in the school community are committed, particularly the Board of Governors and the senior management team, means that appropriate support can be given to all those involved. For example:

- The work is given a recognised place within the overall prioritising of teaching and learning so that individuals are not left feeling that if they do specific work around

5 Adapted from Taylor, M.J. (1998), Values Education & Values in Education, London, Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

diversity and controversial issues they will be penalised in some way for not adequately covering prescribed areas of curriculum content.

- If a parent expresses concern about or criticism of work being done in the classroom, the staff member involved can be certain that s/he will have the support of the senior management team in talking with the parent, and will not somehow be scapegoated.

- All staff will be supported with sufficient development and training opportunities to enable them to facilitate intentional work in the classroom, to respond to topics which arise (for example, as a consequence of events in the local community or reported in the media) and to address incidents of prejudice, discrimination or bullying. Ideally, this will include opportunities to reflect on their practice through a supervision type model.*

- All staff will have practical support in terms of both financial and physical resources, adequate planning and evaluation time, recognised lesson time within the curriculum to deliver the work.

Support Through Supervision

Supervision has an everyday meaning relating to management. Supervision in the sense that we are using it here, however, is primarily a relationship that enables the staff to explore issues relating to their work. It allows staff to:

- *look back at recent work;*
- *explore the successes and dilemmas which may have arisen through it;*
- *give validation to skills;*
- *consider how to progress with future work;*
- *assure quality and professionalism;*
- *reflect on personal learning and development to date, and future training / support needs.*

Supervision is most effective when there is a positive professional relationship between the practitioner and the supervisor, and when it takes place regularly, possibly once a month. In a school setting, it may be that once a term is more realistic. The supervisor can be someone from within the workplace structures (for example, the principal or a member of the senior management team) or someone external (known as an 'off-line' supervisor).

Where supervision is not available, use other informal, but regular support structures on a monthly or termly basis, for example, meeting with a colleague from your own or another school, an ELB advisor, another experienced teacher, possibly one who has recently retired.

Practically, it is important that all staff:

- work together in developing programmes as this provides opportunities to share ideas, to check out planned activities with others who may have experience of using them, to ensure that programmes are developmental and consistent across different year groups, and to evaluate programmes together;

- ensure that senior management team members are involved in this process so that they have clear information and can give their backing to the programme;

- work with senior management team members to make parents aware of the work being undertaken;

- draw on other support structures as appropriate, for example, through the ELB and relevant voluntary agencies.

Questions for Reflection

Is there a whole school approach in place which supports this kind of work?

Within my work context, what possibilities do I have for carrying out this kind of work?

What support do I need to carry out the work?

Who can help me with programme planning, evaluation, etc.?

How can I work best with the senior management team?

Can parents and others be involved in the process? How can this best be done?

Is supervision a possibility? Where else can I reflect on and learn from my practice?

Preparing for Facilitation: Encountering Diversity

In addition to personal reflection on value base, experiences, attitudes, feelings, etc., facilitators need opportunities to explore these with other people in a similarly safe environment to that which they will create for the children, young people and adults with whom they work.

One way of doing this is to instigate some structured or informal conversation around the issues in question with friends or colleagues who have different views and life experiences. This kind of experience could also be provided through development / training sessions: some suggestions are given below.

You could . . .

- intentionally include diversity issues as a theme for internal staff development days;

- organise joint training / development sessions with your Schools Community Relations Programme partner school(s);

- visit local faith centres, churches and others;

- invite pupils and / or parents from ethnic minority communities to facilitate sessions and / or provide information input to staff, governors and parents;

- invite a panel of local politicians to speak on a particular theme or for a question and answer session;

- hold a disability awareness workshop for governors and staff, drawing on the experience and skills of pupils and parents;

- organise a tour for staff living outside the school's local community, led by, for example, parents or local youth / community workers.

As well as having inherent value in itself in deepening personal understanding and relationships, the benefit of this experience is that it:

- allows you to feel the fears and other emotions which group members may also hold;

- provides you with meaningful insights into other perspectives and the life experiences which shape them. This is important if you are working in an environment where everyone comes from a similar background;

- demonstrates that you value the reflection process and do not expect group members to take risks which you have not also experienced in some form;

- enables you to increase your knowledge base in relation to, for example, historical events, flags and symbols, political structures, relevant legislation, etc. This needs to be qualified, however, by recognising that you are not expected to be an expert, and that a response such as, 'I don't know the answer to that question, but I will try to find out for our next session' is an appropriate part of the facilitation process.

Questions for Reflection

What are my concerns and fears about exploring diversity?

What are my attitudes / feelings towards people whose:
- *religion;*
- *ethnic background;*
- *cultural background;*
- *political views and affiliation;*
- *sexual orientation;*
- *physical and learning abilities;*
- *social background;*

is / are different to my own?

Do I have prejudices which I need to examine?

What opportunities do I have to explore life experiences, attitudes, etc. with people from backgrounds different to my own?

Where can I learn more about different traditions, symbols, flags, etc.?

What opportunities are there to bring these aspects into my work?

To what extent am I prepared to talk about my personal experiences, values, beliefs, etc.
- *with colleagues and other adults?*
- *with pupils?*

Developing Facilitation Skills

Facilitation involves a wide range of skills, and it is important that the facilitator models the behaviour and skills which they would like group members to develop. The facilitator, therefore, may need some training support in order to feel confident and competent in her / his facilitation.

Some of the skills which are important for facilitators include:

Group Awareness
It is important for the facilitator to be sensitive to the needs, interests and 'mood' of the group and individuals. Group members may volunteer information but the facilitator also needs to be aware of non-verbal communication (body language, etc.) and to be able to draw out further information. See Group Members and Group Dynamics (Section Three).

Enabling Participation
It is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure that all group members can participate as they feel comfortable, helping the group keep to its contract and maintain the 'safe space': ensuring confident group members do not dominate discussion, and encouraging quieter members to have their say. See Enabling Group Members (Section Three).

Active Listening
This is about absorbing what a person has said, and ensuring that s/he knows that s/he has been heard by giving both verbal and non-verbal responses. It means giving a person your whole attention, and does not mean that you are busily thinking about your reply while s/he is speaking. See Developing Skills within a Group (Section Five).

Giving and Receiving Feedback
This can be about giving affirmation to group members for their skills, contribution to the group process or tasks, etc. It may also be about respectfully and appropriately challenging group members to consider their strengths and weaknesses, to try new things, to look at a situation from different perspectives, etc. See Section Three (Enabling Group Members).

Critical and Creative Thinking
A facilitator needs to be able to reflect on a range of perspectives and ideas, and be able to support group members in exploring different ways of understanding these. Where problem-solving is involved, s/he also needs to be able to enable the group to think creatively about a range of possible solutions or outcomes.

Positive Ways of Approaching Conflict
Where strong differences of opinion are expressed within a group, it is important that the facilitator supports the group in working through any conflict that may emerge. As well as helping the group to keep to their contract, this might include sharing skills in relation to negotiation, mediation, etc. See Managing Conflict (Section Four).

Enabling Closure
The facilitator needs to support the group in bringing a session to an appropriate close, so that everyone is able to move on to whatever they are doing next. S/he also needs to support the group when a programme is ending, so successes and learning can be celebrated and strategies for the next stage can be planned. See The Importance of Closure (Section Five).

The development of skills and confidence is ongoing and increases through experience, but it is good to have some grasp of these skills in starting out to work with a group.

Questions for Reflection

What skills do I feel confident about?

Which skills do I need to work at?

Where can I get support in developing these skills?

Are there situations when it would be helpful to have a co-facilitator?

How can I share these skills and support group members in developing them?

3·5 Building Positive Relationships Between the Facilitator and Group Members

As well as the facilitator's personal preparation, there are a range of other aspects which need to be given attention in order to create a 'safe space' for groupwork. Building positive relationships with group members and enabling them to become familiar with ways of working as a group will help to create a framework for exploring issues, including more controversial ones, together.

Questions for Reflection

Do I really care about each pupil in my class?

Do I speak respectfully to each pupil?

Do I regularly acknowledge the positive attributes of each young person?

Do I expect certain pupils to misbehave?

Do I assume certain pupils are guilty before establishing the facts?

Am I able to apologise to any pupil if I have reacted unjustly?

Am I able to deal positively with conflict?

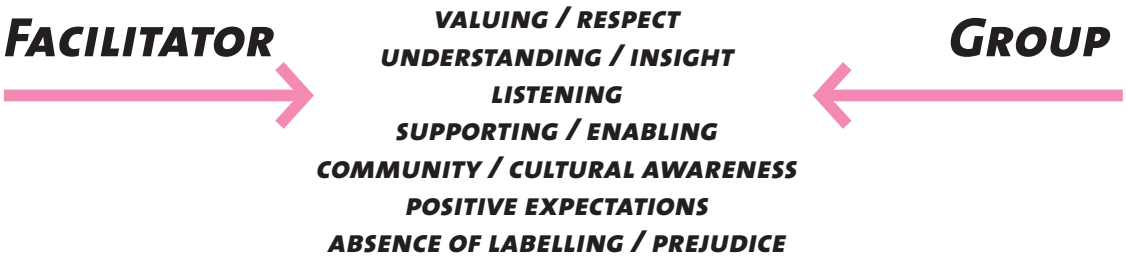
Is my body language consistent with the words I use to each pupil?

Do I organise the curriculum, recognising the diversity of learning styles, so that it's possible for every pupil to achieve daily moments of success, which I then take time to notice? [6]

Also consider these questions in terms of: the members of my staff team; the parents; the governors; any other group members I work with.

6 Adapted from Jenny Mosley (2000), Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom, Wisbech, LDA.

Aspects of the Relationship between the Facilitator and Group Members



Positive relationships help create a sense of being a team and encourage the group to support each other and work together. This involves:

- valuing each person and getting to know her / his talents, interests, needs and concerns;
- listening to and affirming each person;
- enabling everyone to participate fully by providing learning opportunities suitable for different abilities, needs and learning styles;
- developing an understanding of the community and cultural contexts within which they live, particularly if members of staff live outside the school area or come from a different background to some or all of the pupils;
- being aware of events and relationships within local communities which may impact on individuals or groups, and can affect the level of risk-taking involved in exploring certain issues or in meeting groups from different backgrounds.

Questions for Reflection

How well do you know the local community within which the school is situated?

How well do you understand the cultural / religious / political background of the children, young people and adults who make up the school community?

What do you know? Are these facts, assumptions or judgements?

What issues are being faced by the children, young people and adults who make up the school community?

What spaces are created to discuss these life issues? What support do they have?

What is appropriate in terms of exploration / intervention within the classroom or school?

What is the purpose of the work being undertaken with them?

Is there a 'change' agenda?

It is important to keep a balance between this kind of 'helpful awareness', while avoiding preconceived judgements based upon past experience, perceptions of the community, or what has been said in the staffroom, etc. Try to avoid:

Labelling
perceiving someone as 'quiet', 'a troublemaker', 'someone who overreacts' with the inherent assumption that s/he 'always' (or mostly) has been and will be like this.

Prejudice
feelings or attitudes towards a group or individual without reasonable knowledge of that group or individual.

Transference
where someone within the group reminds you of someone outside the group, and you assume that the group member will also be like that person in other ways.

Projection
putting your own traits, feelings, attitudes, etc. onto group members and assuming that they will respond and act in the same way that you do.

Scapegoating
placing the blame for things that go wrong, negative feelings, etc. on one group member, whether or not there is any justification for this.

Practical Points

- What do I want to be called by the group? For example, if I am working with a class, am I happy for them to use my first name or not? All the time? Just for this kind of lesson / module? Just during name games / activities? Not at all?

- How will I learn the names of group members, if I don't already know them? Name badges? Name game? Introductions? Reminder activities? Other possibilities? See Developing Programmes for Children, Young People and Adults (Section Five).

- What kind of relationship do I want with this group? Why? What style of working will best assist this? What ground rules will best frame this?

- How will group members benefit from this relationship in terms of learning, enjoyment, etc.?

3.6
Group Members and Group Dynamics

Group members are the individuals who make up the group. The term 'group dynamics' is used to describe the nature of the relationships and interactions between these individuals.

Every group, whether it is a class or smaller group of pupils, a staff team or a gathering of other adults within the school community, is made up of individuals who each bring their own skills, needs and life experience to the process. The way each individual behaves and contributes to the group process will be shaped by these factors, and this in turn will play a part in shaping the dynamics within the group as a whole. It is crucially important, therefore, that the facilitator pays attention to these, both because they will be the source of much of the group's learning and because the group may need support in addressing particular issues or conflicts which emerge from them.

What Group Members Bring

In working with any group, some aspects to consider are:

AGE AND LIFE EXPERIENCE

While some aspects of life experience can be loosely determined by age, others vary widely from person to person. Life experience is probably the most important factor in shaping what individuals bring to a group. For example:

- a child who has lived in different places may bring a positive experience of diversity which others in a class may not have;
- a staff member who lives within the local community will bring a knowledge of pupils' day-to-day environment, which those who come from elsewhere may not have;
- a group of young people who have experienced tragedy will bring an insight into grief and its related feelings and struggles which others may not have;
- a parent or governor may bring particular skills from their area of work (within or outside the home) while others may bring different ones.

Without prejudging individuals within a group, it can be helpful to know something of their life story so that sensitivity can be applied to areas which they may find challenging or difficult. While this does not mean avoiding these areas, it is important to remember that this kind of groupwork is not counselling, and if particular behavioural or emotional difficulties arise, it may be appropriate to offer further support elsewhere. See Beyond Programmes: Learning for Life (Section Seven).

SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE

Some of the key ingredients of positive self-esteem include:

- *feeling physically safe;*
- *feeling emotionally safe;*
- *having a sense of personal identity;*
- *having a sense of belonging;*
- *feeling capable and effective;*
- *having a sense of purpose and meaning.*

The extent to which group members experience these will affect how they participate within the group. It may be valuable to include some activities within the programme which, as part of their purpose, are aimed specifically at building group members' self-esteem and confidence.

With regard to work around community relations or other controversial issues, people who are confident about and secure in their own sense of identity are likely to feel less threatened by difference. This means that they will be more able to engage in exploration of controversial issues, to gain positive learning from the experience and to deal effectively with any conflict which may arise.

Building a positive atmosphere in the classroom / school in general and for groupwork specifically is easiest when you feel good about yourself. Similarly, it is difficult to build the self-esteem of participants if you yourself have low self-esteem.

- Take time to think about the different things, big and small, which you have achieved over the past week, month, year. If you find this difficult, ask a friend or colleague to help you!

- Everyone has bad days, so do not blame yourself unnecessarily for these. Instead, be honest with the group about how you're feeling, adapt the session to or swap it with one that you can manage more easily or postpone it to a better time.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES & LEARNING STYLES

Rather than thinking of intelligence in purely academic terms, Howard Gardner[7] has identified at least nine intelligences which individuals have to different extents.

1 Interpersonal
the capacity to understand and work well with others.

2 Intrapersonal
the capacity to understand oneself and learn through reflection.

3 Kinesthetic
the capacity to use mental abilities to co-ordinate bodily movements in effective ways.

4 Linguistic
the capacity to respond to and use language effectively.

5 Logical / Mathematical
the capacity to investigate and analyse problems logically and scientifically.

6 Musical
the capacity to appreciate, compose and perform music.

7 Naturalist
the capacity to appreciate, explore and understand aspects of nature and the environment.

8 Visual / Spatial
the capacity to understand the dimensions and possibilities of different kinds of visual space, and to be creative with this.

9 Existentialist
the capacity to explore and understand in spiritual and philosophical terms.

7 Gardner, H. (1993), Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (2nd Edition), London, Fontana Press. (He has adapted and added to his list of intelligences over time.)

This will affect how individuals participate in terms of the things which interest them, the aspects which they pick up or respond to most quickly, etc. By its very nature, group-work demands that all group members use their intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence (defined by Daniel Goleman as 'emotional intelligence').[8] Developing skills in these two areas will increase the effectiveness of group members' participation and learning through the process. Again, it is likely to be useful for the facilitator to include activities within the programme which have such skills development as part of their purpose. This emotional literacy is a necessary and valuable skill for group members in all aspects of their lives.

The recognition that individuals do not have a fixed amount of intelligence means that our capacity for learning is effectively limitless, and, aside from the important issues of respect and self-esteem, make labels such as 'bright' and 'stupid' meaningless. Individuals do, however, learn most effectively in different ways or combinations of ways, as defined below:

1 Visual learning
people who learn best by seeing, for example, reading, looking at diagrams, maps or pictures, etc.

2 Auditory learning
people who learn best by hearing, for example, listening to a talk or lecture, learning by association with particular music, etc.

3 Kinesthetic learning
people who learn best by doing, for example, by trying experiments, making things with their hands, using drama or role-play, etc.

Facilitators, teachers and leaders have a tendency to work out of their own preferred learning style and should be aware of providing for a range of learning styles to maximise the opportunities for all participants.

The ability to learn is also affected by our past experiences, how we feel about learning and the situations in which we find ourselves. Again this reminds us of the importance of self-esteem, and of the facilitator's need to be aware of the emotions that are being experienced during group sessions.

You might want to consider doing an intelligences or learning styles questionnaire in order to reflect on your own strengths, weaknesses and preferred learning styles. The purpose of this is not to put you in a box, but to assist with self-reflection and awareness, and to enable you to broaden the range and types of activity which you include when facilitating a group.

There are a number of websites which offer such questionnaires, for example:
www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.mi.htm

8 Goleman, D. (1996), Emotional Intelligence, London, Bloomsbury Publishing.

EXPECTATIONS

Each group member will come to the process with different hopes and fears. This may affect their expectations of the process and their willingness to engage with it. The first time the group meets, it is likely to be valuable for the facilitator to create a space for group members to express (anonymously or directly) some of these hopes and fears. By doing this, fears can be allayed, and, as appropriate, hopes can play a part in shaping the process or programme. If some hopes or expectations are unreasonable within the possibilities of the group, this can be clarified and the purpose of the group's time together explained again.

It is important to recognise here that within a school context, some people may have a choice about participating and others may not. Where participation is compulsory, clarity about the purpose of the group's time together is especially valuable. If the facilitator can give attention to group members' hopes and work to allay any concerns or fears, this is likely to increase group members' willingness to engage with the process. Being aware of their interests and particular skills will help the facilitator to find 'hooks' which will draw their attention and enthusiasm for the process. For example:

- children (or adults) with a preference for kinesthetic learning will be drawn into the process more quickly through interactive exercises than by listening to a talk;

- teachers are likely to feel happier about participating in a groupwork activity when they can see its direct relevance to the specific challenges which they are facing in their classrooms;

- young people's interest is likely to be sparked by a theme which relates directly and realistically to their life experience outside school;

- support staff are likely to be more willing to give extra time to participate in training sessions when they feel their contribution to the school is clearly and specifically valued.

Questions for Reflection

Take time to reflect on your own:

- *self-esteem and confidence;*
- *intelligence strengths and weaknesses;*
- *preferred learning style;*
- *hopes and fears.*

How might these affect the way I facilitate the group?

Have I included activities within the programme that will help to build individual group members' self-esteem and confidence?

Have I included a diverse range of activities to enable all group members to enjoy and learn from the group experience?

Personality Types and Group Roles

Within a group, individuals will participate in different ways. This will be partly shaped by personality, and it may at times appear that certain group members are taking on particular roles. Identifying these roles can be helpful in trying to develop an understanding of the relationships and dynamics within the group. However, it is important only to do so when bearing in mind that:

- role definitions apply to specific behaviours and not to the whole person;

- although some roles are disruptive to the group process, others are of benefit, and some can be both, depending on the context;

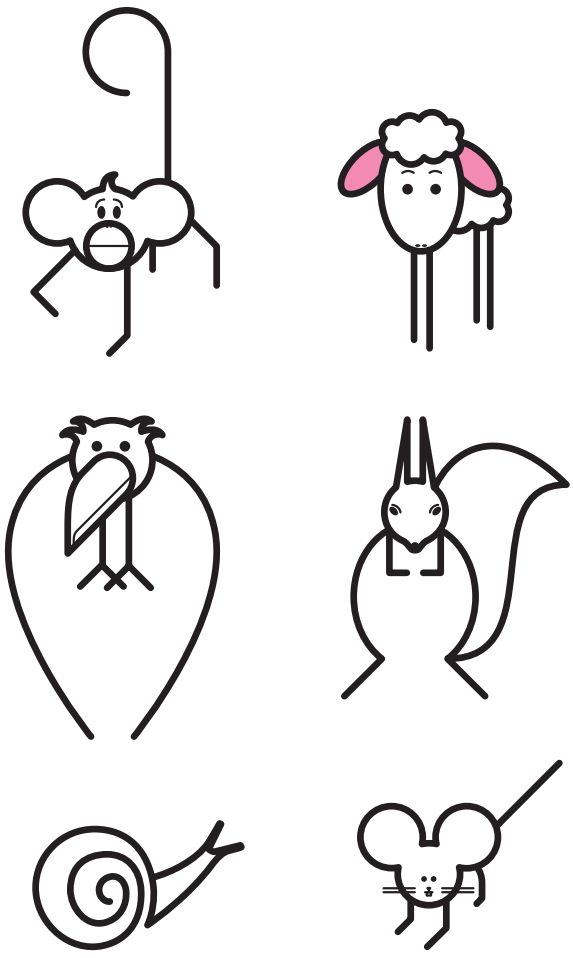
- some roles are very transitory while others appear to be more enduring, but each person has the potential and possibility of changing their behaviour;

- if the role is disruptive and needs to be challenged, highlight the specific behaviour and do not condemn the individual;

- identifying roles does not become a labelling of people which prevents them from participating differently within the group or that limits their personal development.

One of the purposes in identifying the roles of particular individuals is to encourage participation in the group process in different ways to the ones they habitually use.

Some roles that it may be helpful to look out for include: [9]



The Monkey
brings humour into the situation but can also chatter a lot and prevent serious discussion.

The Sheep
is a patient listener but can also follow the crowd instead of thinking for her / himself.

The Parrot
is a good talker but also incessantly answers back without taking time to listen.

The Squirrel
stores up all the anger and hurt inside.

The Snail
withdraws when under pressure and refuses to share her / his ideas and opinions.

The Mouse
quietly gets on with things but also finds it hard to speak up.

9 Naylor, Y. (2003), Who We Are: Dealing with Difference, Belfast, Irish School of Ecumenics.

Interaction and Group Dynamics

Within any group, there are numerous relationships developing, all at the same time. In a group of eight people, for example, there are 28 different relationships happening at any given time. In a class of 30 pupils plus one teacher, there are 465 relationships happening at any given time![10] It is these relationships which create the dynamics within a group, and the behaviour of one individual or a small group can affect all of them. The facilitator in particular needs to be aware of how her / his own mood, attitudes and behaviour can affect everyone else in the group.

Throughout the life of the group, ways of behaving and interacting develop between group members. As with the roles which people may take on as part of this process, some of these behaviours and interactions will be of benefit to the group while others may be detrimental. One of the facilitator's jobs is to ensure that there is a clear, agreed understanding of respectful behaviour within the group, for example, through the early development of a group contract which can be re-visited at different points throughout the group's life as necessary. If detrimental behaviours and interactions emerge as the group progresses, the facilitator needs to challenge them appropriately and support individuals or the group as a whole in addressing them. See Responding to Behaviour which is 'Challenging' (Section Three).

All groups will also experience conflict at some time or another. While this is a normal part of life, it does have the potential to be harmful rather than creative, so it is vital that it is managed effectively in order to reach as positive an outcome as possible. See Managing Conflict (Section Four).

It is within these interactions that enjoyment, creativity and learning take place. Groupwork is a relational, exploratory model of co-learning which is effective because of what participants bring to the process, supported by thoughtful and compassionate facilitation.

Questions for Reflection

What roles am I aware of within the group?

Am I using this awareness appropriately, or am I limiting people by labelling them?

How many relationships (using the formula) are happening within this group?

Can I see developments within group members' relationships and interactions as they get to know each other better and / or as the programme develops?

Are clear boundaries of respectful attitudes and behaviour being maintained?

What am I learning from group members and through my experience of the group process?

10 The formula for this is:
$$\frac{\text{(Number in Group) x (Number in group, less one)}}{2}$$
Kindred, M. (1995), Once Upon a Group, London, Roy Allen Print Ltd.

3·7 Enabling Group Members

Group members have the right to expect:

- *consistency, fairness and honesty;*
- *recognition of worth, respect and consideration;*
- *that the facilitator develop and create new experiences;*
- *structure, direction and boundaries;*
- *protection of standards, norms and values;*
- *feedback, advice, suggestions;*
- *an increasing and proportionate role in making decisions;*
- *that the facilitator act as a model of legitimate and compassionate authority.*[11]

Creating the Learning Environment

When setting up the learning environment you need to consider the:

- *people who will be involved (who are they, how do they relate to each other);*
- *time of day, and amount of time you have;*
- *place in which you are working.*

Along with your facilitation, these factors will shape the learning that takes place. This learning will be most effective if the environment is defined by characteristics such as those listed in the diagram which follows.

The term, ***Democratic Classroom*** is becoming increasingly familiar, particularly within the context of Local and Global Citizenship. Groupwork is most effective when it takes place within such a democratic setting, and where:

- group members are supported to take responsibility for their own participation and learning;

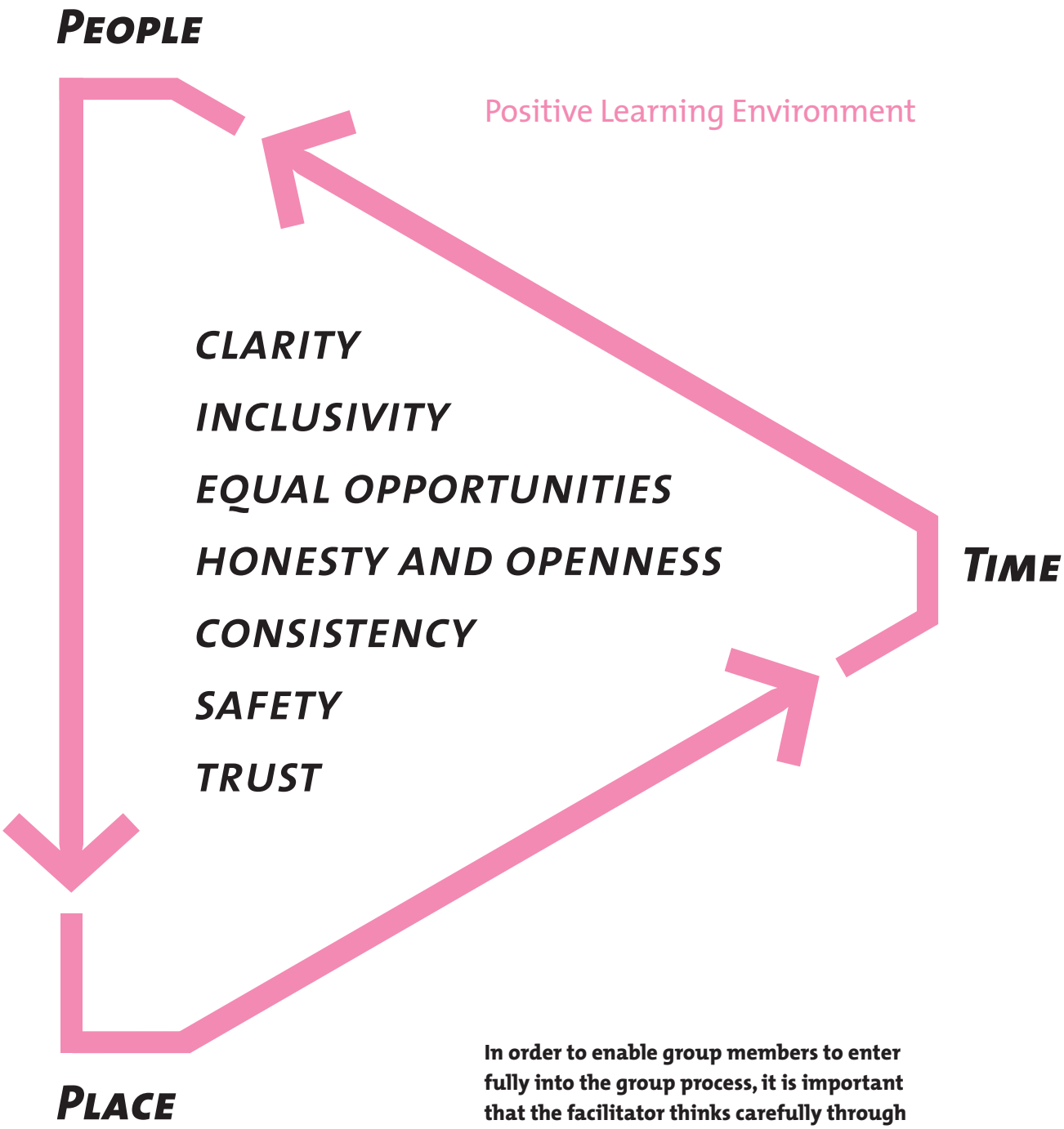
- group members are significantly involved in programme planning, development and evaluation;

- the nature of the group process is inclusive and fully interactive;

- learning takes place through open and investigative questioning and discussion rather than purely didactic methods.

To be truly effective, the 'democratic classroom' needs to be underpinned by democratic approaches throughout the school. It is difficult, for example, to expect teachers to model democratic approaches within their classrooms if they do not experience a similar democracy in management styles, decision-making processes, etc. Similarly, if pupils experience a democratic approach in one classroom, but not elsewhere, it is likely to have a detrimental effect on their relationships with different adults in the school community and to leave them uncertain about what is expected of them in terms of their participation, behaviour, etc. Children, young people and adults alike will be quick to spot inconsistencies between what is being advocated in the classroom and what is being practised in the school as a whole. Democratic ways of working are not always familiar within a school setting and although there is some risk-taking involved, the learning and relational benefits can be enormous.

11 From Benson, J. (1997), Working More Creatively with Groups, London, Routledge.



In order to enable group members to enter fully into the group process, it is important that the facilitator thinks carefully through the beginnings of the process and the gathering of the individual participants into a coherent, functioning group.

The creation of a 'safe space' in which the group can meet and learn together has an overarching significance, but there are also a number of specific factors which can be highlighted. The creation of a positive learning environment is about finding ways to maximise group members' participation for both their individual benefit and that of the group as a whole.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WELCOME

In many ways, the first session can set the tone for the rest of the group's time together. It will have a large impact on whether group members come back to the next session and / or the extent to which they are prepared to engage with the process. It is important that participants feel welcome when they enter the group space. This is not just about the words which the facilitator uses, but also the warm and inclusive atmosphere which s / he sets out to create.

Within the first session, this might include:

- Ensuring the room is physically comfortable in a way appropriate for the session's purpose.

- Having a starting ('bell') activity which will give people something to do when they arrive and may help them to feel less self-conscious. This could include anything from a structured exercise which encourages people to talk to each other, to offering a cup of tea or coffee.

- The facilitator speaking clear and inclusive words of welcome, backed up by welcoming body language and an overall style which is friendly and respectful.

- Giving people the opportunity to introduce themselves by the name they like to be called, and providing them with some guidance as to what information would be useful, with perhaps one piece of 'fun' information included, for example, your first name and why you were given it, your first name and your favourite film.

The factors which build this atmosphere of welcome need to be sustained throughout the group's life: it is not simply an 'act' for the opening session.

CLARITY ABOUT PURPOSE AND PROCESS

Group members will find it helpful to know what is expected of them in terms of participating, behaviour, etc. It is particularly important that they have a clear understanding of the purpose of the group's time together. A mismatch between the facilitator's and a group member's understanding of the group's purpose can lead to unnecessary frustrations and conflict which will have a negative effect on the experience of individuals and the group as a whole.

It is also important that the facilitator listens to the hopes and fears of group members about the process. As discussed above, where group members see evidence that their hopes and fears have been taken on board, they are likely to participate more fully and effectively in the overall process. Group members will feel more ownership of and commitment to the process where their views and ideas are included in programme development.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

As with most other aspects of their experience, each group member will come to the group with different skills and levels of skill. For the group's effectiveness, it can be valuable to include activities and exercises early in the process to ensure that all group members have a shared baseline of opportunity to develop skills that will be useful to them during the group's life and beyond. How each individual responds to the exercises will, of course, vary, but at the very least, some key skills, such as active listening and creative thinking will have been highlighted and can be revisited throughout the time the group is together. See Developing Skills within a Group (Section Five)

It is also important for the facilitator to be aware that previous group and life experiences may have bred negative 'skills' for some individuals or for the group as a whole. One example of this would be group members who have learnt to hide their feelings and opinions, especially about more controversial issues, because past experiences have taught them that these are not things to talk about in a classroom or professional setting. Specific time will be needed to address such 'skills' where they inhibit personal and group development and learning.

ENABLING PERSONAL SHARING

This kind of learning is not necessarily about right or wrong factual answers. It is about investigative approaches, hearing different perspectives and opinions, developing emotional literacy (including empathy), etc. Therefore, the life experiences, thoughts and views of each member of the group are needed so that all of the group can learn and develop. It is the facilitator's job to help people to feel confident and comfortable to do this in a way which is appropriate. This can be supported through strategies such as the following:

- activities which encourage the development of intra / interpersonal skills;

- creation of group guidelines or contract;

- the specific ground rule of using 'I' statements, avoiding the use of generalisations or assumptions about what others might think or experience;

- techniques such as a Circle Time round with a 'Sentence Starter' to aid the expression of feelings or experiences;

- the facilitator appropriately sharing some of her / his own experiences, feelings and views, encouraging a greater openness as group members become aware that the facilitator is not asking them to take risks that s/he is unwilling to take her / himself.

Ultimately, people are most likely to share their personal experiences, feelings and views when they feel that they are being listened to and valued. It is essential, however, that group members do not feel that they are being pressurised into taking risks in sharing personal information, etc. when they do not feel ready to do so or they do not feel it is appropriate.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT OR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Disruptive behaviour does not just create difficulties for the facilitator, it affects everyone in the group. At its most extreme, it may intimidate or distress people to the extent that they decide not to come back to the group or not to participate in any way beyond what they absolutely have to. It is, therefore, essential that such behaviour is addressed promptly and appropriately, for the sake of all group members as well as for the individuals involved and the facilitator. It is important, however, for the facilitator to be aware of the (sometimes fine) distinctions between purely disruptive behaviour, and challenging behaviour which emerges as the result of an uncomfortable or controversial theme. If handled effectively, the latter can provide opportunities for personal reflection and learning for the wider group as well as for individuals directly involved. A fuller discussion of disruptive and challenging behaviour, and of some response strategies can be found in Responding to Behaviour which is 'Challenging' (Section Three).

GIVING FEEDBACK

Giving feedback is about the facilitator responding to what people say and do within the group setting. Working within the framework of respect and inclusivity, it is a skill which, among other things, can be used for checking out, affirming, encouraging, and challenging.

It is a valuable part of the facilitator's job for a number of reasons, for example:

- it allows the facilitator to check that s/he has understood the points, feelings, etc. someone is trying to convey;

- the facilitator can encourage and build a group member's self-esteem through commenting positively on her / his contribution to the group;

- it can be a tool for encouraging group members to take their learning further, through affirming what they have learnt, and asking questions which may encourage them to think even more broadly or deeply about something;

- the facilitator can also give feedback on negative behaviour or comments, respectfully challenging group members to think about their words or actions, and how they might participate differently.

The facilitator can also receive feedback from group members, peers and senior colleagues / tutors. Creating opportunities for them to give feedback will both demonstrate how they are valued and enhance their own skills. For the facilitator, this can be valuable for her / his personal and professional development, and for the development of the current and future programmes. This will be most useful if you:

- ask for it to be given in a helpful way (giving examples, positive as well as critical comment);

- listen all the way through;

- remember that it is their experiences of you and their perspectives on the situation;

- give yourself permission not to reply at once, and to take time to think about what has been said;

- give yourself permission to learn from mistakes.

For feedback to be useful, it needs to be:

- planned: consider when and where is most appropriate, how the person will feel, whether s/he has had previous negative experiences, how you hope to follow it up in a constructive way, etc;
- owned: 'This is my feedback to you', i.e. how I see the situation – there may well be other perspectives;
- clear;
- specific and behaviour-focused;
- balanced: highlight strengths / weaknesses;
- relevant and soon after the situation;
- regular and integral to the group process.

Remember to give group members the opportunity to respond if they wish, or to come back to you at a later stage, either within or outside the group setting.

Feedback must always be appropriate in terms of both what the facilitator says and when they says it. For example:

- A young person with low self-esteem who is very aware of her / his position within her / his peer group, may find it difficult to receive public affirmation, so it may be more appropriate to give it on a one-to-one basis after the group session. Otherwise, rather than encouraging greater participation and learning, these may actually be inhibited.
- Yelling at a child or young person about her / his negative behaviour does not constitute appropriate feedback and breaks all the rules of the contract that the facilitator is trying to model to the group!

ENABLING APPROPRIATE ENDINGS

All group processes must come to an end at some point. Although group members and the facilitator may meet in other contexts and for other purposes, the particular process in which they were involved will be completed. Even where a teacher continues to work with the same class or a principal continues to work with her / his staff team, the series of lessons or development sessions need to have a clear finishing point. This does not mean that particular themes or concerns cannot be revised or explored further at a later date, but this should be seen as a separate stage of the process, and may not involve the same group of individuals.

Appropriate endings provide a sense of closure and contribute to the group's sense of working in a safe space with clear boundaries. Endings are also important because they are part of the learning experience. A clear ending:

- prevents the process from becoming too drawn out, or even boring;
- provides a specific opportunity for reflecting back on the process and assessing the learning which has taken place;
- creates a space for celebrating what has been learnt and the value of the relationships and process which the group has experienced;
- gives the group members the opportunity to think about how they are going to use their learning in school and in their broader life experience;
- allows group members to consider what further learning might be useful to them.

For further information on 'endings' see The Importance of Closure (Section Five) and Developing a Model for Self-evaluation (Section Six).

3.8 Useful Tips for Facilitating Discussions

Outlined below are strategies to assist effective discussion. Consider how these could be replaced (when need be) with, picture or colour cards, one word responses, thumbs up / down, other actions, puppets, etc., particularly when working with younger children.

Ways of Starting

Sometimes it is good to get everyone involved by asking them for a quick contribution. You might set the 'ball rolling' by asking each person for a one word reaction to the theme, to say, briefly, how the issue relates to them or by telling a personal anecdote that is sparked off by the subject. Alternatively, each individual could complete one of these unfinished sentences:

- *I am excited about this discussion because ...*
- *I am not sure about this discussion because ...*
- *Right now I feel ...*

NB. Consider using humour sometimes as a way of introducing controversial issues. It can be a great way of 'hooking' people's enthusiasm and good will and releasing facilitator and group member anxieties prior to a deeper level of investigation.

Questions for Reflection

What are the things I can do to create a positive and democratic learning environment for those I work with?

What practical things can I do to create a warm welcome at the start and throughout the module / programme?

Have I taken time to write down the purpose of this programme? Is it clear, relevant and easy to understand? Check it out with someone!

What skills will group members need for this programme? Have I built in sufficient time and activities to support them in developing these?

What can I do to encourage appropriate personal sharing within the group?

What might it be appropriate for me to share from my own experiences?

What opportunities have I built in to give and to receive feedback?

Have I ensured that the different aspects of ending the programme can be attended to?

Ways of Ending

Stopping a discussion can be as hard as starting one! Marking the end in some way often helps. Ask a member of the group to sum up what has been said, gather some key words / points of learning on a flipchart, or try using these unfinished sentences:

- *By participating in this discussion I have gained . . .*
- *New things I have learnt by participating in this discussion include . . .*
- *After participating in this discussion I will do things differently because . . .*
- *Something I have enjoyed about participating in this discussion is . . .*

Effective Discussions

Sometimes a discussion can become sidetracked, people can get bogged down in a particular issue, energy levels can plummet, something can happen to distract people, etc. There are a number of quick interventions that may help. (At other times, a more significant intervention may be needed, or people may simply need some 'time out'.)

Just Checking
Everyone can be asked to say a few words about how they are feeling at that moment, for example, bored, interested, tired, etc. Alternatively, the facilitator can call out suggestions and individuals can stand up if the word matches how they are feeling. This can be useful if the group seems to be breaking up for no clear reason.

Optimists
If a discussion is becoming negative, or the group is becoming irritable and mistrustful, ask everyone to make one positive statement before they criticise an idea. They may need a structure to do this, for example, 'One good thing about that is . . . I also feel that . . . '

Sides
If discussion is becoming polarised, people should be asked to put forward the opposite viewpoint to their own position or to state their own view, then put forward an opposing case. Alternatively, they could be asked to repeat what they heard the other person say and check this out with the speaker. Indeed you may need to be prepared to do something similar yourself or to play 'devil's advocate'. This can be useful in getting people to consider the others' case and lead to a better acceptance of the others' views.

Turns
To help make discussions less rowdy, to encourage listening as well as talking, to support individuals to think before they speak, a number of techniques can be used:

- put a ball on a table or in the middle of the group. If anyone wants to talk, s/he must take the ball from the table or the middle and return it (always to the table / middle, not to another group member) when s/he has finished.

- give three playing cards to each participant, once s/he uses these, s/he is not allowed to speak again.

Stuck Discussions

Sometimes, discussions just seem to get 'stuck'. No one has anything to say and there is an uneasy, anxious atmosphere. Usually when a discussion is really stuck, something has happened to make people feel very anxious. They are afraid of talking. All their energy is bound up in worrying and they find it hard to speak. This often happens if you have approached an emotional subject too soon, before enough trust has developed in the group. Leave emotional subjects until people know each other better. If it does happen, however, (and sometimes it does quite unexpectedly) try:

- *going back to less threatening topics;*
- *working in pairs or smaller groups;*
- *saying what you think is wrong – talking about the problem can make it less frightening and you can start to rebuild trust.*

Sometimes discussions get stuck because people have genuinely contributed all their ideas. When this happens, even if it is sooner than you anticipated, you need to close the discussion (possibly with one of the suggestions above) and move on. It may be useful for the group to come back to the theme at a later stage when they have had more time to think about it or have learnt more about it through other activities.

Questions for Reflection

Have I thought about how I am going to start and finish the discussions within this session?

Have I a few quick strategies 'up my sleeve' so I can feel confident to respond to situations such as those outlined above?

Considering this session's theme and the group involved, are there any potential difficulties that I may need to watch out for?

What are my fears about this session's potential discussion themes?

Will I be able to be flexible if I need to alter my session plan?

Have I a couple of activities in my head if we finish the planned work early?

3.9 Responding to Behaviour which is 'Challenging'

The starting point for any facilitator in responding to challenging behaviour within a group is to be aware of their own attitudes, actions and reactions within the group process as a whole and within a specific situation.

When we think about challenging behaviour, we often imagine behaviour which is noisily disruptive, aggressive or confrontational. This may 'tap into' our anxieties about a lack of skill or training / support in ways of positively responding to verbal or physical conflict. There may be, however, many other behaviours which we find challenging, and it is important to be aware of which behaviours have an emotional impact on us and which raise anxieties about our ability to deal with or resolve them. Some challenging behaviours within a groupwork setting can include:

- *shyness and linked withdrawal;*
- *disengagement, possibly due to boredom, a sense of irrelevance, etc.;*
- *joking about and a refusal to engage with serious themes;*
- *other diversionary tactics;*
- *cliques, and refusals to work as a group.*

When you are striving to create an inclusive, participative atmosphere, the challenge may be how to ensure that people are genuinely included and able to contribute and learn.

Finding out What's Wrong:

- Don't assume that because you can see a particular behaviour that you know the reasons behind it.

- Jumping to the wrong conclusions may mean that you make the wrong response.

- The priority must always be ensuring the physical and emotional safety of the group.

- Once this is established, take time to check out what is going on with group members.

- This discussion in itself may be enough to resolve the difficulty, otherwise it will allow you to make an informed decision about the next step.

There are many resources which provide helpful insights into positive behaviour management both generally and in a specific groupwork based context. Some of these are listed in the resources section at the back of this pack. Below are some aspects to consider and some specific strategies which may be useful.

Thinking about Ourselves First

There can be a tendency to associate challenging behaviours with children and young people, but adults are equally likely to display any of the behaviours previously listed. Given this, it is important to be aware of your own behaviour as a group member, and the things that you might do which will create difficulties for the facilitator and, potentially, inhibit the group as a whole.

A humorous list of examples (How to 'Wind-up' the Facilitator), but with a serious point, is outlined below. It is worth thinking about how these or similar things irritate you when you are facilitating, teaching or chairing a meeting, for at least two reasons:

- it helps you to be aware of the potential impact of your behaviour on the facilitator;

- it helps you to be aware of behaviour which particularly triggers negative reactions within you when you are facilitating. This can help you to develop some coping strategies and constructive responses in advance, rather than reacting out of irritation or frustration.

Think also about any distinctions you might make in the way that you approach a situation involving adults and one involving children or young people. Sometimes these distinctions will be appropriate, because of the age groups involved and their levels of understanding, personal development, etc. Although working with peers may involve different dynamics, we must respond to children and young people with the same respect which we give to adults.

Sometimes it is tempting to let adults away with behaviour not perceived as acceptable if the group members were children or young people. Often this is the case because we find responding to the behaviour of adults, particularly our peers, more challenging, and some additional support (for example, within a supervision context) may be needed.

HOW TO 'WIND-UP' THE FACILITATOR

1 Always arrive late and make a lot of noise finding a seat.

2 When talking, use 20 words when five would do.

3 Set your watch alarm to go off regularly.

4 During discussion yawn and sigh deeply.

5 Pass notes to others.

6 When the facilitator introduces an exercise, just say that you have done it before and you know that it does not work.

7 Always come in late after lunch and fall asleep - alternatively, do not bother to turn up for the afternoon session.

8 Organise for friends to call you on your mobile phone during the session, and send text messages to those that do not.

9 When asked if there are any questions, ask how long it is until break / lunch.

10 During discussions, talk behind your hand to the person next to you.

11 When in small groups to do an exercise, spend the time talking about your last holiday or what you're planning to do at the weekend.

12 Break the ground rule about speaking for yourself. Make many sweeping generalisations, which suggest that the whole group shares your view that the session is pointless.

13 Do not say a word during the evaluation, then go around afterwards being very critical.

14 At the end, do not pick up your handouts and take them with you. Ideally, leave them scattered on the floor. [12]

12 Adapted from Skinner, S. (1992), Training and How Not to Panic, Halifax, Community Development Training Unit.

A Context for Responding to Challenging Behaviour

The starting point to responding to challenging behaviour is to consider whether you, as the facilitator, have done your best to create and maintain a safe learning space. This would include the following:

CLARITY OF GROUP / PROGRAMME PURPOSE

- Have you clearly explained the purpose of the group being together and the specific programme?

- What evidence do you have that group members have understood this and perceive its relevance to them?

- Are you restating the purpose, flagging up any changes / developments and checking this out with group members at appropriate stages throughout the process / programme?

A SAFE SPACE FOR LEARNING

- Have you taken sufficient time in the early stages of the programme to:

  - *get to know group members' names?*
  - *build trusting and respectful relationships between yourself and the group, and between group members?*
  - *work with the group in establishing a clear contract for working together?*
  - *enable the group members to develop the skills they will need in order to participate fully in the process / programme?*

- Are you taking time to revisit these aspects of group building at appropriate stages throughout the process / programme?

PROGRAMME PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Have you made yourself aware of any appropriate information you need with regard to aspects of group members' life (and, specifically, school) experience which may impact on the way in which they participate in this particular group and programme?

- Have you included a broad enough range of learning experiences to cater for the different learning styles and interests of group members?

- Is there coherence between individual sessions / activities and the overall programme purpose?

- What evidence is there that group members are able to see the purpose and relevance of individual sessions and activities to:

  - *the programme as a whole?*
  - *themselves as individuals?*

- Is there flexibility in the programme to respond to group members' learning needs and interests?

- Have group members been able to share in programme planning, evaluation and further development?

Developing Responses to Specific Behaviours

The ways of working suggested previously may seem time-consuming within the pressures of a classroom or other timetable, however, if you are encountering 'challenging' behaviours, it is likely that time is not being spent usefully anyway, and that learning and enjoyment are being restricted.

In order that learning and enjoyment can be re-established the issues and behaviour need to be dealt with and this process, if facilitated well, will involve learning in itself. Sometimes this means having the courage to abandon your original programme, at least temporarily!

Below are some examples of behaviour which will need a response, and some suggestions as to what this process might involve in terms of underlying principles. The list is far from exhaustive, and there are no set answers: different settings, groups and programmes will need different responses. There are also scenarios at the end of the section which you can use to consider your own underlying values and strategies. In each case, the starting point for responding is a respectful and inclusive setting.

A GROUND RULE IS BROKEN

If this happens, it is important that the response is prompt and appropriately visible to the whole group: they need to know that the contract is meaningful, and that they have a responsibility to keep it themselves and to support the rest of the group members in keeping it. Equally, they need to know that there are consequences if a ground rule is broken. Having involved all group members in drawing up the contract, they also need to be involved, where possible, in deciding what happens if a ground rule is broken. See Developing a Contract / Learning Agreement (Section Five).

CONFLICT WITHIN THE GROUP

Conflict can take many forms within the group. A ***restorative approach*** to behavioural issues[13] would argue that negative behaviours are not simply about broken rules but are, more significantly, about the breakdown of relationships which require restoration. Any response will need to address the feelings and attitudes of both 'perpetrators' and 'victims' – it is likely that both or all of those involved may perceive themselves as victims in some way, or may perceive themselves as both at different points in the process. In the example above, if an individual group member breaks a ground rule, the relationships between her / him and the other group members, and between her / him and you are broken. As the facilitator, you are likely to need to take on a mediation role or to involve another facilitator. Depending on the incident and on the group itself, this could be another group member. Some guidance on dealing with conflict situations, including mediation, is provided in Managing Conflict (Section Four).

LACK OF PARTICIPATION

An apparent lack of, or a withdrawal from participation by individual group members can be for all kinds of reasons: shyness, a preference for observation, boredom, no sense of relevance or meaningfulness, distractions, a more pressing priority to think about, etc. Each of these will require a different response, and you are unlikely to know what the cause is unless you check it out with the group or the particular individual concerned. When it does involve one person, it will often be more appropriate to address it with her / him individually. If the cause is shyness or anxiety, for example, picking her / him out within the group is likely to make matters worse.

13 See, for example, Belinda Hopkins, www.transformingconflict.org

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

All kinds of behaviours can be disruptive, whether it is apparently harmless joking, everyone talking at once and not listening to you or to each other, or numerous other examples. Again, there may be a wide range of reasons for the behaviour, and you will probably need to check out the possible causes in order to deal with it effectively. Is it:

- *boredom;*
- *anxiety about discussing a particular theme;*
- *absence of a sense of connection or relevance;*
- *excitement about other things;*
- *not being challenged or stimulated enough;*
- *finding it too challenging or difficult;*
- *an issue or conflict from outside that has been brought into the group;*
- *the time of year?*

You may need to use some 'containing' strategies in order to create the space for exploring causes and potential responses. Depending on the circumstances, these could include:

- a change of activity – possibly to something more active to enable people to 'let off steam' (see Section Five (Using Games)) or, alternatively, to something calming, perhaps a few moments silence;

- a change of venue – to somewhere where there will be less disruptions or distractions, or with different associations;

- a change of theme – back to a 'safer' theme, until there is greater trust and skill within the group to enable them to explore the one which you had originally planned;

- a five / ten minute break;

- using the break to have a quick one-to-one chat with particular individuals, if need be;

- using 'warning cards' or quietly letting people know that you are unhappy with their behaviour and why, so that any further action is part of a process and is not unexpected or misunderstood;

- 'time out' from the group for an individual member (this needs to be managed appropriately, and be for a set length of time);

- going around the circle and asking everyone for one word to describe how they are feeling at that moment – this will give you a starting point for responding and / or opening a discussion.

Where the whole group seems to be affected, and you are fairly sure of the cause, suggesting this openly to the group and giving them the opportunity to respond and to talk about it, may in itself partly resolve the problem. It may at least give you back their attention, because (if you have got it right!), you are now working with them on something that is relevant, set by their needs and at their level. If you have got it wrong, inviting their input and analysis may in itself be enough to re-engage them with the process. When you are not sure, asking an open question to check out your assumptions may also provide a way in, for example:

- 'It seems to me that some people are feeling a bit unsettled today. Would anyone like to tell me how you are actually feeling?'

- 'What do you think of these activities that we're doing today? Why is that?'

Always try to include those who seem to be less directly affected, or who may have gone quiet as others became more disruptive: they may feel that it is nothing to do with them, or they may feel frustrated by the disruption to the session, etc. These individuals may also be more able to see a creative way out of the difficulty.

Summary Points:

- Start by creating and maintaining an inclusive and safe setting.
- Model the behaviour you expect from group members.
- Affirm and give attention to positive behaviour, rather than focusing on negative behaviour.
- Check out your assumptions: do not assume you know the cause of the behaviour you see.
- Confirm the physical and emotional safety of the group before going on to address the behaviour more fully.
- Consider how the whole group has been affected, not just those most obviously involved.
- Be flexible with your programme – keep reviewing it to ensure relevance, stimulation and enjoyment.
- Take time to resolve situations thoroughly, if possible: it will be worth it in the long run.

NB. It is possible that you will encounter children and young people whose behaviour is consistently challenging and who need additional support. This can be stressful and exhausting for the teacher(s) working with the child or young person on a daily basis, and they also need support, as may the other pupils who participate daily in classes with them. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, the importance of a supportive staff team comes into play, as does awareness and availability of external resources, for example, through the ELB or other agencies. One source for suggestions on strategies for working with children and young people 'beyond' is Jenny Mosley's Circle Time Model as outlined in her various books.[14]

Responding to Behaviour which is 'Challenging'

Outlined below are a number of scenarios, based on real life examples, for you to consider how the theory of responding to behaviour which is 'challenging' might translate into everyday practice. Drawing on the ideas within Section Three (Responding to Behaviour which is 'Challenging') and elsewhere in the resource, how might you respond to the situations outlined below?

Alternatively, or additionally, consider examples from your own experience – reflecting on them now, what might you do the same and what might you do differently?

14 See, for example, Mosley, J. (2000), Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom, Wisbech, LDA.

Responding to Behaviour which is 'Challenging'

1 You are facilitating a session exploring a contentious issue. (This could be anything from a playground conflict, to a political or ethical issue, to a change that is proposed for the school's decision-making structures, etc.). One person in the group seems to have particularly strong views on the subject and is dominating the discussion to the extent that the majority of group members have not spoken.

How do you respond?

2 There is a lively discussion taking place within the group, but one person has not contributed at all in this or the previous session. When you used sentence completion around the circle, s/he chose to pass. You are not sure of the reasons for her / his lack of participation, but you are concerned that s/he may not be learning from or enjoying the sessions, and, equally, no one else is benefiting from any contribution this person might be able to make.

How do you respond?

3 You are feeling frustrated because every time you try to take the group's work and discussion to a deeper level, one group member with apparent influence over others keeps joking, introducing 'red herrings' and generally pulling the conversation back to a superficial level.

How do you respond?

4 You are exploring flags and symbols with a group. After significant preparation, you decide to introduce actual flags as part of a discussion exercise. The behaviour of a small number of group members becomes aggressively disruptive, preventing both them and all other group members from engaging with the exercise.

How do you respond?

Exploring Controversial Issues

'... all learning begins when our comfortable ideas are found to be inadequate ... the diversity of ideas that comes from the diversity of people is one of the best ways to create this necessary condition of learning.'

CAMBRON-MCCABE, N. AND QUANTZ, R., 'GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PREPARING TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS' IN SENGE, P. ET AL. (2000), SCHOOLS THAT LEARN, LONDON, NICHOLAS BREALEY PUBLISHING.

exploring controversial issues

4.0
What is a Controversial Issue?

A controversial issue is 'an issue about which there is no one fixed or universally held point of view. Such issues are those which commonly divide society and for which significant groups offer conflicting explanations and solutions'.[1]

By their very nature, controversial issues can involve strong feelings as well as different perspectives and viewpoints. Each person will approach them from her / his own value base and life experiences.

Intentional and Responsive Work

In considering this area of work within schools and other educational settings, it is important to recognise that opportunities to explore controversial issues do not only come about because they have been planned into a scheme of work or a staff training session. Often, they may arise as a result of an external event (in the media or the local community, for example) or as a consequence of an incident of prejudice, discrimination or bullying (whether general, or of a sectarian or racist nature) within the school itself. In these cases, an immediate response may be required, and / or it may be appropriate to build the issue into future lesson plans and meeting schedules. This means that everyone involved in the school can contribute to learning and may find themselves in a position to respond in particular situations, for example, the playground, the canteen, off-site activities, etc. This kind of responsive work may be very different in its starting points from the intentional work of planned lessons, modules and training programmes, but the underlying ethos and processes will be essentially the same. If a class regularly uses Circle Time, for example, to explore classroom issues, or a staff team regularly uses a groupwork format to reflect on school successes, issues and concerns, the fora for responsive work are already in place. Time taken to create a whole school approach, to build positive relationships, to develop skills and to familiarise adults and pupils with these ways of working will be well spent, and, in fact, crucial in providing a framework for the exploration of more controversial issues however and whenever they arise.

1 Advisory Group on Citizenship (1998), Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in School, London, QCA.

Why do Children, Young People and Adults need opportunities to explore Controversial Issues?

'Stories are the secret reservoirs of values: change the stories individuals and nations live by and tell themselves and you change the individuals and nations. Nations and people are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their history for future flowerings.' [2]

- Children and young people's experience of learning in school needs to be relevant to their broader life experience and the opportunities and decisions which they face personally, socially and vocationally.

- Exploration of controversial issues opens up many opportunities for personal development and learning.

- Avoidance or denial of difficult issues can leave a significant gap in their educational experience.

- Controversial issues often have a strong 'feelings' dimension. Giving children and young people the opportunity to articulate and explore these feelings is an important aspect of developing emotional literacy.

- Exploring controversial issues involves the development of a whole range of skills including active participation and listening, critical and creative thinking, investigative and reasoning skills, decision-making, empathy, finding positive ways of approaching diversity and conflict, etc.

- An indication that a school is a genuinely 'safe place' for everyone in the school community and for those who visit, will be the extent to which children, young people and adults are able to openly and respectfully discuss controversial issues.

- Perhaps most importantly, research indicates that children and young people are interested in these kinds of issues and want opportunities to explore them.

- These experiences and learning are also important for adults so that when they have the opportunity to explore them with children and young people, they can do so with:

  - *a personal awareness of the everyday nature of such issues;*
  - *confidence in their own ability to participate in and / or facilitate such discussions;*
  - *a recognition of the learning they can gain from children, young people and their peers.*

Questions for Reflection

What are some of the issues that I would define as controversial?

Do I see it as part of the role and responsibility of schools to explore issues such as these with children, young people and adults within the school community?

What do I personally perceive as some of the potential benefits of such exploration:
- *for myself;*
- *for children and young people;*
- *for the adults in the school community?*

What do I perceive as some of the potential difficulties?

Can I see possibilities for creating opportunities for this kind of exploration within my own work and sphere of influence? Where?

2 Okri, B. (1996), Birds of Heaven, London, Phoenix.

4.1 Diversity Dictionary [3]

Prejudice
Unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand without knowledge, thought or reason. Feelings or attitudes (positive or negative) towards individuals or groups and based on prior assumptions.

An untested or inherited assumption or belief

Stereotype
Tendency to think or act in rigid, repetitive and often meaningless patterns. A standardised image or perception shared by all members of a social group. Most of our stereotypes tend to be negative, because of this some people prefer to substitute it for the less emotive or value-loaded term 'generalisation'.

Applying fixed notions to people

Discrimination
Unfair treatment of a person, racial group, minority, etc; action based on prejudice. It is important to see discrimination as prejudice in action, since it is based on the creation of unfavourable distinctions between one group or people and another, often because of characteristics such as race, colour, sex and intelligence.

Discrimination can be positive but is usually negative.

Race / Racism
Group of persons sharing a genetic pool. Disputed term as cannot really be shown to exist. Racism occurs when discriminatory action is taken on the basis of a person's or group's perceived ethnic origin.

Sectarianism [4]
A system of attitudes, actions, beliefs and structures:

- *at personal, communal and institutional levels;*
- *which always involves religion, and typically involves a negative mixing of religion and politics;*

which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity and the free expression of difference; and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating to:

- *hardening the boundaries between groups;*
- *overlooking others;*
- *belittling, dehumanising or demonising others;*
- *justifying or collaborating in domination of others;*
- *physical or verbal intimidating or attacking others.*

3 Adapted from an NUS / USI Training Document.

4 Adapted from Liechty, J. and Clegg, C. (2001), Moving beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland, Dublin, Columba Press.

4.1 Acknowledging Fears and Concerns

There are people who for different reasons, may feel very positive about the opportunity to explore more controversial or challenging issues. Others may have significant anxieties based around the very term 'controversial issues'. Even for those who do feel positive, there may be concerns about the risks that might be required, and fears that other people will not bring the same degree of openness to the group.

Why do we feel Anxious or Afraid?

When thinking about exploring themes which may be controversial it is important to bear in mind that:

- Fears and concerns are genuinely felt, even if you, as the facilitator, do not share them. Equally, there may be very strong reasons why people feel this way and these may emerge in discussion.

- Fears and concerns are likely to be strongest among a group that does not know each other well and where the levels of trust are low.

- They may be shaped by previous negative experiences, or by stories they have heard from others.

- The tendency to raise subjects such as politics, religion, etc. only with those from the same background and perspective can deepen fears about conversing on these issues with those from different backgrounds.

- A culture of 'polite avoidance' of themes such as politics and religion may mean that people simply do not have much experience of such conversations and do not know what to expect. They may fear that a 'can of worms' may be opened, rather than feeling positive about things they might learn or the opportunity to hear other people's perspectives.

- Fears and concerns may be caused or heightened by events and relationships within the local community and / or by wider societal and political developments.

Fears and Concerns that might be Experienced?

Below are listed some examples of fears and concerns that were expressed or demonstrated in various ways by group participants exploring themes of identity and sectarianism in Northern Ireland. Remember, these are only examples and the list is not exhaustive!

- *not being listened to or respected*
- *being laughed at, mocked or embarrassed*
- *being misunderstood*
- *giving offence*
- *harming (new) friendships*
- *being 'forced' to talk about difficult / sensitive / personal issues*
- *isolation or being a 'lone voice'*
- *'letting the side down' or breaking the united front presented by the rest of the group or sub-group*
- *being shown up as ignorant of their own or others' traditions*
- *issues being talked about outside the session or group*
- *verbal or physical attack, either during the session or afterwards*

Fears and Concerns that might be Experienced by the Facilitator?

You may share some of the fears and concerns that group members feel, and it is important to explore these as part of your personal preparation. You may also have concerns about how you facilitate this work, and whether you have sufficient support within your school or organisation.

This issue is explored more fully in Personal Preparation for Facilitation (Section Three).

Thorough preparation and finding ways to create a safe space are of paramount importance to allay fears of both participants and the facilitator, ensuring that the risk-taking involved is appropriate and adequately supported. The most effective overall structure is one which is based on a whole school approach where the commitment to, and responsibility for, this way of working is shared by everyone in the school community.

Questions for Reflection

Do some of the fears and concerns listed above resonate for me?

Where can I get some support in addressing these?

Am I aware of any of these fears and concerns being particularly relevant for the group in relation to the themes we will be exploring together?

What are some of the things I may need to do with the group to address these?

Having worked with group members to address their fears and concerns, what are likely to be some of the positive outcomes for them from exploring these particular themes?

Responding to the Unexpected

Sometimes themes may arise within a session which you as the facilitator did not think would be controversial or emotive but which spark off strong feelings within the group.

Some of the group members may be as surprised by this as you are. If you feel personally well prepared and have put the structures in place which create a safe space for your groupwork, you will already have the tools which you need to facilitate the new development within the group process. Again, this may be a time when you have to significantly change, or even abandon, your original programme.

4.2
Working with Emotions

Working with controversial issues involves facilitators in being willing to:

- pay attention to their own feelings and values around sensitive / controversial issues;
- see their own personal development as an integral part of their professional development;
- understand that their growth in confidence and competence will be a continual process – 'lifelong learning';
- take account of other relevant programmes both within and outside of school, and support group members in making connections in their learning;
- work towards creating an open and democratic classroom using negotiated ground rules to promote a safe, enjoyable environment conducive to enquiry and learning.

Working with controversial issues involves group members in being willing to:

- recognise and take responsibility for their feelings as opposed to avoiding or denying them through blaming or accusing someone else for making them feel bad;
- pay attention to how they each experience feelings in their bodies and the language that they use to communicate how they are feeling;
- look for and, when appropriate, challenge patterns which connect their feelings and their behaviour;
- operate the ground rules and act in ways that promote fairness and democracy.

All of this needs to be grounded in a framework of positive relationships which is sustained throughout the process. See Building Positive Relationships (Section Three) and Creating Safe Space (Section Five).

What Feelings are likely to be Generated around Controversial Issues?

Possibilities might include:

Anger
Expressions of hatred; stereotyping, insulting, denigrating, blaming, accusing the other person / 'side', wish for revenge / retribution.

Pride
in individual / collective identity, culture, a particular cause, place, event, etc.

Hurt
feelings of being ignored / neglected; not having a chance to tell their side of the story; experience of being a victim of conflict.

Kinship / loyalty
towards an individual, group, party, etc.

Guilt and shame
feeling responsible, dishonourable, unworthy; feeling of 'letting the side down'.

Sadness
sense of loss, grief, disillusionment, hopelessness, despair.

Triumph
sense of achievement, victory (possibly at the expense of another person / group).

How Might they be Manifested?

There are many models for understanding behaviour but a very generalised summary of them could suggest that our emotions can be experienced in three ways. We may, of course, display our feelings in more than one way at the same time. These are through:

1 bodily feelings, for example, 'butterflies in the tummy' i.e. 'feeling' the feelings;

2 physical behaviour including body language i.e. 'acting' out the feelings through gesture, posture, behaviour, non-verbal communication;

3 verbalising i.e. naming and 'talking' about the feelings.

Why do Some People Seem to Act out their Feelings more than Others?

We all have varying levels of self-awareness about how our emotions can affect our behaviour. Our self-awareness can also fluctuate depending on how we are feeling on any given day and on the degree of the emotion aroused by the issue. Strong feelings will usually indicate a high degree of personal involvement with the issue – currently or in past experience.

Are Feelings Always What they Seem to Be?

Instead of demonstrating what we are actually feeling in one or more of the three ways suggested, another option is to mask or translate the feeling into a form that is somehow less frightening or more acceptable (in our perception) either to ourselves or to another, for example, the facilitator. Many of us resort to using ***defence mechanisms*** when we are feeling threatened in any way. Common defence mechanisms include:

Resisting or Denial
refusing to accept that there is any emotional reaction, despite evidence to the contrary, for example, 'I'm not angry!!!'

Sublimating
channelling anger towards a safe target as opposed to dealing with the root cause.

Avoidance
disengaging from the session; causing disruption to divert attention away from source of unease; displaying boredom; giggling; 'This is stupid' etc.

Compliance
where a group member appears to be engaging but actually is not.

Minimising
feelings, perhaps by taking refuge in clichés such as, 'It was OK / not too bad', 'I'm alright / fine', etc.

Are Defence Mechanisms Unhelpful when Looking at Controversial Issues?

Defence mechanisms are there for very good reasons: they are forms of learned behaviour that in our past experiences have proved helpful in dealing with threatening situations. As such, they are to be respected and worked with gently. When dealing with controversial issues the aim is to provide enough safety to be able to explore the issue that has set off the defence mechanism in the first place, but at a level and a pace that the person can handle. Too confrontational an approach can cause the person to become more defensive, leaving little opportunity for learning.

What Can be Done if Someone does Become Very Emotional?

SUMMARISE

When working with controversial issues, periodically summarise what seems to be happening and reflect this back to the group, for example, 'I can see that when I say that there seems to be a variety of reactions. Some of you look a bit annoyed, some of you seem OK.'

In this way, if someone does become very emotional, it will not come as a huge shock to the group. This also creates partnership between the facilitator and the group around the pace and the intensity of the learning processes.

LET GROUP MEMBERS SET THE PACE

The facilitator will need to 'feel her / his way' as to how far and how deep to go within the given time. This also means checking out the group's readiness, perhaps through tentative questions, such as 'Would it be OK to talk about ...,' and making adjustments guided by group responses, such as ' Maybe we could skip on to looking at people's attitudes towards...'.

ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE GROUP

If feelings do become strongly engaged do not ignore them or pretend that nothing is happening. If you do, the individual and the group as a whole will loose confidence in your honesty. They do not necessarily expect you to 'fix things' but they will need you to acknowledge something is happening and to work with them in dealing with it.

RESPECT FEELINGS

Do not minimise anyone's reaction otherwise they may feel humiliated, ashamed or exposed. Reflect the person's feelings to them and the group, and offer them a choice: 'Is this something you want to talk about now or would it be better to take some other time to do it?'.

If someone is personally aggrieved over something that has arisen out of the group's work provide an opportunity for them to speak, listen, reflect, summarise and acknowledge the level of feeling. This does not mean condoning or rejecting the validity of the feeling. That can be a matter for more discussion once feelings around the issue have been discharged.

If someone in the group feels tearful, it is important to acknowledge this and to reassure her / him and the group that tears are OK. It may be appropriate to offer her / him some 'time out', to talk with her /him individually after the session, or support her / him to stay within the group.

Do encourage everyone as individuals to take responsibility for their own feelings. When taking part in discussions ask everyone to use 'I' statements as opposed to 'We' / 'You'. If necessary, interrupt speakers politely to remind them to do this. Model this yourself as the facilitator.

Allow people to respond to each other's feelings without intervening to 'protect' them unless this becomes necessary. Where appropriate, keep reminding them of the contract – the importance of respect, etc.

NO-BLAME

- Do not make the group feel guilty that feelings are running high; instead encourage them to consider the meaning of such strong feelings and what can be learned from them.

- Do not scapegoat individuals; keep the emphasis on 'us as a group'.

- Try to provide a safe and respectful way for people to express their feelings, for example, through offering a structure: 'When you say ..., I feel ...', etc.

- Be 'up front' (in relationship terms, aim for transparency) about what is happening: 'It's obvious that X and Z are very annoyed by this and we need to sort this out before moving on,' and involve the group actively in creating some sort of resolution.

- Do not force people to take more risks than they are ready for – but, equally, do not limit the group inappropriately by your own fears.

WHEN IT ALL SEEMS TO GO WRONG

Try not to feel that because the session has not 'gone to plan' that it has been a disaster. It can seem unhelpful and contrived to steer discussion too closely. Wherever the group and discussion have ended up will have involved useful learning. Turn the situation into an opportunity for evaluation and learning. See If Things 'Go Wrong' (Section Five).

Questions for Reflection

What are my anxieties around facilitating work which may raise strong emotions?

What can I do to minimise these anxieties without limiting the work itself?

Am I aware of similar or other anxieties within the group?

How can I best support group members?

Have I strategies in place if someone does become very emotional?

4.3.
Managing Conflict

The Chinese word for 'conflict' is made up of two characters.

One character implies that conflict can be a crisis, while the other indicates that it can be an opportunity. Often we focus on the crisis and miss the opportunity to see the positive aspect about conflict.

The reality is that conflict is all pervasive in our lives. It appears in our personal life, exists in our communities and is present in schools.

STARTING POINTS:

1 Conflict is a natural part of everyday life.

2 Conflict in itself is neutral, however, if not handled appropriately conflict can become very destructive; it can also bring about learning, growth and change.

3 Each of us can develop skills to handle conflict creatively.

Conflict is constructive when it:

- *brings about meaningful communication;*
- *addresses the issues;*
- *releases built up emotions or anxiety.*

Conflict is destructive when it:

- *causes aggressive or violent behaviour;*
- *hardens attitudes;*
- *lowers self-confidence, self-esteem or security;*
- *prevents real issues from being addressed.*

Types of conflict can focus on the following themes:

Interests
What 'I' want
What 'you' want

Understanding
What 'I' understand
What 'you' understand

Values
What is important to 'me'
What is important to 'you'

Styles
How do 'I' deal with issues
How do 'you' deal with issues

Opinions
What 'I' think
What 'you' think

Questions for Reflection

What do you understand conflict to be?

Describe a positive / negative experience of conflict?

Was it resolved?

What were your feelings at the time, and now?

Can we Simplify Conflict and Focus on how it is Made Up? [5]

Behaviour
Often, the first experience of conflict is behaviour (shouting, fighting, withdrawing etc.).

Feelings
Behind the behaviour there is normally a feeling (anger, frustration, hurt, powerlessness etc.). We need to ask, 'What is the person feeling?'

Issues
Behind the feelings there are normally issues or experiences. We need to ask, 'Why are they feeling that way?'

Relationships
In conflicts, issues usually involve another party or relationship. We need to ask, 'Who else is involved?'

Personal Task
Using this structure, describe a conflict with which you are familiar.

Conflict Management Styles [6]

Five main ways to manage conflict:

1 Avoid
The individual withdraws from the conflict. S/he believes it is hopeless to try and resolve conflict and avoid people and issues that may cause it.

2 Accommodate
These are co-operative individuals who tend to quickly accept the position of others and ignore their own needs. They are very concerned about keeping relationships together and fear conflict will damage relationships.

3 Compete
Those who adopt this style try to force others to accept their positions and deny the feelings and needs of others. They believe in 'win-lose' scenarios.

4 Compromise
This style is characterised by a 'give and take' approach to conflict resolution. Compromising is a middle ground, which addresses issues to some depth and leaves people partially satisfied.

5 Collaborate
These individuals confront conflict openly and fairly. They have a high regard for other interests and for preserving relationships.

Questions for Reflection

What strategy do you think you adopt most often?

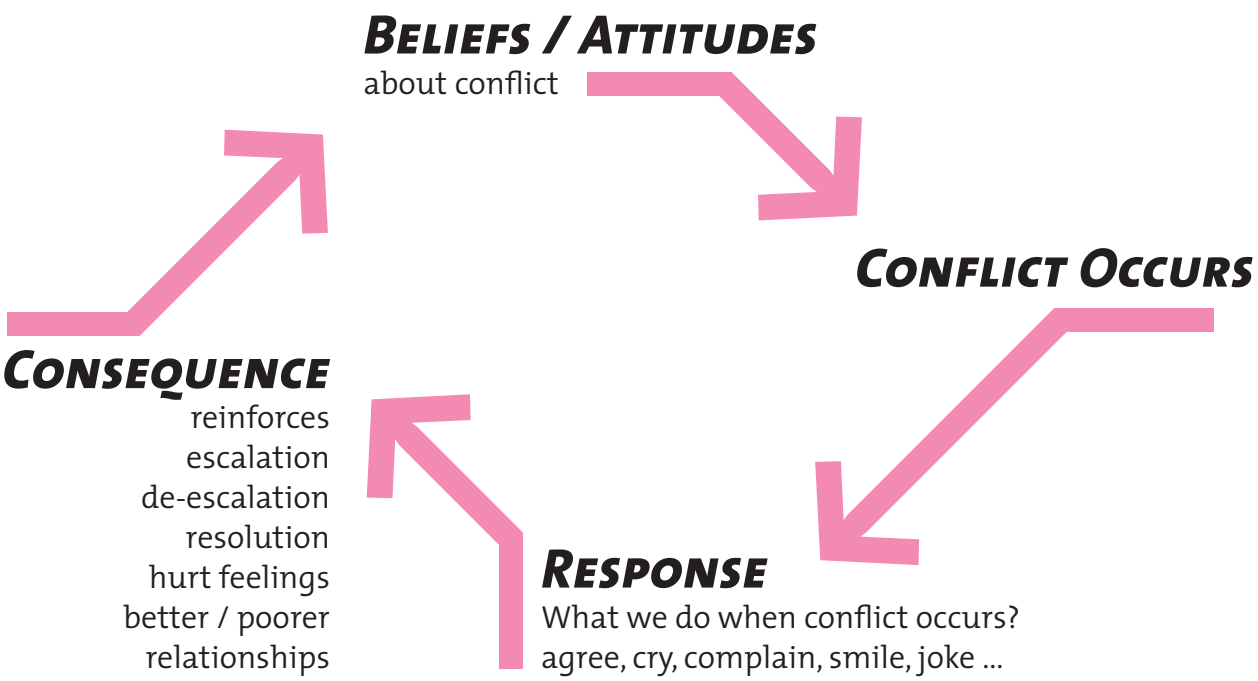
Is this different in your personal life to how you manage conflict in the classroom / with colleagues / with other adults in the school community?

Does your strategy change depending on the situation?

What other factors influence how you deal with conflict?

How does the school deal with conflict?

5+6 Adapted from material developed by Mediation Northern Ireland.



Conflict Cycle

What we believe about conflict comes from the messages we received from, for example:

- *our parents;*
- *teachers;*
- *the media;*
- *our own experiences.*

These beliefs affect how we respond when a conflict occurs. It is, therefore, important to reflect upon where our messages have come from.

Questions for Reflection

Where did you get your messages about conflict?

What did you learn about conflict?

How was conflict dealt with in your home, with friends, in school or other workplaces?

Is it important that children, young people and adults learn about conflict?

What do you want children, young people and adults in the school community to learn about conflict?

What support do you need to facilitate this work?

Practical Steps for Dealing with Conflict Between People [7]

Do not let conflict fester. Address conflicts as early as possible, when there is the greatest possibility of resolving the conflict and restoring the relationship.

Talk directly to the person with whom you have the problem (providing there is no threat of physical violence). This is much better than sending a letter, shouting, throwing things or complaining to everyone else.

Think beforehand about what to say. It is important to be clear about what the problem is and how you feel about it.

Choose a good time and place and allow enough time. Try to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.

Do not blame the other person for everything, call names or tell him / her what should be done.

Listen and give the other person a chance to talk and try to learn how s/he feels about the problem. Do let her / him see that you are listening and that you are glad that the two of you are talking together.

Give information about how you see the problem and how you feel about it.

Talk it through, and once you start, try to talk about all the things that bother you - even the 'difficult' areas or the things that niggle you.

Plan for the future and begin work on a way forward together. Try to make sure that both of you are going to work at it. Be specific about what you agree.

Escalation and De-escalation of Conflict

The effect of most responses to a conflict is either escalation or de-escalation. It is helpful to understand the conditions that contribute to each of these.

A conflict will be more likely to increase or escalate when:

- other people become involved in the dispute and take sides;
- one or both people feel(s) threatened by the other;
- there is no interest or investment in maintaining the relationship;
- there is a history of unproductive, negative conflict between the parties;
- there is an increase in the acting out (indirect expression) of anger, fear or frustration;
- important needs involved are not acknowledged and met;
- there is a lack of the skills necessary for peacemaking or a lack of awareness of the skills the parties do, in fact, possess;
- there is limited, ineffective communication.

A conflict will be more likely to decrease or de-escalate when:

- those involved focus on the problem rather than on each other;
- emotions of anger, fear and frustration are expressed directly rather than demonstrated indirectly;

7 Adapted from material developed by Mediation Northern Ireland.

- threats are reduced or eliminated;
- the people involved have co-operated well prior to the dispute;
- needs are openly discussed;
- communication is effective;
- the people involved are able to use their peacemaking skills, or they receive some help in applying them.

Mediation
a 'neutral' body in the dispute, assisting communication between individuals or groups in order to manage or overcome difficulties and effect positive change.

Negotiation
to attempt to come to an agreement on something through discussion and compromise.

Sample Programme: Exploring Conflict

TIME AVAILABLE:
Three hours *

AGE GROUP:
KS3+ or adult

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:
- *explore our perceptions of conflict*
- *reflect on how we have learned about conflict*
- *develop understanding of and assess our own conflict style*

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:
- *Share aims for the session*
- *Reminder of contract / guidelines*

2 ACTIVITIES:

'Conflict' Wordstorm

Purpose:
to focus thinking, gather thoughts, personal and group reflection

Resources:
flipchart, markers

Gather ideas about the term 'conflict', writing all the comments on the board. Once all the thoughts have been exhausted, ask the group to identify from the words the ones which were positive and the ones which were negative. Ask individuals to reflect on the range of negative and positive words and explore what the overall perception of conflict is and how this impression has been formed.

Conclude with a discussion around the question, 'Where have we learnt about conflict?'
A definition of conflict can be presented at this stage. Use the starting points highlighted at the start of this section.

Personal, Local and Global Conflict: Pairs Discussion

Purpose:
to explore the levels at which conflict occurs

Resources:
paper, pens

In pairs, ask each group to identify the type and range of conflicts that occur at a personal, local and global level. Reflect on these lists and ask each pair to identify which of the listed conflicts are destructive and which are constructive.

Conflict Spectrum

Purpose:
self-reflection, to establish a baseline of understanding

Resources:
paper, markers

Using the full space of the room, place at one end of the room the statement 'Avoid conflict' and at the other end 'Confront conflict'. Individuals are asked to imagine a line between both ends of the room and to stand at a point in the line in relation to their perceived approach to conflict. When individuals are positioned they are encouraged to explain their place and ask each other questions.

Difficulties in Dealing with Conflict

Purpose:
self-reflection, communication skills, skill analysis in managing conflict

Resources:
flipchart, markers

In small groups, ask individuals to share their answers on what they see as the blocks which they face in dealing with conflict.

These can be written up on the board / flipchart. Using this information, ask individuals to discuss the most appropriate way of dealing with the range of conflicts that they may face.

You could develop this activity further by using role-play of the situations they come up with.

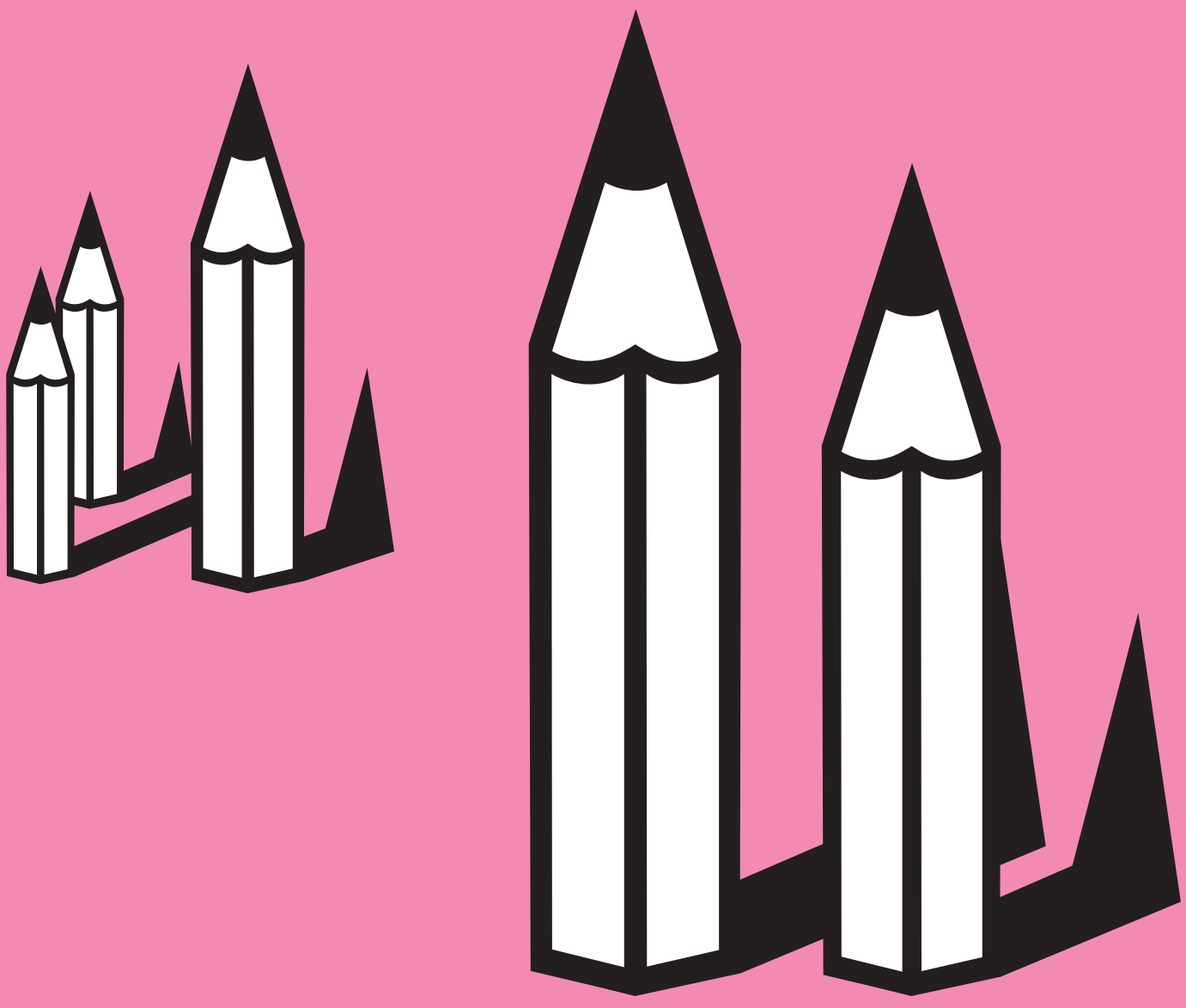
3 CLOSURE:

Sentence Completion

Purpose:
review and evaluation, communication skills, encouraging the participation of all

Use a sentence completion statement around the circle: 'One new thought about conflict ...'

* Alternatively, this session could be delivered in 45 minute sections. It will be important to allow for introduction and closure for each one.



Developing Programmes

For Children, Young People and Adults

'Children will always need safe spaces for learning. They will always need launching pads from which to follow their curiosity into the larger world.'

SENGE, P. ET AL. (2000), SCHOOLS THAT LEARN, LONDON, NICHOLAS BREALEY PUBLISHING.

developing programmes

5.0
Creating Safe Space

WHAT IS 'SAFE SPACE'

A 'safe space' within groupwork and the classroom / school is one where everyone is enabled to reflect individually and together on the themes which are raised, and to apply that learning to their life experience. It will be a space where people feel supported to take appropriate risks in talking about their personal experiences and views, in building relationships and in exploring areas of potential and actual conflict.

A safe space does not necessarily mean that group members will find these things easy to talk about, or that they will agree about everything – in fact, it is much more likely that there will be a range of perspectives. What it does mean is that they will feel able to trust the rest of the group and that the overall experience of participation will be positive.

The principles and ethos which characterise a 'safe space' have been explored in more detail in Building a Positive Learning Environment: Using Groupwork and Facilitation (Section Three). In this section, we consider the practical tools and ways of working which can be used to build this kind of atmosphere and setting.

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING SAFE SPACE

The strategies outlined in this section give some ideas about the reasons why different tools and methodologies are used, and about what makes them effective. Their overall effectiveness is grounded in respectful, relaxed facilitation which values each group member and is aware of their needs, interests and potential.

Questions for Reflection

What do I understand to be a 'safe space'?

What things might make me feel unsafe and might restrict my participation / facilitation?

As you work through this section, consider:

- *How could these tools and strategies build my sense of safety as a participant or a facilitator?*
- *As a facilitator, how could these tools and strategies enable me to contribute to the safety of group members?*

5.1
Working in a Circle

Circles have been used as a forum for meeting throughout history and within many different cultures. A circle is an appropriate structure for groupwork because it:

Encourages Equality
There is no beginning or end to a circle, no fixed 'first place / last place', no hierarchy and no leader. It is helpful, therefore, if everyone has the same seating.

Builds Trust
Everyone can see and hear everyone else, and may talk more honestly about experiences and views when they can see everyone else's reactions. The contrast, for example, might be rows of desks where a child or young person in the front row worries about what reactions might be happening behind as s/he speaks.

Encourages Participation
The nature of the circle and the use of tools such as a talking object encourage each person to contribute as s/he feels able. It is also easier to move about if an exercise requires it.

Promotes a Sense of Belonging
As people participate they can be encouraged to think about themselves as a team and increase their support to each other.

Creates Opportunities for Affirmation
When giving affirmation, the giver and the listener can see each other easily.

Encourages a Sense of Personal and Group Responsibility
The equality within the circle and the supportive group setting encourages people to take responsibility for themselves and develop this as a group. For example, this might be around what they contribute to the sessions and how they keep the ground rules they have developed in their contract / learning agreement.

Questions for Reflection

What experience do I have of working in a circle, either as a participant or a facilitator?

What key reasons make working in a circle valuable?

Do I feel comfortable and confident working in a circle?

Where can I gain some experience, training or support in relation to this?

How can I best familiarise group members with this way of working?

What resources might I need?

Some Strategies for Circle Based Work

Not all children, young people or adults will feel comfortable speaking in a large circle all the time. There are a number of different strategies which you can use to encourage and support group members in their participation. These include:

Using a talking object
An object is passed around the circle, and the person who is holding it is allowed to speak. This helps the group members to focus on and develop listening skills, as well as enabling them to see when their turn is coming.

Being able to say, 'Pass'
While you want to encourage everyone to participate, there may be some who feel unable to do so from time to time, and being allowed to say, 'Pass' can take the pressure off

these people. Sometimes people say, 'Pass' because they have not had time to think, so it is worth asking at the end of a circle round whether there is anyone who passed who now feels ready to contribute.

Using partners or small groups with feedback
Some people feel much more comfortable speaking to one other person or to a smaller group. It is good to mix in activities where group members work in pairs or in small groups (threes or fours) and then provide feedback about their discussion to the large circle. Not only does this support participation in general, but it also enables more in-depth discussion of the theme being explored. Feedback to the large circle may form the basis for a whole group discussion.

Supporting shy or less confident participants
There may be individuals who consistently find it difficult to participate and who may need specific support to enable them to grow in confidence. In part, this is about sensitive and appropriate facilitation, as well as recognising that listening is as important a form of participation as speaking. Specific strategies, such as the use of puppets and masks as a medium to talk through, can be useful in this process. With younger children, allowing a friend to speak for them or asking them if they would like to sit beside you so that you can speak for them can be useful starting points. It is important to try to move on from this position by using some of the other strategies outlined above.

What is Circle Time?

The term 'Circle Time' has come into increasingly common usage in schools. While often associated more with primary schools, it is also a valuable methodology for use at Post-Primary level, particularly where pupils are already familiar with the process from their primary school experience, and for use with adults (for example, in staff meetings, with a group of parents).

The purposes behind it include developing:
- *self-esteem and self-discipline;*
- *communication skills;*
- *emotional literacy;*
- *positive relationships and a sense of team;*
- *problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.*

It is most effective when:
- it is part of a whole school approach, where all school staff work within the context of the ethos which it promotes and operate a consistent rewards and sanctions policy;

- adults in the school community participate in Circle Time, and understand its purpose and structures;

- all classes have regular Circle Time sessions, so that children and young people experience progression in their learning through their years at the school;

- Circle Time sessions have a clear purpose, structure and intended learning outcomes.

One such model is the Whole School Quality Circle Time Model developed by Jenny Mosley. [1] Her books provide information on how the model works, including suggested outlines for individual Circle Time sessions with different age groups. See the Resource List (Section Eight) for further details.

1 Mosley, J. (2000), Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom, Wisbech, LDA; Mosley, J. and Tew, M. (1999), Quality Circle Time in the Secondary Classroom, London, David Fulton Publishing.

Questions for Reflection

What kind of school ethos would support effective Circle Time work?

How can I practically integrate Circle Time into my teaching plans and classroom ethos?

- *When would be the best time in the week / within the module / training programme?*
- *How will I introduce it to the class / group?*
- *What planning and evaluation time do I need?*

What personal preparation would I need to do?

What support / training needs do I have?

What resources might I need?

- *ideas for structure, activities, etc.?*
- *support or co-facilitation at the start?*

How can I reinforce the Circle Time learning within other aspects of classroom work / training and development, and vice versa?

Developing an Outline for Circle Time [2]

Intended Learning Outcomes

In preparing for the session, you need to start by defining your purpose and intended learning outcomes for the series of Circle Time sessions and for this particular session. The learning outcomes should:

- *address specific individual and group learning needs;*
- *enable continuity and progression between sessions;*
- *encourage risk-taking within a safe environment;*
- *provide you with a starting point for selecting focused and purposeful activities.*

Welcome and Introduction

It is important to set a positive atmosphere at the start of the session and to remind participants briefly of important ground rules. This demonstrates to group members that both they and the activity which they are participating in are valued. These statements will also explain what the session is about so that the participants are clear about what is expected of them. It also makes links to past and future sessions.

Introductory Game

This game aims to:

- *create a relaxed atmosphere;*
- *encourage mixing and new friendships / working partnerships;*
- *provide a fun / light introduction to the theme being explored;*
- *allow the facilitator to assess the group situation and respond flexibly to group and individual learning needs.*

2 Adapted from a Circle Time format and guidelines developed by Kathryn Edgar, SEELB.

Sentence Completion
Participants are given a 'sentence starter' to complete which will focus on the theme being explored. Asking for a volunteer to start, the 'talking object' is then passed around the circle enabling everyone to have a turn in speaking. This activity:

- *encourages group participation;*
- *assists in developing thinking, talking and listening skills;*
- *develops confidence in speaking in a group;*
- *encourages self-reflection (identification of personal needs, feelings, etc.) and responsibility for self.*

Discussion Activity / Sharing more Information
This is where the main exploration of the theme will take place, and where use of pairs / small group work, role-play, creative arts activities, etc. with feedback to the large circle can be useful tools. Effective activities will demonstrate development across a wide range of skills as well as achievement of your specific intended learning outcomes.

Closure
It is important that the Circle Time session is brought to an appropriate close so that participants can move on to whatever they are doing next. This needs to involve all group members and might take the form of:

- *a Closing Circle (possibly using sentence completion) which allows people to evaluate the session or say how they are feeling;*
- *a game to release any tension;*
- *a simple guided meditation to help bring a sense of calm to the group;*
- *an affirmation exercise.*

Evaluation / Planning Ahead
As you consider how the Circle Time has gone and plan for the next Circle Time session, some questions to consider are:

- *What feedback did I obtain from the group?*
- *What other evidence is there that intended learning outcomes are being achieved?*
- *Were the intended learning outcomes and activities focused at the right level? Do I need to make adjustments for future sessions?*
- *What will be the next step in terms of continuity and progression?*

Planning a Circle Time Session [3]

TIME AVAILABLE

THEME / TITLE

AGE GROUP

RESOURCES NEEDED

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

-
-
-

Welcome and Introduction:

Introductory Game / Activity:

Sentence Completion:

Discussion Activity / Sharing More Information:

Closure:

EVALUATION / PLANNING AHEAD

3 Adapted from a Circle Time format by Kathryn Edgar, SEELB.

5.2
Developing a Contract / Learning Agreement

A contract is essentially an agreement between all of those involved in a group (both facilitators and participants) about the ground rules which they need in order to work together safely and effectively.

This needs to be based on a shared understanding of the group's purpose, and a commitment from all group members to work within the agreed rules. The issues being addressed need to be perceived as relevant to all group members, and the reasoning behind any ground rule needs to be clear to everyone. They may be about the way people relate to each other within the group, the way people participate, and general expectations about behaviour.

Why Use a Contract / Learning Agreement?

Creating a contract or learning agreement together is an important part of a group's development. Some of the reasons for using a contract are that:

- A contract enables each person in the group to have a sense of ownership for the group and the framework within which they are working together. With this in mind, both the contract and any possible sanctions need to be discussed and agreed by the group.

- A contract asks each person in the group to take responsibility for her / himself and to be accountable to each other for how the experience of the group develops. It is not the facilitator's role alone to call people back to the contract, although it may be appropriate for them to do this at times.

- A contract enables a group to clarify their purpose and hopes for their time together. If the facilitator is coming from outside the group, it ensures that s/he and the group are agreed on the purpose of their work together.

- A contract enables a group to think about their needs as individuals and as a group in order to feel safe and comfortable to participate.

- A contract helps people to know what is expected of them within the group.

- A contract allows people to explore the meaning behind the words they use, and to think carefully about what different values or ground rules mean in practice. For example:

  - *What does 'respect' mean in practice?*
  - *When we ask everyone to participate, how do we ensure that each person feels safe to do that at a comfortable level?*
  - *When we talk about confidentiality, what are some of the limitations and responsibilities around this (for example, the facilitator's responsibilities in relation to Child Protection)?*

- Within this context, a contract helps create a setting where people feel safe enough, for example, to discuss more controversial issues, to take appropriate risks around sharing personal experiences and views and to listen to those of others without feeling defensive.

Making an Effective Contract / Learning Agreement

In order for the contract to be used effectively, it is important that it is genuinely agreed by all group members and that it remains relevant to their context. There are a number of factors which it is useful to bear in mind in relation to this:

- In order to keep the contract 'live' it needs to be re-visited at different stages of the group's time together to ensure that the guidelines within it are still relevant and do not need to be revised. This will be particularly important if a new person joins the group.

- The group also need to consider what the consequences will be if the contract is broken, both in terms of the implications for the group's experience and in terms of appropriate 'sanctions'.

- There need to be clear distinctions between Safety Rules (for example, fire procedures) which are non-negotiable, and the ground rules within the contract which are agreed by the group.

- Where possible, particularly at a classroom level, it is usually helpful to create one set of ground rules together which apply to all activities which the class group is involved in both in the classroom and outside. These also need to be consistent with the general school rules.

- It is usually best to keep the contract fairly short and straightforward. If there are too many rules, people can find it hard to remember and apply them, and can feel restricted by the very fact that they are there.

- It is helpful to display the agreed contract as a visible reminder to people about what they have committed themselves to.

DRAWING UP A CONTRACT / LEARNING AGREEMENT

1 Outline and check understanding of the purpose of the programme / session.

2 Explain the need for ground rules.

3 Gather suggestions for rules and note them down where everyone can see them. This can be done as a whole group, or by working in pairs / small groups and feeding back to the large group. It is important that all contributions are valued.

4 Decide together which rules are most necessary and appropriate.

5 Keep the list of ground rules manageable.

6 Together make a commitment to try to keep the agreed rules. You may like to sign your names to the contract to show your ownership of it.

7 Display the finalised rules where everyone can see and re-visit them at the start of the next few sessions, and at intervals after that.

Contracting with All Age Groups

It is possible to develop a contract with any age group, but it is important that the language used is age appropriate.

Younger groups may need more prompts to help them come up with ideas, and it is important to keep their list of rules short. When re-visiting the contract at the start of a session, it can be used as a memory exercise. Where children have not yet learnt to read, pictures can be used to represent the different rules. Even with older young people and adults, pictures and symbols representing the different ground rules can be useful.

When Time is Short

When working with a group within a very limited time-frame, it is still important that some ground rules are put in place. The facilitator needs to clearly outline the purpose for the group's time together and, in presenting a small number of ground rules, needs to ensure that participants understand the reasoning behind them.

This circumstance should be the exception, rather than the rule – time taken with a group at the start of a programme or an academic year to develop and agree a contract together will be time well spent in the long run!

If the Contract is Broken

It is important that the group understands that if the contract is broken there are consequences in terms of the quality of relationships within the group, the level of trust, willingness to participate and to share personal experiences and opinions, etc.

Having involved all group members in drawing up the contract, they should also be involved, where possible, in deciding what the sanctions will be if the contract is broken. This discussion will take time, but is of great importance because it demonstrates the way the contract is valued, and enables group members to use and develop skills such as listening, empathy, conflict resolution, etc. Some key tasks for the facilitator within this process will be:

- enabling everyone, including those who have broken the contract and those who may have suffered as a consequence to feel safe to participate in this discussion;

- encouraging the group to listen to and understand different perspectives in the group;

- providing guidance in developing appropriate sanctions – children and young people can sometimes tend towards overly harsh sanctions;

- checking all group members feel that the sanctions are appropriate and fair;

- ensuring sanctions are carried out fairly.

It is crucial that the facilitator ensures fairness when the contract is broken, and that a similar process is followed each time so that there is no sense of some people being punished arbitrarily.

If a rule in the contract keeps being broken, there are a number of options:

- It may reveal a low level of skill in relation to a particular rule (for example, listening to each other) among some or all group members. The programme could be revised in order to spend more time on skill development.

- More work may need to be done around empathy so that group members have a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions and the impact on others.

- It may be that some aspects of the contract are no longer appropriate for the group, and it needs to be re-negotiated.

- It may be that some group members have not understood the importance or relevance of a particular rule, and this needs to be re-clarified.

- It may be that new members who have joined the group since the original contract was made, do not understand the reasoning behind some of the rules or do not have any sense of ownership of the contract. A new contract needs to be developed that is owned by the whole group, or at the very least, the existing contract needs to be re-visited and amendments made.

SAMPLE CONTRACT

We agree to:

- Listen to each other
- Give each person a chance to speak – don't interrupt
- Respect each other's opinions – agree to disagree
- Support each other / be kind – no put downs
- Speak for myself – use 'I' statements: for example, 'I think', 'I feel'
- Keep confidentiality – what is said in the room, stays in the room*
- Respect people's right to pass / not answer personal questions
- Have fun!

*** In agreeing to maintain confidentiality, which will enable people to participate without fear of repercussions beyond the session, it is important that the facilitator is clear that this cannot be absolute when the facilitator has responsibilities in relation to Child Protection. The commitment of group members to keeping this ground rule, balanced by individuals taking responsibility for what they choose to say, is crucial for people's safety outside the programme as well as within it.**

Sample Exercises: Ways into Contracting

Suns and Clouds

Purpose:
to explore people's hopes and fears about the group's programme, ensuring that hopes are realised and fears / concerns are minimised by developing a contract

Resources:
paper cut-out sun (yellow); paper cut-out cloud (blue) - or people can make them for themselves (paper, scissors, crayons / pens)

Each person in the group is given a cut-out sun / cloud. The sun represents their hopes for the session and the cloud represents their fears / concerns. They are asked to write or draw a hope on the sun and a fear / concern on the cloud.

These hopes and fears can be shared in the group in a number of ways, for example by:

- laying them all on the floor, or sticking them all on the wall, so that people can come and look at them. This way they remain anonymous;

- collecting them all in a box, and getting each person to pick one sun and one cloud from the box. They are then read out / shown around the circle. Again, they remain anonymous;

- going around the circle, allowing each person to read out / describe her / his hope and fear.

This can be followed by a group discussion, perhaps using questions such as:

- Does anyone have any comment that they would like to make about the hopes / fears we have shared?

- Is there anything in particular anyone has observed about the hopes / fears we have shared?

At this point, people have the opportunity if they wish to point out their own hope or fear to make a more detailed comment on it.

Ideal Island

Purpose:
to think creatively about an ideal setting, specifically, about rules / laws which would ensure that it remained ideal for everyone, providing a basis for rules needed in the classroom / school

Resources:
large sheet of paper (A3+)
smaller sheets of paper to draw / prepare on
coloured pens, pencils, etc.
scissors, glue, old magazines, newspapers

Situation:
After being shipwrecked you and a few friends find yourselves stranded on a small island. There may be others living on the island but you are not sure.

Group activities:
- *Think of a name for your island.*
- *Draw your ideal or perfect island - natural resources? food? housing? other buildings? roads? etc.*
- *Make a list of laws you think will be needed to make sure that people can live safely and happily on your island.*

Other questions you could think about:
- *What kind of government will you have?*
- *What punishments will you have for those who break the laws?*
- *What jobs will you and your friends do?*
- *What kind of schools will you have?*
- *What do specific groups need on the island (for example, elderly people, families)?*
- *What other things will be important?*
- *What will you do if you discover other people living on the island?*

Evaluation:
- *How did you get on in your group?*
- *Did your group work well together?*
- *Did one person take leadership / control?*
- *How did you decide on what laws / rules to have?*
- *Do you think that if you stuck to your laws everyone would be safe and happy?*
- *When you wanted different things, how did you work that out?*

The maps and ideas can then be presented to the large group, and the maps displayed. The large group can use the ideas about laws / rules as the basis for thinking about what rules we need to ensure that the classroom / school is a place where everyone feels welcomed, is able to learn and can enjoy being.

5.3 Developing Skills in a Group

'Emotional life is a domain that, as surely as math or reading, can be handled with greater or lesser skill, and requires its unique set of competencies ... emotional aptitude is a meta-ability; determining how well we can use whatever other skills we have.'[4]

As well as developing her / his own interpersonal and facilitation skills, the facilitator needs to support group members in building the skills which will enable them to make best use of the learning experience. These skills will be useful not only for this process, but in the whole of their lives. There are a number of overlapping skills areas which will be involved, including those outlined below.

INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS

These skills focus on developing the ability to think about what is going on 'inside me', and are essential for assimilating learning and moving forward on a personal level. They include aspects and qualities such as:

- *Self-awareness / Self-knowledge*
- *Self-reflection*
- *Self-respect / Self-esteem*
- *Self-management / Self-responsibility*
- *Self-motivation*
- *Openness and honesty*
- *Assertiveness*
- *Emotional literacy: awareness and clear expression of personal feelings, values, etc.*
- *Effective self-expression of opinions, ideas, etc.*

This skill area focuses on questions such as:

- How do I feel about this and why?
- What do I think about this and why?
- What have I learnt?
- How will this shape my future thinking, feelings, actions?
- Are there things I need to think about or do differently? If so, what?
- How will I do this? Do I require help to do it?

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

These skills are about the way we relate to and interact with others. They are essential for making the best of our relationships, both personal and professional, and enable us to maximise our learning from each other. They include aspects and qualities such as:

- *Active listening*
- *Communication*
- *Respect for others*
- *Respect for and understanding of diversity*
- *Working co-operatively, as part of a team*
- *Empathy*
- *Affirmation of others*
- *Managing and resolving conflict*

This skill area focuses on questions such as:

- What can we learn from each other?
- How can we best work on this together?
- Have I really understood what you are saying and feeling? Do I need to check it out?
- Do we have a good understanding of and respect for each other's positions?
- Do you know the specific ways in which I value our relationship / conversation / interaction?
- Can I / we find a way of positively acknowledging and responding to the conflict between us?

4 Goleman, D. (1996), Emotional Intelligence, London, Bloomsbury Publishing.

THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

These skills are about the way we process ideas and draw conclusions both individually and collectively. They include aspects such as:

- *Creative thinking*
- *Critical thinking*
- *Identifying issues*
- *Recognition of multiple perspectives, possibilities, solutions*
- *Reflection*
- *Decision-making*
- *Negotiation*
- *Mediation*

This skill area focuses on questions such as:

- What sparks creativity within me?
- Are my thinking skills strongest:
- if I have peace and quiet for myself?
- when I can work collaboratively with others?
- what are the benefits of these for me?
- Do I take what I see / hear / read for granted, or do I ask questions and analyse it?
- Do I think before I speak?
- How do I make major decisions?
- In a discussion, how do I think through and present my views?
- In a situation of conflict, am I able to imagine a number of possible solutions?
- Am I able to work with others to come to a shared conclusion, or a respectful difference of conclusions, where appropriate?

ACTIVE LISTENING

One of the key skills upon which many others can be built is active listening. This is a crucial skill for both facilitator and group members as it is essential for good communication.

Active listening is about absorbing what has been said and ensuring that the speaker knows that s/he has been heard. This is conveyed to the speaker through both verbal and non-verbal responses.

The effectiveness and usefulness of active listening will be undermined for both the speaker and the listener if:

- the listener is experiencing anxiety or other strong emotions which distract her / him from focusing on what the speaker is communicating both verbally and non-verbally;

- the listener has a negative or judgemental attitude which prevents her / him from listening with openness to what the speaker has to say;

- the meeting place is inappropriate: too many distractions, poor acoustics etc.

People will not feel that they are being heard if, for example:

- the listener is looking elsewhere and is giving no eye contact;

- the listener is demonstrating very 'closed' body language;

- it becomes apparent that the listener is so busy thinking about her / his response that s/he is not really hearing what is being said;

- the listener interrupts and goes on to something else;

- her / his contribution is ignored, not valued or negatively judged.

People will feel that they are being heard if, for example:

- the listener's facial expression and eye contact shows that s/he is paying attention;
- the listener's body language indicates that s/he is relaxed and attentive;
- the listener demonstrates that s/he is listening and interested by encouraging the speaker, and asking open-ended questions allowing her / him to develop what s/he is saying;
- the listener clarifies / reflects back what the speaker has said to ensure that the listener has understood.

Questions for Reflection

How effective are my active listening skills?

What evidence do I have of this?

What distracts me from listening actively to the people I work with?

When listening to someone, how aware am I of:
- *my body language;*
- *my facial expressions;*
- *my thoughts, feelings, etc.*

Do I take time to reflect back what has been said to make sure that I have understood?

How can I best support group members in developing active listening skills?

Sample Exercises: Developing Listening Skills

Newspaper Game

Purpose:
to introduce a session on listening and communication

Resources:
newspaper cuttings, paper, pens

People are asked to find a partner and to stand at opposite ends of the room. Those at one end of the room are given a newspaper cutting each, and their partners are given a piece of paper and a pen. When the facilitator says, 'Go', the people with the newspaper cuttings have to read them out while their partners write down what they hear. Each pair gets two points for every word and one point for every piece of punctuation they get right. This can get very noisy!

What I had for Breakfast

Purpose:
to begin to explore what it feels like not to be listened to

People are asked to find a partner, and label themselves A and B. A's task is to tell B all about what s/he had for breakfast, while B has to do everything s/he can to make sure s/he does not hear – this can involve covering her / his ears, making lots of noise, running away, etc. – but not using physical violence! After a few minutes they swap over and do it the other way round. In the pairs and then in the large group, questions can then be explored around:

- *what it felt like not to be listened to;*
- *what it felt like to deliberately not listen to someone else;*
- *what the consequences of this could be.*

Chair / Table / Flower

Purpose:
to explore how much we actually listen to what other people say

Resources:
slips of paper with a word written on each (for example, chair, table, flower, tree)

People are asked to find partners and to label themselves A and B. A is given one of the slips of paper which s/he must not show to B. A's task is to describe the word on her / his paper without using the word itself for three minutes. Following these instructions, they begin. At the end of the three minutes, the Bs are told that they must now repeat back to the As everything they said within the three minutes. In most cases they will find this almost impossible, as they will have switched off from what A was saying as soon as they thought they had worked out what the word was. In the large group questions can then be explored around, for example:

- *how much real listening we do;*
- *how we can jump to conclusions and stop listening;*
- *why we might do this;*
- *how we value each other if we do not listen.*

Personal Space / Magic Spots

Purpose:
to take time individually to listen to the sounds around us that we may not normally notice

Everyone goes and finds a space on their own, preferably outside and not talking to anyone else. They then spend ten minutes (vary as appropriate to the group) listening to the sounds around them. This also provides a space for individual reflection and listening to ourselves.

Pennies

Purpose:
to explore how we evaluate / make choices about what we have to say, how different people participate within a group, and the power balances involved in speaking and listening

Resources:
enough pennies or tokens (for example, cardboard cut-outs) to give three to five to each person in the group

Working in small groups, each person is given three to five pennies / tokens, and each group is given a topic to discuss. These might include:

- *men are better drivers than women;*
- *blondes have more fun;*
- *school uniform should be abolished;*
- *cigarette smoking should be made illegal;*
- *a topic which is directly relevant to the theme which the group is currently exploring – however, at this stage, do not introduce something that will take the group 'too deep' too soon within the process.*

Each person may only speak when s/he puts one of her / his pennies in the middle of the table, and once s/he has spent all her / his pennies s/he may not speak again. The group needs to create a supportive atmosphere where those who normally do not speak very much feel able to use their pennies.

This highlights questions and issues around, for example:

- the right and responsibility to speak;
- the choices we make about our participation;
- the way these choices impact on others;
- how much thought we put into what we are about to say;

- the fact that everyone has something of value to contribute;

- the frustration felt by those who are used to speaking a lot when they have to keep silent;

- the value of listening;

- issues of power and justice when the image of pennies is translated to group, community or global level. Who are the people in our society who have lots of pennies / power, who are the people who have little or no pennies / power? How does this affect the way they relate to each other?

5.4 Using Games

WHY USE GAMES?

The perception of games can be that they are 'just a bit of a laugh' and not really very valuable within the context of education and learning. They can be, however, purposeful exercises which have clear learning outcomes, and very useful tools when trying to create 'safe space'.

Some of the reasons for using games in this way are that:

- Games are fun - they can help people relax and have a laugh together, perhaps as an ice-breaker activity at the start of a process, or as a closure exercise to release tension after a more difficult discussion. Remember, if facilitators do not enjoy or feel confident about the experience, it is unlikely that group members will either!

- Games can enable people to get to know each other - they can allow people to learn each other's names, to talk to each other and to find out information about each other in a non-threatening way.

- Games can enable individuals to become a group - they can help people to become aware of each other and of each other's skills, needs, contribution to the group, etc., encouraging people to support each other and work together.

- Games can involve everyone - including those, for example, who may not feel so confident about speaking out in a discussion.

- Games can enable people to experience success and affirmation – and to demonstrate talents and achievements in a way that they might not, for example, in an academic setting.

- Games can enable people to develop skills - they can create opportunities for people to use skills such as listening, communication, co-operation / teamwork, aspects of leadership, problem-solving, etc.

- Games can enable people to learn - they can raise awareness and understanding of all kinds of issues, for example, sense of identity, diversity within a group, etc., and provide a more light-hearted introduction to deeper discussion or more demanding exercises.

Using Games Effectively

In order to be effective, the games which are chosen need to be appropriate for the particular group and the individuals within it.

Some people dislike the idea of games, especially ice-breakers, and others actually dread being asked to participate. This may be because of previous negative experiences and may be linked into concerns about:

- feeling stupid or embarrassed;

- feeling pressured to join in when they would rather not;

- the games seeming to have no real purpose;

- the games going on for too long;

- an atmosphere of tension rather than ease or appropriate challenge being created;

- a lack of thought on the facilitator's part as to whether the games are suitable for the group, its individual members and their purpose of meeting together;

- the games having an unexplained ulterior motive, known only to the facilitator(s).

To be most effective and enjoyable, games need to be chosen carefully so that:

- they are appropriate for the ages, cultural backgrounds, gender mix, physical and learning abilities, etc. within the group;

- they are appropriate for the stage in the group's life (i.e. how well people know each other and how comfortable they feel together as a group);

- they are physically safe;

- they fit within the values reflected in the contract or learning agreement you create with the group. For example, a game which leaves one person feeling left out and laughed at will not 'match' the values of respect, being supportive to each other or participation which are being encouraged within the group. Given that the games are an integral part of building the group, games which encourage competitiveness may not always be appropriate;

- they are purposeful and need to be included with particular learning or developmental outcomes in mind as an integral part of the overall learning experience.

Different Ways of Using Games

Outlined below are some specific ways in which games can be used. Some samples of each of these are provided at the end of the section. Many games can be used in a number of different ways and will be most effective if there is clarity about their purpose and appropriateness.

NAME GAMES

These enable group members to learn and remember each other's names in a fun way. These are particularly important when a group is coming together for the first time, but it can be helpful to use them again to refresh people's memories. Name games are also a valuable way into a theme such as 'Identity' because names are a core part of our sense of who we are.

ICE-BREAKER GAMES

These help a group to relax and feel comfortable with each other. Some groups will find these useful at the start of most sessions, but they are particularly important when a group comes together for the first time.

GROUP BUILDING GAMES

These encourage a group to build a relationship around a task, to work as a team and to develop trust. These games will also help a group to explore the roles which different individuals take on within a team and to begin to think about the skills which they need to work together effectively.

Some points to bear in mind:

- Some group building games involve physical challenge. It is important that games are chosen which are age and ability appropriate, and sufficient attention is given to health and safety.
- Similarly, some group building games involve physical contact. There may be cultural reasons why these games will be inappropriate for some groups or individuals. Some people may simply feel uncomfortable about physical contact with others of the same / opposite sex.
- Trust within a group will not be built by games alone. It is crucial that the level of trust within a group is not over-estimated and that sufficient time is given for trust to be developed. Awareness of the degree of trust within the group and being able to assess the appropriate level of risk-taking is a core part of the facilitator's role.

ENERGISING GAMES

These are games which help a group to re-engage with a process or task, for example, after a break or when energy levels are low, and will usually involve getting people to move around. They may also involve getting people to think about the theme or task from a different angle to encourage new ways of thinking and creativity.

BRAIN GYM [5]

These 'brain exercises' can be used to help a group to refocus on the process, as research has demonstrated that our brains actually work better if we take a break from what we are doing and try some of these kinds of physical activities at different points throughout the day. The exercises stimulate both sides of the brain, develop co-ordination and dexterity, and reduce stress or tension, which may enhance the end of a challenging session.

5 Smith, A. and Call, N. (2001), ALPS Approach Resource Book, London, Network Education Press.

Some Brain Gym Examples:

- Practice yawning! Stretch your mouth as wide as you can. Stick your chin out and move it from side to side.

- Hold your ears with your opposite hand and slowly roll your earlobes between finger and thumb.

- Stand with a partner shoulder to shoulder, now move apart so that you can touch the tips of your forefingers. Now try to trace a circle together.

- Sitting with your hands holding your seat, extend your feet forwards and rotate your feet together one way, then the other.

- Write the keywords from the lesson in the air with one hand.

- Trace the number eight in the air with two hands held together. Follow your hand movements with your eyes only. Keep your head still. Keep your lips and teeth together.

Session Preparation: Choosing Games

- What is the purpose of the session?

- What are the intended learning outcomes?

- Would a game(s) be useful?
  - *as an ice-breaker?*
  - *to develop skills and a sense of team?*
  - *to introduce the theme?*
  - *to re-energise or re-focus the group?*
  - *to help close the session?*

- What game(s) would be appropriate for this particular group – their needs, abilities, ages, etc.?

- How will this fit the time and space available?

- Are there other considerations?

THEMED GAMES

These provide a way for a group to begin to explore the theme of a particular session. The intention is to provide a safe, light-hearted way into a subject which can be explored in more depth through other exercises and discussions.

CLOSURE GAMES

These enable a group to bring a session to a close in a way which affirms their group identity and the positive relationships which have developed. If the session has involved more difficult discussion, a game which involves laughter and / or appropriate physical contact may help to diffuse any tension and enable the group to move on to whatever they need to do next.

Sample Games

A range of games and activities are included within the sample lesson / session plans in Section Eight.

Outlined below are some specific examples of the different kinds of games described within this section.

NAME GAMES

Name Graffiti

Resources:
large piece of paper (A3+), markers

Place a large piece of paper (A3+) and some coloured markers in the centre of the group. In turn or when they feel they want to, people write their name on the sheet and tell something about themselves - perhaps something about their name (such as, what it means). They can also draw a picture / symbol beside their name as a reminder to everyone of what they have said. The poster can then be displayed as a representation of the whole group.

Name and Action

Each person needs to think of an action to express her / himself. One person begins by saying, 'My name is ... and my action is ... ', and performs the action (for example, a clap, turning round, clicking fingers, etc.). The second person says, 'His / her name is ... and his / her action is ... . My name is ... and my action is ... ', This continues around the group. It is only a good idea to include the repetition of others' names and actions if the group is not too big, otherwise people can become bored and / or the task of remembering everything can become too threatening. The group needs to work together to help each person to remember – it is not a competition!

Alternatives:
name and rhyme / adjective / animal / food / country / etc., (starting with the same letter)

The Alphabet Game

Resources:
A4 size cards, each marked with a letter of the alphabet

Lay cards with the letters of the alphabet around the room. Invite participants to go and stand beside the letter which is at the start of, for example:

- *the place they live;*
- *the place they were born;*
- *their favourite food;*
- *their ideal holiday destination;*
- *the name of a person they admire;*
- *the last book they read;*
- *a film they have seen recently.*

Encourage participants to introduce themselves to the other people who are standing beside the same letter, and to find out their response to the statement that had been called out. If people are standing on their own beside some letters, encourage them to talk to the people near to them. This is a good game to use as an ice-breaker, to help people get to know each other and to talk informally, and to introduce the session theme.

Group Dividers

Sometimes it is necessary to divide a large group into smaller groups for the purpose of the session(s). If you want to try to avoid cliques, or the same people always working together, you could use one of the ideas below, rather than simply numbering people off. These games are useful at the ice-breaker stage as they are fun and require people to work together.

Animals

Resources:
sets of cards with animal names (same number of each name, enough in total for each group member to have one)

In silence, give each participant a card, having explained they are to find other members of their group by making the sound of their animal.

Dots

Resources:
a coloured sticky dot for each group member (using equal numbers of each colour)

Stick a coloured dot on each group member's forehead. In silence, they have to find the other people with the same colour of dot as themselves. Afterwards ask the group about how they worked out what colour dot they had and how they found the other members of their group.

Back-to-Back

Resources:
sticky labels, with the name of half of a pair written on each one (enough in total for each member of the group to have one)

A label is stuck on each person's back with, for example, an animal, a famous person, a fairy tale character, etc. written on it. Asking questions that can be answered with 'Yes' or 'No', they have to find out who they are, and then find the other half of their pair, or the other people who would be in the same group as them.

GROUP BUILDING GAMES [6]

People Machines

This exercise can be done in small groups. The group work together to create a machine, acting it out using themselves as parts – everyone in the group must be involved. They can then act it out for the rest of the large group to guess what it is. This can be done in silence or with the appropriate noises!

Alternatively, one person begins with an action and a noise, and others gradually join in, adding their action and noise, to create a connected imaginary machine.

Another version, is where a group work together to create a vehicle, using themselves as parts, to travel from one point to another. It can be a 'real' or imaginary one. The challenge is to include everyone in their group, and to actually get from A to B in one piece.

Human Knots

The group stands in a circle, hands outstretched and crossed in front of them. They move forward quietly and slowly with eyes closed and take hold of two hands - not the people on either side of them and not hands belonging to the same person! The group's task is to sort itself out into a circle again without letting go hands. If you have a very large group, divide it into smaller groups of a manageable size (about eight people).

Fawlty Towers

Resources:
newspapers, pieces of string, cardboard boxes, masking tape / sellotape, scissors
You could also add a couple of things which are 'red herrings'!

Working in small groups, the aim is to see how high a tower each group can build within a certain space of time. Afterwards, evaluate the exercise with the group, exploring how they worked together and what they learnt from the process. In order to develop the team building aspect, one or two members of the group can be blindfolded, one or two others can have their hands tied together, etc. Part of the evaluation will focus on how the group included these people, and how everyone worked together as a team.

ENERGISING GAMES

Paper Islands

Resources:
newspapers

Spread large sheets of newspaper on the floor. Explain that these pieces of paper are islands and that the other area is the shark-infested sea. While music is played the group moves around the room and when it stops they jump onto an island. Each time the group stops more paper is taken away.

Finish by seeing how many people can fit onto one large piece of newspaper.

Another version of this game is to divide people into pairs, and give each pair a sheet of newspaper the same size. Each time the music stops, they have to fold their newspaper in half and stand on it, so that each time the piece of newspaper gets smaller. The pair that can balance on the smallest piece of newspaper are the winners.

6 Be aware that many group building games involve a high level of physical contact and you need to consider whether this is appropriate for your group and / or the group's current stage of development.

Ducks and Corrals

The group is the corral fence and stands in a circle holding hands. Approximately four to six people volunteer to be ducks, and stand in the middle. They have to hold their ankles, close their eyes, quack and walk backwards! A break is made by the corral fence people at one point in the fence, and the ducks have got to find their way out. Once a duck has found the break, s / he has to quack loudly to let the other ducks know where it is. To prevent them hearing, the fence has to sing 'Row, row, row the boat' as loudly as they can. The game finishes when all the ducks have escaped.

BRAIN GYM

See examples on page 125

THEMED GAMES

Ideal Islands 2

Resources:
A3+ sheets of paper / flipchart paper, markers

This is a version of Ideal Islands which explores the themes of diversity, conflict and negotiation.

Working in groups of five to eight people, each group imagines that they are stranded on a desert island and as a new society, they have to come up with three to five rules which everybody on the island agrees to live by as their new constitution. They have 15 minutes to do this.

The group can also think about drawing up:

- *a map of their island;*
- *a list of all the things they would choose to have on their island;*
- *a list of all the things they would choose not to have on their island. These go in the surrounding sea.*

As the time draws to a close, ask for a volunteer from each group. While the remainder of the group finalises their constitution, privately brief the volunteers that they are to be washed from their original island and stranded on another island. On the new island, they will be presented with the constitution whereupon they will decide to break one of the rules. Their violation needs to be reasoned as they will need to justify it to the other islanders.

Bring the volunteers back into the room and allocate them to a new group, explaining they have been washed from their original island and landed on a new one. The original islanders are invited to introduce the new islander to their constitution. Once this is completed the new islander informs them that s/he cannot live by Rule X and must break it.

Leave the groups for about ten minutes and observe the process of settlement – whether it is compromise, expulsion, conflict, etc. Bring the groups back together, display the constitutions and discuss these questions:

- What was the original process of rule-making – consensus, majority decision, negotiation, etc.?
- What was the new arrival's experience of the new society?
- What were the settlements reached?
- Were any punishments given appropriate? Did they fit the crime? Who decided?
- What were the islanders' feelings when the constitution was broken?
- How do we deal with diversity, difference?
- What can people learn from this in terms of how they handle conflict?

CLOSURE GAMES

Affirmation Exercise

Resources:
paper, felt tip pens, ribbon (for scrolls)

These exercises focus on affirmation and recognition of people's qualities, skills and the aspects that you have enjoyed about spending time / working with them. It is one part of reflecting on the programme / session you have been involved in together. It also involves interaction and movement - good after a quiet / sitting down / discussion session! It is worth noting that some people may find giving and receiving affirmation difficult so this exercise can be a challenging one. Within the group, people can be gently encouraged to help each other and all comments must be positive.

1 Each person gets a piece of paper, writes her / his name on it, and sticks it on her / his back.

2 Everyone then has the opportunity to write on each other's pieces of paper, a skill or quality they have noticed that person has, or something s/he has contributed to the group, or something they have enjoyed about spending time / working with her / him. Try to write something on everyone's piece of paper.

One variation of this exercise is to get people to sit in a circle and draw around their hand on an A4 page, putting their name at the top. The hands can be passed round the group in a clockwise direction and each person writes an affirmation for the named individual on her / his sheet.

Another variation is to have an envelope with each person's name on it pinned on a noticeboard with slips of paper available so that people can write affirmations and put them in each person's envelope either in a structured session, or in their own time.

Where literacy may be an issue, the facilitator can gather the ideas verbally about each person and write them on a piece of paper which can then be turned into a scroll and presented to the person. Children and young people can then be encouraged to take these home to share with parents / carers who can re-read the affirmations to them.

Wool Web

Resources:
large ball of wool

A Wool Web can be used to explore all kinds of questions and discussion, and ensures that each person in the group has the opportunity to speak. One session it can be used for is a group evaluation.

1 Each person in the group thinks about a key question such as the following:

- *What has been the highlight of the session for you?*
- *What have you learned from / through the session?*
- *What have I enjoyed about this session?*
- *What have I learnt from other people in the group?*

2 One person takes the ball of wool, and gives her / his answers to the questions. S/he twists a bit of the wool around her / his finger (not too tight!), and throw the ball to the next person. This person then gives her / his answers, twists a bit of the wool around her / his finger, and throws the wool to someone else, and so on.

3 When everyone has spoken, you will all be linked up by a web of wool. This is a valuable way to talk about a subject which ensures that everyone in the group gets the opportunity to speak, and also provides a symbol of our inter-connectedness, i.e. that everyone is in relationship with each other at different levels - a good way to finish a session or a programme.

4 Now somebody has the fun of rolling the wool up again - the easiest way is if everyone lays it down on the floor as it is, and lets one person get on with rolling it up!

5·5
The Importance of Closure

Closure, the act of bringing things to an appropriate end, is important both for individual sessions / lessons and for finishing programmes / modules. In each case, people need to be supported to reflect on past experiences and to move on to whatever will be next for them.

In any session exploring controversial issues, there is the likelihood that people's emotions will be touched, some tension and anxiety may be experienced and some strong, conflicting views may be discovered. In order to ensure that people are able to leave the session feeling relaxed, with their relationships affirmed and the discussion appropriately brought to a close, it is important that sufficient time is always allocated for closure. In some cases, this will mean resisting the temptation to let the 'fantastic discussion' continue for 'just another five minutes'!

Achieving Closure

WAYS OF ACHIEVING CLOSURE AT THE END OF A SESSION / LESSON CAN INCLUDE:

- giving the group a brief (verbal or written) outline of the session / lesson plan at the start so that they know what to expect in terms of timing and the things which need to be covered before the end of the session;

- calling the group's attention to the time five to ten minutes before the end of the discussion / exercise so that they have a clear conception of the time-frame in which they are working and can bring it to an appropriate close;

- using a closure activity which allows group members to say something about how they are feeling at the end of the session;

- using a closure activity which allows group members to affirm their relationships with each other;

- using a closure activity which allows the release of any tension, for example, a game which involves having fun together.

Questions for Reflection

Have I left sufficient time for closure within my lesson / session plan?

Would it be useful to have a timekeeper other than myself to ensure that enough time for closure is left?

What are likely to be the key learning points that need to be drawn together at the end of the session?

Is this session likely to raise strong emotions? Will there need to be some form of closure relating to this?

What will be the most appropriate closure activities for this group at the end of this session?

WAYS OF ACHIEVING CLOSURE AT THE END OF A PROGRAMME OR MODULE CAN INCLUDE:

- The use of an entire session at the end of the programme / module for affirmation, reflection and looking ahead.

- Affirming what each person in the group has learnt and contributed, through giving certificates or prizes. The affirmation will be most effective if it is person specific, naming the particular learning and skills which have been evidenced.

- Celebrating the end of the programme / module – inviting guests to see the work that has been done, presenting certificates, having a special meal / cake, going on a relevant visit / trip, etc.

- Evaluating what has happened within the programme / module. As a form of closure, it allows group members to reflect on what they have been doing, the feelings they have experienced, what they have learnt, etc. and to contribute to the planning of future sessions, both for themselves and for others. Evaluation and reflection processes and tools are discussed more fully in Developing a Model for Self-evaluation (Section Six).

Ways of achieving closure at the end of an entire programme / module could also involve some of the suggestions for closure at the end of a session.

Questions for Reflection

Have I planned sufficient time into the programme / module for effective closure?

What closure elements are likely to be most useful for this particular programme and group:

- *affirmation;*
- *celebration;*
- *personal reflection;*
- *programme evaluation;*
- *looking ahead?*

What are the key learning points from the programme / module that need to be drawn together at the end?

Have I included sufficient time for group members to give me feedback on their learning and on the programme / module?

How will this feed into the overall evaluation of the programme / module?

What support or further learning / development opportunities may group members need beyond this particular programme / module?

Will group members be able to leave the final session with a sense of achievement, well-being and completion – and an openness to new challenges and learning?

For examples of Closure activities, see sample Games, page 130

5.6 Other Groupwork Tools and Strategies

In addition to games and similar activities, there are a wide range of other tools and strategies which can contribute to the learning possibilities within a particular programme. A variety of styles and ways of working will allow the facilitator to cater for the breadth of learning styles within a group.

Some of the ways of working may be new to group members (and possibly to the facilitator), and this trying out of new experiences can be in itself a very valuable part of the learning process. In order that people feel able to take appropriate risks in trying something new, it will be especially important that the boundaries of safe space are securely in place and that clear introductions and explanations are given. It may also be appropriate to use other activities to build up to the new exercise / way of working rather than plunging straight in.

If the facilitator is trying something for the first time with a group;

- *thorough preparation;*
- *observing another facilitator using the activity / way of working (for example, on video);*
- *the opportunity to try the activity first as a participant (for example, with a group of colleagues);*
- *the support of a co-facilitator;*

can all help to build her / his confidence.

Questions for Reflection

How do I feel about trying out new ways of working, or activities that are in a different style to what I normally use?

Are there opportunities I can take to try them out first as a participant or facilitator?

- *through a training / development session?*
- *with a supportive group of colleagues?*

Is there anyone I know who has used them before who I could talk to, or who could work with me?

A whole range of ways of working and activities are listed in the box below. Some of these are largely self-explanatory, but longer explanations are given for others. As explained in Using Games (Section Five), it is important to think carefully about which way of working / activity will best fulfil the purpose of the programme you are planning and will be most appropriate for the group with which you are working. There is some overlap between the different types of activity: for example, the learning from the more practically based activities will often need to be drawn out through a debriefing style discussion at specific points throughout or at the end of the activity.

- Wordstorm
- Group Debate
- Worksheet
- Puppets and Masks
- Circle Time
- Participant-led Discussions
- Collage
- Question and Answer
- Paired Work
- Journals
- Story
- Silent Personal Reflection
- Facilitator-led Discussions
- Role Play
- Reportage
- Small Group Work
- Walking Debate
- Facilitator roles, e.g.'Devil's Advocate'
- Think, Write, Share
- Art-based activities
- Scenarios
- Presentations
- Practical Tasks or Challenges

Maximising Participation within the Group

As well as having different preferred learning styles, individual group members will also have different personalities, experiences, skills and levels of confidence / self-esteem.

These factors will impact upon the ways of working with which they feel most comfortable, for example, some people feel confident speaking within a large group, while others prefer to share ideas with one other person. If all of the activities take place within the large group, some people may never contribute their ideas and experience to the group. An appropriate mix of groupings could include the following:

INDIVIDUAL WORK

Giving people time and opportunity to think and reflect for themselves through thinking time, drawing or writing, etc. Sometimes it will be appropriate for them to share their thinking afterwards in pairs, small groups or the large group. You also need to consider whether it is appropriate for everyone to share their thoughts or whether it should just be volunteers.

PAIRED WORK

Encouraging people to work in twos can be of value in itself, or can give people the chance to test out their ideas with one person before sharing them with a larger group.

SMALL GROUP WORK

As well as being more comfortable for some group members, working in groups of three to five people allows the participation of a greater number of people within a limited time-frame. Where appropriate, the small groups (or a nominated speaker from each one) can feed back or show what they have discussed / made / learnt to the large group. If their work is visual (for example, ideas on a flipchart, a piece of art), these could be spread out on the floor or put up on the wall for other groups to walk around and look at instead of (or as well as) using verbal feedback.

NB. The nominated speaker from within the small group needs to be willing, not someone who has been negatively pressurised into taking it on.

LARGE GROUP WORK

The large group includes everyone who is involved in the process, for example, the whole class, the whole staff team, etc. The advantages of work in the large group are that everyone is aware of and part of each stage of the process together. However, within a set time-frame and given people's different personalities and levels of confidence, it may limit participation and the wealth of contribution which people have to make to the process. It is useful for smaller groupings to feed back to the large group at various points during the process so that the learning can be gathered and there is a shared sense of purpose and direction.

CIRCLE TIME

This structured form of groupwork can enable everyone to participate, even in a large group. See Working in a Circle (Section Five).

Discussion-based Activities

FACILITATOR OR PARTICIPANT-LED DISCUSSIONS

In planning a programme or session, you do not need to assume that the facilitator will always be the person leading. There will be times when it is valuable to give group members opportunities to facilitate and lead particular activities and sessions. In all cases, it is important that the opportunity is appropriate and open to any group member who might benefit from it. This opportunity can:

- promote the concept of a democratic setting / classroom;
- give individual group members the opportunity to develop new skills;
- allow group members to share their knowledge, skills and interests;
- give group members the opportunity to receive feedback from the facilitator and from their peers;
- build confidence and self-esteem;
- give the facilitator a structured opportunity to learn from group members;
- allow the facilitator to take a break!

Questions for Reflection

Am I willing to consider handing over the facilitation of a particular activity or session to a group member?

Will this be appropriate:
- *in the context of the intended learning outcomes of the programme?*
- *for this particular group?*
- *for the broader personal development of the individual group members?*

What might be the specific learning outcomes from this particular experience for the individual concerned?

Are there particular feedback and reflection opportunities that I need to put in place for the individual and for the group when planning the programme?

Who would I consider offering the opportunity to? Am I restricting the opportunity inappropriately?

NB. Some children and young people (and adults!) whose behaviour is difficult within a group can rise to the challenge of being given this kind of responsibility, and demonstrate skills and maturity that might not otherwise have been evident.

FACILITATORS' ROLES

At times, it may be useful for facilitators to take on a particular role in order to challenge the group's thinking and to take their learning further. See The Facilitation Process (Section Three).

WORDSTORMING / IDEAS GATHERING

A simple way of getting a lot of useful ideas about a subject in a short period of time. It provides the opportunity for maximum participation and should increase self-esteem by valuing the contributions of everyone involved. It can be done in the large or small groups with feedback to the large group.

People are encouraged to say whatever comes into their head – it doesn't matter how silly / funny / odd the ideas are. Each person should only speak a couple of times on each idea. All ideas are written up on a large sheet of paper / flipchart with a felt tip pen / marker so that everyone can see the suggestions.

After five minutes or so (when the ideas stop flowing) you will end up with a list to start working on. You will engage the group in deciding which ideas have possibilities and which ideas are unrealistic in this situation. An alternative way to reach consensus on the ideas is to engage the group in voting for ideas that could be worked upon.

Example wordstorm results for the phrase: **Community Relations**

RELATIONSHIPS
SHARING IDEAS
CONFIDENT
DIFFERENCE
CONFLICT
OUR HISTORY
PEACE
FAIRNESS
PERSONAL HISTORY
RECONCILIATION
DIVISION
NORTHERN IRELAND
SECTARIANISM
HARD WORK
OPPORTUNITIES
EUROPE
FLAGS AND EMBLEMS
CULTURE
RACISM
POLITICS
RELIGION

GROUP DEBATE

This provides the group with a formal structure in which to discuss the different ways of looking at a particular theme or issue. Where the issue may be contentious, this has the advantage of 'containing' it. On the other hand, its focus can be reasoning-based and may limit people's reflection on how they feel about the theme in question.

The group selects the topic for discussion and volunteers are sought for the roles of protagonist (arguing the case for the motion), antagonist (arguing against the motion), chairperson, timekeeper, etc. The room needs to be laid out so that the group is in a semi-circle with the main speakers at the front. Following presentation of the case for each side and facilitated by the chairperson, group members can ask questions of the speakers. At the end, a vote can be held for and against the motion.

WALKING DEBATE

A walking debate works best with at least ten people and space is required for the whole group to stand in a line. Label one end of the room 'Agree' and the other 'Disagree' to create an invisible continuum. Alternatively, label the four corners of the room, 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Don't Know' and 'Don't Care'. When using this exercise for the first time, begin the session with a light, non-controversial statement that invites opinion on a current television programme, football team, etc. If you are not going on to further discussion about the debate themes, it can also be useful to end the session with a similar statement. The Walking Debate can be used to support participants, for example:

- *to explore their opinions and feelings about different issues / themes;*
- *in evaluation of a session / programme;*
- *in resolving a classroom dispute;*
- *in gauging interest in a particular topic.*

Explain that you will be reading out statements and they must respond by choosing a place along the line depending on their strength of feeling, or go to the corner that most closely represents their view. It is important to encourage the group members not to go along with the crowd, but to follow their own instinct. Once they have taken up a position, you can ask questions of the individual members, encouraging them to explain to others in the group why they have taken up this position. This can lead to a group discussion on the issues raised – remember there are no right or wrong answers, the activity is all about discussion and debate. It is important to inform individuals that, it is okay for them to change their mind and to take up a different position. At some stage, it is possible that the discussion may become difficult to facilitate in a line and you may find it more useful to form a circle.

Sample statements:

- *Reality TV shows should be banned.*
- *Football players should have to give 30% of their income to charity.*

- *The legal voting age should be lowered to 16.*
- *People should have the freedom to fly the flag of their choice over their door.*
- *Class A drugs should be legalised.*

- *It is important for us to learn about other people's opinions.*
- *Changing the curriculum / our training programme to include this subject has been worthwhile.*

PRESENTATION

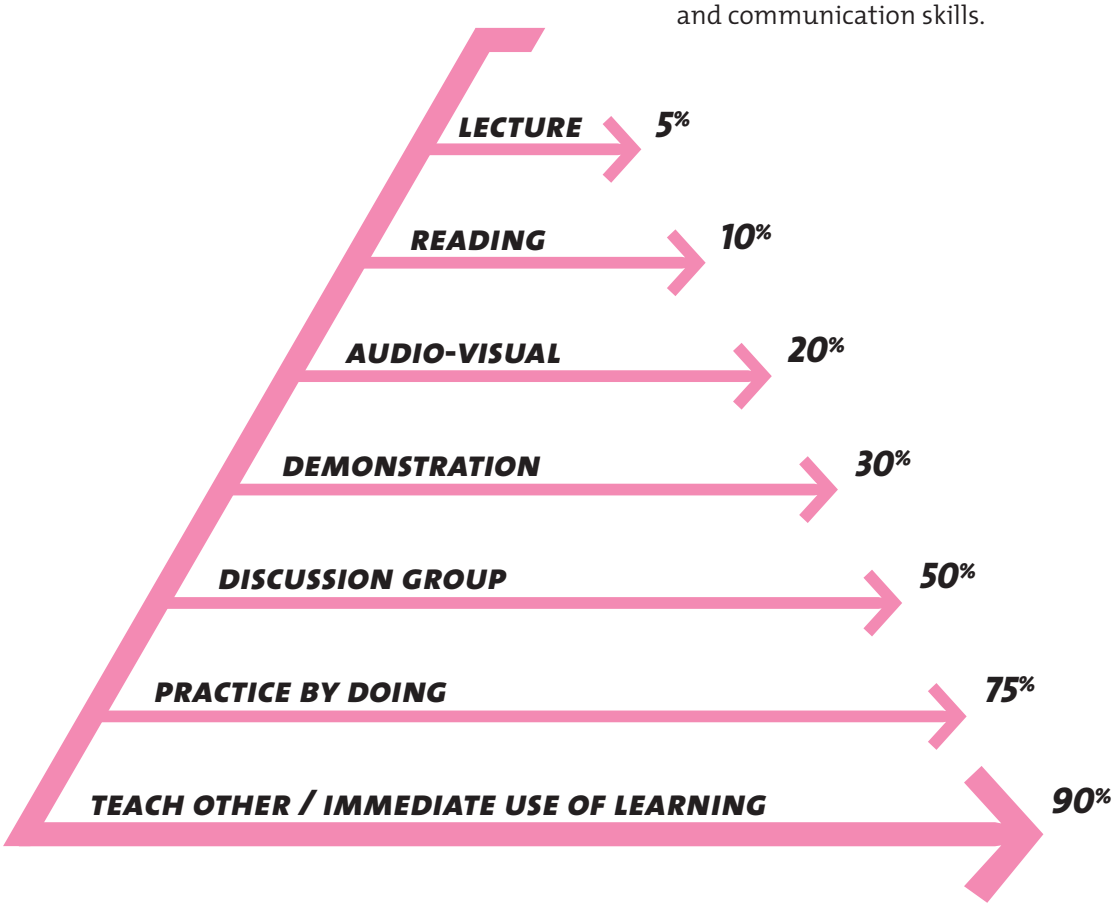
This is a useful way of giving the group a chunk of information about the particular theme which they are exploring. It can be delivered by an individual or a small group using Powerpoint, an overhead projector, a flipchart, a whiteboard, etc. However, it is important:

- to enable group members to understand the relevance of the input and how it fits in with what they are doing in the programme as a whole;
- to make sure that the input fits within group members' concentration spans (for example, depending on the time of day, group age, energy levels, etc.);
- that you do not overload people with too much information at a time.

With this in mind, set yourself a time limit, and stick to it.

Breaking up the input with discussion and other activities may help with this. In addition, bear in mind that often people learn and remember most effectively by 'doing': a more useful way of working may be to set small groups the task of finding out about aspects of the particular theme, and for each of them to give a presentation to the large group. As well as learning about the theme, they will also be developing other investigative, thinking and communication skills.

LEARNING PYRAMID [7]



7 Adapted from National Training Laboratories, Bethnel, Maine.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

This allows the group(s) to focus on a particular theme through the structure of questions and answers, rather than through open discussion. The questions may be addressed to the facilitator, to an individual group member or to a particular small group within the group. This may be in response to a presentation, in the light of the specific experience or expertise a group member is known to have, etc. It is essential to check that the individual or small group is comfortable with being the focus of questions and is happy to have a go at answering them. As the facilitator, it is also important to know when to end such a session, perhaps because enough time has been given to it or because the person fielding the questions seems to have had enough. One way of doing this is to check with her / him now and again, for example, by asking, 'Would you like to leave it there, or are you OK to take a couple more questions?' Remind the questioners to keep their questions focused and the responder to keep her / his answers succinct. It is always important to work within the context of the group contract, so that both questioning and answering are respectful, even when challenging someone else's perspective.

SCENARIOS AND STORIES

Particular scenarios can often give a context for understanding life implications that might otherwise seem theoretical or irrelevant. A fictional story can give groups a fantasy space in which to safely explore a theme within their own life context. There are many excellent children's stories that can be used in this way, including with adults. Alternatively, you can create your own scenario or story to suit the situation. Scenarios and stories in picture or video / DVD form are also useful.

In order to develop an understanding of the theme and to relate it back to 'real life', some ways of using scenarios and stories include:

- considering the situation / theme from the perspective of different characters;
- developing alternative endings or outcomes;
- thinking about what might have been happening just before the story / scenario;
- thinking up questions you would like to ask particular characters, and their possible answers;
- examining the possible positive and negative ways characters relate to and interact with each other, and considering alternatives;
- considering where I would put myself in the scenario / story? What would I have done the same / differently?

It can be valuable to use fairy tales and to look at the situation from the perspective of different characters, not just the 'hero / heroine', for example, the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood, the ugly sisters in Cinderella.

Stories for exploring identity:

- *Inkpen, M. (1996), Nothing, London, Hodder Children's Books.*

Stories for exploring fear and conflict:

- *Long Neck and Thunder Foot, London, Puffin, Piers, H. / Foreman, M. (illustrated) (1984);*
- *For further examples, see CCEA (2002), Primary Values, Belfast, CCEA.*

Scenarios are often developed directly or indirectly from the facilitator's or group members' own experiences. Telling your own story can be an important part of understanding your experiences, just as listening to others' 'real life' stories can provide a way of learning from theirs. The very experience of being heard can be hugely affirming.

TELLING OUR OWN STORY: LIFELINES

This exercise allows individuals to tell their own story based on key events in their lives to date. It allows us to see our lives differently: pictorially and in positives and negatives. You can do it in different ways – you could take it from birth until now, from age 15 until now, over the past year, etc.

Give participants a large sheet of paper and pens / crayons, ask them to find a space on their own and to work for 15 – 30 minutes (depending on the group). They can illustrate their 'line' using words, pictures, symbols, newspaper / magazine cuttings, etc.

Participants can then share their Lifeline with a partner or in a small group. Make sure that you allow time for everyone in the group to tell their story. The Lifelines can also be displayed, if participants are happy with this. Be aware that Lifelines can be emotive and contain very personal information, so always work within the contract framework and ensure that people know that they choose what they want to illustrate and share with others.

You might want to give the group some specific guidelines to work with, for example, 'a time ...':

- *I felt proud*
- *I felt happy*
- *I felt embarrassed*
- *I became aware of difference*
- *I felt aware of belonging*
- *I felt (un)fairly treated*
- *I was aware of divisions in Northern Ireland*
- *I was aware of global conflict*

These possibilities can also be explored through drama, writing and arts-based activities.

Drama-based Activities

ROLE-PLAY

Role-play can be an exciting technique where you encourage people to play the role of another person or indeed a position they themselves have previously experienced. It can also be valuable for people to take on a role they have not previously experienced, particularly a role reversal, for example where they take on the role of someone they have different views from or with whom they have been in conflict. They will take up this role for a certain period of time (to be specified at the start of the role-play) and should be encouraged to play this role to the best of their ability. You could introduce the concept of role-play by outlining the different roles you undertake in every day life, for example, son, daughter, father, mother, teacher, pupil, caretaker, governor, tutor, etc.

You can prepare for role-play in advance by preparing role cards, but be conscious not to make them over-complicated so that players do not become over-anxious about trying to remember everything. It is important that you set realistic boundaries, and the scene for the role-play so that everyone understands what is happening.

Role-play can encourage people to appreciate that our behaviour, feelings and self-image may vary depending on the role we are playing. We can also develop self-confidence through an increased awareness of our capacity to cope with different roles. There is no script for role-plays and you need to be prepared for the unexpected, for example:

- *emotional issues emerging;*
- *players drying up;*
- *the need to challenge negative stereotypes.*

After the role-play, allow as much time for follow-up as for the role-play itself. Feelings that arise during role-play are very real and should not be discounted. Give players time to come

out of their role and talk about their feelings now and those during the role-play. This can be done in small groups or in the large group.

Simple 'de-roling' techniques enable people to leave their roles and become themselves again. Explain that the role-play is over and get them to think of who they are, for example, turning to the next person and saying their name and favourite football team / food / music etc. It is important to create time so that there is a definite break for the group to debrief – how did they feel, what did they learn, linking the role-play to real life situations, etc.

NB Some people feel deep anxiety about 'role-play'. It is always important to be clear about what is involved, that no fantastic acting skills are required and that this, as with everything else, takes place within a supportive, respectful space. There is a big difference between being asked to role-play a particular conversation with a partner while everyone else is doing the same, and being asked to do a role-play in front of the rest of the group which they will then discuss afterwards. You need to consider:

- that it is appropriate to give people a choice as to whether or how they participate;
- giving people time to think about the role-play before they act it out;
- asking for volunteers when it is for role-play in front of the large group;
- approaching people to allow them to prepare in advance of the session if it will help them to feel more confident;
- giving people the option of taking on an observation and feedback role;
- building up to role-play by doing other, lower key drama-based activities first.

USING PUPPETS AND MASKS

Puppets and masks allow people to take on roles within a discussion or drama, but often also give them confidence to say things or to explore things which they might not do while 'being themselves'. On a basic level, shy children can use a puppet to speak through, where they might not speak within the group by themselves. On another level, group members can express feelings, thoughts, concerns, etc. that the puppet or mask persona is experiencing where they might not have said it directly about themselves. Using puppets to act out stories and scenarios is a valuable experience in itself, and can also be a way into group members engaging in role-play.

The experience of actually making the puppets or masks and of writing stories / scenarios can also be an extremely useful part of the process.

Other Arts-based Activities [8]

As with drama-based activities, these can be very effective with group members who are less confident about their verbal communication and literacy skills. They:

- encourage a range of other creative skills;
- can provide an important outlet for the expression of emotions;
- enable people to express things that they might not be able to put into words.

As with drama, it is important to allay people's concerns by emphasising that we all have creativity within us, and it is not about being good or bad at art, music, etc. as we may have previously been told. Encourage people to consider the importance of the process and learning rather than the product.

Before moving into the main activities, it may be useful to do a couple of short introductory

8 See Craig, C. et al. (2002), Different Tracks – Experiential Learning: A Practical Resource Guide for Community Relations Work, Belfast, Corrymeela Community.

activities to help build people's confidence. For example:

- Ask people to use only marks or lines (no pictures, symbols or letters) on a page to represent different feelings.

- Ask people to think about which colour / shape they associate with different feelings, places, experiences, etc., for example, 'think of a colour which represents ...':

- *how you see the world;*
- *your motivation;*
- *how you see yourself.*

- Give people a piece of clay and ask them to simply feel it in their hands with their eyes closed. Keeping their eyes closed, they could then go on to make something (anything at all, it does not have to be complicated!) of their choice.

- Ask people to sit in silence for two to three minutes and to listen to the sounds which they can hear around them.

- Develop a simple clapping rhythm within the circle, possibly beginning with everyone clapping once, passing the clap around the circle. As the group becomes confident, divide people into several small groups with different rhythms.

- Play a piece of music (any style!) and ask participants to write / draw what the music meant to them, the feelings it raised or what they thought about.

COLLAGE

Participants spend approximately 45 minutes searching through old magazines and newspapers cutting out relevant material relating to the subject of the collage. It is a good idea to write up about four relevant headings as a guide to the content of collages. These headings will not restrict the contents of the collage as participants soon become engrossed and are merely a support to get everyone started. Upon completion of their collages participants / small groups display them around the room. Each person / group in turn explains their collage to the others with time allocated to ask questions, discuss and affirm each collage.

Collage Headings Example: Conflict

- *Words and images associated with conflict*
- *Personally, locally, globally*
- *Resolving conflict: the ideal and the reality*
- *Consequences of conflict:*
  for example, intimidation, refugees, famine, unemployment, etc.

Group members often feel great pride in their collage, and the depth of content displayed can be surprising. For this reason it is important that collages, as with all creative work, are treated with a certain amount of reverence – allowing them to stay on display for a period of time, or be taken home afterwards. It is important to create a safe space and this means that there are no spectators in this activity, including the facilitator. You and the group will benefit greatly from your participation – you might even be surprised by what you learn about yourself!

ART SPIRAL

Lay out a large spiral of paper / card, spread widely enough so that group members can access different parts on which to work. Provide crayons, paints and pens.

Everyone, including the facilitator, selects a spot on the spiral and in the space they have chosen, draws / paints something which represents their thoughts in response to the question. You may want to encourage them not to use words in their art, and you may also want to ask everyone to work in silence. After a time (for example, ten minutes), ask them to find another space, and respond to a follow-on question. This can be repeated as is appropriate and according to space on the spiral.

Sample questions could include:

- *How would you represent important aspects of your past?*
- *How would you represent important aspects of your present?*
- *What are your hopes for the future?*

Afterwards, allow time to stand back and look at the spiral, walking around to see other people's contributions. Follow this by de-briefing as a group, talking about what people can see on the spiral or what they chose personally to depict, and considering the process of working together. For example:

- How did people feel if someone used 'their' space and developed or added to their work?
- How did it feel to work in silence?
- How comfortable were they with an art-based activity? When had they last done something like this?

Writing-based Activities

These activities are useful because they require people to articulate their thoughts and feelings and, therefore, help to build all kinds of literacy, including emotional literacy. It is important to be aware of literacy levels within the group. Using only or mostly writing-based activities can reduce the opportunities for participation, contribution and learning for those who are not confident about their literacy. At worst, they may opt out of activities or stop coming to the group altogether.

REPORTAGE

A similar exercise to the collage, where individuals / small groups are asked to design a news report for a specific communication medium such as radio, television, newspaper or the internet to explain the work they have been doing. They should consider to whom the report is to be made available. The report could include:

- the value of the work, including both positive and negative points;
- what they have learnt and what action needs to be taken;
- interviews with people who have views on the issue in question;
- examples of written or artwork;
- celebration of the group, the learning, etc.;
- future plans.

WORKSHEET

Using worksheets individually, in pairs or small groups can help to focus people's thinking because they need to express it clearly in writing and often in response to particular questions. It can be limiting, however, if the questions are not open enough, if there is no opportunity to share their learning and depending on the size of the sheet. (For sample worksheets, see end of section.)

SILENT PERSONAL REFLECTION AND JOURNALS

It is important that people have the opportunity to develop skills of personal reflection and to be comfortable with themselves. There will also be those within the group who will learn most effectively in this way. It is useful to develop silent reflection when you want people to give a considered response within a discussion rather than simply their first reaction.

Similarly, using a journal can help to focus thoughts and reflections, whether it is done through writing, drawing or a combination of the two. A journal also allows people to reflect back on their learning over a period of time. This provides useful reminders and can be hugely affirming as they see what they have learnt, the skills they have developed, etc. To help give a sense of the purpose of journals when working with children, Jenny Mosley calls them 'Think Books',[9] and this, or a similar name may be more appropriate for your particular group.

It is crucial that before people begin using journals there is a very clear understanding as to whether they are totally personal or whether they will be shared with the facilitator and / or the group. People are likely to record very different things depending on who is going to see them. Where the facilitator is going to have access to them, it may be appropriate to write responsive comments which will give affirmation, assist reflection and learning, etc. However, again, it needs to be made clear that this is going to happen at the start.

9 Mosley, J. (2000), Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom, Wisbech, LDA.

THINK, WRITE, SHARE

This allows people time to think and reflect, to focus their thoughts in writing or in a picture / symbols and then to share them with a partner or group. It is especially useful for people who may feel 'put on the spot' when an instant response is expected from them. A worksheet could be used as the starting point for this.

Group Tasks and Challenges [10]

These could include many of the activities outlined above and many of the games described in Section Five (Using Games). There is a valuable group-building purpose within such activities, and they can also be arranged to suit the particular theme of the programme / session. Setting the group a shared task or challenge, for example, to solve a problem together, to make something together, to undertake a community-based project, to investigate and respond to a particular social or global issue, etc. is a useful way of embedding learning. A good example of this is the action component within Local and Global Citizenship.[11] As with the other practical activities, this can be emphasised by debriefing questions.

10 Craig, C. et al. (2003), Different Tracks – Experiential Learning: A Practical Guide for Community Relations Work, Belfast, Corrymeela Community.

11 CCEA (2003), Local and Global Citizenship: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools, Belfast, CCEA.

SAMPLE DE-BRIEFING QUESTIONS:

- Did your group worked well together?
- Did your group elect a leader?
- Did a leader emerge?
- Was there any attempt at planning how to perform the various tasks?
- Was enough time spent on planning the tasks? Did this save time later?
- How did the group operate as a team?
- Was there conflict, differences of opinion, etc.?
- What skills did you need to use?
- Did anyone monitor the time available?
- Did everyone understand what was going on and what was expected of them?
- Did different personalities emerge, for example, analyser, peacemaker, etc.?
- Were the later tasks better organised by the group than the earlier ones?
- What kind of atmosphere was there?
- Did you use the time between tasks to review progress and plan improvement?
- Was everyone involved? How were the tasks shared out?
- Did the task get so complicated / disorganised that it had to be started again?
- List four strengths your group demonstrated.
- Did your approach have any weaknesses?
- What would you do differently if you could do the task again?

Questions for Reflection

Have I chosen a wide enough and appropriate range of ways of working and activities for this particular group and programme?

Are there ways of working which would be new to me, but that I would like to try? Where can I gain experience or get support for doing this?

Are there ways of working that I feel wary about? Would it help to see them in action, or experience them as a participant? How can I do this?

Is there someone else with particular skills who could work with me for specific activities? (Make sure that it's appropriate – having told the group that they do not need to be drama or art experts, it may undermine that to bring one in!)

12 Adapted from Benson, J. (1997), Working More Creatively with Groups, London, Routledge.

Worksheet:
Similarities and Differences

Three things about me which are the same as everyone else in the room:

-
-
-

Three things about me that I feel make me different from everyone else in the room:

-
-
-

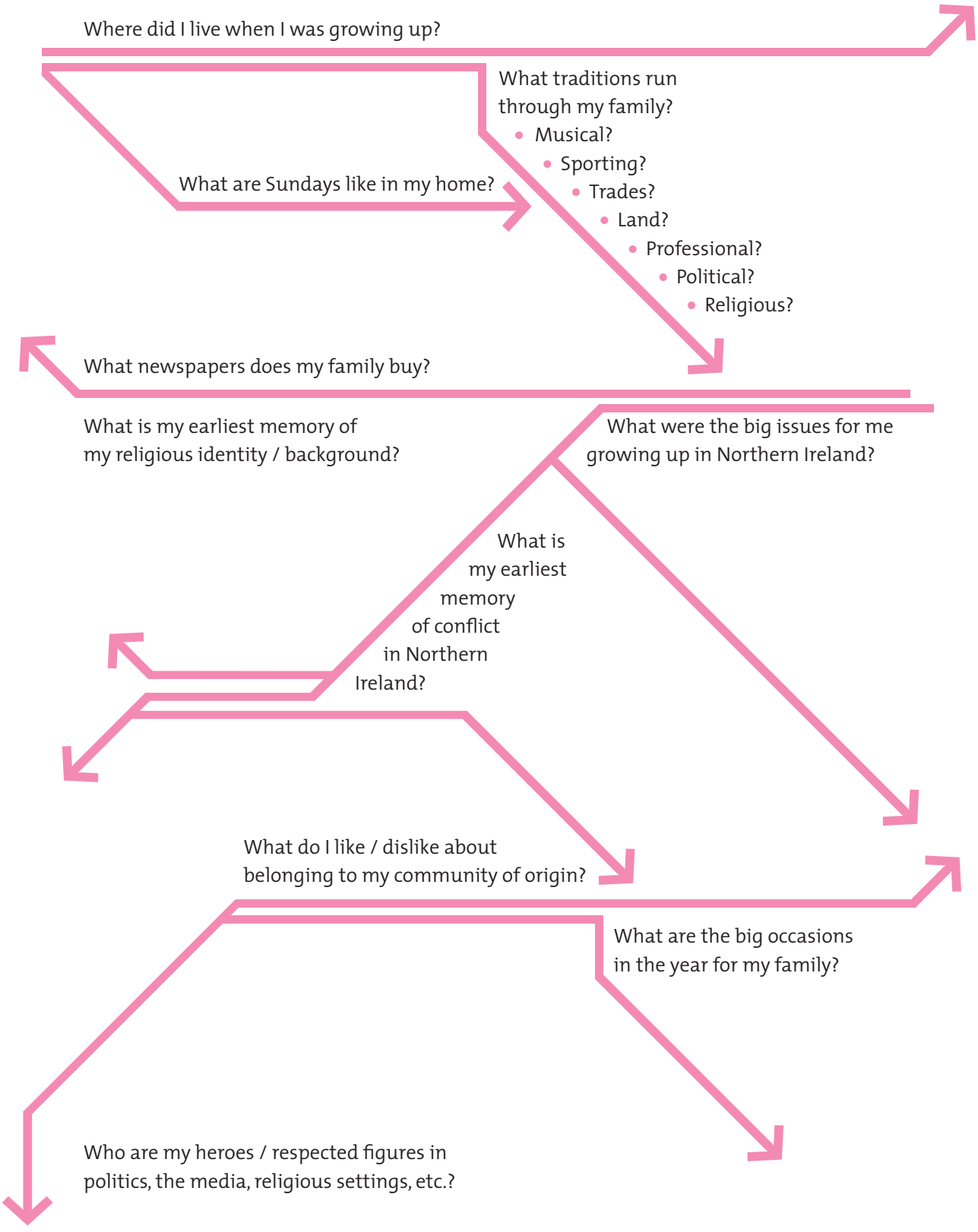
Five things which are the same as some other people in the room:

-
-
-
-
-

Three qualities that I feel other people in the room have that I do not have:

-
-
-

Worksheet:
Heritage and Identity



5·7 Practical Preparation for Groupwork

Although 'safe space' is about far more than the physical surroundings, these and other practical considerations will play an important part, and need to be considered by the facilitator within the overall planning. Very basic things will affect people's level of comfort, sense of safety and, therefore, their ability and willingness to participate.

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

For a class group working on their own, the best place to do the work will probably be their own classroom as this is likely to be the place in the school where they feel most at home. This also recognises that the work is integrated within the life of the classroom and is not something additional or exceptional. In a similar way, a staff team might find their staffroom the most appropriate place for this kind of work. On the other hand, if the staffroom is really only, or is perceived to be only, the 'teachers' room', this might not be the appropriate place for work involving the whole school staff team.

It is important to bear in mind that some rooms, such as a science laboratory, have fixed workspaces and it may not be possible to use these rooms for groupwork. Some aspects of groupwork may still be possible with a bit of creativity and compromise, for example, partner work and work in small groups with feedback to the large group, even though not in a circle.

☑

Setting up a circle for group discussion:

- *Does a circle need to be set up and put away for each session?*
- *Does everyone, including the facilitator, have the same seating?*
- *Does everyone has eye contact?*
- *Do I need a 'talking object' for discussions?*

Practicalities:

Have I checked with group members that:

- *everyone has a seat / space (and a seat / space is left for anyone you are expecting to arrive late)?*
- *they are warm enough / not too warm?*
- *the lighting is OK (for example, no one is being blinded by sunlight)?*
- *everyone can see and hear everyone else?*
- *there is a good balance between giving people their 'personal space' and a sense of actually being together as a group?*
- *possibilities of interruption are minimised (for example, all mobile phones are switched off, the facilitator is aware at the start of anyone who needs to leave early)?*

Other considerations:

- Is there sufficient space for any games or other activities I am planning?
- Are there any health and safety implications?
- Do I need a sign on the door so that the session will not be interrupted?
- Is there the possibility of another room if the usual workplace is not suitable?
- If the room has limitations, what are the possibilities I could still creatively develop, or adaptions I could make?

Where two or more groups from within a school or from different schools are meeting together, the co-ordinators / facilitators will need to discuss together the most appropriate place to meet.

- How many people (including facilitators / leaders) will be involved?
- Will it be possible to work in one circle, or will it need to be split up into smaller groups?
- If working in more than one group, will there need to be feedback to the whole group at points during or at the end of the session?
- What space will be needed for this – more than one room?
- What will be the most appropriate venue (in one school or external)?
- Is there sufficient space for any games or activities which we are planning?
- Have we checked out any health and safety implications?
- Have we organised consent forms for children / young people who are going to a venue other than their own school?

NB. For example: An assembly hall or gym may provide plenty of space for games and circles, but some group members may feel overwhelmed by such a big space or feel that their voice is too exposed if they express a personal view, and it can be 'echo-y' and harder to hear people.

Weighing up the pros and cons is important!

THE TIME AVAILABLE

For individual sessions, this is likely to be more flexible within a primary school than within a post-primary school context, but in both cases the balances between flexibility and other curriculum demands need to be maintained. The bell ringing for the next class / break / end of school is usually a non-negotiable limit, and it is crucial that the programme has reached an appropriate point of closure before this happens.

Aspects such as starting and finishing on time can assist children, young people and adults to see that the work is purposeful and planned, and that they and their time are valued. If group members are late for the start of a session, it is important to respond to this appropriately and respectfully. If they are late for no clear reason, it may be because they do not perceive the session to be a good use of their time, and it may be necessary to clarify the session's purpose, its relevance to them and the contribution which they can make for the benefit of the group as a whole.

Whether planning an individual lesson, a module / series of lessons or a development / training programme for adults, it will be important to think about how much time is needed for the different aspects of:

- *introduction;*
- *relationship and trust building;*
- *exploration of the themes;*
- *evaluation and closure.*

The appropriate depth to which the discussions can be taken will depend in part on the time available to ensure that each of the introductory and ending steps is sufficiently developed. Within a longer session, and particularly if the programme / process is very in-depth or emotive, time will also need to be allocated for breaks.

- What time is available for the overall programme / module?
- What time is available for each session?
- When is the best time within the day / week for a regular session?
- How can the programme purpose best be achieved within the time available?
- What size is the group? (This will affect how long it takes to do different exercises.)
- How long is it appropriate to spend on different activities or discussions? (This may depend on the ages, abilities, and concentration skills within the group.)
- Have I allowed sufficient time for introductory activities (for example, sharing purpose and plan for the session, introductory / ice-breaker game, re-visiting contract, etc.) and for evaluation and closure?
- Have I allowed time for appropriate breaks (including meals!)?
- Have I considered how I will respond if people are late for no clear reason?

RESOURCES

There are many resources available which can support this kind of work, outlining exercises, games and activities. Such resources will enable more creative programme planning and will support the facilitator in introducing a range of learning opportunities. It is important, however, that facilitators thoroughly familiarise themselves with a particular activity before introducing it to a group, paying particular attention to its appropriateness for that group and the programme in which they are participating.

People are also an important resource, not least the group members themselves, who may have different skills and activity ideas to share. Provided it does not contravene group needs or disrupt the group in other ways, there may be times when it is useful to:

- work with a co-facilitator, see Co-facilitation: Working Together (Section Three);
- invite someone in to lead a session / programme because of their particular experiences or expertise;
- invite other members of the school or local community to participate in or lead a session / programme;
- invite a colleague, tutor, etc. to participate in the group to support you in reflecting on your own learning and skills development.

- What resources are available to me?
- Which resources might be useful for this particular group and programme?
- Do I feel confident leading this exercise?
- How will I evaluate its effectiveness?
- Do I have a resource budget?
- Do I need any support in facilitating this programme?
- Is there someone who could co-facilitate or lead a particular session?
- Is there someone who could help me reflect on my practice?
- Is it possible to bring in someone external?
- *Is there money available for this if needed?*
- *Have they completed any necessary Child Protection documentation?*

5.8
Developing a Programme

As with all other areas of session planning, this work needs to have a clear ***Purpose*** and intended ***Learning Outcomes*** (for individuals, the group as a whole, yourself as the facilitator). The biggest challenge may be that the facilitator is less in control of the process than s/he might be in other areas of their work.

There are a number of reasons for this:

- The material for the work is drawn largely from the life experiences of group members and is dependent to a significant extent on what they choose to bring to the process.

- A commitment to a democratic way of working means that the facilitator does not come to the process as an expert with knowledge to share with the group members. While maintaining a co-ordination role, the facilitator is also a listener and a learner, recognising what each of the children, young people and / or adults brings to the group.

- There is an emphasis on the process itself, rather than on completing a specific task. This requires a high degree of flexibility on the part of the facilitator and a strong sensitivity to the needs and feelings within the group.

Given these circumstances, it is highly appropriate to involve the members in planning as they are the 'experts' on their own life story and situation, and know which issues are of interest and relevance to them.

All of these factors may challenge the facilitator's sense of safety. Feeling reasonably confident about her / his personal preparation, her / his facilitation skills and having a positive relationship with her / his group members will help to ensure that s/he feels equipped for her / his facilitation role. The consequences have the potential to be hugely dynamic and rewarding!

Group members will also feel safer and better able to participate fully if the programme:

- *has a clear purpose they are able to buy into;*
- *is genuinely relevant;*
- *provides a range of learning opportunities which match their different learning styles;*
- *is appropriate for their age group, ability range, etc. and builds from the level of previous experience.*

See Building a Positive Learning Environment: Using Groupwork and Facilitation (Section Three) and Creating Safe Space (Section Five).

Developing Learning Outcomes

The facilitator needs to consider in advance how s/he will reflect on and evaluate both individual sessions and the overall programme. Establishing the purpose of the work and the intended learning outcomes means that these can be used as indicators to measure the learning which takes place.

You will need to consider learning outcomes in relation to aspects such as:

- *factual knowledge;*
- *skills;*
- *understanding;*
- *relationships / interactions;*
- *attitudes and behaviour;*
- *making connections*
  i.e. will group members be able to understand that the learning is relevant and transferable to other settings and experiences?

Gathering evidence of learning will enable everyone to see where learning has taken place, to value the work and to feel confident that it is an important use of their time.

For more information on monitoring and evaluation, see Developing a Model for Self-evaluation (Section Six).

Once the purpose and intended learning outcomes of the programme and individual sessions are set, you can begin to look at which ways of working and specific activities will be most likely to ensure that these are met and that learning actually takes place. Both within individual sessions and across whole programmes, there needs to be a sense of appropriate ***progression*** and ***development***. This means that there needs to be:

- *a sense of continuity and connection between each activity and session;*
- *a structure of activities which allows each new level of learning to be built on further;*
- *opportunities along the way to re-visit and reinforce key learning points.*

It is important, therefore, to get a good balance between keeping the process moving and trying to ensure that key learning is in place before moving on to the next stage.

Common Mistakes [12]

- There is a failure to base the programme on identified individual or group (learning) needs.

- A failure to link the programme objectives to the group's hopes and expectations.

- The programme is too rigid, for example, because of over-planning, failure to allow for spontaneous or unexpected incidents.

- There is an inability to use unexpected incidents to develop programme objectives or to take an entirely new course where this might be appropriate.

- There is not enough balance between individual and group needs, and the group's task requirements.

- The programme is aimed above or below the capabilities and potential of group members, leading to frustration, boredom, competition, etc.

- The programme is unimaginative, repetitive, unstimulating or inappropriate.

- There is too much focus on completing tasks / activities at the expense of attending to and learning from the process which is happening within the group.

- There is a failure to create clarity for group members in relation to the programme and its purpose.

- There is a failure to monitor and evaluate the programme as a way of fine-tuning or even redesigning it if necessary.

12 Adapted from Benson, J. (1997), Working More Creatively with Groups, London, Routledge.

PREPARATION QUESTIONS

Purpose and Learning Outcomes:

- *What is the purpose of the programme?*
- *What are the intended learning outcomes for the programme / module?*
- *What are the intended learning outcomes for the session?*
- *How will learning outcomes, and the whole programme, be monitored and evaluated?*

Involving Group Members:

- *How can group members be involved in programme design and planning?*
- *How can group members be involved in programme monitoring and evaluation?*

Practical Considerations:

See previous checklists on physical setting, time and resources.

- *Bearing all of the above in mind, what will be the most appropriate ways of working and specific activities to use?*

Maximising Learning:

How can I maximise the learning opportunities for group members through:

- *the range of activities offered;*
- *repetition of key themes;*
- *re-visiting key themes using different types of activities;*
- *making clear connections with other learning environments and life experiences?*

5.9 If Things 'Go Wrong'

Given the nature of groupwork and all of the relationships and interactions within it, there is always the possibility that the programme will not go as originally planned. There can be all kinds of reasons for this, and many of these can be turned into constructive learning experiences in themselves. Some of them will be very minor and / or may be immediately positive while others may prove more challenging. There are a few basic foundations, explored in more detail elsewhere in the resource, which will enable the facilitator to respond in ways which will minimise any disruption or anxiety within the group.

These include:

- *a respectful and consistent facilitation style;*
- *taking sufficient time at the beginning of a programme to establish good relations and clear ground rules within the group;*
- *ensuring that the group are able to understand and engage positively with the purpose of the programme;*
- *flexibility in your programme – to suit the group and the circumstances;*
- *taking sufficient time along the way to reflect and evaluate;*
- *ensuring that support structures are in place for the facilitator and for group members.*

The situations which arise will be different in each unique group and will require appropriate responses. They may include:

- *a ground rule being broken;*
- *different forms of challenging behaviour;*
- *people expressing strong emotions;*
- *the formation of subgroups or cliques;*
- *rebellion or refusal to engage;*

- *'red herrings' which take the group off on irrelevant tangents (NB. sometimes they may not be 'red herrings' at all, but may be indicating something which is important within the group);*
- *the group needing to make an important decision and struggling to do so;*
- *a mismatch between the programme content and the group (for example, too theoretical, pitched at an inappropriate level, a sense of irrelevance, etc.);*
- *avoidance or denial of particular issues;*
- *conflict within the group.*

Starting Points for Responding

DON'T PANIC!

- If you have attended to the basic principles outlined above, you already have all the tools in place that you need to respond to whatever situations arise.

- Has something really 'gone wrong' or is there something in particular that is triggering your own anxieties? If possible, check this out with a co-facilitator or colleague. Positive learning may well be occurring within the group.

TAKE YOUR TIME IN RESPONDING

- Provided the physical safety of group members and yourself is assured, there is no need to rush to respond.

- Give yourself time to observe what is going on within the group and to ask the group what they think is happening.

- Consider whether this is something which needs an immediate response, whether it is something that can be worked out through the group's ongoing activities and discussions, or a combination of the two.

DON'T ASSUME THINGS HAVE GONE WRONG

- Disruption to your carefully planned programme may not be a disaster! In fact, it may be a useful indication of immediate needs within the group which need to be explored and addressed before they will be able to move on.

- It may indicate gaps within your programme which the group feel or demonstrate are important (for example, the need for more skills development, significant aspects which had not occurred to you, relational issues which have been preventing the group from working effectively together).

CONSIDER THE POSSIBLE CAUSES

- Do not assume that whatever has happened is the responsibility of a perceived 'troublemaker' who 'always' disrupts things / leads others astray.

- Consider carefully what the genuine and practical causes for the situation may be – again, ask the group what they think. Bear in mind that things going on outside the group (within an individual's circumstances, in a peer group, another class, the wider school, the community, etc.) may be impacting on what is happening within the group.

- If there are individuals who you believe carry particular responsibility for what has happened or who have been particularly affected, consider where and when the appropriate place to respond is. It is important to keep the whole group appropriately informed.

DON'T AUTOMATICALLY BLAME YOURSELF

- Unforeseen circumstances can arise within any group, and sometimes, because of your knowledge of a group, you can be aware that you are taking some level of risk in introducing the next planned topic.

- Take time to reflect with a supportive colleague, with your teacher tutor, or in supervision if it is available, so that you can consider all of the factors involved and use what has happened as a situation to learn from.

SHARE RESPONSIBILITY WITH THE GROUP

- Groupwork is a democratic process, and it is the facilitator's task to enable the group to learn and develop.

- Supporting group members to explore, and respond to difficulties is a key part of the facilitator's role. If the process is well facilitated, group members will be enabled to develop in a whole range of skills including, for example, self-reflection, self-expression, active listening, empathy, other aspects of emotional literacy, problem-solving, conflict resolution, etc.

- As suggested above, group members may well have the answers you are looking for as you yourself think about how to respond!

Strategies for Responding

Some specific responses to the situations suggested above are outlined in other sections in the pack. However, some general strategies which may be useful include:

TIME OUT:
for the group and for yourself. A quick break can give people a bit of space, time to re-gain perspective to reflect and think through options.

RE-VISIT THE CONTRACT / GROUND RULES:
if the issues emerging are around behaviour or relations within the group, it will be important to look again at the ground rules, to make sure that everyone is clear about their purpose and meaning. This may be sufficient to address the issue, or it may become appropriate to use the agreed warning and sanctions system.

CHANGE THE PROGRAMME:
while recognising that there may be curriculum restraints, it may be useful to alter the learning methods, or even the actual content. Pushing on with your original plan will be futile if no learning is going to take place.

RE-VISIT EARLIER STAGES OF THE PROGRAMME:
have the difficulties emerged because learning from an earlier stage of the programme has not yet been assimilated? Or because there has not been sufficient development of particular skills?

WORK WITH A CO-FACILITATOR:
if it is appropriate and possible at this stage within your programme, it may be useful to invite someone to co-facilitate with you for the next session(s).

USE AN EXTERNAL FACILITATOR:
if you feel that you are too involved in what is going on, it may be useful and appropriate to ask an external facilitator to explore the issues with the group, with you also participating. This may be particularly useful if there is a conflict which needs to be mediated.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR GROUP MEMBERS:
bearing in mind that this kind of groupwork is not about counselling or therapy, occasionally it may be appropriate to encourage or enable individuals to receive this kind of support elsewhere. Equally, if Child Protection issues emerge, it is essential to follow through the appropriate procedures for responding to these.

REVIEW AND EVALUATE THOROUGHLY:
take time to thoroughly reflect on and evaluate what has happened, and build this into your planning for future sessions. Use your own support structures to help you to reflect, to check out your ideas and to obtain other perspectives and insights.

Questions for Reflection

What are my fears as to things that could 'go wrong' with this group and this programme?

What positive learning for myself and for the group could come out of such situations?

Is there anyone in this group I might have a tendency to scapegoat? Why?

Have I thoroughly planned and prepared for the work?

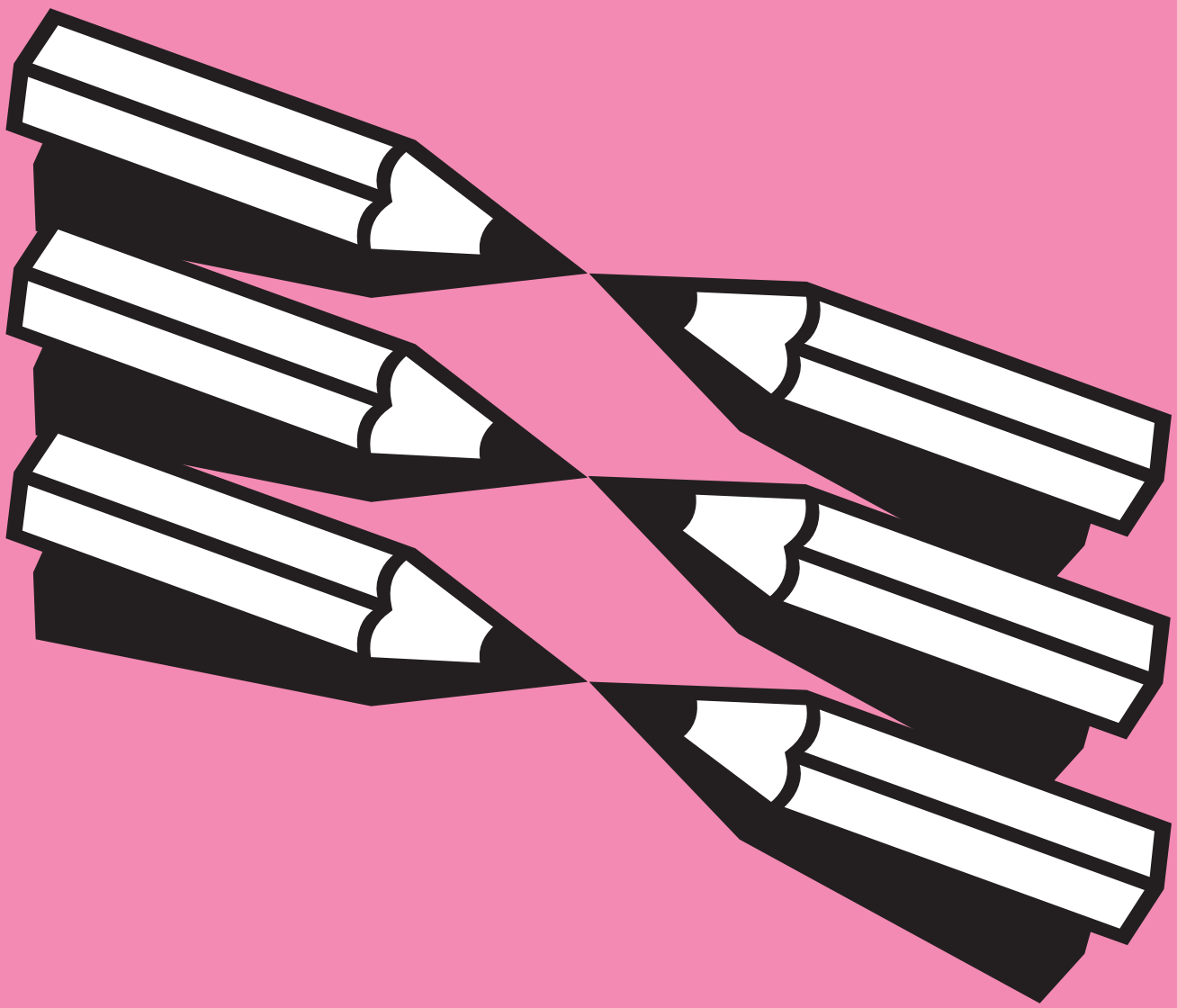
Have I allowed sufficient time for building relationships establishing ground rules, developing skills, etc.?

Is there a clear and appropriate rewards, warnings and sanctions system?

Am I prepared and confident to be flexible with the programme?

Have I some alternative possibilities ready?

What support is available to help me reflect, evaluate and plan for the next session?



Developing a Model for Self-evaluation

People talking without speaking

People hearing without listening ...

'Fools,' said I, 'You do not know

Silence like a cancer grows.'

LYRICS FROM: SIMON, P. (1964), SOUNDS OF SILENCE.

developing a model for self-evaluation

6.0

To evaluate means to collect information about the results of an action and set this against predetermined goals in order to judge the value of the results. The evaluation allows you to maintain, to change or to suspend, justifiably, a defined plan. In this way it supports you to decide the direction you need to go and the best way to get there.

A simple word 'Evaluation':

- *What for?*
- *When? In which circumstances?*
- *With whom?*
- *How to do it?*

The Self-evaluating School [1]

Self-evaluation is a process through which an individual teacher, groups of staff, the staff as a whole and senior management can:

- *reflect on their current practice;*
- *identify and celebrate the school's strengths;*
- *identify and address areas for improvement in their work;*
- *engage in personal and shared professional development;*
- *focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching.*

The process of self-evaluation:

- is ongoing and sharply-focused, and involves monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the existing provision and the pupils' achievements;

- recognises the need for the staff and governors to have a clear and agreed view of the school's current stage of development and through school development planning, to identify priorities which will have a positive effect on learning and teaching;

- informs and influences classroom practice and the quality of learning and teaching, and promotes development and improvement;

- requires staff to evaluate their work critically, reflect on the extent to which expectations are being realised in the work of the school, and establish a clear vision and future direction for the school.

This process requires a climate where all involved are encouraged to be open about their work, evaluate and where necessary improve their own performance.

1 Adapted from the Department of Education's Education and Training Inspectorate, Together Towards Improvement A Process for Evaluation, Bangor, ETI.

6.1 Reviewing

In this context, reviewing is understood as a process of reflecting, asking questions and making learning connections, which is informal and integrated into the fabric of how you work.

Evaluation takes place when this process is formalised and broadened to include aspects such as structures, programme content, delivery style, numbers participating, etc.

Learning does not take place in a vacuum, but in the context of everyday life. Optimum learning is achieved when it is connected. For example, the Northern Ireland Curriculum supports the links between subject areas / themes, although this requires further integration as children / young people also need support in understanding the links between different aspects of learning. Similarly, adults need to see the relevance of any training they receive, to the work which they are required to do or the responsibilities which they carry.

Reviewing is about the link between experience and learning. Just as we need experience in order to learn, we need to use our knowledge to plan our actions and experiences.

REVIEWING INVOLVES FOUR BASIC PROCESSES:

1 Reflection

- *understanding what happened and why;*
- *judging progress in terms of the objectives within the learning programme;*
- *making connections for ourselves;*
- *relating experience gained through the learning programme and existing knowledge.*

2 Making Connections

Personal growth can be viewed as making new connections in any of several directions:

- *upward to achieve one's full potential;*
- *outward to contact and encounter others;*
- *inward to increase our awareness of who we are and what we want, need, sense and feel.*

Some activities have value in their own right, and do not depend on the kinds of connections that are made with other experiences.

We continually come to know ourselves and our worlds by making connections between past, present and future. Threads and themes help us to draw separate experiences together into stories about ourselves and who we are. This can be restricted if, for example:

- people's development is held back by others around them who will not let them change or grow up;

- whatever they do gets explained by themselves or by others in terms of labels from the past.

3 Planning

The experience and learning gained through activities is used to plan what happens next in the programme.

4 Learning Transfer
This is a process of continuous development, which focuses on identifying new knowledge, understanding and skills and thinking about how these can be used in current or future situations.

Questions for Reflection

Do I regularly consider my teaching with a view to identifying aspects that can be usefully developed?

Do I make use of systematic evaluation methods of collecting data about my current practice that may be helpful?

What do I do about what I have learned?

6.2
Assessment as Evaluation

Assessment is an integral part of the learning process through which teachers / trainers build a comprehensive picture of the progress and learning needs of each child, young person or adult in order to plan future work and improve learning. Improvement in learning through assessment is enhanced by:

- the active involvement of children, young people and adults in their learning, including:
  - *sharing learning intentions with children, young people and adults;*
  - *raising their awareness of the skills and knowledge that are being developed;*
  - *developing their awareness of strategies which they employ in their own learning;*

- the provision of effective feedback to children, young people and adults (recognising the profound influence this can have on motivation and self-esteem, both of which are crucial influences on learning) and creating circumstances whereby everyone can give feedback to the teachers / trainers about their learning experiences;

- developing their ability for self-assessment by helping them to :
  - *reflect on and evaluate their own work;*
  - *affirm their own successes and learning;*
  - *set their own goals following supportive questioning and feedback;*
  - *develop practical strategies to improve;*

- the adjustment of teaching / training to take account of the outcomes of assessment.

6.3 Evaluating Learning

ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

Several methods and techniques can be used in an evaluation, depending on the circumstances. Whatever method you choose, it is important to reflect on the starting point of the group so that you have a baseline.

This starting point could be in connection with, for example:

- *new learning;*
- *change of attitudes;*
- *development of skills.*

This baseline will enable you to see what has been achieved and can fit into what you are already doing, for example, the school development plan, monthly plans, training agendas, etc.

SETTING LEARNING OUTCOMES

Once the baseline is established, it is important to set a purpose / learning outcomes for any session or programme. These will provide you with indicators against which to measure your evidence, i.e. how far have you moved from the baseline in achieving the goals (learning outcomes) which you have set?

GATHERING EVIDENCE

A varied range of evaluation techniques need to be used as an integral part of the learning and teaching process, not just at the end of a session / lesson. Facilitators need to select techniques that best suit the nature of the work and the needs of the group members at the particular time, for example:

- *observation;*
- *discussion;*
- *oral, written, visual presentations, including photographs, videos, etc.;*
- *creative arts displays or presentations, including drama, puppetry, etc.;*
- *individual or group tasks;*
- *project work;*
- *homework;*
- *lesson and monthly plans;*
- *feedback questionnaires;*
- *reports and policy documents.*

The evidence from these activities should help facilitators:

- *evaluate the individual and group learning;*
- *plan the next stages of learning for this group;*
- *adapt the programme for a similar group;*
- *evaluate their own learning.*

Ideas for Inclusion to Ascertain Learning

Looking Back

- What have we learned so far?
- *What do we know now that we did not **know** at the beginning?*
- *What do we **understand** now that we did not understand at the beginning?*
- *What can we **do** now that we could not do before?*

- Which of these things helped us learn?

- How have they helped us learn?
- *the group as whole;*
- *particular group members;*
- *the group atmosphere;*
- *the learning approaches;*
- *the facilitator;*
- *the material / resources used;*
- *specific activities?*

- Did any of these things interfere with our learning in any way? If so, how?

- What have we found out about our personal ways of learning things?
- *methods we find helpful, for example, trying things out, using books, being instructed by others, using videos and learning aids;*
- *the style of learning we like best, for example, working alone, working in small groups, in pairs, working co-operatively, competing against other groups;*
- *the personal skills we use, for example, observing, listening, memorising, comparing one thing with another, making notes?*

Looking Forward

- How can we use this knowledge about the way we learn to help us with future learning?

- Where do we go next with this programme?

- If the programme is finished, is there a need for follow-up / further support for individuals or for the group?

Reflection Questions for Staff

What are the main learning methods used in the session / programme?

How interesting and useful are they?

What role do you play in the process?

Do the group members help one another learn?

Are there any changes you would make to the session / programme?

What role could the participants play in the session / programme?

How did the participants organise themselves during the activities; how were decisions made?

Did the groups work well together, how do you know this?

How good was communication, did people share ideas, information, questions?

Evaluation Example: Feedback Sheet

DATE OF ASSEMBLY

What did you enjoy most and why?

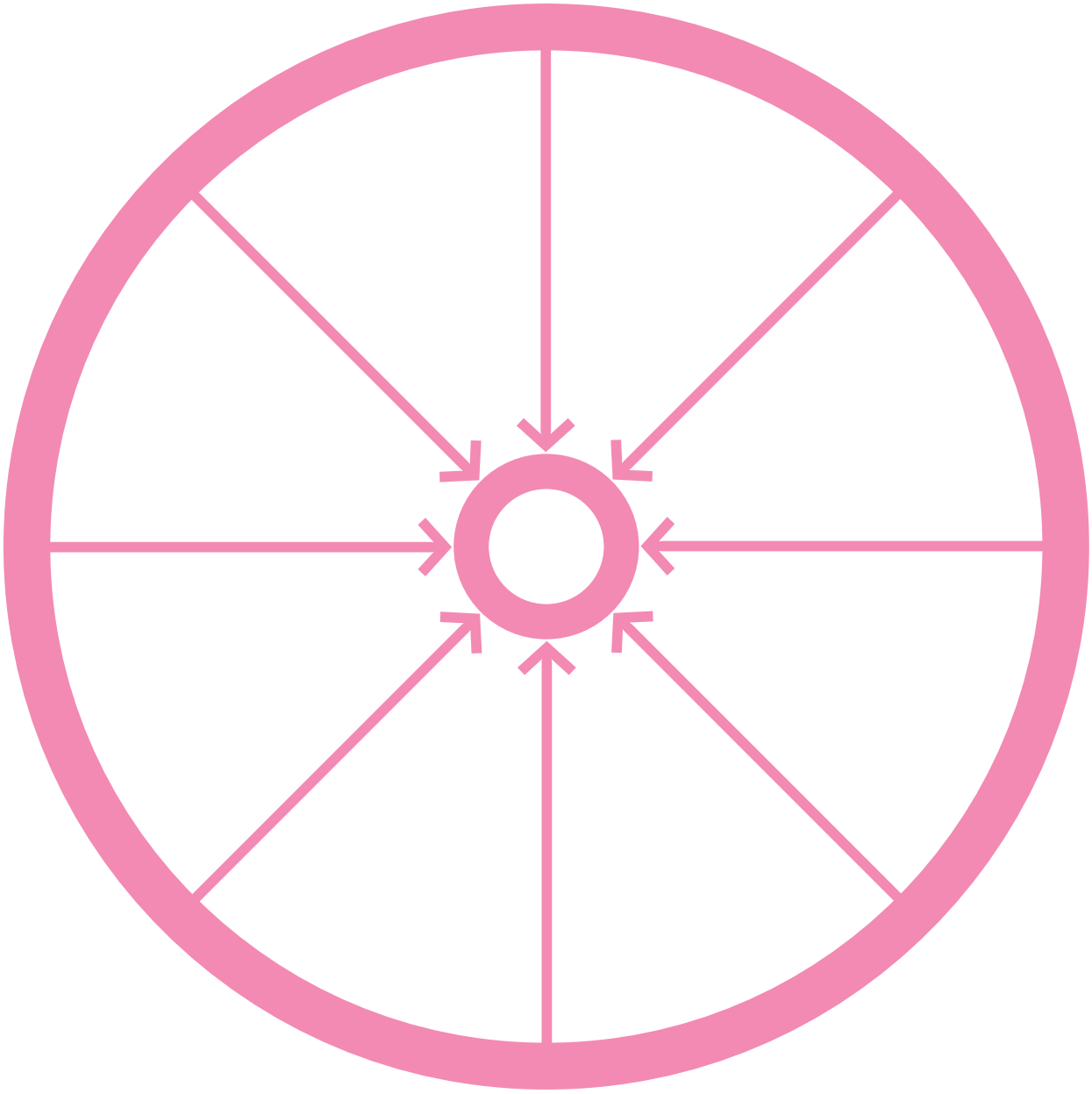
What did you enjoy least and why?

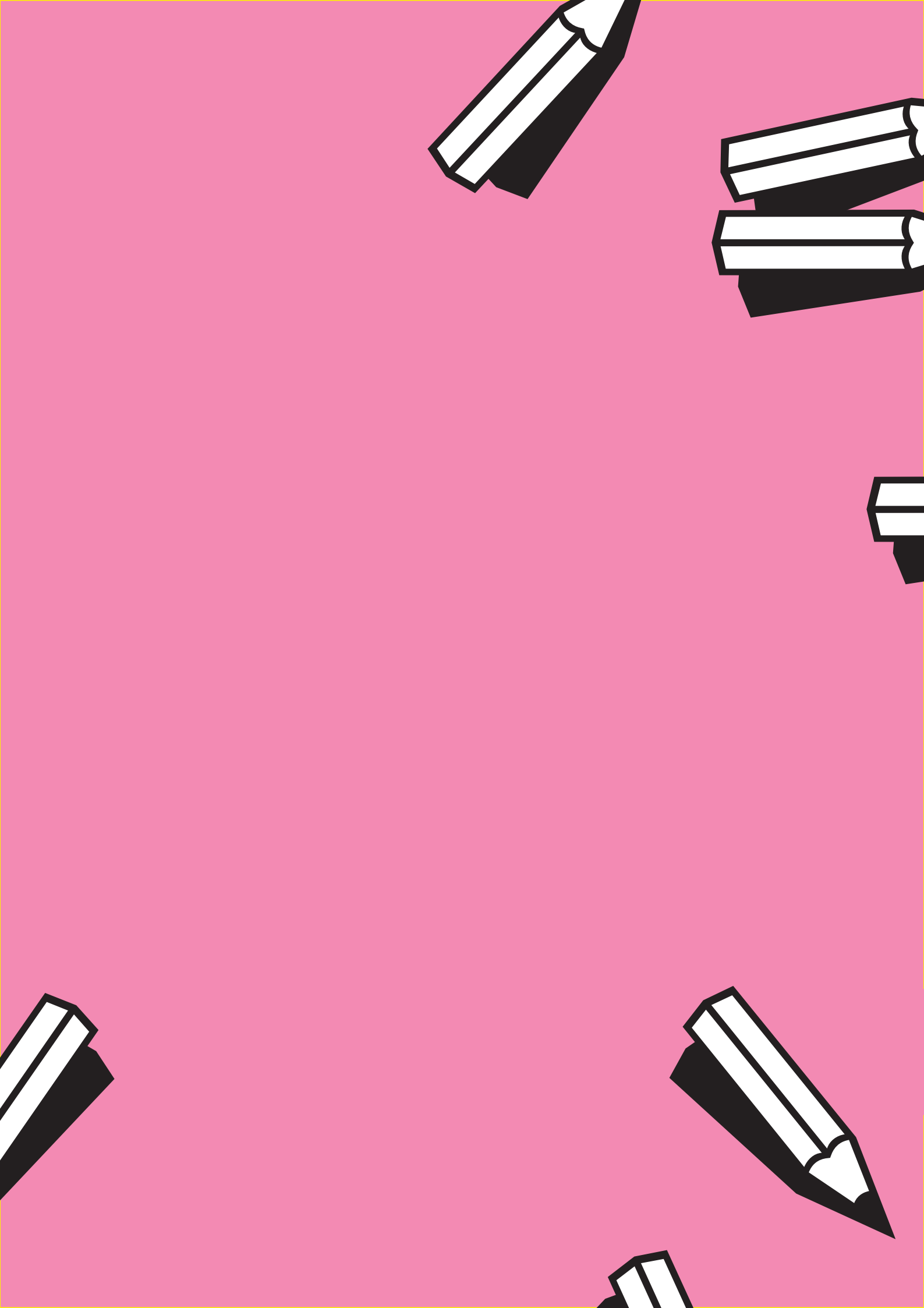
One thing you did not know before this assembly?

What will you remember about this assembly?

Evaluation Example: Dartboard Evaluation

Label each segment to represent an aspect of the programme, for example, different activities, venue, etc. Assuming that the centre of the circle (the Bull's Eye) is excellent and the outside is not so good, mark each section with an 'X' or a colour to show how you felt about that programme aspect.





Beyond Programmes

Learning for Life

beyond programmes

7.0
Opportunities and Support for Group Members Beyond the Programme

All learning involves some degree of change, whether in terms of:

- *levels and areas of knowledge;*
- *new and developed skills;*
- *attitudes;*
- *breadth and depth of understanding;*
- *emotions;*

or a combination of these and other factors. Therefore, if the groupwork process has been effective, this means that people are impacted in ways that go beyond the duration of the programme itself.

This should generally be a very positive thing – after all, this learning is a key reason why people were participating in the first place. Providing people with resources and support beyond the programme will help them to remember what they have learnt, and to build on it further. Some possibilities for doing this include:

- providing handouts, resources and resource lists (for example, relevant books, videos, website addresses);

- programming follow-up sessions into the class timetable, staff development strategy, etc.;

- asking people informally, individually or in a group setting, whether they have thought any more about or done anything further with their learning;

- working as a staff team – making colleagues aware of what you are doing so that they can make connections and reinforce the learning;

- follow-up through a supervision meeting;

- referring back to key learning points in other contexts to which they are transferable and encouraging the group to discuss their relevance;

- using other opportunities such as assemblies, displays, staffroom noticeboards, etc. to highlight the key learning points;

- providing people with information about other relevant training opportunities outside the school setting, and providing support in applying for these;

- drawing on other educational and external resources, for example, ELBs, local youth workers, community-based projects, issue-based organisations, etc.

People may also need support beyond the programme if the themes explored and the learning have been particularly challenging. It is important that the programme itself is structured so that closure, personal reflection and evaluation are all thoroughly attended to. Beyond that, some of the strategies listed above will provide opportunities to check how people are progressing with their learning and how it has impacted on their life experience. If appropriate, specific follow-up can be designed with them in order to meet their learning and support needs. Very occasionally, the work may raise personal issues for a particular individual, and it may be appropriate to encourage or enable her / him to seek specific external support such as counselling. As with all aspects of the work, it is essential to follow school procedures in doing this.

Opportunities and Support for Children and Young People

Hopefully, the themes explored and learning which takes place within the groupwork sessions will be genuinely relevant to the lives of the children and young people involved. If this is the case, it is unlikely that the experience will finish when they leave school at the end of the day or after the final session of a module / programme.

Most learning involves some level of change and if the facilitator looks honestly at the purpose of this kind of work, it is probable that there is an explicit element of change intended. This might include:

- *developing critical thinking skills;*
- *developing emotional literacy;*
- *challenging prejudice and discrimination;*
- *encouraging group members to relate more positively to those who come from backgrounds different to their own;*
- *approaching conflict situations differently.*

This is likely to be the case particularly when the themes being explored are controversial, and the groupwork is demanding with regard to the feelings, attitudes they touch and viewpoints which they challenge. In some circumstances, particularly for young people, there may be a number of difficult consequences to this. For example:

- They may experience a significant change in their ways of thinking and relating to other people, particularly those whose background or views are different to their own. This may be a challenging experience which raises feelings of uncertainty and even anxiety.

- They may find themselves in conflict at some level with family members, friends, peers and others in their community.

- For some, even to participate in a programme with people from a different community may make them vulnerable in their own community, regardless of whether or not they demonstrate changes in attitudes or behaviour as a result of their participation.

It is, therefore, really important for the facilitator to think clearly about the purpose of the work, the potential learning and change outcomes, and the support structures which are needed. There are limitations which a school will face within its particular community and societal context, but participants' safety and personal development must be appropriately attended to beyond the actual module or programme.

Below is a list of some possible structures and ways of working which will contribute to the physical and emotional safety and development of children and young people beyond the programme itself.

- The whole school model allows for a broader support context than an individual teacher working with a group on their own.

- Where appropriate, informing and involving parents and others (such as local youth workers) will broaden the support structure.

- Throughout the programme, the facilitator needs to hold a balance between acknowledging genuine fears and concerns, and encouraging participants to recognise the potentially positive outcomes of their participation and learning.

- The development of skills within the programme must be done in a way that is transferable to the rest of life. The facilitator needs to ensure that these connections are sufficiently made.

- The ethos of encouraging people to take responsibility for their own learning needs to be supported by discussion which helps them to contextualise this within their longer term experience.

- This will also involve developing their awareness and understanding of the relationship to the social and political context in which they live.

- The facilitator and others within the school need to be available to offer appropriate individual support on both an informal and formal basis. This will be dependent on the building of good relationships.

- There may be opportunities to provide training and support to older pupils so that they can take on a mentoring role for younger pupils.

- Informal and more formalised peer support structures can be developed through the programme (where hopefully a strong sense of team has been built) and beyond.

- Children and young people will benefit from the opportunity to articulate their learning with others, whether their peers or adults. As well as enabling them to develop further skills, this process affirms them, and their learning and achievement as something hugely positive.

Opportunities and Support for Adults

Many of the principles outlined in the section above will also be relevant when working with adults in the school community or in a teacher education setting.

As well as application within their broader life experience in general, it is likely that their participation in the programme is intended to have specific reference to their interaction with children and young people in the school and related settings. With this in mind, some additional forms of support beyond the programme could include:

- resources which will enable them to translate their experience as a participant into the development of programmes and the facilitation of similar work with children and / or young people;

- opportunities (through supervision meetings, follow-up sessions, etc.) to reflect on this facilitation, particularly in the early stages;

- opportunities to reflect on occasions when they have had to put their training into practice in responding to specific incidents in the classroom, the playground, etc.;

- opportunities to share their learning with other adults, for example, teachers and other staff in their own school or in other schools, governors, parents, etc.;

- further training and development opportunities which will enhance their learning and confidence.

Questions for Reflection

Have I thoroughly considered the broader context of the programme / module which I am planning?

Have I built in sufficient time for personal reflection, evaluation and closure?

Are there likely to be physical and emotional safety issues arising from this programme?

What support and follow-up will be useful and possible beyond the programme? For example:

- *What handouts and resources can I provide?*
- *Is there scope within my time-frame for follow-up sessions?*
- *What opportunities do I have to find out informally how people are doing (for example, at the end of a class or staff meeting)?*
- *How can I ensure that future programmes for this group build on the current learning?*
- *What other appropriate external training / development opportunities can I suggest?*

Who might I need to work with to develop these options effectively?

Will this person / these people be working directly with children and / or young people? If so, what Child Protection forms need to be completed?

7.1 Working in Partnership: The School in the Community

It can sometimes seem that schools are expected to do everything, and this can be an enormous pressure within the restrictions of the weekly timetable, the demands of the curriculum, curricular changes, etc. It is important to remember that schools are situated within communities and there are likely to be rich human and physical resources within the local and wider community which can support the work within a programme and beyond it.

Building partnerships with, for example:

- *youth workers;*
- *community projects and residents' groups;*
- *other schools and further education colleges;*
- *churches and other faith centres;*
- *the local Council;*
- *Health and Social Services Trusts;*
- *local businesses and other workplaces;*
- *homes for elderly people;*
- *the police and fire services;*
- *local charities or voluntary organisations;*
- *cultural centres and agencies, including museums, galleries, etc.;*
- *local libraries;*
- *sports centres and facilities;*

will provide the school with a valuable pool of experience and expertise across a whole range of issues and practice, and may be useful within a particular programme and beyond it.

Some specific examples might include:

- a local community project or residents' group which is able to provide teachers who live outside the area with some insight into issues affecting the local community;

- local youth workers offering to run a linked programme in conjunction with, or as a follow-up to, the programme you are running within the school setting;

- local churches and other faith centres hosting sessions as a follow-up to a school-based programme exploring themes such as diversity, sectarianism, etc.;

- older people within the community working with children and young people to help them build their knowledge and understanding of the development and changes within their local community over the past century;

- local businesses and / or charities and voluntary organisations providing people with opportunities to put their learning into practice, for example, giving teachers and others the opportunity to work within a youth work setting, or supporting young people developing an action project as part of Local and Global Citizenship;

- the school and individuals within it using local shops, businesses and services.

The school can similarly be a resource to the community in which it is situated. The time taken to build these partnerships will be a valuable investment, not least because, within and outside the school, it will increase people's understanding of the school as a part of the community. The positive relationships and experiences which form through these partnerships will enable children, young people and adults to connect with the community in new ways, becoming more aware of the richness and diversity within it and of the opinions and perceptions held of the school.

Questions for Reflection

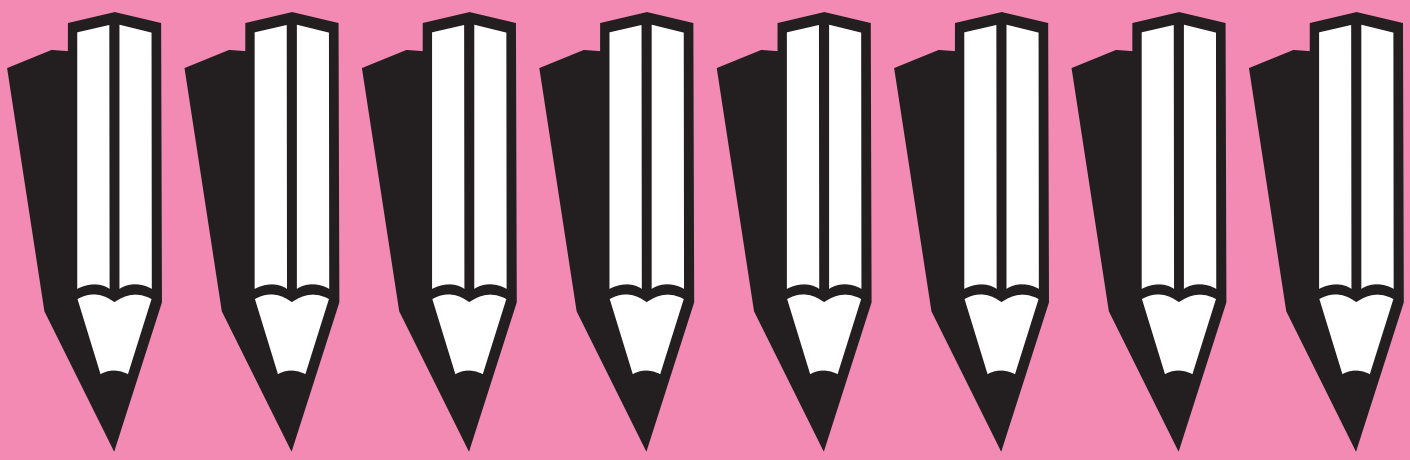
What range of partnerships can the school as a whole and I in particular build within the local community?

What opportunities are there for members of the local community to contribute to the curriculum and to school life in general?

Is there a regularly updated resources and contacts list that is accessible for everyone in the school?

Is everyone, including pupils, aware of the community resources available to them?

In what ways can the school also serve the community, so that the partnership works both ways? For example, allowing groups within the local community to book facilities within the school, such as the computer suite, playing fields, assembly hall, gym.



Resources & Information

Appendices

Appendix One: Resource List

Background Resources

CCEA (1997)
Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage: Cross-Curricular Guidance Materials
Belfast, CCEA

Department of Education Circular (1999 / 10)
Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection

Department of Education (2003)
Review of the Schools Community Relations Programme
Bangor, DENI

Equality Commission (2004)
Equality Awareness in Teacher Education and Training in Northern Ireland
Belfast, Equality Commission

Smith, A. and Robinson, A. (1996)
EMU: The Initial Statutory Years
Coleraine, University of Ulster

Volunteer Development Agency (2000)
Our Duty to Care: Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People
Belfast, VDA

Whole School Approaches

Baginsky, M. and Hannam, D.
The Schools Councils. The Views of Students and Teachers
London, NSPCC

Booth, T. et al. (2000)
Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools
Bristol, CSIE

Burns, S. and Lamont, G. (1995)
Values and Visions
London, Hodder & Stoughton

Department of Education (2001)
Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour
Bangor, Department of Education

Eyben, K., Morrow, D. and Wilson, D. (2003)
A Framework for Organisational Learning and Change
Coleraine, Future Ways

Furlong, C. and Monahan, L. (2000)
School Culture and Ethos: Cracking the Code
Marino Institute of Education

Leadbetter, J. (1999)
'The Inclusive Classroom: Taking Account of the Individual,' in Leadbetter, J. et al.
Applying Psychology in the Classroom
London, David Fulton Publishing

Mitchell, P. (2002)
Focus on Bullying: Guidance and Resources for Post-Primary Schools
Belfast, Save the Children

Senge, P. et al. (2000)
Schools That Learn
London, Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Sutton, F. (ed.) (1999)
The School Council: A Children's Guide
London, Save the Children

Taylor, M.J. (1998)
Values Education and Values in Education
London, Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Tyrell, J. (2002)
Peer Mediation: A Process for Primary Schools
London, Souvenir Press

Groupwork and Facilitation

Benson, J. (1997)
Working More Creatively with Groups
London, Routledge

Kindred, M. (1995)
Once Upon a Group
London, Roy Allen Print Ltd

Prendiville, P. (1995)
Developing Facilitation Skills: A Handbook for Group Facilitators
Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency

Skinner, S. (1992)
Training and How Not to Panic
Halifax, Community Development Training Unit

Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Skills Development

Gardner, H. (1993, 2nd Edition)
Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences
London, Fontana Press

Ginnis, P. (2002)
The Teacher's Toolkit: Raise Classroom Achievement with Strategies for Every Learner
Carmarthen, Crown House Publishing

Goleman, D. (1996)
Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ
London, Bloomsbury Publishing

Hall, E. (2002)
Let's Be Friends: Friendship Skills in Year 3
Belfast, The Churches' Peace Education Programme

Montgomery, A. and Birthistle, U. (2001)
Primary Values: A literacy based resource to support the Personal Development Programme in primary schools
Belfast, CCEA

Mosley, J. and Gillibrand, E. (2001)
Personal Power: How to Fulfil Your Private and Professional Life
Trowbridge, Positive Press

Popov, L.K. (2000)
The Virtues Project Educator's Guide: Simple Ways to Create a Culture of Character
Torrance CA, Jalmar Press

Schilling, D. (1996)
50 Activities for Teaching Emotional Intelligence (Level II: Middle School)
Torrance CA, Innerchoice Publishing

Thompson, H. and Maguire, S. (2002)
Mind Your Head!
Get to Know Your Brain and How to Learn
Antrim, NEELB

Whitehouse, E. and Pudney, W. (1996)
A Volcano in My Tummy: Helping Children to Handle Anger, Gabriola Island
Canada, New Society Publisher

Exploring Diversity

BAA / Nottingham Project
Teaching Through Controversial Issues
Nottingham, BAA

CCEA (2001)
Interlinks: Supporting intercultural education at Key Stage 2 – A CD-Rom for PC and Macintosh
Belfast, CCEA

Community Relations Council (2004)
A Good Relations Framework
Belfast, CRC

Connolly, P. (1999)
Community Relations Work with Preschool Children
Belfast, CRC

Connolly, P. (2002)
Fair Play: Talking with Children about Prejudice & Discrimination
Belfast, Barnardo's / Save the Children

Connolly, P., Smith, S. and Kelly, B. (2002)
Too Young to Notice?
The Cultural and Political Awareness of 3-6 Year Olds in Northern Ireland
Belfast, Community Relations Council

Council of Europe (2000)
Intercultural Learning
Strasbourg, Council of Europe and European Commission

Liechty, J. and Clegg, C. (2001)
Moving Beyond Sectarianism: Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland
Dublin, Columba Press

Murphy, K. (1999)
A Companion to An Ulster Wean's A – Z
Belfast, Community Relations Council

Naylor, Y. (2001)
Moving Beyond Sectarianism: A Resource for Young Adults, Youth and Schools
Belfast, Irish School of Ecumenics

Naylor, Y. (2003)
Who We Are – Dealing With Difference: A resource for children and young people 9–14
Belfast, Irish School of Ecumenics

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (2002)
The Anti-Bias Curriculum
Belfast, NICIE

NUS-USI (2000)
Promoting and Managing Diversity in Tertiary Education: A guide to implementing community relations strategies on campus in Northern Ireland
Belfast, NUS-USI Northern Ireland Student Centre

Richardson, N. (2001)
Making Rainbows: Creative Ideas for Exploring and Celebrating Differences (Key Stage 2)
Belfast, Enelar Publications

Richardson, N. (ed.) (2002)
A Handbook of Faiths: A Brief Introduction to Faith Communities in Northern Ireland
Belfast, Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum

Sands, C. (2001)
Moving Beyond Sectarianism: A Resource for Adult Education
Belfast, Irish School of Ecumenics

Solomon, R. P. (1995)
'Beyond Prescriptive Pedagogy: Teacher In-Service Education for Cultural Diversity'
in Journal of Teacher Education, 46(4)

Williams, T., McGovern, M. and Curran, C. (2001)
Creating Community
Belfast, The Corrymeela Community

Exploring Conflict

BBC Northern Ireland
A State Apart: Northern Ireland – An Interactive Chronicle of the Conflict
(CD-Rom)

Burrows, R. and Keenan, B. (2004)
'We'll never be the same' Learning with children, parents and communities through ongoing political conflict and trauma: a resource
Belfast, Barnardo's

Connolly, P. and Healy, J. (2004)
Children and the Conflict in Northern Ireland: The Experiences and Perspectives of 3–11 Year Olds
Belfast, OFMDFM Research Branch

Fisher, R., Ury, W. and Patton, B. (1992)
'Getting to Yes. Negotiating an agreement without giving in'
Random House Business Books

Fitzduff, M. (1999)
Community Conflict Skills: A handbook for groupwork
Belfast, Community Relations Council

Hopkins, B.
www.transformingconflict.org

Leitch, R. and Kilpatrick, R. (1999)
Inside the Gate: Schools and the Troubles
Belfast, Save the Children

McLaughlin, M. and Regan, C. (2000)
A Place Apart? Exploring Conflict, Peace and Reconciliation: The Case of Northern Ireland
Glencree, The Glencree Centre for Reconciliation

Morrow, D. and Wilson, D. (1996)
Ways Out of Conflict: Resources for Community Relations Work
Coleraine, Understanding Conflict Trust

1916: Lest We Forget - The Symbols CD-Rom Interactive Experience
Derry / Londonderry, The Nerve Centre

Pocock, M. (2001)
Creative Force: Arts-based exercises for work with young people around issues of violence
London, Save the Children

Smyth, M. et al. (2004)
The Impact of the Political Conflict on Children in Northern Ireland
Belfast, Institute for Conflict Research

Circle Time

Cowling, A. and Vine, P. (2003)
Bridging the Circle: Transition Through Quality Circle Time
Trowbridge, Positive Press

Davies, G. (ed.) (1999)
Six Years of Circle Time: A Curriculum for Key Stages 1 & 2
Bristol, Lucky Duck Publishing

Mosley, J. (2000)
More Quality Circle Time: Evaluating your practice and developing creativity within the Whole School Quality Circle Time model
Wisbech, LDA

Mosley, J. (2000)
Quality Circle Time in the Primary Classroom
Wisbech, LDA

Mosley, J. (2000)
Turn Your School Round
Wisbech, LDA

Mosley, J. and Sonnet, H. (2001)
Here We Go Round: Quality Circle Time for 3-5 Year Olds
Trowbridge, Positive Press

Mosley, J. and Tew, M. (1999)
Quality Circle Time in the Secondary School
London, David Fulton Publishing

Activity-based Resources

Craig, C. et al. (2002)
Different Tracks Experiential Learning: A Practical Resource Guide for Community Relations Work
Belfast, The Corrymeela Community

Smith, A. and Call, N. (2001)
ALPS Approach Resource Book, London
Network Education Press

Tyrell, J., Hartop, B. and Farrell, S. (1999)
EMU: The Games Book
Derry / Londonderry, Positive Ethos Trust

Human Rights and Citizenship

Advisory Group on Citizenship (1998)
Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools
London, QCA

Amnesty International (2002)
Learning About Human Rights Through Citizenship (Key Stage 3+)
London, Amnesty International

Brander, P. et al. (2002)
A Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People
Strasbourg, Council of Europe

BBC Worldwide (2000)
Study Ireland: Citizenship
(video resource for 11 – 14 year olds)

Britten, F. (2000)
Active Citizenship: A Teaching Toolkit
London, Hodder & Stoughton

Brown, M. and Durie, D. (2000)
Local Citizen, Global Citizen: Activities for teaching citizenship and personal-social development for use with 8 to 12 year olds
London, Christian Aid

Burca, U. and Jeffers, G. (1998)
Connected: Civic, Social and Political Education for First Year
Dublin, The Educational Company of Ireland

Burca, U. and Jeffers, G. (1999)
Connected: Civic, Social and Political Education for Second & Third Year
Dublin, The Educational Company of Ireland

CCEA (2003)
Local and Global Citizenship: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools
Belfast, CCEA

Cuthbert, C. (2001)
Exploring Our World: Investigating Issues of Interdependence and Social Justice in the 21st Century
Belfast, One World Centre

4Learning (2001)
Sarah and the Whammi: Early Learning For pre-school and 4–6 year olds
(video)

4Learning (2002)
Using Sarah and the Whammi: Teachers' Programme
(video)

Garlake, T. and Pocock, M. (2000)
Partners in Rights: Creative activities exploring rights and citizenship for 7-11 year olds
London, Save the Children

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (2000)
Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: A Training Manual
Belfast, NIHRC

QCA (2001)
Citizenship: A Scheme of Work for Key Stage 3
London, QCA

Taylor, M. (2002)
The European Convention on Human Rights: Starting Points for Teachers
Strasbourg, Council of Europe

Walton, J. (1993)
It's Not Fair: A Handbook on World Development for Youth Groups
London, Christian Aid

Youth Work Approaches

Curriculum Development Unit (2003)
Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice
Antrim, Youth Work N.I. Curriculum Development Unit

JEDI Practice Group (2002)
A Framework for Reflection in Practice: Guidelines for embedding EDI principles in youth work practice
Belfast, JEDI

Evaluation

Department of Education's Education and Training Inspectorate
Together Towards Improvement and Progress for Evaluation
Bangor, ETI

Greenaway, R. (1990)
More Than Activities
Glasgow, Save the Children

Further resources and links are available from:

www.nicie.org.uk
www.corrymeela.org

Appendix Two: Whole School Audit

This general audit[1] needs to be adapted to the particular context of the individual school, which may mean adding, changing or omitting certain questions from the sample outlines over the following pages.

The questions can be changed into questionnaire format appropriate to particular groupings (for example, teachers, other staff, pupils, parents, and governors). In the questionnaire format, it can be more useful to frame the questions around 'what do you think' to elicit personal responses and views. It is also important to ensure that the language used is appropriate for the target grouping, for example, avoiding jargon / abbreviations, using a few questions with picture-based responses for younger children, etc. Too many questions can put people off – so select a number of key questions (or write alternatives) for each section, rather than including all of them.

In both the questionnaire and general audit format it is important to provide appropriate practical and / or anecdotal (avoiding use of names, etc. to maintain confidentiality) evidence to support the answers. The answers and evidence will provide the baseline from which you can develop your action plan for achieving your vision goals.

1 Some questions adapted from Booth, T. et al., Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools, Bristol, CSIE.

Sample Outline: Whole School Audit

Leadership: Management Structures and Decision-making Processes

WITHIN THE STAFF TEAM

How many staff [2] make up the whole staff team?

Describe the leadership / management structures within the school.

Is it a priority of the school to have a diverse leadership team?

Are staff aware of the priorities of the school development plan?

Are staff given opportunities to be involved in contributing to the school development plan?

Do staff feel that they are sufficiently involved in school decision-making?

2 Throughout the audit, 'staff' is used to refer to all staff, support staff as well as teachers.

How are decisions communicated to the whole staff team?

What support is available to staff through the management structures, for example, in terms of supervision, in responding to challenging behaviour or incidents, etc.?

What structural support is available to the leadership / senior management team?

Are staff involved in the development of the school policies?

Does the leadership of the school encourage staff to use their full expertise, skills and creativity?

How is in-service training decided on, delivered and managed?

Are there sufficient staff meetings?

Are support staff invited to attend relevant meetings?

Is there wide participation in staff meetings?
Do all staff feel comfortable to contribute?

Do staff feel that their contribution is valued, irrespective of their position in the school?

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Do staff understand the role and responsibilities of governors?

Do governors share in-service training opportunities with staff?

Do governors and staff work well together?

Do governors and staff agree about what governors can contribute to the school?

Do governors and staff have a shared commitment to the school's vision and values, and support each other in their work?

Internal Relationships: Pupils, Staff and Parents / Carers

PUPILS AND STAFF

Do staff treat all pupils with respect, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, etc.?

Do pupils treat all staff with respect, regardless of their position?

Do staff attempt to counter negative views of and derogatory comments about pupils by both pupils and other staff?

Do staff promote equality of opportunity for all pupils?

Do staff treat all pupils with fairness, regardless of background, abilities, etc.?

Is there a forum for pupils to express views and to be involved in school decision-making?

Do pupils' opinions and ideas make a real difference to the school?

Do staff see the personal and cultural diversity of pupils as a rich context for learning?

WITHIN THE STAFF TEAM

Do staff treat each other with respect, regardless of their position?

Do staff feel comfortable discussing challenges and dilemmas with colleagues?

Do staff recognise how their behaviour and interactions are a model for pupils?

Do staff know whom to turn to if there is a problem?

Do staff recognise the richness of their own diverse backgrounds, skills and qualities?

Do all staff have structured opportunities for collaborative working and reflection?

Do all staff take responsibility for trying to make the school more inclusive?

Do staff demonstrate effective conflict resolution skills with pupils, colleagues and others?

Is the staffroom a welcoming and comfortable place for all staff?

STAFF AND PARENTS / CARERS

Are parents / carers made to feel welcome in the school?

Do staff and parents / carers treat each other with respect?

Do staff encourage the involvement of all parents / carers in their children's learning?

Do parents / carers take an active part in their children's learning? Are they clear about what they can do to support their children's learning at home?

Are efforts made to overcome any barriers there may be to parents' / carers' involvement in their children's learning?

Is there good communication between staff and parents / carers?

What opportunities are there for parents / carers to consult teachers about their children's learning?

Are parents / carers well informed about school policies and practices?

Are parents / carers involved or consulted in school decision-making?

Are parents' / carers' skills and knowledge utilised within the school?

Is there a Parents' / Carers' Group or Parents' / Carers'-Teachers Association?

BETWEEN PUPILS

Do pupils have good self-esteem?

Do pupils treat each other with respect regardless of background, ability, etc.?

Do pupils appreciate the achievements of others, recognising that different people have different starting points?

Do pupils help and support each other, not just those in their immediate friendship circle?

Do pupils work well together on group / team activities?

Do pupils demonstrate effective conflict resolution skills?

Is bullying being minimised among pupils?

Are there peer (pupil – pupil) mentoring or mediation programmes within the school?

School Policies

PROMOTING INCLUSIVITY ACROSS POLICIES

How does the school attempt to minimise all institutional prejudice and discrimination?

How do policies explicitly contribute to and support anti-discriminatory practice?

Are policies written in inclusive language?

Do policies and practice ensure that minority groups in the school do not experience prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination or exclusion?

Do staff avoid stereotyping and discrimination in choosing pupils for tasks, roles in school productions, etc.?

Is it recognised that individuals have multiple dimensions of identity, and that within a particular grouping individuals will have different beliefs, attitudes and experiences?

Are policies developed in ways which overcome barriers to participation and learning?

Is the school addressing aspects of physical accessibility throughout its buildings and grounds?

STAFFING POLICIES

Does the composition of the staff team reflect the communities in the school's locality?

Do the management posts reflect the balance of genders and backgrounds of staff in the school?

Is a commitment to the values of inclusivity, respect for diversity, enabling participation and open communication regarded as an essential criterion for the appointment of staff?

Do all appointments and promotions procedures demonstrate fairness and transparency?

Are strategies in place to develop a sense of team among the staff, particularly with regard to welcoming new members?

How democratic are the policy development processes within the school?

PASTORAL / LEARNING SUPPORT / POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR POLICIES

Are pupils, parents / carers and others consulted in developing these and other policies?

Do pupils know who to go to if they have a particular difficulty? Do they feel comfortable to do this?

Is support for pupils who experience barriers to learning and participation seen as a responsibility of all members of staff?

Do all staff receive training and support in responding to pupils who may approach them because they are troubled about something within or outside school?

Is there a pro-active approach to bullying attitudes, language and behaviour?

Do all staff receive training and support in challenging sectarianism, racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice and bullying?

Are relational and restorative approaches used to respond to behavioural issues?

Are pupils involved in developing school / classroom rules as a matter of policy?

Are there clear reward, warning and sanction systems, which enable pupils to be clear about the likely consequences of their behaviour?

Are there clear procedures in place to respond to the extremes of challenging behaviour?

What support structures are there for individual staff members who have to respond to persistent challenging behaviour?

In what ways are pupils positively involved in overcoming behavioural issues and disaffection?

Once a behavioural issue has been addressed, do pupils experience 'forgiveness' and the freedom to start with a 'clean slate'?

Teaching and Learning Approaches

What does the school understand 'learning' to consist of?

How does the school understand itself as an inclusive learning community?

Are there opportunities for everyone in the school to learn and develop, and to make informed choices with regard to their learning needs and opportunities?

Do teaching approaches within the school reflect a commitment to inclusion, respect for diversity, enabling participation, and open communication?

Does the school provide support for pupils for whom English is not their first language?

How does the school value and give affirmation to people in the diversity of their intelligences, skills and achievements?

How are opportunities created for everyone to learn effectively and to experience success?

Are all pupils and staff encouraged to have high aspirations about their learning?

Are people encouraged to view mistakes / failures as positive learning opportunities?

How are opportunities created for people to be co-learners, learning from and with each other?

Where pupils have areas of particular skill and experience, are they encouraged to share these with their peers and also with staff?

Are there opportunities for learning and relational skills development for all the different groupings within the school community?

Do staff feel confident and supported to explore challenging or controversial themes with pupils, colleagues and others?

Are issues of prejudice and conflict openly, respectfully and constructively discussed?

What opportunities are there for self and team evaluation?

Are there positive relationships in place so that people are able to give each other constructive feedback and learning support?

Other Working Practices

CLASSROOM AND CURRICULUM ISSUES

Do staff members avoid classist, sexist, racist, disabilist or homophobic and other forms of discriminatory remarks and thereby act as positive role models?

Are pupils encouraged to work with others who are different from themselves in terms of background, gender, impairment and ethnicity?

Does the curriculum seek to develop an understanding of differences of background, culture, ethnicity, gender, impairment, sexual orientation and religion?

Is stereotyping questioned in curriculum material and during classroom discussion and after school activities?

Is there a range of assessments used that allow all pupils to display their skills?

Do teachers share in planning schemes of work for lessons and homework?

Do teachers and classroom assistants share in working with individuals, groups and the whole class?

Are learning support assistants involved in curriculum planning and review?

Do teachers welcome comments from colleagues?

Do teachers share their attention equitably, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, class and culture?

Do all pupils feel fairly treated?

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE) PROVISION

Is RE delivered to take into consideration the diversity of faiths?

Are world faiths celebrated within the school?

If the school has a Christian ethos is it inclusive for non-Christians?

What festivals / holy days do you celebrate in the school calendar?

Are key milestones in individual pupil's spiritual development marked by the school community?

Are religious symbols displayed in the classroom and school building?

Are the religious symbols balanced for all faiths and none?

SCHOOL DISPLAYS

How do you ensure that all the communities within the school are represented in the displays?

What is the purpose of the displays within the school?

In what way does display enhance pupils' and adults' learning?

How is diversity evident in library materials and school / classroom displays?

ASSEMBLIES

Do you have daily, weekly or monthly assemblies?

What is the purpose of assemblies in the school?

Does the whole school gather for assembly or is it in smaller groups?

How often does a whole school assembly take place?

What themes are selected for assemblies - how are they selected?

Who is responsible for organising assemblies?

Are children and young people involved in the planning and delivery?

Are guest speakers used for assemblies? If so, how often and which organisations are represented?

Are the speakers representative of a diverse society?

Is attendance at assemblies voluntary or mandatory?

Do you use prayers during assemblies?

Does the assembly have a Christian emphasis?

Is there provision for non-Christians during assemblies?

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Is there a range of after-school activities?

Is transport made available to enable those who have far to travel?

Are there opportunities for boys and girls to take part in single sex activities?

Are pupils discouraged from monopolising the play areas with, for example, football?

Are pupils who get chosen to represent the school representative of the diversity of the school?

Do sports days include activities in which everyone can take part irrespective of skill level, etc.?

What clubs, societies, charity work does the school support? How are they chosen - are they balanced?

Are religious dietary requirements taken into consideration in the planning and preparation of school meals?

Relationships with the Wider Community

Is the first contact that people have with the school friendly and welcoming?

Does the school involve local communities in activities in the school?

Do members of the local community participate equally in the school regardless of their background (religious, ethnic, economic, etc.)? Is there a positive view of the school within the local community?

Are the school's entrance criteria for pupils inclusive and enabling to all children / young people within the local community, regardless of background, ability, etc.?

Do many of the staff team come from the local communities?

Does the school view the local communities as a valuable learning resource?

Is there a regularly updated record of resources in the locality that can support teaching and learning?

Do members of the local community contribute to staff development / training and to the pupils' curriculum?

Does the school have a good relationship with individuals in the local communities who can help build an understanding of community issues / events which may be impacting on pupils' needs, learning, behaviour, etc.?

Relationships with the Wider Education Sector

Who does the school liaise with within the sector?

Is there a record of contacts maintained in the school?

Has the school discussed the impact of the developments within the education sector?

How do you see the school responding to the changes within the education sector of which it is part?

How do you see the school responding to the changes with technology?

How do you see the school adapting to political changes?

What resources does the school share with other educationalists?

How does the school represent itself to other educationalists?

What does the school foresee to be the biggest challenge in the next three years?

Does the school have relationships with other schools? Do these support the pupils and adults to learn about diversity?

How does the school relate to and work with other practitioners who work with children and young people?

Appendix Three: Outline Circle Time Session 1 [3]

THEME / TITLE:
Exploring Identity – 'Myself'

TIME AVAILABLE:
25 minutes

AGE GROUP:
Foundation Stage / KS1 *

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- *To enable the children to explore their awareness of themselves*
- *To encourage the children to relate positively to each other*
- *To build self-esteem and respect for self and others*

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
to find out more about each other and the things that are important to us

Reminder of Circle Time Rules:
We listen to each other; we are kind to each other; we have fun together. (Use written / picture posters and / or actions to help children remember.)

'What skills am I going to be watching out for?' (Listening / looking / speaking / thinking / concentrating – use actions / pointing together to help children remember.)

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Handshake Game

Purpose:
importance of name as part of identity, communication skills, encouraging participation

One person starts by turning to the person on her / his right, shaking her / his hand and saying, 'Hello, my name is ...'. The second replies, 'Hello, my name is ...'. S/he then turns to the person on her / his right, and this continues right around the circle.

3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:

'Something I like doing in school / at home / at the weekend is . . .'

Purpose:
thinking about myself / self-reflection, responsibility for self, communication skills, encouraging participation

Resources:
talking object – e.g. a teddy

Give the children a few seconds to think about the sentence, then ask for a volunteer to start. S/he can choose which way around the circle to pass the 'talking object'. Encourage the children to say the start of the sentence as well as completing it as this supports them in taking responsibility for their own thinking.

3 Adapted from a Circle Time format by Kathryn Edgar, SEELB.

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

Star Badges

Purpose:
self-reflection, creativity, affirmation, communication skills

Resources:
card stars, crayons

Give each child a star cut out of cardboard, and give them five minutes to write their name (or you can do this in advance, if need be) and draw a picture of something they are good at doing. Afterwards, go around the circle, using the sentence starter such as, 'I am good at . . . ' to enable the children to describe their picture. You could finish with a clap for everyone.

5 CLOSURE:

Rainstorm

Purpose:
working together, concentration skills, using up energy, bringing group to quietness at the session end

For this game, everyone needs to keep quiet and copy the leader's actions (once the children learn it, the leader does not always have to be the teacher!). Begin by clicking your fingers, or tapping one finger on each hand together, then rub your hands together, then clap them slowly and not too loudly, then get louder, then pat your hands on your knees, then stamp your feet as well, as loudly as you can. Then work backwards through the sequence until the sun comes out (make a big circle shape with your hands) and everyone is completely quiet.

6 EVALUATION / PLANNING AHEAD:

* This outline provides ideas that might be suitable for Foundation Stage / KS1 pupils. However, it needs to be adapted to suit the specific group of pupils with which you are working. For example, with a younger group, you may need a shorter session, so include fewer activities in the middle part of the session. Alternatively, you could divide this session into three to four ten minute sessions, ensuring that you have an opening and closure point with each one.

Outline Circle Time Session 2 [4]

THEME / TITLE:
Our Local Community *

TIME AVAILABLE:
30 minutes

AGE GROUP:
KS2 **

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- *To enable the children to become more aware of their local community and how they feel about it*
- *To build respect for each other and the people who live in their community*
- *To develop awareness of difference / diversity within their local community*

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
how we feel about living / going to school in our local community, the different things we find here, what it looks like, what there is to do, the people who live here, etc.

Reminder of Circle Time Rules

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Silent Statements Mixing Up

Purpose:
gently splitting up any cliques, encouraging different people to work together, introducing the session's theme, opportunity to observe what some key interests / issues might be

When you call out a statement, everyone to whom it applies gets up and moves to another seat. They must not move to the seat on either side of them or, within that go, return to their own seat.

Start with some fun statements, moving from the visual to things that cannot be seen – do not include statements that will only apply to one person. It can also be important to finish with a more light-hearted statement.

As an alternative, you can take away a seat, and let the person left in the middle each time come up with the next statement – if s/he is stuck, s/he can say, 'everyone change places.' You cannot determine the statements, although you can give some guidance as to the theme. Also, be aware of your group – being left in the middle may put some children under too much pressure, particularly in the early stages of the academic year, and this method may be inappropriate.

Examples, where everyone:

- *wearing blue, change places*
- *who had cereal for breakfast, change places*
- *who lives near the school, change places*
- *who walks to school, change places*
- *who buys at the local shops, change places*
- *who has friends on their street, change places*
- *who likes living in this area, change places*
- *who likes fruit, change places*

4 Adapted from a Circle Time format by Kathryn Edgar, SEELB.

3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:

'Something I like about living in this area is ...'

Purpose:
developing the theme, communication skills, enabling participation

Resources:
talking object – e.g. soft toy, bean bag

Give the children a few seconds to think about the sentence, then ask for a volunteer to start. S/he can choose which way around the circle to pass the 'talking object'. Encourage the children to say the start of the sentence as well as completing it.

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

Community Maps

Purpose:
exploration of theme, communication skills, reflection, decision-making

Resources:
A3 paper, crayons / pens

Small groups of approximately four pupils are asked to draw a basic map of the area where they live, marking on it any buildings, places, etc. that they have noticed. Encourage the small groups to discuss their maps, including the things they like and dislike about their area, other things that they wish were there and where they could be located, whether they think it is a friendly place to live, etc. A volunteer from each group can then feed back to the large group two important things they talked about, and / or all the maps can be spread on the floor / desks so that everyone can walk around and have a look. The teacher can then facilitate a general discussion, possibly gathering the main points on a flipchart / whiteboard for exploration in future sessions.

5 CLOSURE:

'Electric Shock' Game

Purpose:
bringing everyone together at the end of the session, easing out of the discussion, teamwork, concentration skills

Everyone sits without speaking and holds hands (not too hard!). The teacher squeezes the hand of the person on their right, s/he passes the squeeze on, and so on right around the circle. Variations include seeing how fast the 'shock' can be passed around, passing a 'shock' in both directions so it has to cross in the middle, etc.

6 EVALUATION / PLANNING AHEAD:

* This is a theme which it would be useful to explore over a number of sessions. It could include supplementary activities such as going on a walk around the local community, taking photographs / video, exploring local history with older people who have lived in the community for a long time, looking at flags and symbols in the area, etc. It is important to note that if all pupils do not live locally, you will need to re-frame the session as the school's local community, or look at the different areas that pupils live in.

** This outline provides ideas suitable for KS2 pupils. However, it needs to be adapted to the specific group with which you are working.

Outline Circle Time Session 3 [5]

THEME / TITLE:
Prejudice and Stereotyping *

TIME AVAILABLE:
45 minutes **

AGE GROUP:
KS3+ ***

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- *To encourage empathy and respect for self and others*
- *To build an understanding of the terms 'prejudice', 'stereotyping' and 'discrimination'*
- *To explore 'real life' examples of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination*

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
sharing intended learning outcomes, encouraging everyone's participation

Reminder of Circle Time Rules

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Pattern Ball

Purpose:
introductory game to encourage the group to work together and build a sense of team, co-operation, thinking / concentration skills

Resources:
soft ball / bean bag, flipchart, pens

Everyone stands in the circle. One person begins by throwing the ball / bean bag to another person, saying her / his own name and the second person's name. The second person then throws the ball / bean bag to someone else. Once someone has received the ball, s/he then sits down which ensures that everyone gets a turn, completing the pattern. Variations can include repeating the same pattern of throwing as fast as possible (safely!), reversing the pattern, etc.

'Today we are going to begin thinking about prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. Can anyone tell me what they think any of those words mean, or give me an example of them?'

Discussion of meanings / examples, possibly noting key points on a flipchart / whiteboard.

5 Adapted from a Circle Time format by Kathryn Edgar, SEELB.

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Mixing Up Activity: Concentric Circles

Purpose:
developing the theme, giving people the opportunity to talk about related topics on a one-to-one level before discussing them in larger groups, gently breaking up cliques, encouraging different people to work together, thinking and communication skills

Everyone gets into pairs, labelling themselves 'A' and 'B'. The As form an outer circle, facing inwards, and the Bs form an inner circle, facing their partner. All of the pairs are then given a topic to discuss, then the outer circle moves one (or more) places to their right / left, and a new topic is given. This continues for several topics, including both fun ones and ones relating to the session theme. When the pairs have finished their final topic, they will be with someone different and they sit down beside that person.

Topic examples:

- *The best film I've ever seen.*
- *Somewhere I'd really like to visit.*
- *A time I felt different from other people.*
- *An example of prejudice / stereotyping / discrimination I've seen in the media.*
- *An example of prejudice / stereotyping / discrimination I've seen or experienced.*
- *A time I was left out / laughed at, and how I felt about it.*

3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:

Pairs Discussion

Purpose:
to give people time to think and test ideas with a partner before sharing them in the large group, to enable people to talk about experiences they may have had without personalising them in the large group at this stage, to develop emotional literacy, particularly empathy, reflection and listening skills

Resources:
talking object – e.g. juggling ball

Short discussion in pairs about how someone might feel if they were discriminated against.

Everyone feeds back one idea to the large group: 'When someone is discriminated against, they might feel . . .'

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

Collages

Purpose:
developing the theme, building understanding of the connections between prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination, teamwork, thinking and communication skills

Resources:
A3 paper, newspapers / magazines, scissors, glue, pens

Working in groups of approximately four people, give each group 10 - 15 minutes to make up a collage of images which they

consider to be stereotypes. They can also draw their own examples. Give each group the opportunity to report back on their collage.

This could be followed by a general discussion, considering questions such as:

- What kinds of stereotypes came up most often? (gender, race, age, etc.)
- What other kinds of stereotypes can you think of?
- Do you think these stereotypes are positive or negative? Why?
- How might stereotypes be linked to prejudice and discrimination?

5 CLOSURE:

Sentence completion

'Something I have learnt today is . . .'

Purpose:
consolidating learning, reflection and evaluation, useful feedback for the teacher / facilitator – (have the intended learning outcomes been met?), encouraging participation

Resources:
talking object – e.g. soft ball / bean bag

Pattern Ball

Purpose:
bringing the group together at the end of a potentially challenging session, helping to release any tension / heightened emotions through a physical and fun activity, concentration and co-operation skills

Resources:
talking object – e.g. soft ball / bean bag

6 EVALUATION / PLANNING AHEAD:

* This theme needs to be built up within a series of Circle Time sessions, and will need to be explored over a series of sessions in order to maximise learning and reflection.

** The time available is likely to depend on the length of class periods, so the content of this session could be divided over two sessions if need be. For example, you might focus the first session purely around definitions and the second around the feelings that might go with the experiences. This will also give pupils some time between sessions to think about their own experiences in preparation for the second session.

*** This outline provides ideas that might be suitable for secondary school pupils. However, there is a big difference between Year 8 and Year 14, so it does need to be adapted to suit the specific group of pupils with which you are working.

Outline Circle Time Session 4 [6]

THEME / TITLE:
Values and Diversity

TIME AVAILABLE:
45 minutes

AGE GROUP:
Adult *

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- *To explore the values which underpin our work in schools*
- *To explore our attitudes to difference, and how this relates to our values*
- *To consider how we express our values in practice*

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
sharing intended learning outcomes, encouraging everyone's participation

Reminder of Circle Time Rules

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Name Game

'My name is ... and I am ... (positive adjective, starting with the same letter as name)' **

Purpose:
thinking, listening and concentration skills; getting to know each other

Resources:
talking object

It can be valuable to ask for a volunteer to start, and they choose which way around the circle to pass the talking object. However, as this is the first activity, it is appropriate for the facilitator to start in order to model the response. If the group is not too big, this can be used as a fun memory game, where people have to remember the names and adjectives of everyone who has gone before – the emphasis is on helping each other come up with adjectives and to remember.

Silent Statements Mixing Up Activity

Purpose:
gently splitting up any cliques, encouraging different people to work together, introducing the session's theme, opportunity to observe what some of the key interests / issues might be

When you call out a statement, everyone to whom it applies gets up and moves to another seat. They must not move to the seat on either side of them or, within that go, return to their own seat. Start with some fun statements, moving from the visual to things that cannot be seen – do not include statements that will only apply to one person. It can also be important to finish with a more light-hearted statement. As an alternative, you can take away a seat, and let the person left in the middle each time come up with the

6 Adapted from a Circle Time format by Kathryn Edgar, SEELB.

next statement – if they are stuck, they can say, 'Everyone change places.' However, this does mean that you cannot determine the statements, although you can give some guidance as to the theme. Equally, you need to be aware of your group – this method may put some people under too much pressure and will, therefore, not be appropriate.

For example:

- Everyone wearing red, change places
- Everyone who likes chocolate, change places
- Everyone who has been to the cinema in the last month, change places
- Everyone who thinks pupils should be involved in designing school / classroom rules, change places
- Everyone who thinks young people should be able to give feedback to a teacher after a lesson, change places
- Everyone who thinks that they have a responsibility to promote reconciliation in the school, change places
- Everyone who thinks they have a responsibility to challenge sectarian or racist comments or behaviour, change places
- Everyone who feels confident exploring controversial issues with pupils, change places
- Everyone who deliberately includes diversity issues within their lesson planning, change places
- Everyone who is looking forward to the holidays, change places

3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:

Pairs Discussion

Purpose:
to give people time to think and test ideas with a partner before sharing them in the large group, to enable people to talk about experiences they may have had without personalising them in the large group at this stage, to develop emotional literacy, particularly empathy, reflection and listening skills, to develop responsibility for self and own contribution

Resources:
talking object, flipchart / whiteboard, pens

Short discussion in pairs about some of the values which are important to me in my work in school.

Feedback to the large group, with each person sharing one value. These could be gathered on flipchart / whiteboard for future reference / discussion.

'A value which is important to me is ...'

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

School / Classroom Scenarios

Purpose:
to encourage people to think about how their values translate into practice, sharing and checking out ideas with colleagues, self-reflection, problem-solving and communication skills

Resources:
scenario sheets

Divide the large group into groups of approximately four people (mixing teachers and non-teaching staff, if working with a whole staff team). Give the groups a list of scenarios to choose from (you will need to draw this up in advance, based on the situation in which you are working – see following sheet for examples), and / or ask them to come up with a situation which one or more of them has experienced in school of, for example, diversity or a controversial issue, prejudice or discrimination, conflict, etc.

Ask the groups to think about how they would respond to the situation in the light of their own values / the values which have been gathered on the flipchart / whiteboard. Ask them to consider whether this is what they would actually do.

Each group can then feed back to the large group, and after a group has finished others can share ideas / questions / etc.

5 CLOSURE:

Sentence Completion, for example, 'Something I have learnt today is ...'; 'Some support / training I would like (in relation to this theme) is ...'

Purpose:
consolidating learning, reflection and evaluation, useful feedback for the facilitator – (have the intended learning outcomes been met?), encouraging participation

Resources:
talking object

6 EVALUATION / PLANNING AHEAD:

* This Circle Time is aimed at staff working in schools, with some specific examples for teachers. As well as adaptations needed to suit your particular group, the content would need to be adapted slightly for work with governors, parents and others.

** Adjectives beginning with letters like 'K', 'Z', etc. can be difficult, depending on linguistic ability, and it is especially important to encourage group members to help each other with ideas. However, other introductory sentence completions could be used instead, for example, 'My name is . . . and something I am good at is . . .'

Positive Approaches to Conflict Scenarios

1 The caretaker informs you that some of the girls in your class have been picking on another girl from the class at break and lunchtimes. This bullying has included name calling, excluding her from games and pushing past her when they are going back inside. The caretaker has spoken with them but it has had little effect.

How do you respond?

2 Among a group of boys who play football together, one of them is from a Chinese background. The other boys, who all come from White Northern Irish backgrounds, use racist language which they describe as 'a bit of a laugh' between mates, claiming, 'Sure, he knows it's just a joke'.

How do you respond?

3 You work in a maintained school which has a mainly Catholic staff. You notice that when politics or religion are discussed in the staff room the two Protestant members of staff don't participate, and often find a reason to leave the room.

or

You work in a controlled school which has a mainly Protestant staff. You notice that when politics or religion are discussed in the staff room the two Catholic members of staff don't participate and often find a reason to leave the room.

How do you respond?

4 You have been developing circle time in your classroom and have done a lot of work with your pupils around respectful relationships. In the corridor, you discover another member of staff yelling at one of your pupils in front of other pupils and staff, in a way which you feel is inappropriate.

How do you respond?

5 You are running a Schools Community Relations Programme (cross-community) event with your partner school. Some of the boys turn up wearing Rangers and Celtic tops. No one had told them not to, but you are aware of tensions within the group, and this comes to a head when you find two of the boys shouting sectarian abuse at each other while some of the others 'egg them on'.

How do you respond?

Appendix Four: Exploring Controversial Issues in Early Years *

THEME / TITLE:
Exploring Diversity / Building Positive Relationships

TIME AVAILABLE:
five sessions, 20 minutes each

AGE RANGE:
Foundation Stage / Key Stage One **

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- *To explore similarities and differences within the class group and beyond*
- *To develop respect for self and others*
- *To encourage positive relationships and empathy*
- *To explore positive ways of responding to conflict*

Session One: Making Our Classroom a Happy Place ***

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
to think about how we can make our classroom a happy place for everyone, using Circle Time rules

Reminder of Circle Time Skills:
looking, listening, speaking, thinking, concentrating

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Pass the Rain

Purpose:
concentration skills, awareness of others, co-operation and teamwork, encouraging the participation of all

Everyone holds their hands out in front of them, palms downwards, and wiggles their fingers. This is the rain. They put their hands back on their knees. The teacher / facilitator begins by wiggling her / his fingers and pointing them in the direction of the person on her / his right / left. This person wiggles her / his fingers in response, then turns to the person on her / his other side and 'passes the rain' on to her / him, continuing the whole way around the circle. As the children become familiar with the game, you can ask for a volunteer to start, rather than always beginning yourself.

3 SENTENCE COMPLETION

'I feel happy when . . .'

Purpose:
self-reflection, talking and listening skills, developing confidence, encouraging the participation of all

Resources:
talking object

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

'Ideal Island' activity

Purpose:
co-operation and teamwork, creative thinking, decision-making, self-reflection, empathy

Resources:
A3 paper, crayons

Draw an outline of an island. Tell the children that you want them to imagine that they have all been shipwrecked together on this island (You can make a story of this, or do a guided meditation, if appropriate and not too scary!) and they are to imagine what the island is like - what would they really like to have on the island? What would make it a really special place? What might they need on the island? Either draw on, or invite different children who come up with ideas to draw on, the various things which are suggested.

Then talk together about the different rules they might need on their island so that everyone could enjoy it.

What similar rules might they need so that everyone can be happy in our classroom?

These can then be written / drawn on a poster, or represented by actions so that the children can be reminded of these when need be; for example, at the start of Circle Time sessions.

If it is appropriate, divide the children into small groups of approximately four people, and get them to draw their own maps. They can then explain them to the rest of the group, followed by the rules discussions.

5 CLOSURE:

Pass the Smile

Purpose:
awareness of each other, concentration skills, closing on a positive note

The teacher begins by turning to the person on her / his right / left and smiling at her / him, encouraging her / him to smile in response. S/he then turns to the person on the other side of her / him and smiles at her / him, and so it continues right around the circle. As the children become familiar with the game in future sessions, invite a volunteer to start off, instead of always beginning yourself.

Session Two:
Diversity in Our Classroom

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
think about things which are the same / different about people in our class

Reminder of Classroom and Circle Time Rules / Skills

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Pass the Rain

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3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:
'Something I like about me is . . .'

Purpose:
self-reflection, talking and listening skills, developing confidence, encouraging the participation of all

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

Pairs Work ****

Purpose:
self-reflection, getting to know each other, talking and listening skills, building confidence in participation

Divide the children into pairs and ask them to find out two things that are the same about them and two things that are different.

Each pair then feeds back to the circle with one child saying the things that are the same, and the other saying the things that are different. This can be broadened into a more general discussion about the diversity in the class.

If you have more time, the children could draw pictures of the things that are the same and different, and use the pictures as the basis for their feedback to the circle.

3 CLOSURE:

Touch Fingers

Purpose:
awareness of each other, concentration skills, closing on a positive and calm note

Everyone sits quietly and holds out their pointer / index finger. The teacher / facilitator touches the end of her / his left index finger to the right index finger of the person on her / his right. S/he then touches her / his left index finger to the right index finger of the person on her / his right, and so on around the circle.

Again, as the children become familiar with the game, you can ask for a volunteer to start off rather than always beginning yourself.

Session Three: What Makes a Good Friend?

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
think about the things that make a good friend, what do your friends do that make you feel happy, what do you do to make your friends happy?

Reminder of Classroom and Circle Time Rules / Skills

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

'Simon Says'

Purpose:
concentration skills, physical co-ordination, having fun together (ice-breaker)

The teacher / facilitator calls out instructions, for example, 'Simon says, 'Touch your nose", 'Simon says, 'Stand up," etc. If the instruction does not have 'Simon says' at the start, the children should not copy it. Don't put people out if they get it wrong: the emphasis is on having fun together as friends (as well as developing listening and concentration skills).

3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:

'I am a good friend when I . . .'

Purpose:
self-reflection, empathy, talking and listening skills, developing vocabulary around the theme, encouraging the participation of all

Resources:
individual cards, flipchart

If the children are able to read, write these ideas down on a flipchart page or on individual cards in the middle of the circle as the children suggest them so that they can see all of the key words. Depending on the range of ideas which have been suggested, you may want to follow this up with a more general discussion.

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

'Good Friends' Figures

Purpose:
reinforcing new friendship vocabulary, creativity, empathy, talking and listening skills

Resources:
A4 paper, crayons / pens, scissors

Depending on time and age group, either make in advance or during the session, concertina figures joined at the arms. (For example, fold a piece of A4 paper in four, like a fan. Draw a figure on the first section, with the arms going to the edge. When you cut around it and unfold the paper, you should have four figures 'holding hands'.) Give each child a set of figures (or get them to make their own) and give them crayons to create four happy friends. If they are able to, they can write one of the key words of what makes a good friend on each figure.

Each child can then show their figures to the rest of the circle, maybe highlighting one key word, or saying why the friends are happy.

5 CLOSURE:

Rainstorm

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Session Four: Feeling Left Out

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
what it feels like when we are left out or when someone laughs at us, perhaps because we are different from others or because they think we are different

Reminder of Classroom and Circle Time Rules / Skills

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Touch Fingers

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3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:

'Today I feel . . . because . . .'

Purpose:
self-reflection, talking and listening skills, developing confidence, encouraging the participation of all, developing a vocabulary around the theme

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

Using Puppets

Purpose:
self-reflection, empathy, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, conflict resolution skills

Resources:
puppets

Use hand puppets to create a story about a situation where one of the puppets is laughed at / left out of a game by another. Ask the children, for example:

- *How does the puppet who is left out / laughed at feel?*
- *How does the other puppet feel?*
- *How might the two puppets sort it out / make friends again?*
- *If they find this difficult, who might be able to help?*

If you have more time, the children could make their own puppets (for example, finger puppets, stick puppets, wooden spoon puppets, etc.) and make up their own stories in small groups, which they could then perform for the rest of the class. This could then be followed by a discussion based on questions similar to those above.

5 CLOSURE:

Mexican Wave in the circle

Purpose:
awareness of each other, co-operation and teamwork, concentration skills, closing on a positive note

Session Five: Affirmation *****

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Purpose:
to think back over the things we have learnt over the past few weeks in Circle Time

Reminder of Classroom and Circle Time Rules / Skills

2 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

'Simon Says'
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3 SENTENCE COMPLETION:

'Something I enjoyed doing (in the last four sessions) was . . .'

Purpose:
self-reflection, talking and listening skills, developing confidence, encouraging the participation of all, evaluation

4 DISCUSSION FORUM / SHARING MORE INFORMATION:

Elmer [7]

Purpose:
self and group reflection, assimilating learning, affirmation, creativity

Resources:
Elmer book

Read the story, Elmer, and use it to draw out from the children some of the key things they have learnt over the past four sessions about diversity / differences and building positive relationships / being a good friend. Get each child to imagine they are one of Elmer's elephant friends – give them a piece of paper and get them to draw their elephant with the colourful design they would wear on the special Elmer day. They can then show their picture to the rest of the group, and the pictures can be displayed afterwards.

5 CLOSURE:

Sentence completion
'Something important I have learnt is . . .'

Purpose:
self-reflection, evaluation, assimilation learning, talking and listening skills

'Electric Shock'
Page 215

7 McKee, D. (1990), Elmer: The Story of a Patchwork Elephant, London, Red Fox.

* This series of sessions uses Circle Time as its structure. For information on the purpose and process of Circle Time, please see Section Five (Working in a Circle).

** As this is a general outline, it will need to be adapted to the specific age group with which you are working, and to the particular needs of the group. Sessions may need to be shortened or lengthened, activities may need to be adjusted, etc. However, it is always important to include sufficient time for introduction and closure, and to 'warm up' to more challenging topics. Some activities may need to be simplified or an alternative chosen for Foundation Stage groups.

*** The Circle Time sample outline given for Foundation Stage / KS1 (page 212) could be used as an additional session after this introductory session.

**** Ideally, this exercise will draw out in a natural way diversity such as ethnicity, (dis)ability, etc. within the class. If these do not emerge from the children's initial ideas, try to draw them out through further discussion, not in a way which creates issues, but which affirms the value of diversity within the class, and the uniqueness of each person.

***** If you have more time, it would be valuable to begin to look at specific kinds of diversity within and beyond the classroom and in the community. As well as further Circle Times picking up these themes, you could go out for a walk in the community, invite some older people in to do a session around games that they played as children, look at other cultures and religious festivals, do some work on flags and symbols, etc.

Exploring Diversity at Key Stage Two

TIME AVAILABLE:
Four week Programme for a SCRP Link
(Schools Community Relations Programme which is administered through the Education and Library Boards funded by the Department of Education Community Relations Branch)

The programme must have clear aims and objectives related to the promotion of the community relations dimension of Education for Mutual Understanding and must have clear learning objectives which can be monitored and evaluated.

NB: Each session could last three hours but the content can be changed to accommodate the time available. The programme can also be adapted for a single class.

AGE RANGE:
KS3 (8 – 11 year olds)

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES:
- *To explore similarities and differences*
- *To develop respect for self and others*
- *To explore personal identity*
- *To learn about aspects of difference*
- *To encourage healthy relationships within the class and with the other class*

PROGRAMME PROCESS:
Mixture of small group discussions / physical games and learning about each other.

Session One: Ice-breaker

This Session is to encourage co-operation and teamwork, encourage those within the group to get to know each other on a personal level, to learn names, etc.

1 INTRODUCTORY GAME / ACTIVITY:

Parachute Games

Purpose:
to mix the group and to encourage individuals to come out of friendship groups

Resources
parachute

Time:
20 – 25 minutes

The group holds the parachute with both hands at chest height. A person will be asked to state something that is true about her / himself, for example, 'I am wearing black shoes', or 'I watch Eastenders'. If that statement is true for other people in the group, they walk under the parachute and go directly opposite to where they are standing.

Debrief:
The game is designed to help participants think about how people in the room can be very different or similar to themselves.

It is important to stress that it is OK to be different and that this is what can make life more interesting and healthy.

Human Bingo

Purpose:
to encourage participants to make contact with as many people as they can in a limited time

Resources:
human bingo sheets, pens

Time:
20 minutes

Participants are given a sheet with 15 boxes. In each box is a statement such as 'Find someone who goes to a different school than you', 'Find someone who plays football' etc. Participants have to get the signature of the person for which the statement is true. They are not allowed to have anyone's signature more than once, so they have to find 15 different people if they are to fill their sheet. Be aware of group members who may be shy or have difficulty writing and help them if necessary.

Debrief:
Encouraging people to think about difference and commonalties. Acknowledge that it is not always easy to talk to someone you do not know, but when you do, it can be rewarding.

Personal contracts

Purpose:
to encourage people to think about what they would like to get from the programme, what is expected from them and what they hope / expect from others in the group

Resources:
sticky shapes, card, flipchart sheets, pens etc.

Time:
20 – 30 minutes

The group will be divided into small groups of approximately four people. Everyone in the group will be given a piece of card and some brightly coloured crayons / markers. In groups of two to four they will write a rule or something important for the programme to make it fun, safe and memorable. Use different sticky shapes to decorate their contract.

The cards will be kept for the rest of the programme and displayed in the venue / classroom. The group can be asked to sign the cards they made to help them to get a sense of making and keeping a contract.

Blobs

Purpose:
to generate energy, work in small groups, teamwork and co-operation

Time:
15 minutes

The group is asked to form blobs based on a number, colour and theme called out. A 'blob' is a cluster of people touching each other. Examples: form blobs of six people, of the colour blue, of those with 'a' in their name etc.

2 SESSION EVALUATION

Sample questions for group feedback:

- *Did you meet someone you didn't know?*
- *Would you come back?*

Session Two: Personal Identity

This aim of this sessions is to learn about others and ourselves in a positive way

Grand National

Purpose:
to have fun together, to improve concentration, to explore other means of communication, teamwork and co-operation

Time:
5 minutes

For the next five minutes everyone is a horse in the Grand National! Instructions for the leader to call out and actions for the participants to carry out are as follows:

Canter
Everyone taps their own legs lightly & slowly

Gallop
More speed tapping own legs

Left
Turn to person on left and tap their knees

Right
Turn to person on right and tap their knees

Jump
Jump out of seat like jumping a hurdle

Double jump
Same only twice in quick succession

Water jump
Jump, and hold you nose on the way down

Rickety bridge
Rattle over a bridge – with sound effects

Photo finish
Smile for camera, and say 'cheese'

Fruit Salad

Purpose:
to have fun together, appropriate competitiveness, mixing activity

Time:
10 minutes

Everyone in the group is given the name of a fruit: apple, orange or banana, etc. There is a chair less than the total number of people in the group. The person without a seat will stand in the middle and shout out a fruit. For example, when s/he shouts 'bananas' all bananas must leave their seat and run for a new one. The person left without a seat is then in the middle. Later in the game introduce 'fruit salad' - this means everyone in the group must get up and find themselves a new seat.

Rules:
You cannot get up and sit on the seat immediately to your left or right.

Health and safety:
Remind everyone to keep an eye on moving chairs, to be aware of each other and not to run so fast that it becomes unsafe.

Secret orchestra

Purpose:
to encourage teamwork and co-operation

Time:
15 – 20 minutes

The group stands in a circle and two people are taken outside the room. One person will be nominated to lead the rest of the group in performing simple actions that can be done without breaking the shape of the circle, for example, patting head, clapping hands, hopping on the spot etc. After every twenty seconds or so, the action will have to be changed by the leader. After the leader has been nominated, that person will begin leading the actions and the people outside the room will be invited back into the circle. It is the task of these two people to work out who the leader of the group is. The task of the leader is to wait until the attention of the detectives is off her / him, then change the actions - in other words s/he will be trying hard not to be caught. The task of the rest of the group is to follow the leader's actions subtly, so that the leader is not caught.
The detectives have three chances to guess correctly and the game repeats as many times as appropriate.

NB. The two detectives should be encouraged to work closely together and talk about their guesses together before making them.

Same Difference:

Purpose:
to explore and acknowledge personal differences

Resources:
pens / paper

Time:
20 – 30 minutes

Pupils will be assigned into small working groups as balanced (for example, gender, ability, mix from the different schools) as possible. In these groups the pupils will have a set time (three to five minutes) to list all the things that they have in common. This can take into consideration everything about themselves, broad or specific, i.e. they are all human, in primary schools, all living in ..., etc.

They will also have the same set time to come up with all the things that make them different from each other, i.e. they may all have different birthdays, they may all have a different number of brothers / sisters etc.

Debrief:
Pupils will be encouraged to think about what they have in common. Ask about their differences: what sort of things did they come up with? Encourage the pupils to think about why these differences are important to them. Sometimes people are only encouraged to think about what they have in common but difference is really important too.

And it's OK to be different!
Get them to think about how boring life would be if everyone thought the same way, supported the same football team, was the same religion and wanted to be the same things when they grew up. Would they rather all be exactly the same or have differences from one person to the next?

People Jigsaws

Purpose:
personal development, self-awareness, teamwork and co-operation

Resources:
coloured card, markers / crayons

Time:
1 hour

Pupils will work in their small groups for this activity. Everyone will be given materials for this exercise including markers, crayons, coloured paper, etc.

First of all, people will be asked to pick one of their favourite colours. This will make up one quarter of their flag colour. Their name will go over this first coloured card. See diagram for clarification.

Pupils will then pick three words that describe them best, for example, friendly, patient, sporty, nice, happy, funny, etc. These should be qualities they see in themselves or that other people have pointed out to them. Instead of using the words, they have to think of a shape or an object that best describes the word.

Next, they should pick another three colours that would best go behind these words, something that they feel stands for the qualities. For example, if they feel they are friendly, maybe a bright colour like yellow or white would suit, or if they are sporty, a darker, more striking colour would be good, like red or blue. The pupils will write or stencil the words on the appropriate colour of card.

They should now have four pieces of coloured card that will make up the whole of their flag.

The flags will now hopefully represent them in some small way. They will be encouraged in their small groups to present their flags to the rest of the group and explain their shapes, colours, etc.

Debrief:
Show the group your appreciation, for taking the time to do the flags and recognise the hard work they put into the exercise. The flag helps to describe them as individuals and what they are proud of.

John (shape)	**Sporty** (shape)
Patient (shape)	**Helpful** (shape)

Session Three: Symbols

Palm trees

Purpose:
use as a 'loosening up' exercise, to get the group working as a team and using listening skills

Time:
15 minutes

The group stands in a circle. A volunteer will stand in the middle of the circle and point to someone. S/he can shout 'elephant', 'palm tree' or 'rabbit'. The person in the middle must make up the body of whichever object is called out, with the people either side making up the outer parts. For example, if 'palm tree' is called out, the person pointed to must raise her / his arms upward, and the people either side must form the branches. If they do not do the right action, the person in the middle of the object will come into the middle of the circle and nominate someone new. Try to play the game at speed, as it's a bit more fun.

Flags and Symbols

Purpose:
to explore myths and realities about flags and symbols, to explore people's feelings about flags and symbols

Resources:
flags, football jerseys etc.

Time:
30 minutes

The facilitators will present the group with the main flags of Northern Ireland / the Republic of Ireland (the Irish Tricolour, the Union Jack, the Ulster flag and possibly the Ulster provincial flag) and the European flag. You could also include Celtic, Rangers, Linfield tops, an Ulster rugby jersey and various sports supporters' scarves. The pupils will have five to ten minutes to look at the flags / symbols and discuss / write down what they feel they already know of them. The group will get the chance to handle the flags and see them up close. After the pupils feed back their information in the bigger group, the facilitators will then spend a little more time giving some more background information on the flags, including why the specific flag colours were chosen.

Debrief:
- *What did we know about the flags?*
- *Where did we get our information from?*
- *Was our information accurate?*
- *Where can we find correct information?*
- *Where do we normally see these flags?*
- *What feelings did the flags raise for me?*

Wishing Tree

Purpose:
exploring aspirations

Resources:
willow branches, planting pots, light bulb shapes, star shapes

Time:
30 – 40 minutes

The willow branches and planting pots will make up the 'trees'. Each person will be given a cut-out of a light bulb and a star. The light bulb will have space to follow on from the sentence, 'One wish I have for my school is....' The star will have, 'If I had one wish for the future, it would be....'

Pupils will work in two mixed groups at a tree each. After filling in their cut-outs, they will go and hang them on the branch of a tree. Each school will be able to take the trees back to their class and maybe display them in their room or at the reception area of both schools. Pupils might want to share what they wrote or they can be given time to walk around the trees to read what everyone else has written.

Session Four: Closing Activity

Spiders Web

Purpose:
to refresh group knowledge of names, to draw on the themes of teamwork and make new 'connections' within a group

Resources:
ball of string

Time:
20 minutes

The group will stand in a tight circle. The first person will be holding the beginning of a ball of string and will call out a name of someone s/he knows from the other school and something s/he likes about her / him. S/he then passes the ball of string to that individual. This person then calls out another name and says something s/he likes about that person and passes the string to her / him, the game continues until everyone in the group has had their name called out.

Debrief:
The string should make the shape of a spider's web and there are themes that can be drawn from this:

- The web is held together by hundreds of tiny silk threads and if one or two threads break, the web cannot do its job as well as it might. This relates to teamwork and everyone participating in the activities if the group is to get the most from it.

- Everything is connected in the web. Hopefully by the end of the programme people will have made new connections or friendships within the group. At the least, they will have met some people they did not know before and got to know them a little better.

Pass the hand-clap

Purpose:
to encourage teamwork and co-operation

Time:
5 minutes

The group stands in a circle. An individual will be nominated as the first person, and will start the hand-clap and they will 'pass' the clap around the group in a clockwise direction. This means that the person next to her / him claps as quickly as s/he can after the previous person. The clap must pass around the group without anyone missing her / his go, and the exercise is timed by a leader. See how fast s/he can get it down to with four to five attempts!

Evaluation

Time:
10 minutes

In small groups the individuals are asked to reflect on a number of questions such as:

- *What was useful about this programme?*
- *What would make it better for the next year group?*

Exploring Identity at Secondary Level

TIME AVAILABLE:
Four week programme

AGE RANGE:
KS3+

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES: *

- *To explore the factors which shape our identity*
- *To reflect on how labels and judgements contribute to prejudices*
- *To explore and learn about prejudices*

Session One

This sessions aim is to develop and prepare the group for teamwork, communication and being facilitated rather than taught

This session could be divided into two comprising forty minutes each, the natural break after paper tower exercise.

Name Game

Purpose:
exploring identity, getting to know each other, sharing personal history

Time:
10 minutes

Ask each student to say their name and what they know about their name, why they were called their name, was their name chosen for a specific individual in the family etc.

Warp Speed

Purpose:
concentration skills, teamwork and co-operation, creative problem-solving

Resources:
soft ball / bean bag

Time:
5 – 10 minutes

The group is asked to stand in a circle and to pass the ball to each person in the group shouting the name of the person the ball is being thrown to. The object of the game is for everybody to touch the ball and say the respective names in the fastest time.

Eventually someone should come up with the idea of not doing it in a circle but, for example, in a line, rolling the ball between their legs.

Line Up

Purpose:
team building and co-operation, non-verbal communication skills

Time:
30 – 40 minutes

The group are asked without speaking to form a line with the smallest person at one end and the tallest at the other. It is important that the group are encouraged not to speak. You can give the group several minutes to decide how they might complete the task.

Variations of this:
Ask the group to line up depending on the month they were born - so January at one end and December at the other end. Alphabetical line using the first letter of their first name. age, shoe size etc.

'And I Thought I Knew You!'

Purpose:
to allow participants to be more comfortable with disclosure, to give space to all participants to speak

Resources:
pens, paper

Time:
10 minutes

Group members are given a few minutes to write down three things about themselves they think no one in the room knows. Pieces of paper are folded, collected and re-distributed at random. A piece of paper is then read out by one of the participants and everyone tries to guess who it belongs to. Eventually the culprit identifies her / himself to the group. As participants are often quite open in this activity some closure may be required.

Paper Tower

Purpose:
team building, creative problem-solving

Resources:
newspapers, sellotape

Time:
15 – 20 minutes

The group is split into teams of three. Each group is given newspapers and sellotape and are given the instructions 'to make a free standing tower made with only paper and sellotape, and it has to be as high as possible'.

Debrief:
- *How did individuals complete the task?*
- *Who came up with the design?*
- *Was everyone involved?*
- *Were everyone's ideas heard?*
- *Was there a natural leader?*
- *How were decisions made?*

Session Two

Counting to 20

Purpose
to encourage the group to work together as a team; to improve communication within the group

Time:
5 – 10 minutes

The group sits / stands in a circle. As a group, the aim is to count to 20. There are two rules:

- No person is allowed to speak after the person sitting either side of her / him.

- Two people cannot call out the same number at the same time.

If these rules are broken, the count restarts at one. If someone has played the game before, ask her / him not to tell the group the solutions.

Debrief:
- *How did people know when to speak?*
- *What signals were people watching for?*

Trust Exercise **

Purpose:
to explore the value of trust and to reflect on how it can be developed within the group

Resources:
blindfolds if possible

Time:
10 minutes

In pairs, one person is 'A' and the other 'B'.

OPTION ONE
A closes her / his eyes and is led around the room avoiding others and obstacles by B, placing their hands on A's shoulder. B should reassure A about the environment. Switch so that both have had the experience. The space the group has to move around is limited, for example, you may move chairs around to make a confined space for the group to work in. *Highlight health & safety considerations!*

OPTION TWO
Again, one person is A and the other is B. A has to lead B around by hooking fingers with her / his and avoiding others and obstacles. Switch so that both have had the experience.

OPTION THREE
Again, one person is A and the other is B. A closes her / his eyes and is led about the confined space. When you shout, 'Stop,' B moves to find another partner whilst all the As keep their eyes closed. You shout, 'Stop' again and B moves again to another A. Then the exercise is repeated with the As leading and the Bs with their eyes closed.

Debrief:
- *How did it feel to be 'blind' and to have to trust another person?*
- *Did you open your eyes at any time? Why?*
- *Did your partner make you feel safe?*
- *What was it like to have different partners?*
- *How was the trust built between you and your partner?*
- *In talking about yourself in a group, what do you need to feel you can trust the group?*

Using the last debrief question write up some of the points the young people stated and remind the group that these are something to work towards.

Session Three: Identity

Contract ***

Purpose:
a set of ground rules for people to consider and remember when working with each other, it aims to provide boundaries within which the group can feel comfortable

Resources:
flipchart, markers

Before the contract, ask individuals to identify any of their hopes and fears regarding the day. What people expect gives you an idea of interests, and the fears will give you an idea of what could be done to make people comfortable.

Review

The group are encouraged to reflect in small groups or individually:

- *What did they find useful about the previous two sessions?*
- *What did they learn about each other?*
- *What did they enjoy about the sessions?*
- *What would they change?*

The feedback can be recorded by you and is a useful way of reviewing the process.

All Change

Purpose:
warm up activity and to lift energy

The group sit on chairs in a circle with you as teacher / facilitator standing in the middle. The purpose is for the person in the middle to say, for example, 'anyone with jeans change places' however individuals cannot move immediately to her /his right / left when they move.

It is useful to encourage individuals to think of invisible features such as believing in God; liking / disliking something; thinking integrated education is a good idea; cannabis should be legalised etc.

Possible statements: "All change if you ...'

- *have met a politician*
- *have hair*
- *watch the news*
- *go to church*
- *like pizza*
- *have been involved in a cross-community project*
- *like your name*
- *been to America*
- *have a wish for your country*
- *own a pet*
- *want to do something for N.I.*
- *know whom you would vote for*
- *liked school*
- *want to be on T.V.*
- *vote*
- *enjoy sport*

Paper not Floor

Purpose:
to encourage individuals to work as a team, to encourage individuals to problem-solve

Resources:
newspaper

Lay out enough sheets of newspaper for the entire group in the room to comfortably stand upon. Facilitator explains that there is one rule.

All participants have to simultaneously be in contact with the paper but not in contact with the floor. Inevitably the group all stand on the paper provided. Facilitators should check that no part of anyone's foot is touching the floor. Once the group has successfully completed this, the facilitator asks individuals to get off the paper then takes the paper away. This is repeated until the group has difficulty standing on paper.

Health and Safety:
Remember that sitting on someone's shoulder is not allowed, because, in doing so, they are not in contact with the paper.

They cannot use any furniture so push the group to achieve the task.

The solution is for all group members to be holding one piece of paper between them and jump in the air at the same time.

Debrief:
- *How did the group reach a solution?*
- *Were everyone's ideas heard?*
- *Who found the task frustrating?*
- *Did anyone think the exercise was impossible?*

Variety is the Spice of Life:

Purpose:
to encourage participants to value diversity

Resources:
paper, pens

Time:
20 minutes

Divide the group into small groups and ask them to list as many things which make the group different. Below are some examples, which you can mention to stimulate examples.

- *For each colour of hair*
- *For each different BT Number*
- *For each different school attended*
- *For membership of each different uniformed / youth organisation*
- *For each different religious denomination represented*
- *For each different football team supported*
- *For each different favourite sports personality*
- *For each different favourite hobby*
- *For each different nationality represented*

Session Four: Prejudice Awareness ****

Commonalities

Purpose:
to discover how much participants have in common

Resources:
paper, pens

Time:
10 minutes

Break larger group into small group to instil some competition. Teams get one point for everything they write down that each person in their group has in common. They must not be visible commonalities, for example, colour of shoes. Inform teams that there are big bonuses for the most unique and funny commonalities.

Debrief:

- *Which list was easier to put together?*
- *Are people more comfortable with differences or similarities?*

Not up my Street ***** [8]

Purpose:
to explore how prejudices are part of life, to reflect on how we make generalisations that can lead to prejudices being formed

Resources:
paper, pens, flipchart

Time:
30 – 40 minutes

The key element of this exercise is the process the young people engage in; that is, how they make their decisions, what did they find themselves saying in relation to judgements they were making about the individuals in the exercise.

- Explain to the whole group that a house in their street has become vacant. The local council has decided that they will consult with the resident's i.e. you, on who should be allocated the house as they have eight prospective tenants.

- You have been given a list of eight people with limited information at this point and have been asked to rank from one to eight people you feel should be given the house individually.

8 Exercise developed by John Doherty.

- In small groups (five to six) ask them to come up with a group ranking using the information on each prospective tenant. This may take some time as individuals will have to negotiate and make compromises.

- The group feed back their choices and these are noted on flipchart paper.

- Then each group are given additional information on each tenant.

- Ask the groups to reconsider their ranking based on the new knowledge.

- The groups feed back their reconsidered lists and these are noted on the flipchart.

Debrief:

- *How easy were the tasks?*
- *What were your initial assumptions?*
- *Was this information based on knowledge or perceptions?*
- *As a complete group reflect on the ranking and check if there is a comparison between the first and second lists on the flipchart?*
- *With the new information did people change their lists – why?*
- *Why do we make judgements based on limited knowledge?*
- *Why is it helpful to gain more knowledge before making judgements?*
- *How and why do we label people?*

PROFESSIONS OF PROSPECTIVE TENANTS:

Reformed Drug Dealer

Unemployed Youth

Retired Bank Manager

Member of the Orange Order

Gay Nurse

Head Teacher

Sinn Fein Councillor

Refugee from Eastern Europe

INFORMATION ON PROSPECTIVE TENANTS:

Reformed Drug Dealer
Helen is aged 47, and was a heroin and cocaine addict for ten years while living in Belfast. She has now been 'clean' for the past ten years, and for the past five years she has been working as an Education Officer with the Health Promotion Agency. She wishes to move to your area because she has been offered a job in the local Drug Rehabilitation Unit.

Unemployed Youth
Gary is aged 19, and was recently made unemployed after serving a two year apprenticeship as a joiner. He wishes to move to your area as a couple of new developments have started in the neighbouring town and he believes he might be able to get some work there. He also feels he might be able to help his neighbours out by doing a few odd jobs.

Retired Bank Manager
Susan is aged 52, and was recently asked to take early retirement because she was involved in fraud at her branch. Her employers did not want the case splashed all over the newspapers so they agreed to give her early retirement. She now wishes to start a new life in your area and get involved in a scheme to provide financial advice to her new neighbours.

Member of the Orange Order
William is aged 74, and has been a member of the Orange Order since he was 21. He follows in a proud family tradition that has spanned generations of his family. He has been very concerned in recent years about the Orange Order's policy in not working more closely with residents' groups. He has always had excellent relationships with his Catholic neighbours. His wife, Gladys, died recently and he now wishes to move into your street to be closer to his son, Tom, who is one of your neighbours.

Gay Nurse
Jim is aged 22, and has lived with his parents until recently. He told them that he was gay and while his parents did not ask him to leave, he felt that he could not live there any longer. Jim works in the hospital in the nearest large town and is soon to gain promotion. He is a trained paramedic and has advanced First Aid training.

Head Teacher
Mary is aged 47, and has just left her job because of allegations that she has assaulted a pupil. A vacancy has come up in the local high school and she is considering applying for the job.

Sinn Fein Councillor
Frankie is 36, and has a young family. He decided to get involved in Politics three years ago and felt that Sinn Fein best represented his political views. He has always been active in the community, and has been very successful in helping elderly people access cold weather payments and in helping young people to fill out job application forms. Recently, he was elected as a councillor for your area and politicians on all sides speak very highly of his tireless work for the community.

Refugee from Eastern Europe
Rudi is 57, and has recently come to Ireland from the conflict in Kosovo. Rudi is a Serb and was the manager of the local factory in his town. He had to escape because his factory was burnt down by the local Albanians after Nato troops liberated the town. Nobody knows why the factory was burnt and there are stories that Rudi had moved most of his money out of the country. For now he is a refugee and needs somewhere to live.

Session Five:
Labelling / Perceptions

The aim of this session is to explore how we make assumptions, to understand how our perceptions influence our decisions

Perception Exercises

Purpose:
to highlight that we will see many things differently because of how we interpret information. These interpretations are because of who we are, where we were brought up, our histories etc.

Time:
10 minutes

OPTION ONE

The group is told that a statement will be written onto a flipchart sheet and they will be asked to read it and count the number of 'Fs' in the statement. They will only be able to see the information for just a minute. Write this on the flipchart:

'Finished files are the final result of years and years of scientific study'.

Once they have read the statement ask participants to take a place in the room, based on the number of 'F's. For example, each corner is given the following numbers three, four, five, six.

Once they have taken a place ask them how confident they are about their decision? Did they follow another person because they thought s/he might be right? Could they convince another person that they are 'wrong'? What does it feel like to be told you are wrong?

After the discussion let the participants see the information again so they can count the 'Fs'. Remind participants it is not about getting it right or wrong but about understanding how we see the same message differently.

Follow this exercise with another perception exercise, again following the same process and review. Individuals are given a pen and piece of paper and asked to follow the instructions in Option two / three and once they have completed the task, it is useful to draw a few of the examples on to the flipchart.

Then again use the debrief questions to discuss - was someone right or wrong; why did we do things differently if we were all given the same information?

OPTION TWO

Read this out:
Fold an A4 sheet of paper in half; tear off the right-hand corner; unfold it; tear off the left-hand corner; show it to others in your group.

OPTION THREE

Read this out:
Draw a 2cm line across your page. Take the first letter of your first name and the first letter of your second name and write them on either side of the line.

Reflection

Ask the group to reflect on the following areas:

- *What do people say about your school and the pupils attending the school?*
- *Are these labels fair, accurate?*
- *How can the school and you change these perceptions?*

Session Six: Cultural Awareness

Human Knot

Purpose:
trust, team building and co-operation, problem-solving

In a circle, ask an even number of people to close their eyes. Stretching their right hand across the circle, ask them to find another hand. Repeat this with their left hand when they open their eyes without letting go. The group has to untie their Human Knot and get back into a circle.

Remind people it is possible.

Debrief:

- *Did the group work together?*
- *Did anyone give up?*
- *Who took the lead?*

Cultural Quiz ******

Purpose:
to reflect on symbols, to explore knowledge and attitudes, to identify myths

Resources:
cultural quiz sheet

Time:
5 – 10 minutes

A sheet of symbols is passed around participants. This exercise can be done as a quiz. Individuals can be put into small teams and given five to ten minutes to identify what each symbol is; where they might see it; what they know about it and what they do not know; what makes them feel comfortable / uncomfortable?

Debrief

- *Where did 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?*

Cultural Object *******

Purpose:
to explore personal identity, to share personal histories

Resources:
cultural object of individual's choice

Time:
20 minutes

Individuals are asked to bring in an object, which represents something from their community. (If someone has not brought one they could have a few minutes to draw their symbol - something they see often / not.)

It might be best to allow individuals to share object in pairs or in smaller groups; but the purpose of this is to support each person to talk about the object, what it means to them and if they know any of the history of the object. You could encourage individuals to ask each other questions, but ensure people don't criticise each other and their object.

Debrief
This can be done in pairs or threes and recorded for the evaluation of the programme:

- *Which symbol did they know nothing about?*
- *Which symbol do they know something about now?*
- *What is the benefit of learning about symbols?*

Press Release

Purpose:
teamwork and co-operation skills, communication skills, sharing experiences and personal aspirations, critical reflection on the role of symbols

Resources:
paper, pens, cartoon board

Time:
10 minutes

Ask the group to divide into smaller groups, the task is to design a press release or a mime as a group, which will answer questions from other countries about symbols in Northern Ireland.

In the press release let the countries know:

- *What symbols mean in Northern Ireland*
- *The role symbols play in Northern Ireland*
- *As young people, the relevance of symbols in your life*
- *What is a good response when symbols cause conflict?*
- *Why can they cause conflict?*

Each group present their mime / press release / cartoon board and as a group agree one thing they would like to be said about symbols on behalf of the school.

Symbols in Northern Ireland

An extra exercise if you feel it is useful or if the young people are reluctant to talk about the symbol they brought.

Purpose:
to explore some of the symbols / emblems of identity in Northern Ireland

Resources:
pack of symbol cards; (refer to the template at end of this section)

- Place pupils into small groups and distribute a pack of the symbol cards (face down) to each pupil. Ask pupils to turn over one card [9] from the top of the pack and place it in front of them. The cards may need to be explained.

- They should then turn over a second card and compare it with the first. If they think that there is a connection between the cards then they should start to form a cluster. (For example, they might connect a flute to the Union flag or connect the flute to a bodhran; it's up to them! There's no right or wrong answer- this exercise is about exploring how pupils perceive the symbols). If there is no connection then they should place the new card a distance away from the first. (For example, a crucifix and a rugby ball may be placed apart.)

- They should continue to turn over cards, adding more to their clusters or swapping cards into other clusters or breaking their clusters into sub-clusters![10] (For example, religious symbols might be sub-divided etc.)

- When pupils have settled on their groupings, ask them to give each cluster a 'name', for example, 'music'.

- Ask each group to show the rest of the class their clusters and to explain why they have clustered the cards in this way.

- Use pupil feedback to introduce the idea of identity in Northern Ireland being religious (for example, ashes, cross etc.), cultural (for example, music, dance, language) and political (for example, national identity, political parties etc.).

CONCLUSION:
Ask pupils to identify which symbols of identity cause the most difficulty in Northern Ireland. Which symbols are used to annoy / antagonise 'others'? How are they used? Is it always just about religion? Or are religious, cultural and political issues 'mixed up together'? During the discussion, pupils will most likely mention the term 'sectarianism'. Use the discussion to define this term.

9 Pupils should only reveal one card at a time. This will help them to develop their own framework of connections between symbols.

Session Seven: Reflection and Recap

The programme focused on a number of areas and we want the young people to reflect on these creatively and remind ourselves of what we achieved today:

- *Team building / Group*
- *Prejudice: Perceptions / Labelling / Judgements*
- *Perceptions of your school*
- *Symbols: their role in this society*

Using leaf outline ask participants to reflect individually on and write down or draw their thought on the leaves, which will be collated and used as a display for the school:

On a leaf write / draw a symbol which is important to me and why?

On a leaf write / draw what you feel we need to challenge?

EVALUATION

Another option is to use a designed sheet which will highlight the learning for the programme.

* This series of sessions uses Circle Time as a structure. For information on the purpose and process of Circle Time, please see Section Five (Working in a Circle).

As this is a general outline, you will need to adapt the content to the ability of the group and the needs that the group presents. Sessions may need to be shortened or lengthened and activities may need to be adjusted; please feel free to use what you think will work for the group.

You will note the first session concentrates on a number of warm-up activities, this is important as it enables you to get to know the group and what would work in your context. These activities are also important as it ensures that safety has been developed within the group especially as some of the sessions will focus on sensitive issues.

** Trust exercises are important in a group as they can support an open discussion on what the concept of trust means generally and in particular within the group. The exercises support the individuals to explore what trust will mean in their group, which is important in building the safety within the group.

*** The contract is important as it supports the group members to take responsibility for themselves and the group. Most classes have group rules displayed, it is important that these do not become filled with 'Don'ts' and a positive approach to behaviour is taken. Often the contract is linked with expectations and when individuals have described their expectations this can be followed with what we need to do to achieve this, i.e. the group as a whole and as an individual.

**** This exercise provides a gentle introduction into the concept of prejudice. It is important

10 Encourage pupils to keep their clusters fairly small (for example, no more than six or seven items in a cluster). This will encourage more creative thinking.

to encourage participants to recognise that this is a natural process for all humans as it is not possible to manage the amount of information, which we receive on an hourly basis. It is also important to support individuals not to feel ashamed about their differences.

***** This explores the concept of prejudice in more depth. Encourage individuals not to censor themselves. The key to the exercise is not the actual exercise but rather the process of how the groups made their decisions, what information they used to work out their ranking. You should encourage the group to reflect on how they made their decisions, did they compromise for example?

****** There is a range of ways of using symbols with a group, you can collect a range of symbols, use pictures of symbols, use the internet or encourage individuals to bring in their own symbols, emblems.

******* An important health warning, if young people are encouraged to bring in their symbols please notify other staff members so that there is a whole school understanding of the reasons. If flags are brought in remind the pupils to respect the flag and not to have it wrapped around their body. Also for transport home ensure that the young people put their symbol away safely for their own safety.

As the facilitator you should spend some time becoming familiar with the meanings behind flags and the historical significance of symbols / emblems.

Symbol Clustering Cards [11]

SYMBOLS IN NORTHERN IRELAND
Page 248
The following cards can be used as templates to make your own set or may be enlarged on a photocopier and cut out.

Claddagh Ring

Rugby Ball

Fainne

IRA Mural

Shamrock

St Patrick

SDLP

Ashes

Cu Chullain

11 CCEA (2003), Local and Global Citizenship: A Resource for Post-Primary Schools, Belfast, CCEA.

Easter Lily

St Bridget's Cross

Ulster Flag

Lambeg Drum

Red Hand

Sash

Cross

Stormont

Ulster Scots

Policeman

Soldier	Bodhran
Flute	Bagpipes
Bible	BB Badge
Scripture Union Badge	Rangers Top
Pioneer Pin	Ulster Unionist

King William Mural

Sinn Fein

Celtic Top

Crucifix

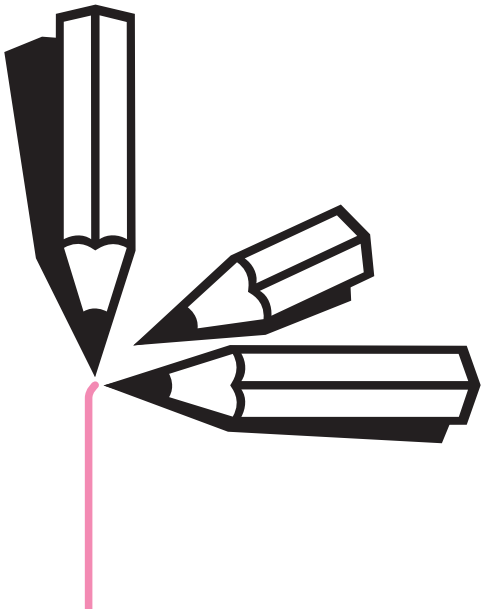
Poppy

Union Flag

Irish Dancer

1916 Mural

DUP

UDA Mural

Alliance Party	Bowler Hat
Harp	Hurley Stick
Tricolour