

Presenting the Toolkit to the School Community: Some Suggestions

An Intercultural Look at our Schools Toolkit advocates for a whole-school approach to improvement that surveys and includes all members of the school community: the Board of Management, principal, deputy principal(s), teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents/guardians. Non-teaching staff may include caretakers, SNAs, canteen staff, secretaries, cleaners and the librarian, even if they work part-time.

In order to help achieve a common understanding about the purpose of the project, it is helpful if the aims of the work are clear from the outset. In this document, we include some suggestions and links that can support you in engaging the participation of different stakeholders.

Management team and teachers

- Ask for a time slot at a staff meeting to discuss the project. You will need about 20 to 30 minutes to present the project.
- Show your colleagues the video Immersion. This is a very powerful video that depicts the reality of the classroom for many students, whether their first language is English or not. When we improve things for one cohort of students, we improve things for all students. This video is about three and a half minutes long.

While the teacher featured in this video and most teachers have the best intentions, **teachers can underestimate what some students know because their language and/or literacy and some students can be treated** as though they lack content knowledge when their language and/or literacy is a barrier to them demonstrating what they know. Many subject teachers who teach students whose first language is not English and/or Irish will find a disparity between the language these students use for conversation (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills - BICS) and their academic performance. Very often, students who display good interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) are considered to be 'fluent' because they express themselves well, in general. The danger of this assumption is that teachers can often misjudge the language level of the students when it comes to cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) required for the classroom. As a result, when academic work is analysed, it can appear to the teacher as though the student is not working to their ability and could do better. This, in turn, can lead to misconceptions about the competence or motivation levels of the student. This powerful video exemplifies the importance of understanding the difference between BICS and CALP and its implications for teaching and learning across all subjects. Students with EAL do not have SEN, they have a temporary difficulty accessing the curriculum which improves significantly over time with the support of subject teachers. They are capable of reaching their potential but need support.

- After watching the video you could ask your colleagues to reflect on the following questions and discuss them as a group (15 minutes):
 1. Have you ever experienced a similar situation in your classroom?
 2. How do you think Moises feels in this clip?
 3. How do you think the teacher feels? Have you ever felt this way?
 4. As you reflect on the difference between BICS and CALP, does any student you have taught/are teaching come to mind?
 5. What could Moises' teacher do to support him better?
 6. What practices/strategies do you use in your class to support recently arrived students with limited knowledge of English?
 7. What does the video imply about having high expectations when it comes to our students' achievements?

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8. As a school, how do we respond in situations similar to the one depicted in the video?
 9. Any student could be Moises. How can we as a school support the development of the language of schooling for all our students so that they gain a sense of achievement and belonging?
- After watching the video at a staff meeting, **or whole staff CPD session**, distribute the leaflet and/or the presentation prepared by PPLI and DDLETB. (hyperlinks to be included) (5 mins)
 - Share the questionnaire with your colleagues and allow them three minutes to feed back to the group.
 1. If you have more time, you could use the video **called** Austin's Butterfly as an example of the transformational power of modelling. Modelling is a very important strategy to support all students but specially those with a basic level of English (A1/A2 in the Common European Framework of Reference). The video demonstrates that detailed feedback (AfL) improves the quality of the students' work as well as gives them time to express their own ideas. The teacher scaffolds the students' use of language and enables them to peer assess by modelling. You could also say that the video focuses on the language being used to describe and clarify the object's features as well as on the importance of peer review and the scaffolding provided by the teacher. Show the video. (3 minutes)
 2. Discuss (15 minutes) the following questions with the whole group:
 - What are the reasons behind Austin's improvement in his description of the butterfly?
 - How effective do you think the teacher's feedback was?
 3. Why is it important to teach students to give constructive feedback when they peer assess?
 4. What role does the teacher's feedback play in developing the student's academic language in this video?
 5. What do you think of the value of students re-drafting their work? How often do we do that in class?
 6. Why should we have high expectations when it comes to our students' achievements and the quality of their work?

Bord of Management

- To present the project to the Board of Management you can use the presentation and leaflets provided.
- Gather some information about the profile of the students in your school and present it to the board.
- Explain the motivation, goals, and benefits to the school of engaging in self-evaluation.

Parents/guardians and other members of the school community

- Use the leaflets and/or presentation provided.
- **There is a model letter supplied for schools to use explaining** your school's rationale for engaging in this project. Give a deadline for receiving responses and explain how you will communicate the results and outcomes.
- For parents who speak a language(s) other than English at home, give them the statements of practice in their first language along with the questionnaire in English.

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Students

- Discuss with your colleagues the most appropriate way to introduce the project to students in your school such as at assembly, by year or class group.
- Use the leaflets and/or presentation provided.
- Ask them to watch the 'Immersion' video, reflect on what they observe **and ask them the following questions:**
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- Have you ever felt this way?
- Do you know anyone who may have experienced something similar to Moises?
- Do you think this is part of your school experience?
- Circulate statements of practice and inform students of the deadline for returning them to the school.
- Explain how the outcome of the project will be communicated to students and the timeframe for this.

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