Connecting people and places around the world

The aim of our project was to help pupils relate to and empathise with other people and communities, both at home and around the world. Initially, we planned to explore the entire global dimension concept; however, we soon realised that in order to deliver the sessions and meet our objectives, we needed to narrow the topic down to a sharper focus. The project took place over two afternoon workshop sessions with year 4 pupils at the National School in Grantham.

We decided that looking at how people work – in the local community, regionally, nationally and on a global scale – was an appropriate focus for our project. Here we describe our workshop activities and the responses of our pupils.

Day 1
Activity 1: Story and potato game
We read aloud The World Came to My Place Today (Readman and Roberts, 2002), a story about a boy of a similar age to the class. It illustrates how many of the things found in our homes today come from other countries, and opens up the idea of the global dimension for everyone. We encouraged the children to think about our local area, nearby places, distant places and the wider world. We talked about some of the children’s holidays abroad and what they had seen on their travels.

In this activity, children looked for similarities between themselves and others in the class. The children sat in a circle in pairs, and we gave each pair a potato. We asked the whole group: ‘What are the similarities between all these potatoes?’ Responses included: ‘from the ground’; ‘some are big and some are small’; ‘some are red and others are brown’, and references to using them in cooking.

Next we asked the children to identify the similarities between themselves and each other in the class, and to relate this to their discussion about the potatoes. Focusing upon similarities enabled the session to remain positive, and it was more effective in terms of understanding how people share similar characteristics, which may vary from place to place. Some of the similarities suggested by the pupils included the colour of hair and eyes, ear shapes, ways of travelling to school, and hobbies. We asked the children to remember any distinguishing features of their potato. All the potatoes were replaced in the bag and mixed up. When we tipped them back out in the centre of the circle, we challenged each pair to find their original!

With the help of a photograph from a collection we provided, or using their own ideas, the children painted their potato to represent someone from a different country. Blending literacy, art and geography, this created an interesting learning environment that captured the children’s interest.

Day 2
Activity 2: Photo imagination
Empathy with people in distant places, creativity and critical thinking skills were encouraged in the second part of the workshop.

Resources for the photo imagination activity
- A4 photographs (one per pair) of people around the world engaged in everyday activities, cut in half diagonally
- the other half of the photograph (retained initially)
- a variety of coloured pencils
- a soft black pencil (2B)
- white A4 paper

Given half a photograph, stuck on an A4 sheet, the children drew in the rest of the picture, thinking about where the place might be and what could be missing. The activity encompassed many skills including imagination and deep reflection, and revealed some stereotypes or misconceptions the children held. Having previously considered people and how they live, this activity offered continuity and a deeper insight into distant places and people’s lives.

Resources for the Potato Game
- different sizes and varieties of potatoes
- various colours of oil-based paint
- easel or interactive white board
- photographs of people from around the world
- pots, newspaper and brushes

Potato painting. Photo: Phil Rimmer and Nikki Fletcher.

Looking at potatoes. Photo: Phil Rimmer and Nikki Fletcher.
Day 2
The second day built on the ideas developed during the first workshop, during which children discussed what the global dimension meant to them and what linked people and places around the world. Now the children experienced geography through physical exercise, music and games. Physical exercise allowed us to talk about spatial awareness, looking out for others, teamwork and learning through play. A one-hour session playing fun, active games generated much excitement! Below are web links where you can find details of the games, plus some of our suggestions.

Activity 1: Warm up
http://golden-time.co.uk/resources/PE/beangameFand%20KS1.pdf
We used activities appropriate to age and ability (in this case, gentle sitting exercises) and different types of movement around the hall. The Bean Game would be suitable for the youngest children.

Activity 2: Pirate ships
http://www.teachingideass.co.uk/pe/pirateship.htm
To encourage spatial awareness and sense of direction, we labelled the four sides of the room North, South, East and West, and the central point of the room the Compass Point.

Activity 3: Beanbags and music
This game incorporated the use of music from a range of cultures. We placed beanbags intermittently around the room and the children danced while the music was playing. When the music stopped they had to find a beanbag and put it on their head. We took beanbags away gradually to reduce the number of children playing the game, until a few winners were left.

Activity 4: The sun shines on
http://www.jubed.com/youth_ministry/view/The-sun-shines-on
We chose this game to help the children become more aware of each other. By playing the game as a whole class and asking each other questions, they learned more about each other, their interests and how they live their lives. It also enhanced the discussion about people’s similarities and differences. A variety of questions extended group thinking skills.

Activity 5: Finding countries on the globe
A good cool-down from the physical activity, this also allowed time to extend pupils’ understanding of countries around the world. The children lay on their stomachs in a circle. A child chose another child, called out their name, and pushed an inflatable globe across the circle. The child who received the globe located a country and said its name aloud for the rest of the group to hear. With older children, this idea could be developed so that pupils ask about the language, currency or food from that country.

The day ended with a quiet session, reading the book that we used to start the workshop. This recap opened a final discussion about what the children thought they had learned from the two-day experience. The feedback was positive and very encouraging; we had achieved our aims of helping the children to a better understanding of people and places around the world.

Conclusion
The children responded with interest and enthusiasm; they were motivated and engaged in a lively positive manner and we harnessed their developing creativity and understanding of the global dimension by encompassing their ideas within all aspects of the workshop. Our holistic approach encouraged enquiry through critical thinking and problem solving activities because it looked in detail at the components of the global dimension and how they linked together. The experience was extremely valuable for all involved.

Geography and its contemporary approach should be considered for development through all subject areas. The global dimension can be implemented through enjoyable stimulating programmes of learning in our classrooms.

Reference

Nikki Fletcher and Phil Rimmer are Geography and Education Studies students at Bishop Grosseteste University College, Lincoln.

‘The global dimension is about us our school, Grantham and around the world.’

‘Knowing that lots of things in our homes come from other countries.’

‘Understanding that people around the world live in different ways.’