

Erasmus Project – Learning to Think and Live Outside the Box



After nearly three years, it is time to look back and reflect. What a project, What an adventure. These are some reflections from staff, pupils and parents and some thoughts about what this has created in our school – the ongoing Legacy of the last three years of Erasmus.

"I imagined it would be about the trips but it was just so much more than that. The training, the Action days, the projects, the staff visits, the enthusiasm that built during the projects. It developed into so much more than the bare bones we started with".

It all started with a meeting. Three schools and Zoom. This was a new adventure and Covid had taught us a little about Virtual get-togethers. We had so far to go. Our training and planning started on a cold INSET day and we planned for what we thought the project would be. Little did we know that staff changes, Covid restrictions and technology would be things we had to 'think out of the box' about. Small starting points like letters to each other and cards started the process. These seemingly small activities have carried on and when the post favours us, it will into the future.

Staff training

Staff training and sharing knowledge between schools became a huge part of this project. The actual visits to Watford and Spain helped build friendships and develop so much confidence in staff. Presenting to an audience and learning about professional practise has been invaluable. There have been aspects of our curriculum forever improved through staff knowledge. We even have live weather stations and Viking experts we can call on.



"I learned how different the approach to education is in other countries and the priorities that are so much more balanced than ours. The similarities between us all - the children bonded so quickly from day1 through to the end. Being an international school/Erasmus participant gave our school community so much more than just the trips; it widened our world view, inspired co-operation, broadened the children's outlook and gave so many an experience they would never have had"



I thought it would be more work, it was a lot more fun and a lot more work. Pupils were braver than I thought they would be. Adults were more nervous.

"The biggest surprise was that the teachers didn't take our passports – we had to do it all ourselves"

Pupil Mobilities

The most impactful part of this project for some has been the chance to travel. This has been a life changing experience for some. An opportunity to visit new places and have adventures with friends. To meet new friends and experience culture differences first hand. The process of applying was a difficult one. With each trip, more and more people wanted to join in. This too was a chance to think outside the box.... How to be fair and how on earth to choose? Being able to work with staff from other schools and end up choosing from other schools – rather than our own felt a bit scary. It ended up being the best way to do this and children and staff recognised that everyone had a fair chance.

I learned that being in a different setting allows children to be someone different - allows them to express different parts of their personalities and be brave in different ways.

I didn't think that my child would be chosen. It was such a shock – a good shock!

I was most scared of going to another family to have dinner. It was actually really amazing. We had Elk meatballs and I have never eaten that before. We played football and made friends quickly.



My daughter was so excited.
I didn't think they were
ready for it but actually – I
wasn't ready. She loved it.

My strongest memory will be
taking children through the airport
and seeing their confidence
develop. Encouraging everyone to
try new foods and some very late
nights

It was wonderful to see a city or a building through the people who live there. We were able to really understand the importance of these places and the cultural significance of them. It was, as always a chance to think outside the box. When getting lost on a treasure hunt we had to ask the locals for help and be brave with using our Spanish lessons in real life. When walking through the woods for hours without a map – we had to find energy reserves we didn't know we had.

"When we arrived at an accomodation and there were not enough beds. We had to build bed frames and be creative with rooms and change plans at the last minute. When we had huge floods and storms (the school was flooded) and yet we still needed to keep going, catch a bus, go to dinner, watch a concert and visit a cathedral in the middle of the storm. Wet feet didn't dampen the experience!"

I didn't miss my phone
the whole week.

I thought we were going to have
a little picnic in the woods – but
the whole school was there and
a BBQ! I ate 5 burgers.

Action Days

Well – there were certainly a few hiccups with these over the years. It was a wonderful opportunity for ALL the pupils to join in and share what we had been doing in class. It was a chance to compare work and share poems, artwork, Our Green projects and our Cross Curricular work. We thought it would be about our Spanish work but in fact, was so much bigger than that. The pupils from the others schools were phenomenal speaking to us in English and making videos and books.

We discovered that some things are the same- where ever you live. Lunch and break times are never long enough and football seems to be universally played in playgrounds.

“I learned a range of teaching tools including using technology” “Technology and communicating without a common language” was the biggest challenge.” “Technology was a blessing and a curse- when things did not go well”

We discovered that going back to a letter and a card – can sometimes be the most rewarding task.

Hosting

Hosting and welcoming staff and children into our school was a big part of the project. For many pupils it was a chance to show pride in their school and to reflect about what it is to be a member of the Parkgate Family. Pupils were proud of what we do and enjoyed having an entire week to get to know each other. It was a chance to think about how we do things as teachers and for our families to share their wider heritage through the food festival and through the trips and activities in school.

Legacy projects and reminders

It is time to think about what we achieved, but also the legacy that has been left for us to continue. These projects may feel like they have come to an end – but it turns out the friendships built and the skills we have developed will carry through into the future.

Swedish Folk Art and the Flor de Barcelona helped inspire our Artwork which all three schools created together for our playground. The games we learned are still played at break and lunch and the changes to the curriculum are apparent in all the plans we make. Look out for the annual Mother Tongue Day, Our Food Festival and Our Autumn celebration of La Castanyada. Amongst many others these are long lasting enrichment to what we do.





It was really weird to meet the person I had got a card and a letter from in real life when we visited.

"I learned that being in a different setting allows children to be someone different - allows them to express different parts of their personalities and be brave in different ways"

"I loved watching the children from different countries interacting with each other"

Did we think outside the box?

Oh absolutely. This project has brought challenges and rewards in equal measures. Would we do it again – in a heartbeat!