

Sharing in Education Programme, St. Mary's College, County Londonderry/Derry.



Building Integration

Although we have entered into a new era of greater political and civic stability, many communities across Northern Ireland and the southern border counties are still living with sectarianism and segregation. Many people from the different traditions continue to live, learn and work separately.

The Fund continues to develop and support pioneering initiatives in education, housing and with community groups which create sustainable opportunities for sharing. The series of programmes which fall under this area of activity aim to promote integration and underpin peace building and reconciliation initiatives which will continue to have a positive impact long after the Fund ceases to exist.



Sharing Education Programme, County Londonderry/Derry.

The Sharing Education Programme

The Sharing Education Programme is a pilot programme that encourages schools to find new models of sharing education which offer additional educational and academic opportunities for students, and in doing so, provide opportunities to build greater cross-community engagement and reconciliation.

Launched in 2006, the initial phase of the Programme involved more than 60 schools, 100 teachers and 2,500 students from across the community through 12 partnerships. The schools'

collaborations focus on a range of curricular subjects including science, ICT, performing arts, learning for life and work, and engineering.

Research into the Programme's initial impact shows that it has provided 18% of participating students with their first opportunity to meet peers from different backgrounds, more than a third of whom didn't have friends from different traditions and would now like to develop such friendships and three-fifths would now like more friends from different backgrounds.

A second phase of the Programme is currently open for applicants and the details of participating schools' partnerships will be announced during 2010.

The Sharing Education Programme was developed by the Fund in partnership with The Atlantic Philanthropies, and is managed by Queen's University Belfast.

A Practical Lesson in Citizenship

Case study: St Mary's College and Lisneal College, County Londonderry /Derry

St Mary's College is an all girls, Catholic maintained secondary school in the heart of the Creggan area of Londonderry/Derry. Through the Sharing Education Programme, it is working with Lisneal College, a controlled secondary school.

Students from St Mary's and Lisneal share Learning for Life and Work classes, taking it in turns to travel to each other's schools to learn together. Learning for Life and Work provides opportunities to discuss identity and citizenship.

Martine Mulhern, Vice-Principal of St Mary's explains the impact of the partnership: "Our partnership with Lisneal brings a very practical dimension to our Learning for Life and Work. It is easy to talk about citizenship in the abstract but sitting in a classroom with students from different backgrounds, wearing different uniforms, gives our discussions a very practical and real focus. Building relationships and trust so that our students can talk about potentially difficult issues such as symbols is making a real difference to the way they see each other."

David Funston, Principal, Lisneal College, said: "Many of the problems we have stem from ignorance. I think children going to another school and learning from another culture and how they do things in a different tradition can only broaden our

children's education."

St Mary's and Lisneal's shared activities have also included a trip to London to examine culture and heritage. Martine explains: "We also held a joint parents' evening and all the parents were incredibly supportive - it was a major step for some of them to come into a school of a different tradition."

In addition, St Mary's has extended its existing Saturday school programme to include Lisneal College students. Running every Saturday morning, the programme offers additional courses and opportunities. Up to 100 pupils from St Mary's participate with a further two mini buses travelling from Lisneal each week.

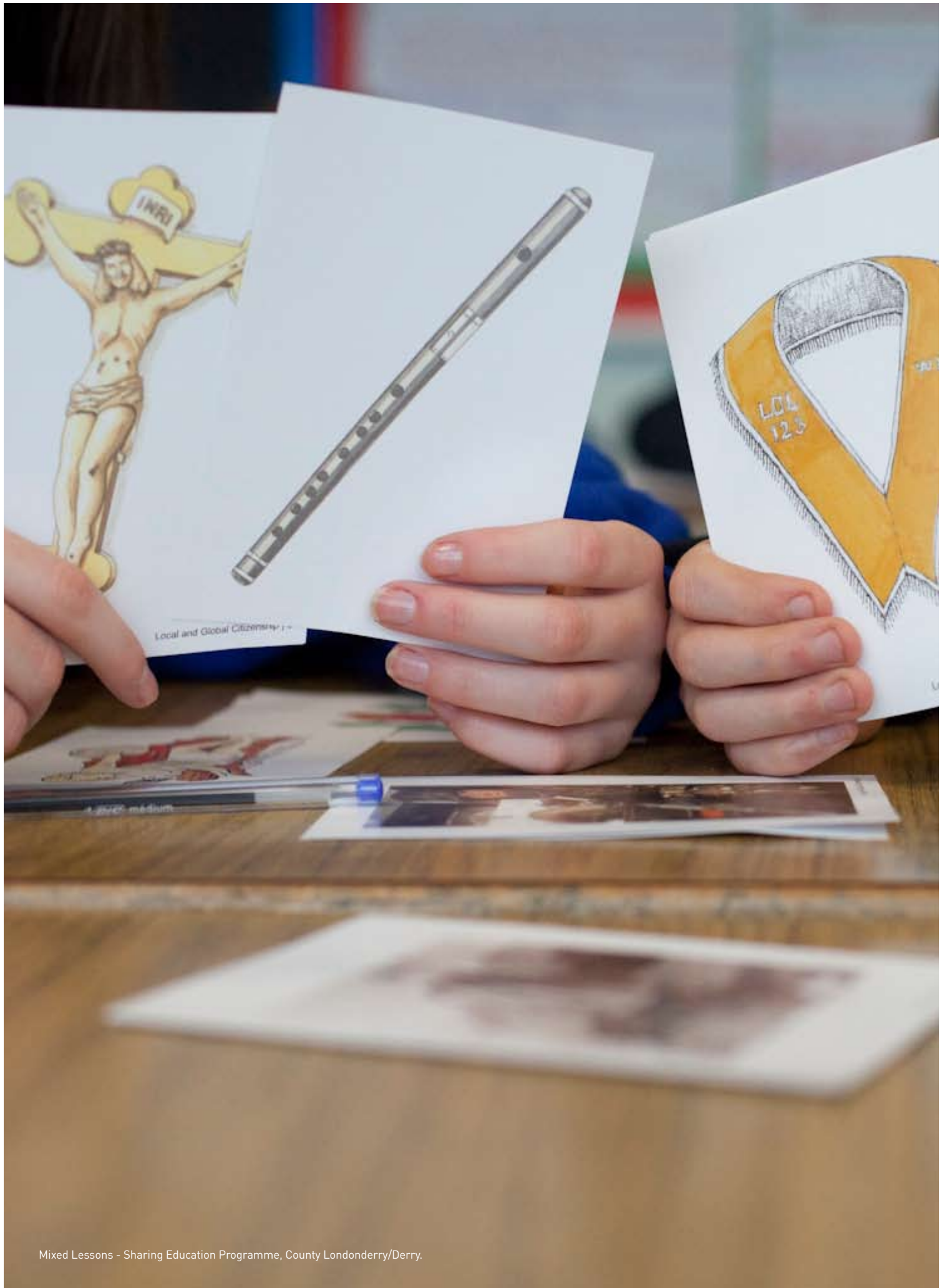
Martine is now a huge advocate of sharing education. She says: "By sharing education, we have all grown in our understanding of one another - teachers, pupils, parents. An understanding of the sameness has come about - the realisation that underneath we are all the same. It's also brought to the fore a sensitivity to symbols and the need to consider other people's feelings and viewpoints

which are all incredibly important and invaluable lessons for life and for our shared future.

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Vice Principal, St. Mary's College



Mixed Lessons - Sharing Education Programme, County Londonderry/Derry.