



DOING DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AS A SCHOOL NETWORK

These guidelines are intended to help schools that wish to set up, or who are already part of, a school network that is focused on embedding quality Development Education in all schools.

CHANGING
ATTITUDES
DEVELOPING SKILLS
GROWING
KNOWLEDGE

What is Development Education (DE)

Development Education (DE) is an educational process aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. DE seeks to engage people in analysis, reflection and action for local and global citizenship and participation. DE is about supporting people in understanding and acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives at personal, community, national and international levels.

Key components of Development Education:

- **Methodologies** which are learner-centered and participatory
- **Knowledge** about how the world works
- **Skills** of critical thinking, reflection, problem solving, analysis, teamwork
- **Values and attitudes** like solidarity, respect and empowerment
- **Action** to effect change for a more just and equal world

“When our students are working together in a network, they are provided with a forum to discuss the issues that affect their future, allowing them to work in solidarity for a better world.”

- Aileen Tennant, St. Mary's Academy.



What is a school network?

A school network is a group of schools working together to achieve a common goal. In this case, that goal is to collaborate and to engage in quality Development Education.

A network will of course vary in size but requires a minimum of two schools. WWGS supports networks that include schools from Northern Ireland, where the lead school is based in the Republic of Ireland.

Types of School Networks

- An established education network with a governance structure.
- ETB schools that form part of a county based network.
- Schools within a distinct geographical region sharing DE activities.
- A group of schools working together under a common global issue or theme.
- A group of schools working together on a global development solution/project as part of their participation in the BT Young Scientists or Young Social Innovators events.
- Schools sharing a common target country as part of their global school partnership e.g. a group of Irish schools that have partner schools in Tanzania could work together.

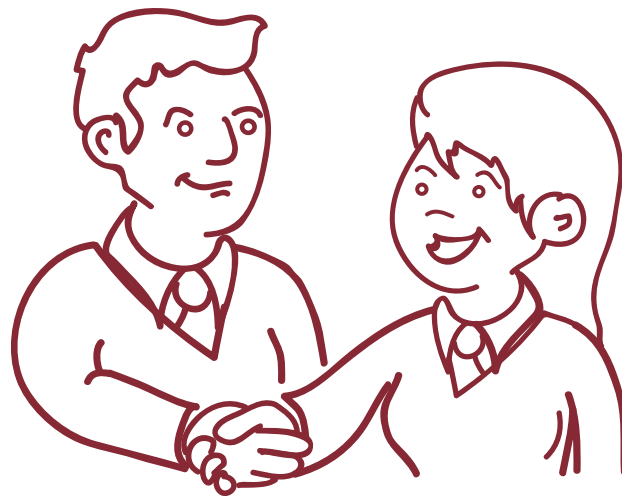
Who is involved in a School Network?

The main participants within a school network are principals or deputy principals, teachers and students. They may also have organisations helping them implement their DE strategy, which can consist of local or national NGOs. There may be an overall coordinator who oversees the work of the school network. For a school network to form, there needs to be a willingness to engage in DE across the network of schools. School management must be willing to engage their school in DE and each school needs to have identified key staff who will help coordinate the school network from their own school and facilitate shared learning across the network.

Why 'do' DE as a Network?

There can be multiple benefits to doing DE in this way:

- Provides opportunities for peer learning and support, allowing schools of varying capacity to complement each other.
- Instills greater confidence and motivation in participants through working with peers.
- Allows schools to share teaching and learning materials, and develop tailored resources.
- Can lead to a greater success rate for projects, as a network provides a collective structure, project plan, deadlines, etc.



Benefits of Networks for Teachers

Once you identify your network's DE needs, you may want to consider some of the following activities:

- Team Teaching: where teachers collaborate and work together with the same group of students – either in terms of facilitating specific teaching/learning methodologies, project work or in a cross-curricular sense.
- Teachers contributing to/participating in sessions to discuss ways of embedding DE across the curriculum and/or into assessment tasks.
- Peer mentoring initiatives: for example, creating spaces and opportunities for experienced DE teachers in the network to mentor and support student teachers on placement, or teachers new to the schools in the network.
- Teachers from schools in the network attending relevant Continuous Professional Development (CPD) events together (e.g. those organised/funded by WWGS).
- Teacher attendance/presentations at relevant conferences (e.g. WWGS Annual Conference, Educational Studies Association of Ireland Annual Conference, etc.)



CASE STUDY 1

Wicklow/Carlow school network

‘It dawned on us quickly that working together is better than going alone.’

- Joe Clowry, Teacher, St. Leo’s College, Carlow.

Colaiste Bride Carnew, St. Mary’s Academy, St. Leo’s College, and Presentation College Carlow form a network of schools that work collaboratively on a development education programme. This collaboration consists primarily of annual Development Education Days for Transition Year students, held in the Parish Centre in Carlow town. On these days the students take part in a range of interactive workshops settings, exploring themes such as ‘Hunger in a World of Plenty’, ‘Gender Equality’ and ‘Sustainable Development’. The network is currently expanding to involve partner schools in Tanzania with a specific focus on Climate Justice.

‘Our vision for Coláiste Bhríde into the future is to become a ‘Development Education School’ in tandem with St Mary’s Academy, Carlow. Our engagement with Development Education through our Irish and Tanzania Schools Network is an innovative model of partnership which will help make this vision a reality.’

- Eleanor Lee, DE Co-ordinator, Coláiste Bhríde, Carnew, Co. Wicklow.



CASE STUDY 2

Loreto Education Centre

The Loreto Education Centre has a network coordinator who is responsible for overseeing DE amongst Loreto schools in Ireland. Many of the participating schools also have lead teachers who oversee DE within their individual schools, whilst also liaising with the central DE coordinator. Each year the coordinator carries out visits to all schools within the network (18 in total) to meet with school principals and provide tailored support. She also monitors the impact of DE on teaching and learning across the network and shares these results on the Loreto Education website. This year, for example, the network held four training days for teachers in various locations around the country, any resources from which were subsequently made available on the website. The schools' lead contacts also receive regular updates via email from the coordinator to keep them up to date on new approaches or ideas to inform their classroom teaching. There is also an annual DE conference for Loreto principals and teachers held in March each year.



DO

- Assess where people currently are in terms of DE and identify gaps. This can help when designing the project plan and DE strategy for your network.
- Ensure that capacity building is relevant to the needs of the network participants. Focus on building the capacity of the lead coordinators/teachers or student groups within the network, so that they can be internal trainers and capacity builders for their own schools.
- Build in regular times where representatives from the network come together in person. This creates important space for debriefing, problem solving and planning.
- Be flexible, so that adjustments to the DE programme can be made if needed.

DON'T

- Create a project plan that is too rigid - it may need to be adjusted or amended over time.
- Overload your project with resources. Ensure that teaching and learning materials used in your network are suitable to the overall aims and objectives in your strategy and plan.
- Adopt an ad-hoc or fragmented approach to DE within the network; ensure that there is a consistent and coherent approach that fulfills the overall aims of your strategy and plan.
- Be overambitious in your plans – it is better to do less and to do it well.

WWGS is available to provide support and funding for school networks that wish to increase their capacity to engage with **global justice** and **development issues**.

Please get in touch with the team at **WWGS** should you have any further questions on **school networks**, or how to go about establishing one.

Contact the WWGS team

The WorldWise Global Schools team is available to provide advice, guidance, training and resources for development education in post-primary schools in Ireland.

WorldWise Global Schools, Kingsbridge House, 17-22 Parkgate Street, Dublin 8
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WWGS is being implemented through a consortium comprising Gorta-Self Help Africa, Concern Worldwide and the City of Dublin Education and Training Board Curriculum Development Unit.

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