Exploring Anti-Racism at Naas CBS: A Whole School Approach

“This week has made me more aware of the stereotypes I lean toward but now I see the unfairness of stereotypes.”

- 5th year student at Naas CBS

Naas CBS, an Edmund Rice school, has a long tradition of supporting social justice issues. Since attending one of the first WorldWise Global Schools teacher conferences, Naas CBS staff have worked closely with WWGS to engage critically with Global Citizenship Education (GCE). This case study shows a whole-school approach to exploring the global justice theme of Anti-Racism.

Choosing a Theme and Ensuring Buy-in

Student and staff buy-in were crucial when choosing and planning the GCE theme.

Student buy-in

At the end of the school year (May 2023) 1st year students were invited to vote for three themes to explore in their 2nd year CSPE course. They chose Migration, Anti-Racism and Climate Change.

Staff buy-in

From these, teachers chose Anti-Racism as both a whole-school theme and the focus for TY GCE.

To build staff capacity, WWGS Education Officers recommended a GCE facilitator who gave a whole-staff workshop at the start of the school year (September 2023). The workshop highlighted the complexity of the theme and the need for critical thinking to challenge racism. At the end of the workshop a clear aim emerged, which built towards an Anti-Racism week in April 2024.

"For students and the broader community to be given the opportunity to learn, the inspiration to speak out, and the courage to stand for dignity against racism."

Developing the Theme through the Curriculum

Scaffolding (deepening understanding through teaching and learning) was crucial to explore the theme of Anti-Racism across the curriculum. Time was given in different subjects to explore critically and dig deeply into systemic and historical influences, in order to understand the root causes of racism and take meaningful action. Damien Stephens, the lead contact teacher for WWGS at Naas CBS, observed that "*the tone of conversations has changed and there are different, deeper questions from the students.*"

This GCE approach allowed students to make decisions, exert autonomy, take action and drive the theme. Some of the pre-event scaffolding activities carried out in Naas CBS classrooms are outlined in the table below. Many of these lessons have cross-curricular potential. Links to resources are included.

Pre-event Scaffolding Activities by Curricular Area

Curricular Area	Activities	Global Justice Issue	Relevant Guiding Principle(s)	Resources included
Maths	Analysing statistics.	Discrimination in Ireland.	• Unlearning & reconstructing • Solidarity	2022 Report of Data available from Irish Network Against Racism
English	Poems, questions, discussion, debate.	Migration, racism and activism.	Critical approach to complex issues.	• You don't get to be Racist and Irish • Rosa Parks • The Empty Pram
English/ Science	Reading Comprehension with questions.	First Nation Aboriginal Peoples' Sustainability.	• Local to global links • Human Rights • Solidarity	PDF with text and questions available here.
Gaeilge	Newspaper articles: comprehension, oral language, debate and essay writing.	Racism	• Scaffolding • Critical approach to complex issues	'Is gránna an rud an ciníochas'
Science JC/ Biology SC	'The Myth of Race': Video and Questions.	• Race & Colonialism • Race & Power • Historical & Political Constructions • Stereotypes • Scientific Racism	• Human Rights • Unlearning & Reconstructing • Solidarity	'The Myth of Race'- Video (7mins) & Qs from BBC Ideas. *Excellent video.
French SC	Leaving Certificate Reading Comprehension: 'An overview of Racism in France'.	• Racial Discrimination • Lived experience	• Critical approach to complex issues • Scaffolding • Human Rights	Leaving Cert PDF with text, questions and answers. Racism in France- articles and worksheet.
Business Studies	Case Study on 1984 Dunnes Stores strike on the import of food from South Africa.	• Apartheid • Trade Inequality	• Solidarity • Local to Global Links • Human Rights	Presentation with some background information and questions

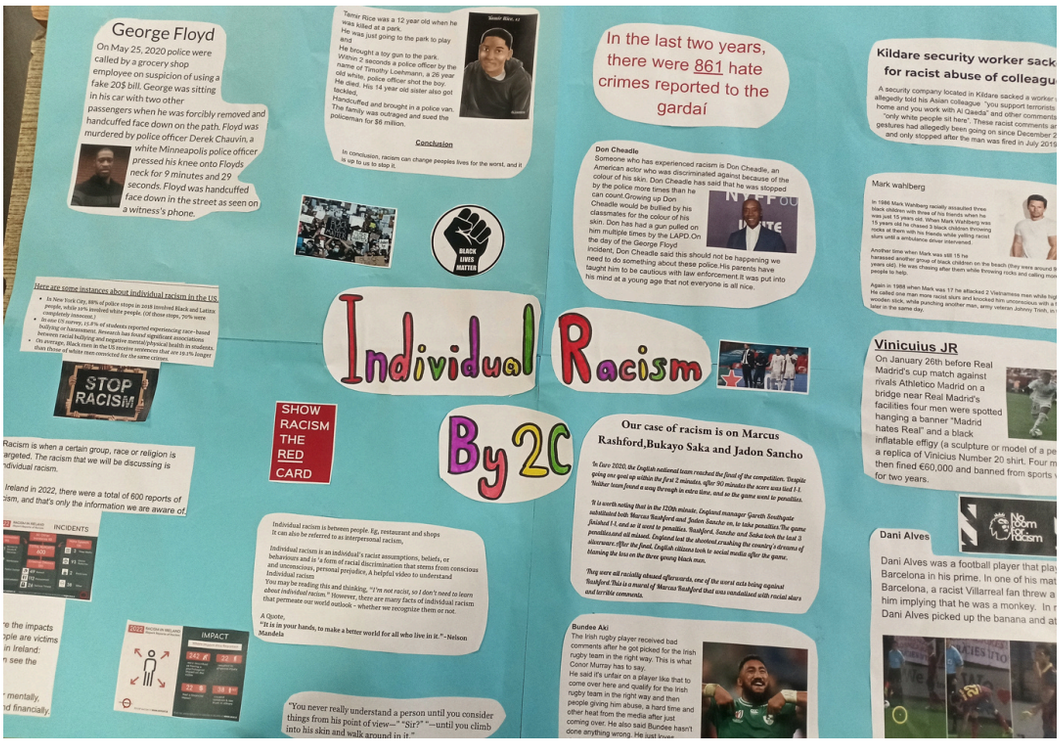
Engaging with the Theme at a Whole-School Level

Anti-Racism Week

- All subject teachers were encouraged to engage with the theme in class during the week.
- Messages challenging students to reflect on and critically evaluate racism and its root causes were shared on the school intercom and at assemblies.
- Discussions at assemblies centred on rejecting racism and aligned the Edmund Rice values of care and solidarity with global justice themes of inclusion, human rights and empathy.
- Workshops:
  - 1st year workshop with Show Racism the Red Card.
  - 2nd year workshop with Sports Against Racism Ireland.
  - TY classes attended a talk by the Movement for Asylum Seekers Ireland.
  - 5th year workshop delivered by the Kildare Traveller Action Group.
  - 6th year students attended some of the TY and 5th year events.

"The workshop made me feel bad for the members of the travelling community that did nothing wrong but were still being profiled and discriminated against."

- 5th year student after a Traveller Action Group workshop.



Peer Learning

- Unity: A Journey from Racism to Compassion

TY Students hosted an Anti-Racism Day based on project work they completed on the theme of racism. These projects formed a whole-school display during Anti-Racism Week. One TY group produced a video, 'Unity'. The 3-minute film, available here, shows the journey from racism to compassion. 1st year students then watched and discussed the film.

- Street Names

2nd year CSPE students created an action project to turn corridors into 'streets' named after anti-racism activists and events. Their 'streets' were based on subtopics such as Racism in Sport, the Jim Crow Laws, the History of Racism. Students wrote fact sheets to accompany the street names. Through this sensory learning experience, the whole school community engaged with the topic; as students and staff walked along the 'streets', the names and fact sheets facilitated informal learning, discussion and reflection. To encourage engagement, a competition was held with quiz questions based on the fact sheets.

Street name with fact sheet.

- GCE Action: Petition

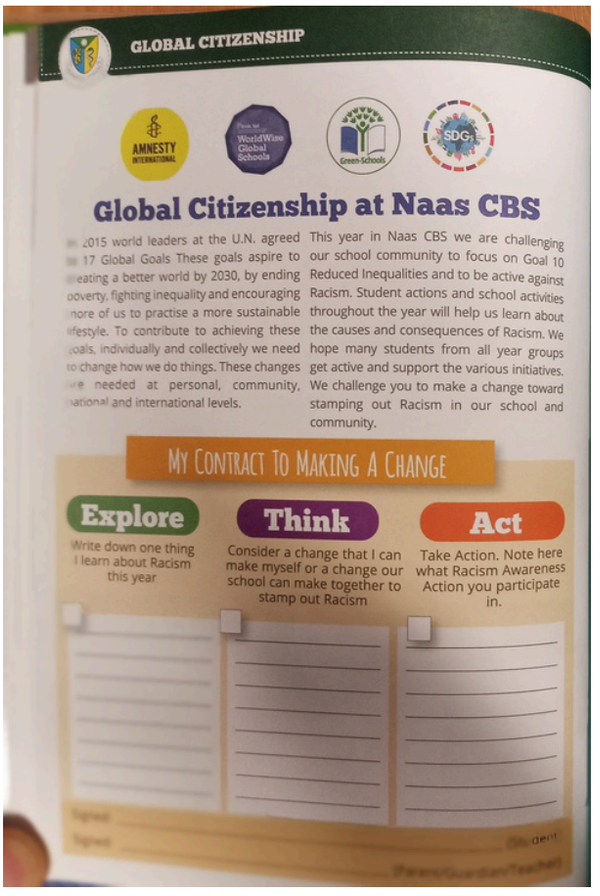
2nd year CSPE students prepared a petition calling for improvements to Ireland's direct provision system. This campaign was supported by a slideshow of images and facts, presented in a whole-school assembly and displayed on screens in the school. The petition calls for the living conditions, support services and limitations put on asylum seekers to be reviewed and improved. At the time of writing the students were gaining signatures before presenting the petition to a local TD.

School of Sanctuary

As a Champion School of Sanctuary, Naas CBC promotes a culture of welcome and inclusivity, which aligns naturally with the GCE global justice values of solidarity and empathy. This translates to the curriculum in a 'Life Skills' module. In the 2024 module, 2nd year and TY students explored migration and refuge, and 5th year students dug deeply to understand how to tackle racism in their Religious Education class. More information is available here on Naas's School of Sanctuary Portfolio.

Everyday and Ongoing GCE

- GCE is a rotating module on the 2nd year CSPE timetable under Wellbeing. GCE is also a TY module.
- GCE is established in the school as part of an AP1 post; GCE features regularly in staff meetings.
- Workshops by WWGS have been delivered to the whole staff and have been an option for CPD Croke Park hours.
- A GCE page in students' school journals is a regular feature and works to keep GCE front and central in students' minds. In this specific project the journal reinforced the whole-school focus on tackling and challenging racism. The photograph below of the journal demonstrates the emphasis on engaging students and the focus on action, inviting them to 'Explore, Think and Act'.
- The school subscribes to GCE magazines New Internationalist and Wideworld.



GCE page in students' school journals

Key GCE Learnings

Student and Teacher Reflections

Teachers' and students' quotes here show the depth and criticality of the thematic approach to GCE at Naas CBS. Global justice values of empathy and solidarity are prominent in the participants' reflections, as well as the time and effort put into challenging stereotypes, unlearning and reconstructing. These principles are key to quality GCE.

> *"I've seen a real change. Some students can be quite blasé in their language. They don't fully grasp what they're saying and who it affects. This project has given an understanding of the global and local impact of their words. Simple is powerful – it's helped them to think about their language. And they've learned so much about the causes of racism – the Jim Crow Laws. They were genuinely shocked."*
>
> *- Denise Fenell, CSPE teacher*

> *"It's so important to look at racism in mainstream school, to discuss it in class and to be educated by someone who knows to get to the truth, instead of listening to online information – you don't know where it comes from or what's real fact."*
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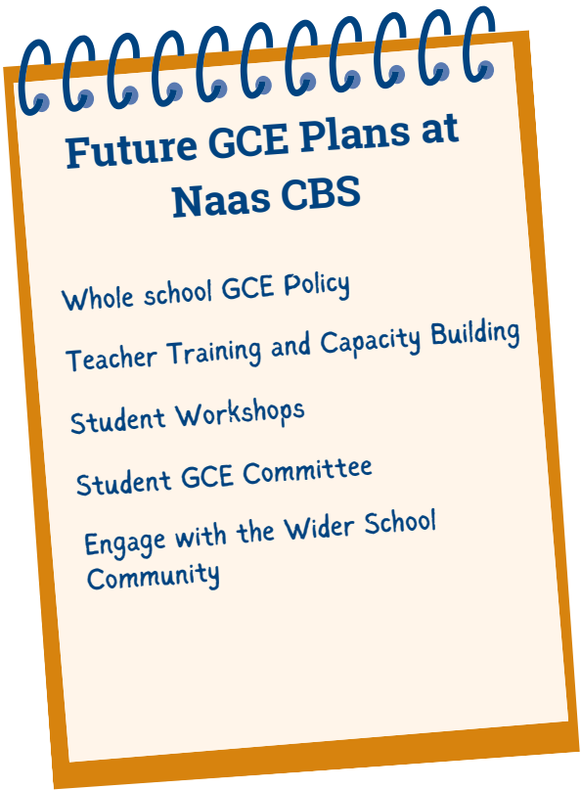
> *- Christopher Young, TY student and director and scriptwriter of film 'Unity'*


Future GCE Plans at Naas CBS
Whole school GCE Policy
Teacher Training and Capacity Building
Student Workshops
Student GCE Committee
Engage with the Wider School Community

June 2024