

# Unlearning and Reconstructing at Castletroy College, Limerick



A case study on WorldWise Global Schools' Guiding Principle 1:  
Unlearning and Reconstructing



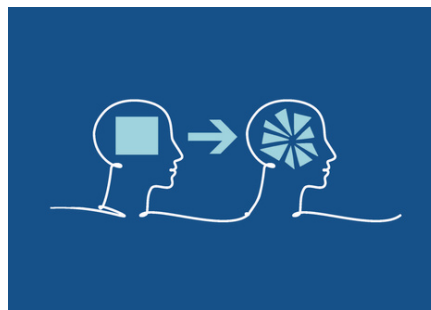
Fairtrade Poster Competition

*“We must act on what we are learning and change our thinking going forward particularly when wanting new clothes or phones. We must ask ourselves, ‘do we really need this? Think of the damage to the environment? Think of our consumer culture.’”*

Alice, GCE Class Captain, 2024

*“For me it is definitely the students being more mindful, that what they’re learning inside in the GCE classroom is not just for the GCE classroom, they are taking it outside and they are actually practising the head, heart hands approach.”*

GCE lead teacher Martina Murphy



## Context

Castletroy College is a large co-educational community college in Limerick City. It has been part of the WorldWide Global Schools programme since 2022 and was awarded a Diplomatic Passport in 2024. With the support of WWGS, and under the direction of lead contact and GCE Coordinator Martina Murphy, staff and students at Castletroy are dedicated to embedding Global Citizenship Education (GCE) across the whole school.

### How did GCE gain momentum in your school?

GCE Coordinator Martina Murphy, who first encountered WWGS through an ESD newsletter in Summer 2022 reflects back, “I am 100% thrilled we went with it (GCE). It has brought a new dimension to our classrooms, inside and out and I certainly can see the students have taken ownership”. After completing a GCE module in Transition Year, the TY students requested to continue GCE into Senior Cycle. Student voice was acted on and there is now a GCE module covered in Senior Cycle Religious Education classes. GCE is supported by senior management and the whole school community in Castletroy, in particular Brenda Cribbin, Green Schools and Sustainability coordinator; Maire Hanley, Horticulture Module Teacher; Gearldine McGrath, TY Year-head and coordinator, along with subject teachers and the TY GCE Class Captains have collaborated on and driven GCE in Castletroy College.

### Why focus on unlearning and reconstructing?

“Because it gets them (students) thinking”.

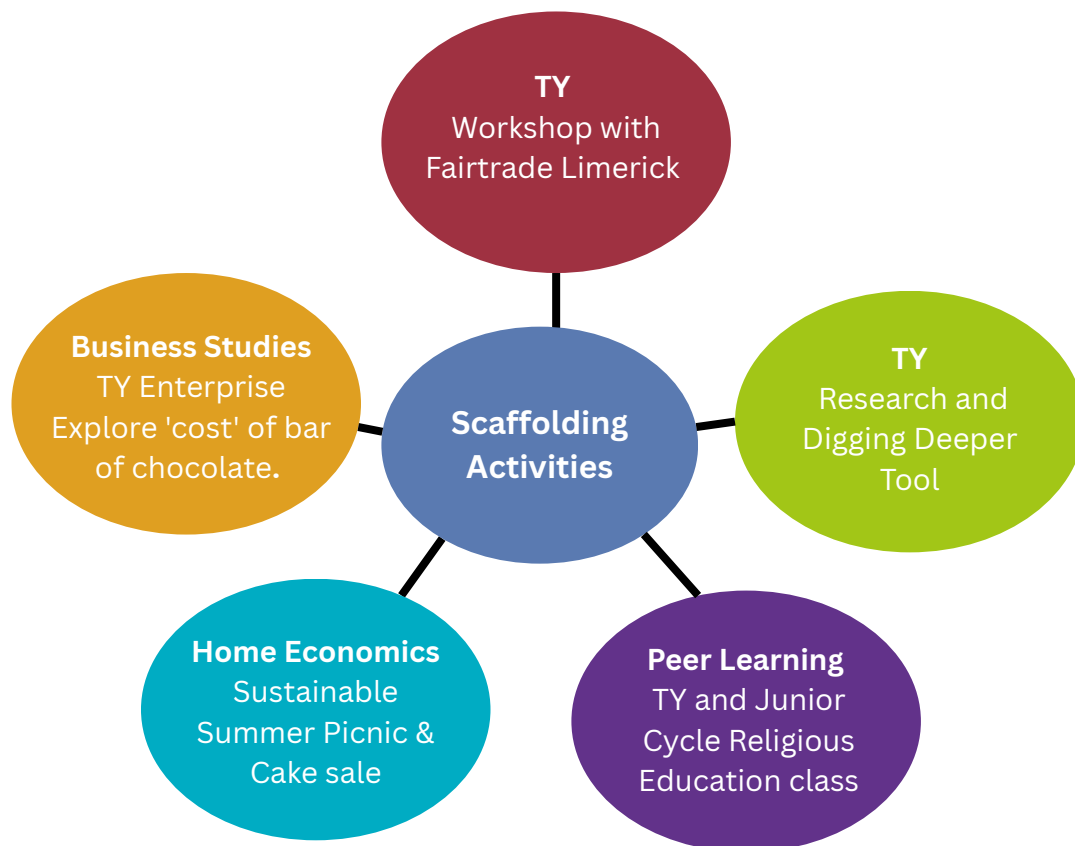
Martina explains that as part of a project exploring the human rights issues surrounding the clothing industry, students conducted their own research and collaboratively used the [WWGS Digging Deeper Tool](#).

Martina and her students watched the Channel 4 documentary [Untold: Inside the Shein Machine](#), where undercover cameras go inside the factories of the Chinese “fast fashion” brand Shein. “There were no-holds-barred, and they (students) saw the treatment of the workers and the human rights links. They will never buy from Shein again, they told me that.” By focusing on the WWGS Guiding Principles of [unlearning and reconstructing](#) along with [prioritising human rights](#) students at Castletroy were inspired to take action by boycotting fast fashion brands.

Martina reflects on the meaningful changes in behaviour; “I think that that has to be the most important thing, because it gets them to stop, take stock, reflect and then make a difference. And then by changing their mindset as such they are changing their learned behaviour”.

## Fairtrade Projects

The work carried out in Castletroy College on Fairtrade has been ongoing and building for the last few years. Reflecting this, Castletroy was awarded a Fairtrade School status in 2023 by Fairtrade Ireland. The work continues to grow, in 2025 'Fairbruary', Fairtrade February, aimed to raise awareness and take action on Fairtrade, culminating with a Fairtrade Friday event mid-February. The exploration of ethical consumption and production and Fairtrade was supported by scaffolding teaching and learning across a number of departments in the school, including Home Economics, [Maths](#) and Business Studies classes.



Through this thematic approach students had opportunities for unlearning and then reconstructing on issues surrounding human rights. Looking for fashion alternatives, students conducted research on clothing brands and delved into options for repairing and maintaining clothes. Students also explored the positive implications of fair and sustainable production and trade practices in relation to chocolate brands. A peer learning project offered TY students the opportunity to deliver Fairtrade presentations to all 1st, 2nd and 3rd year Religious Education and CSPE students. As part of peer learning, students created [Fairtrade fact sheets](#) and [Fairtrade brochures](#); this incorporated student research on what Fairtrade is, the benefits, where products can be bought, and raising awareness about the Fairtrade logo. Peer-learning activities also included a Fairtrade themed board game and a Kahoot Quiz with Fairtrade chocolate as prizes.

GCE lead teacher Martina Murphy's experience demonstrates the dual position of 'teacher as teacher' and 'teacher as learner', and the unlearning and reconstructing necessary for engaging with global justice themes. "I had a lot of learning curves as well. I literally felt like (I was) a page before them (students) for a few classes". To support and strengthen her own unlearning and reconstructing, Martina attended a WorldWide Global Schools workshop on Fairtrade and Global Citizenship Education. Follow this [link](#) to the video recording and slides from the WWGS Fairtrade workshop, as well as suggested readings, activities and additional resources.

## Awareness Raising and Meaningful Change

Castletroy College was awarded first prize in the Fairtrade Limerick poster competition in 2024 and again in 2025. This gave rise to TY-GCE students supplying Fairtrade products for the staffroom and the establishment of a Fairtrade Café run by students for students. Meaningful actions continue and grow each year, with for instance a Fairtrade noticeboard, a Fairtrade cake sale, an Easter raffle with Fairtrade products, and a TY 'Fashion Revolution' a swap-shop to encourage more ethical and sustainable clothes shopping. The students themselves insist that they are more ethical consumers as a result of their unlearning and reconstructing around Fairtrade; "Now that I have learned more about Fairtrade, I will be more conscious when buying food such as Fairtrade chocolate and bananas. From now on I will ensure that I support Fairtrade farmers by campaigning for change and buying Fairtrade products", (Grace TY student).



Fairtrade Limerick Poster Competition 2025: Winners of 1<sup>st</sup> place and 3<sup>rd</sup> place

## Key Learning

“I have seen a difference. I think they are becoming more aware as global citizens. I don’t mean that as a cliché but I think that’s really true”. Martina explains how students became “more mindful”, carrying forward their learning from Fairtrade fortnight into their Business Studies class and insisting on incorporating Fair Trade products into their TY Enterprise.



TY GCE Fairtrade noticeboard

## Ethical Christmas Market

In response to unlearning and reconstructing within the theme of ethical consumption and consumerism, TY GCE class groups came up with the idea of an Ethical Christmas Market. This student-led project used the slogan “reduce, reuse, renew” to promote their objective “to foster and promote an attitude of ethical consumerism in our school and local community”. The Ethical Market consisted of a number of stalls of pre-loved donated items. Stall at the Market, included:

- Festive food stall: menu based on Fairtrade products with food cooked by Home Economics students.
- Fairtrade Limerick: Q&A and raffle.
- 6th Year Politics & Society students showcased their citizenship project on the topic of [greenwashing](#) and ethical consumption.
- Students from the Green Schools and Sustainability team promoted the Green-Schools programme and invited students and staff to come up with energy saving ideas for the school.
- Resident seamstress and Home Economics teacher Eilís Bourke accompanied by craft worker Suzanne Sheehan were on hand to repair any items of clothing that needed a new lease of life.
- [PowerPoint presentation](#) with ideas and reminders for ethical consumerism.
- [Ethical Christmas shopping guide](#) with suggestions for local and online shops.

In efforts to expand their objective to promote ethical consumerism into the local community, 6th class students and their teachers from the local primary school collaborated on aspects of the Market. The Mayor of Limerick attended, as well as Delores O’Meara Chairperson of Fairtrade Limerick and WWGS Education Officer Aoife Rankin. After the event TY GCE class captains wrote an article about the Ethical Christmas market which featured in the [Department of Education ESD Newsletter in March 2023](#) (section 8); there was also an article in the local newspaper the [Limerick Leader](#) about the event.

**Objective** of our ethical Christmas Market- to foster and promote an attitude of ethical consumerism in our school and local community at Christmas time.



## Behaviour Change

“The students had to reflect on why the Christmas Market was not a fundraising initiative. They had to keep reminding themselves of our slogan- reduce, reuse, renew! I had to reiterate to some students that our objective was met- promoting an attitude of ethical consumerism particularly at Christmas time. Our objective was not to make large sums of money. This created a shift in mindset” (Martina Murphy).

TY Class Captain, Alice explained that “with this project, we wanted to encourage people to be more ethical consumers especially at this time of year and think swap don’t shop. I had never thought about shopping in a thrift shop, but I will definitely consider it from now on”.

## Key Learning

“The key learning for both staff and students, indeed the whole school community was that we had to take stock of what we are doing- our own consumption and production and the amount of unnecessary items we accumulate. What one person disregarded, was a treasure for another.” (Martina Murphy)