



Blue Star Programme

Teacher's Guide

2013 - 2014



A Teacher's Guide to Integrating the Blue Star Programme

Introduction:

As National Coordinator of the Blue Star Programme, European Movement Ireland has been very lucky to have had some Blue Star champion teachers participate in the programme since the pilot year in 2011/2012. This Blue Star teacher's guide has been developed in cooperation with them and is designed to support our participating Blue Star teachers. It includes practical advice and guidelines on all elements of the programme. We hope that teachers will find it a useful resource to support and assist you on your Blue Star journey!

"Leaving personal interests aside, the thing that struck me most about Blue Star is its sheer practicality and 'curriculum friendliness'. From experience, I can honestly say that both teachers and pupils really enjoy participating in the programme and it really is just emphasising the work and projects that are conducted in all classrooms up and down the country." - Blue Star Teacher

As you will be aware, the Blue Star Programme is composed of four key modules:

- 1. Historical**
- 2. Geographical**
- 3. Cultural and Creative**
- 4. Institutional**

The following outline will suggest some practical ideas for all four elements of the Blue Star Programme and includes guidance on how to integrate it for all class levels.

Historical

One of the requirements of the Blue Star programme is that the foundation and development of the European Union is looked at to provide perspective for the children. To keep things as curriculum friendly as possible, some ideas for this element include:

- World War II
- The Holocaust.
- The period directly after World War II.

These ideas are most suited to the senior classes and another dimension which may be included is a literary response to this historical period. One idea would be that teachers (particularly 5th/6th) could use books such as *'The Diary of Anne Frank'* or *'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'* to provide a literary context to the historical content - thus, providing cross-curricular integration.

For the younger classes, pupils could select a European country and carry out a whole class project on the history and traditions of this country. Alternatively, important historical figures could be selected by different classes and projects could be completed on them, i.e. Hans Christian Andersen (Denmark), Ludwig Van Beethoven (Germany), William Shakespeare (United Kingdom), Santa Claus (Finland), etc.

Geographical

In the Geography curriculum already in place for Irish schools, it is recommended that from 3rd class on, pupils should carry out studies on member states. Participating Blue Star teachers could plan collaboratively in selecting which countries are to be studied throughout the year.

For the younger classes, one idea for their participation could be if 'mini-studies' were carried out based on member states that children in the class may have close association with or may be originally from. Alternatively, the younger pupils can learn basic geographical information about the various countries of the EU, i.e. capital cities, populations, rivers, mountains lakes, famous monuments and flags.

Similarly (and for all class levels) parents from other member states could be invited in to talk to the children about the country in question and also to show various artefacts e.g. Stamps from their home countries, samples of national food etc. A lot of schools have done this in previous years and found it really useful and informative

Cultural

This element is probably the most enjoyable for the children and also the teachers. All class levels would be more than capable of participating. It can be integrated into the 'Arts' section of the National school curriculum in a variety of ways. The following are some ideas:

- For the Visual Arts curriculum, pupils could look at the work of famous European artists - this could be linked to whatever member states are being studied already. In relation to the 'construction' strand, the children could reconstruct some famous European landmarks such as the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Roman Coliseum.
- For the Music curriculum, pupils could 'listen and respond' to famous European composers.
- The Drama curriculum could be linked with the Historical elements mentioned above, i.e. World War II and the Holocaust.

Under the Cultural element, pupils can learn about famous Europeans from various walks of life, i.e. sport, fashion, music, etc. Also, if a school is fortunate enough to have cooking facilities, it is a nice idea to do some 'European cookery' for the children.

Basic phrases in other languages can be taught to the children and from our experience with the Blue Star programme over the last two years, this is something the pupils really seem to enjoy.

Institutional

Learning about the EU institutions is very much part of the 5th / 6th Class Geography curriculum so this can be very neatly integrated. Senior classes can study the work of an Irish MEP and the role of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

This is a great opportunity to reach out to your MEP for a school visit or an interview. The interview can be done via skype or via email and it is a great way of bringing the Institutional element to life! For the junior classes, younger pupils could paint the EU flag and learn about how the EU was founded, why Ireland joined and the number of current member states. Many schools have also taught the younger pupils about the currencies used in the EU and the EU anthem.

An idea to get a number of classes involved in the institutional element would be to hold 'mock elections with the pupils involved.' The Institutional section also ties in well with the SPHE curriculum in looking at democracy and the wider world.

Europe Day

Europe Day is a good excuse for the children and teachers to display all the Blue Star work and for the school to make a conscious effort to promote all things intercultural & European. The simple ideas for Europe Day often work the best!

Schools in the past have held European food fairs where pupils and the wider community can taste food from all over Europe, parades in the local community, photography or art exhibitions inspired by the work of famous European artists.

It is a great idea to make an effort to present the Blue Star work to a wider audience or out in the community maybe the local library / County Council office / community centre.

Other notes

When researching their projects, pupils are encouraged to use all means of technology available to them, including online resources. Previously, many projects were presented using interactive tools such as Power Point, video clips, audio clips, blogging sites and school websites. The use of technology amongst the different schools in the past has been extremely impressive and brought the goals of the Programme to life in a technological sense.

Do not feel any way 'shy' about contacting the local MEPS, TDs or even Councillors to discuss the importance of being part of the EU. They are usually delighted to help and speak to the children. We have also contacted all European Ambassadors and encouraged them to visit Blue Star schools across the country.

We do ask that you touch base with us here in EM Ireland if you are organising a visit yourself so that we can help, support and assist you in terms of getting media coverage of this event.

Finally, we are available at the other end of the phone for assistance and queries – don't hesitate to get in touch!

Go n-éiri libh!

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