



# TEACHING IDEAS

## INTEGRATING CULTURE

### IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

#### Why integrate culture?

- To promote children's awareness of their own culture and other cultures;
- To foster children's sense of self-identity;
- To develop intercultural awareness and skills e.g. through observing, discovering, recognising, identifying, associating, comparing and contrasting;
- To promote positive attitudes towards different cultures;
- To enable children to relate their own culture to other cultures;
- To promote awareness and understanding of citizenship issues e.g. the importance of caring for the environment, healthy eating, polite behaviour etc..
- To tap into features of culture, e.g. children's culture in a European context, which may help children in the process of learning a foreign language;
- To foster respect for and acceptance of diversity and differences between peoples and cultures;
- To promote world tolerance, peace and understanding (every little bit helps).

#### How to integrate culture?

We can use opportunities to integrate culture in our lessons through:

**1 Everyday life:** through observation, comparison and contrast of different features of every day life e.g. food, meals and meal times, daily routines, school subjects and structure of the school day, shops and shopping, free time activities and sports etc..

**2 Visuals:** through the use of posters, magazine pictures, story pictures, post-cards, internet images, video clips etc. which prompt recognition and discussion of similarities and differences between the children's culture(s) and the target language culture(s).

**3 Storybooks:** through the use of a wide range of story books which offer a wealth of cultural information through language, pictures, settings, situations, narrative structure and plots which can be exploited to broaden horizons, promote understanding of a range of citizenship issues, develop literacy and

visual education as well as positive attitudes and interest towards the target language culture(s).

**4 Festivals:** through the celebration of festivals in English e.g. Christmas, Halloween, Carnival, Easter, Valentine's Day; through discovery of comparisons and contrasts in the way different festivals are celebrated in different cultures and countries; through learning the history behind the celebration of certain festivals e.g. Thanksgiving Day.

**5 Language:** through the language we use in class e.g. the way we greet and say goodbye to children, the way we use 'please' and 'thank you' in requests; through the language in coursebooks, story books, videos and DVDs we integrate and implicitly transmit cultural messages.

**6 Songs, music and rhymes:** through the use of traditional songs and rhymes (plus accompanying actions or finger movements) or adapted versions to traditional tunes, we are drawing children into a shared world of children's culture which may have positive benefits for language learning and memory processes.

**7 Games:** through traditional games e.g. playground games, skipping games or choosing games, children's curiosity about the foreign language culture is aroused and they can also be encouraged to reflect on similar games they play in their culture, region or country.

**8 Stories, myths and legends:** through learning about traditional stories, myths and legends from other cultures, children discover the richness and depth of other cultural backgrounds and reflect on their own.

**9 Projects and quizzes:** through projects and quizzes which promote children's geographical knowledge of their own and other countries and encourage cultural awareness and comparisons e.g. a quiz on flags and countries, geographical features of different countries, food from different countries, countries of the EU etc..

**10 Internet:** through internet tasks or web quests, which require children to visit selected sites prepared in advance by the teacher, in order to look for and discover cultural information that they can compare and contrast with their own country.

**11 School exchanges:** through linking up virtually and/or exchanging emails and photos and/or creating joint blog or wiki with children at schools in another country.

**12 Real contact:** through inviting English-speaking visitors into the classroom whenever the opportunity arises, in order to give the children an opportunity to try out their English in a 'real' situation, to ask the visitor questions about their country and to find out the visitor's responses to their own.