

Schools Across Borders

Israeli Student Visit 2011 Final Evaluation

1. Do you feel that the pre-visit sessions helped you to prepare for the visit to Ireland? (State what you did)

- Yes for the most part. It refreshed information and provided new information. Prepared the group for challenging questions they would be asked and for social skills they would need to function in an Irish social framework – which is so different from the Israeli one. They participated in a drama (social) workshop (ice breakers, manners, etc.), lectures on Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where the students discussed their own feelings, outlooks, as well as history (Ireland – South and Northern) and practised their English (including vital expressions in English).
- Sitting with teachers that had participated in the project was extremely useful, getting to know the kids in various situations, was also very helpful. Observing them clarifying their own positions and asking questions to help them do so from appropriate experts was also vital because it helped me understand each participant's individual perspectives and cognitive processing.

2. What were your main expectations for the visit to Ireland?

- I hoped to meet Irish students and teachers in order to share ideas about the conflict as well as teaching practices, to learn about Irish culture and to learn about the atmosphere and changes in Belfast.
- As the teacher responsible for the students, my main expectation was to be a source of support and to a lesser degree, a source of information, to keep them safe. To ensure they were appropriate to their new environment and to correct any misunderstanding between them and their hosts and other figures they came into contact with. Personal aims were, to continue the process of becoming a stronger teacher, activist, working actively towards helping young people look hard and honestly at what is happening in their world and to help them find the energy and strength to become more concerned and active. Also to look harder myself at what is happening in my background and to find ways that I can make a positive difference.

3. Do you feel now that they were achievable?

- Yes, while I wasn't able to discuss the conflict with the students (our student's job) I did manage to discuss some points with the teachers. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about Transition Year, the program for religious studies, and other aspects of teaching. I would like to develop the idea of Transition Year in our school.

Schools Across Borders

- I think that my role as accompanying teacher was fulfilled adequately, the other roles/ goals are ongoing and are never really achievable but perhaps I feel more now that I took a significant step in the direction that I want to go.

4. What did you expect to be the main challenges/fears?

- I worried that my own point of view may not be accepted by an Irish audience, the students not being interested or able to understand our students. I was SO wrong!!! The kids were lovely, even those we were told were ADHD etc were totally involved. The principal of St. Dominics was astounded by the attention of her weaker pupils.
- They mostly had to do with health and safety worries but also tensions between group members or between the SAB representative and the students.

5. Did any of them arise? If so, how did you deal with them?

- NO
- The only problem that arose was an occasion when several students felt that the SAB representative was taking a one sided view of the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. We immediately opened up the issue to a discussion and once it was clarified it never re-occurred. So I felt it was handled extremely well.

6. Did you feel that there were enough briefing and evaluation sessions for your group in Ireland?

- Yes, the first morning, the opening session before going to the first school sessions really calmed our student's worries about facing the groups. It was the most important session.
- Yes there were, but maybe before or during Belfast there could have been a session if there had been more time.

Schools Across Borders

7. What is/are your general opinion/s of the Irish school groups?

- The children were extremely pleasant, polite and interested in meeting our students and in exchanging information on personal and conflict related issues.
- The overwhelming majority seemed to be genuinely interested in the Israeli delegation in spite of the fact that they did not have time to be adequately prepared. Meeting Irish students that had already been through the program and teachers who had, was especially worthwhile.

8. How did you find the format of working within small groups?

- As an observer, not a participant, I found it an excellent way to accomplish the goals quickly and personally (as opposed to a very large, impersonal group faced by a panel.
- I liked this format and found it effective. However, I might have varied it from time to time.

9. Did you feel that you were able to express your opinions in the group discussions?

- Not relevant for teachers.
- Not relevant for teachers.

10. Did you find any questions difficult to answer? *If Yes, please state which questions*

- Not relevant for teachers.
- The kids found army combat questions difficult to answer.

Schools Across Borders

11. Do you think your answers helped the Irish students to have a better understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

- Not relevant for teachers.
- Yes!

12. Which group discussions did you appreciate the most and why?

- Not relevant for teachers.
- I was most moved by the discussion in Colaiste Eoin. Perhaps because it was an open format, so I heard the entire discussion. I also appreciated the final feedback session at Marion College.

13. Do you think the reflections and feedback sections were useful and effective?

- Very effective. Reflections enabled all the groups to share what had been said with others and to help students to evaluate what was working and what needed to change or be added to future meetings.
- Most of the time, but there were one or two occasions when I felt it would have been better to just continue the discussion because time was so limited, especially in Belfast.

14. Do you have any other comments on the group discussions?

- No
- No

15. What were the benefits to you of the tour in Belfast?

- Belfast was amazing, the most important part of the whole trip. It holds the key, the model, the hope for us.

Schools Across Borders

- Absolutely amazing eye opener- has completely changed my conception of a peace process.

16. How did you find the group discussion with the Belfast students?

- They were extremely inspiring. Unfortunately they were much too short. I really believe that we need to be in Belfast longer. Perhaps stay with a host family there in order to be able to delve deeper into their situation, past and present.
- Too short. The most interesting discussion was with the teachers and in the teacher's room.

17. What was the highlight of the trip to Belfast?

- Seeing the wall and the murals. Although each mural in Belfast was a highlight.
- Seeing how the population have retained their stories, as seen through the murals and memorials. Yet peace has been achieved. Amazing!

18. Did you feel comfortable with your host family? *(Give your reasons)*

- Not relevant for teachers.
- Not relevant for teachers.

19. Did you feel comfortable with the Irish host student? *If Yes, why?*

- Not relevant for teachers.
- Not relevant for teachers.

Schools Across Borders

20. What other experiences did you enjoy during the visit?

- Visit to Howth
- Getting to know Darren was extremely rewarding. I also enjoyed contacts I had with Irish teachers. The visit to Howth and seeing the Irish landscape between Dublin and Belfast. Good spicy food and meeting up with an old friend.

21. What aspects of the visit did you find difficult?

(What aspects would you have changed to make the visit better for you?)

- The pressure to get from school to school. Get Darren a van please. I'm sure it is more economically feasible and will certainly take off the time and stress as well as the worry of teachers about collecting and returning their students from place to place.
- Three groups in one day, the repetition of the same format day after day, not enough time in Belfast.

22. What is your general feeling of the visit to Ireland?

- It was inspiring. I know that even though I've worked with the program for three years, I can return to my school with a better understanding and be much more prepared to involve more kids in the program.
- Absolutely amazing experience! I am thrilled that I had this opportunity.

23. What are the benefits to you personally?

- I've reached a much better understanding and openness. Especially thanks to Belfast. Much more hopeful that our young people will find the way to bring about peace.
- That is difficult to put into words. But I do feel that the visit has set me on a new journey - one in which I will be active in helping Israeli youth and myself, take a hard and honest look at what is happening beyond the wall.

Schools Across Borders

24. What do you think the group can do now as a follow-up action with the Palestinian students in the project?

- I hope they will be able to contact them via Facebook. Unfortunately the summer camp in Dublin and Belfast where the students actually meet, no longer exists. It is a great pity

Since it is the only place where we met face to face and I know how beneficial my students who attended it found it

- They can relate to them about their visit to Ireland, perhaps show real interest in the Palestinian lives. Hopefully they will also be curious to find out about the Palestinians visit to Ireland.

25. What can you do to report or present the visit to your school upon your return?

- We will present our experiences to classmates in presentations in front of the 11th and 12th grades, as well as adding to the SAB section of our website (which you can enter but it is written in Hebrew.)
- I will facilitate meetings between the Israeli delegation to Ireland and their classmates so that the rest of their grade will benefit from their experience.