

Debate

Should Ireland host the Olympics?

Background

This Example showcases a mainstream classroom with children in 5th and 6th classes. Recently the children have shown an interest in public speaking and debating. Recognising this, the teacher prepares a series of learning experiences based on the skills needed to participate in public speaking such as a debate. The experiences support children to develop their skills of listening, speaking, critical thinking and persuasion.

Learning Experience

Prior to this learning experience the class have viewed online speeches, video advertisements and public debates. The children have worked in groups to identify the skills used by speakers to effectively

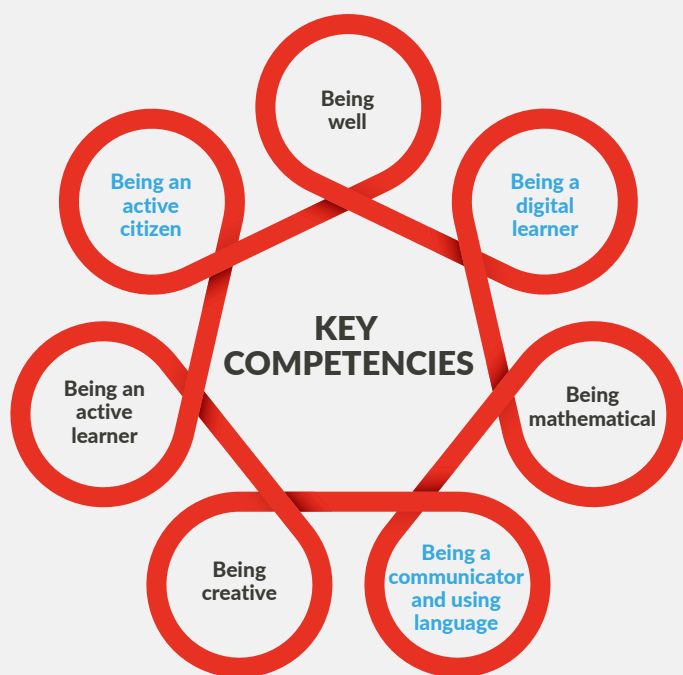
engage with their audience. They identify eye contact, hand gestures, body language, pause, appropriate language, voice and vocal variety.

In this learning experience the teacher begins by drawing on the children's prior knowledge of public speaking and skills of persuasion. This provides children with the opportunity to identify times when public speaking and persuasion is used in everyday life. Following this discussion the children begin developing the motion that *Ireland Should Host the Olympics*. Throughout this learning experience the children demonstrate their agency in making decisions about the arguments for and against Ireland hosting the Olympics. They also develop listening skills as they hear and respect the differing perspectives of others.

To get comfortable speaking, we must practise. A safe, supportive environment will help to reassure children in their role as speakers. Focus intentionally on creating a safe, supportive environment in which skills can be learned, practised and perfected.

Key competencies

This learning experience showcases children developing the following key competencies;



Being a communicator and using language

The children are developing the key competency of **being a communicator and using language** as they work in pairs to share their thoughts and interpretations of the information selected to support their view on Ireland hosting the Olympics. During the TV show *Spill the Beans* the audience members respectfully listen to the different perspectives presented and critically evaluate the information to shape their own opinion on the motion.



Being digital learners

The children are also **being digital learners** by interacting ethically, critically, and responsibly with digital devices to find facts, knowledge and statistics to support their views. The children use the digital device in a collaborative and critical way to source relevant information to enhance their argument on Ireland hosting the Olympics.

Being active citizens

The children are **being active citizens** as they experience learning through democratic practices. As audience members the children independently choose whether they are for or against the motion based on the information available to them. This is demonstrated as children share their views on the motion, with supporting evidence and also by engaging in the voting process to decide the winning side of the argument. The development of these key competencies is inextricably linked.

As children engage with **digital technology** they discuss the relevant information by **communicating** their thoughts, ideas and views with their peers. The children are developing **active citizenship** as they question, critique, and understand the motion building their capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in future discussions and debates on topics that are of interest to them.



Preparation for Learning and Teaching

The teacher's preparation is based on her knowledge of the children, knowledge of the curriculum and knowledge of pedagogy. Her **recorded preparation** is purposeful and practical. It includes clear links with the Learning Outcomes that are addressed through the learning experience (**knowledge of curriculum**).

Learning Outcome 1 - Engagement listening and attention	The children actively listen to the debate presented using the 'show me five technique'
Learning Outcome 3 - Social conventions and awareness of others	The children listen and speak with confidence and independence while working collaboratively with their peers to share feedback, ideas and decisions
Learning Outcome 11 - Information giving, explanation and justification	The children analyse and select information to communicate their ideas and opinions for the debate

Visible preparation is evident through the use of resources that support the children's learning. All children have access to a digital device to locate and select information to support their motion.

The way the learning environment is organised and the use of pair/group work supports children to learn collaboratively and communicate with their peers (**knowledge of pedagogy**).

The teacher's **invisible preparation** includes the decisions and considerations that inform the design and development of the learning experience. As the teacher prepares she carefully considers the needs, interests and abilities of all children in her class (**knowledge of children**). During the debate a classroom culture of mutual respect is fostered as children present differing opinions on Ireland hosting the Olympics.

Demonstration of learning

The teacher's assessment of children's learning is **ongoing and integral**. The teacher engages with the children as they work in pairs to find information to support their motion. She invites them to critically analyse why they are including specific information through questioning. *How will this support your viewpoint? Can you link the information to your stance on whether Ireland should host the Olympics? How would this information impact your audience?*

As the children take on the roles of presenters and audience members during the TV show *Spill the Beans* the teacher engages in **intuitive assessment**. She listens and observes how the children communicate, use and understand language. The teacher will consider this assessment information to identify appropriate next steps for the children's language learning.

Peer assessment is also used in this learning experience as the audience vote on whether Ireland should host the Olympics based on the arguments presented by the opposition and proposition. The audience votes are based on a certain criterion. They look for good speaking, good listening and knowledge of persuasion.

The children are given opportunities to engage in **self-assessment** and reflect on their learning by describing what they liked, didn't like, what they would do differently next time and how they might use these communication skills in future.

Reflective questions

1. The **children's reflections** provide insights on the kind of learning experiences they enjoy in the classroom. How could this information be used to support the teachers' future planning and preparation?
2. This learning experience supports the development of a number of **key competencies**. Can you identify opportunities to further develop these key competencies during language learning experiences??
3. The topic of Ireland hosting the Olympics appealed to the children's interests. What opportunities can you identify for **connecting and integrating** this learning experience with other curriculum areas?

For further information on supporting children to develop public speaking through a structured approach you can access this [support material](#).