



Spotlight on Schools

Lithuanian - Tackling Educational Disadvantage and Promoting Inclusion
through Celebration of Culture, Language and Heritage in our schools.



Teangacha
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Erasmus+ and eTwinning



The title of our project was Tackling Educational Disadvantage and Promoting Inclusion through Celebration of Culture, Language and Heritage in our Schools. Our school engaged and worked with a school in Lithuania through the Erasmus + Program.

What are the aims of the project?

1. To develop and improve cultural awareness and linguistic competence.
2. To develop and improve communication skills.
3. To identify the causes of educational disadvantage.
4. To build relationships between teachers, parents and students in both schools.
5. To foster a sense of belonging/inclusion in Lithuanian pupils in Beech Hill College, through extended use of the Lithuanian language in our school.
6. To show how a student's heritage language can support their learning.
7. To share language teaching methodologies and learning resources through the eTwinning platform and other mobility tools.

How did you plan for it? How did you organise it?

This project was designed to use Lithuanian and English as teaching languages and also as the languages of other non-curricular activities. Participants met weekly, either onsite in the school or virtually during Covid lockdowns. Through our engagement with our partner school, Vilnius Gabijos Gymnasium, both schools worked together on various initiatives including greeting cards exchange between students, school life video sharing and creating video presentations for each other. Students and teachers from Vilnius visited Monaghan to meet us in person. We also visited Vilnius and Trakai for a week in November 2021. Both groups of students really enjoyed these trips, as did the teachers.

We used teaching aids and mobility tools such as Mentimeter, Padlet, Kahoot, Zoom, Teams and eTwinning. These were invaluable for us all, especially during Covid restrictions when schools were closed.

A core focus of our project was the celebration of Lithuania's culture, language and heritage. For that, we used the eTwinning Platform and it was hugely helpful for us. It allowed our students and teachers to share ideas, experiences and practices of school life in Ireland and Lithuania. It also helped the students to improve their plurilingual competence in oral and written skills.

Using eTwinning as a teaching tool was a fantastic way for students to learn language skills and information about the culture of another country, without having to focus on standard curriculum requirements.

How was the project successful?

From the outset, it was our aim in both schools that learning Lithuanian and English would be an enjoyable experience, which would in turn create a positive learning environment. The project did not involve any State Examinations, which reduced pressure and stress on students and teachers in terms of usual curriculum requirements. It allowed teachers and students to explore new teaching methodologies and to experience alternative ways of learning, while discovering unique aspects of each country's respective culture and heritage. Student engagement appeared much stronger than in traditional language learning classes. Our school entered the European Language Label Award competition with this project. We were delighted to participate in the competition and completely overjoyed when we won! Below is a link to a short video about our project submission to ELL.

<https://youtu.be/kYwGpOpm7fA>

Would you recommend it to other schools? Why?

I would highly recommend all schools to take part in these types of programs. There is huge support available from groups such as Léargas and it provides an opportunity for students and teachers to explore other learning techniques. This project offered a great way for students to improve their language skills, both written and verbal. By the end of the school year, increased confidence with the use of another language in school was noticeable in students. It provided an opportunity for them to explore the culture and heritage of another country. In our school this project really helped students with a Lithuanian background to feel much more connected in the school environment. This in turn allows them to achieve their full potential with greater ease. I would definitely recommend using the eTwinning platform. As a teacher, I found it to be an excellent way to share ideas and collaborate with other schools, teachers and students.



Additional Information

I want to express a huge thanks to the students, Principal Patrick McArdle, Deputy Principal Siobhán Sheerin and Assistant Principal Tony McHugh of Beech Hill College. I would also like to extend a sincere thank you to our partners "Vilniaus Gabijos Gimnazija" in Lithuania for working on this project with us. As the school's logo says, Be The Best You Can Be. This project certainly afforded all involved the opportunity to do just that.

Kristina Jankaitiene is a Lithuanian teacher in Beech Hill College, Monaghan, Ireland.





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