

Global Citizenship Education (GCE) - Ireland

The beginnings

in 2015, the Des Places Educational Association, now known as the Spiritan Education Trust [SET]



engaged with the Spiritan schools in Ireland to develop a programme which linked Global Citizenship and Education. This programme was and still is a **student-led** programme. This core strategic educational direction ensures the voices of young people are central to this programme. It is interesting to note that a similar commitment is undertaken by Pope Francis' recent publication: *Catholic Compact on Education*.

Integral to every student-led programme, are teachers and school principals. It is their leadership that creates a culture and environment where student voices are nurtured. Through this nurturing process, students developed their understanding of citizenship in our world today. This essential aspect of a contemporary pedagogy is crucial if the voices of young people are to be heard in today's overcrowded world of communication and of particular importance is the opportunity for students from different schools to mix and work together.

Each school in the Spiritan network had a champion teacher and these champion teachers came together to support each other and their students in the development of this new initiative.

Due to the commitment and work of teachers and students alike, April 2015 seen the first Global Citizenship Showcase meeting of the Spiritan schools in Ireland. It was held on the Kimmage campus in Dublin.



An international GCE programme



Since that day in April 2015, the global citizenship work in our schools have become an integral part of the culture of Spiritan Education. The programme developed and continued to grow in its style and substance. A highlight of this student-led initiative was the student presentation at the Duquesne Integrity of Creation conference in 2019 - <https://bit.ly/3EBYyxN>.

In March 2020, the restrictions of COVID were put in place two weeks before the 2020 GCE annual showcase. This was a great disappointment for everybody involved as the showcase was cancelled for that year.

When the schools reopened in September 2020 a new energy was injected into the GCE network. It was decided at the planning meeting that the GCSE showcase would include international schools from the Spiritan network. Central to this initiative was the development of online platforms that allowed for accessible real time communication. In April 2021, we were delighted to welcome schools from Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, as well as a community project from Brazil. This



unique contribution from these Spiritan international schools allowed for the GCE showcase to be truly an international global citizenship event that reflected the Spiritan invitation to be *cor unum et anima una* (one heart, one soul).



Work and planning is well underway for this year's gathering which will be hosted in St Mary's college in Dublin on the 19th April – The focus this year is on "Sustainability and Energy" and the schools are collaborating feverishly both at Junior, senior level and international level. There has been a shift this year away from the 'Showcase' idea as this could make the focus purely on hosting an event. The real value has been felt in the journey, process, the relationships and connections made, the collaborative approach experienced and celebrated, the gathering, its impact and the learning gained afterwards.

This year will see a more *Global café style* gathering with involvement and inputs from local and international sustainability champions and businesses guiding workshops. There are spaces for



creative expression and discussions tailored for both Junior and senior levels with a focus on how we carry this on and support this afterwards. We have even partnered with a local 'Men's Shed group' to make the awards from recycled and upcycled materials - <https://fb.watch/iZKp78UtjE/> . Exciting times!!

collaboration, with a focus on not 'what we do', but 'how and why we do it'.

For all involved this is valued as a great, practical example of shared values, collective work and international



Today, we remain faithful to continue to develop the Spiritan educational mission that is linked to Global citizenship.