

Getting started: Checklist

Here is a checklist to help you in your initial planning and to clearly identify and manage both your and your partner school's expectations of your partner school friendship:

- Is the partnership and the activities you are planning based on strong links to your curriculum?**

- Have you agreed on a defined purpose, process of communication and structure?**
 - How often do you think you will be able to communicate with your partner school (weekly, fortnightly, monthly)?
 - What are your expectations in terms of turnaround time? Do you want your class to be able to respond to your partner school within 24 hours or a week (and visa versa)?
 - Can you readily integrate your involvement into your teaching program or after hours/club program and easily make class time for BRIDGE-related activities?

- Do both you and your partner school colleague have a clear understanding of the requirements and commitment levels stated and are happy to meet them?**

The relationship you establish needs to be founded on engaging educational activities, relationship-building and sharing.

The focus of your relationship is to:

- build familiarity with each other's cultures
- increase ICT confidence, competence and access for teachers and
- undertake shared collaborative projects that include contribution to a project product

- Have you decided on the types of collaborative activities you want to undertake, with clear and agreed outcomes, actions or products for the project?**

As you know, the first step is to undertake the *Getting Started* project.

After that, what's next? Have you reviewed the range of online collaborative activity ideas available on the BRIDGE website and shared what interests you with each other?

Now is time to make some important decisions about how you will manage your developing partner school relationship:

Will your relationship be ad hoc and reactive or themed, or a combination of both?

An ad hoc/reactive approach may see you initiating contact by sending a batch of introductory letters and then waiting for responses, replying to these responses as they come and so on.

A themed approach may involve you working closely with your partner colleague and planning either a project or weekly or monthly themes using the collaboration ideas on the BRIDGE website and customising them to your own school contexts.

Have you agreed upon a timeline for the different collaboration activities, which can then be reviewed and extended?

Have you worked out your classroom management approach to best facilitate this involvement?

How are you going to manage the workload?

Have you thought of establishing a class Student Management Team (SMT) which will be able to assume various responsibilities within the project such as planning, troubleshooting technical problems (e.g. email issues), reviewing emails/letters before they are sent, printing out documents, training other students, helping to plan themes for correspondence and facilitate activities?

On what basis do you want the friendship to be formed?

Will it be a whole class to whole class set of communication and collaborative activities or student 'partner' to student 'partner' or a combination of both?

Have you agreed on the technology requirements for the relationship and can both your schools meet them?

If you are using ICT, establish what sort of connection your partner colleague has at their school or in their classroom.

If access is difficult or only by a telephone line, consider sending text-only emails and burn all your digital images and presentations onto a CD/DVD or print them out in a booklet and send them via post.

Can both schools (teachers, students) be flexible and responsive throughout the project relationship so that the project can change direction as new opportunities and ideas arise?