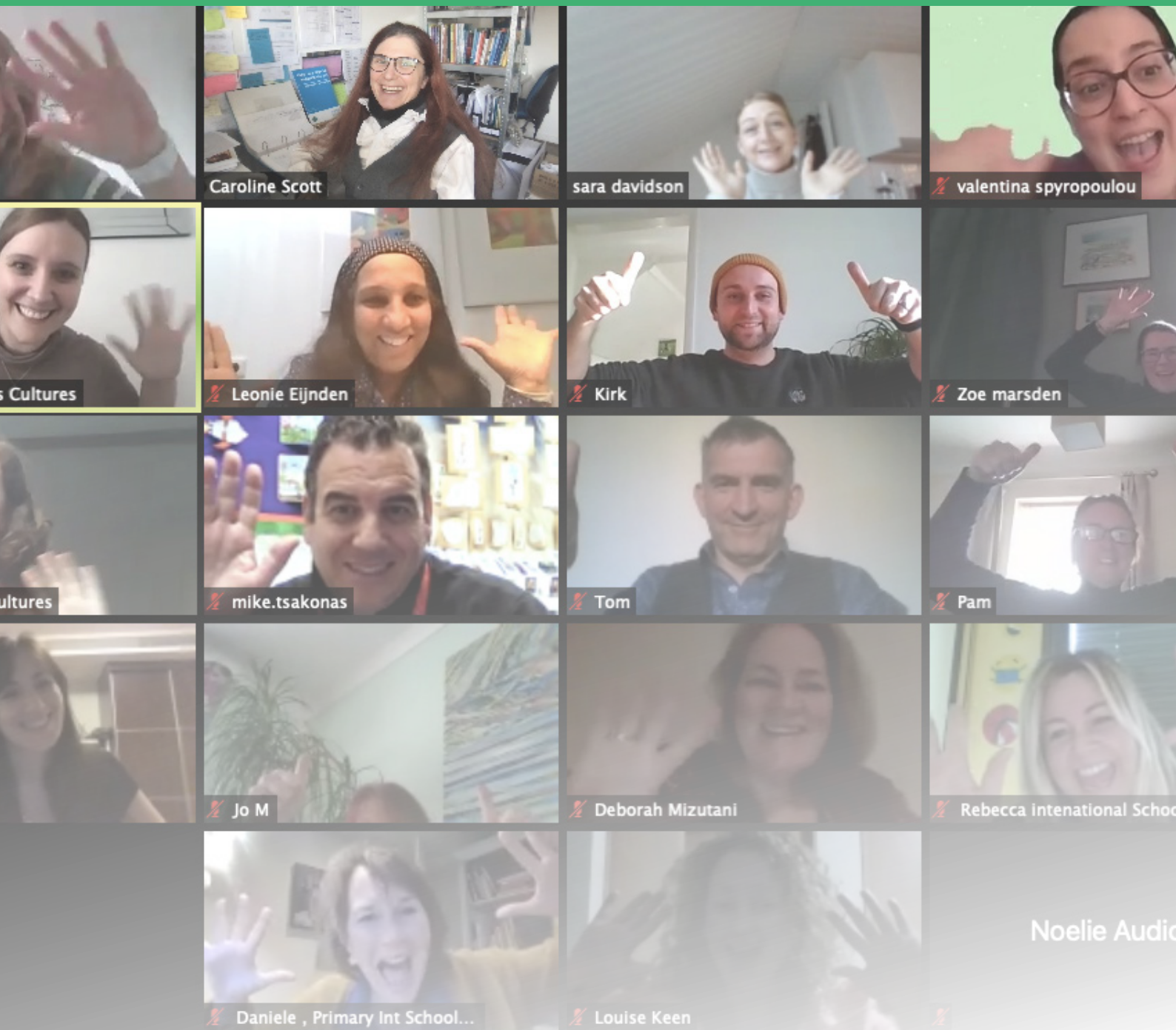


Participants' experiences of virtual learning with Across Cultures & Learning Village





Introduction

This document considers the training sessions provided to teachers, teaching assistants and school leaders by Across Cultures in early 2021. Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, our training courses in the UK were provided virtually in 2020 and early 2021. We gathered data and comments from participants on the courses to assess the success of this new way of delivering training.

Across Cultures ran three training courses in early 2021. The first, on February 5th, called the 'EAL Teaching Resource Implementation Course', was for schools who were new to the Learning Village programme. This 'beginners' programme provided a full introduction to teaching through the programme and showcased the relevant tools and resources.

On February 12th we ran our 'experienced users' course, called 'Start with the end in mind'. This took a more in-depth look at the features of the Learning Village, considering the flow of learning on the programme and explored the tools and resources more fully.

At the end of February and into March, we ran our 3-day EAL Framework course. This course, which also covers the use of the Learning Village programme, is designed to provide a teacher or school leader with the means and resources to develop and steer EAL provision across a whole school or group of schools.

Up to 2020, these courses were provided in person. Following the lockdowns in the UK,

they have been held remotely. In some parts of the world, such as New Zealand, we have held courses with participants both in person and online.

Our virtual training courses have been held over Zoom, with a great deal of thought given to the best way of replicating the usual highly interactive nature of our in-person courses. Aware that some participants can find online training difficult to engage with, we ensured a mix of 'learning' and 'do-ing' activities, with online breaks for informal discussion and networking, and offline opportunities for rest and refreshment.



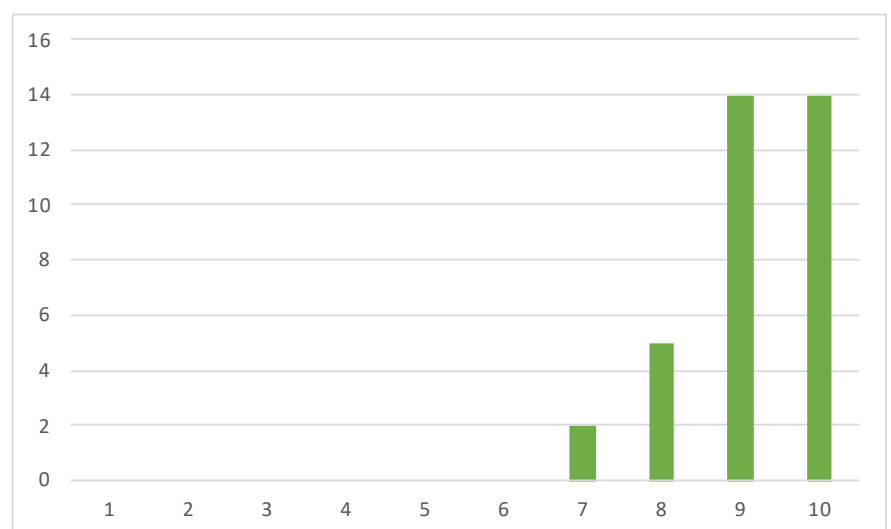
Those less familiar with the technology had access to a virtual IT help room both before the training began and during it, and we ensured that all participants checked and tested their technology with us in introductory sessions. The facilitators - all EAL experts - arranged the course so that it included a mix of activities, including opportunities to share best practice, ask questions and work together, as a team or in small breakout rooms.

Presenting and engaging in online training has been a steep learning curve for all involved over the last year. For us, it has delivered some significant advantages. Most importantly, teachers who had previously been prevented from attending for reasons of distance, cost or time, were able to take part remotely. Indeed, there was such a positive response to the training sessions advertised that we increased the number of places on the courses and ran additional sessions. In addition, the remote operation of training courses enabled us to reduce our environmental footprint. Participants attended our three early-2021 courses from 13 countries, including Japan, Sweden and Brunei - without the need for any international travel at all. This mix of countries also gave participants valuable opportunities to discuss EAL teaching with colleagues working in different regions of the world and in different educational systems - bringing refreshing new insights to all.

Out of 10 (10 being the highest), how did you rate your virtual training?

Across all three courses held in February and March 2021, there was 100% agreement among participants that the course met their expectations.

Asked to rate their overall learning experiences on the courses out of 10, 95% of participants gave a score of 8, 9 or 10 (10 being the highest, 1 the lowest).





Course comments and testimonials

Course content

"It is invaluable to see things through different perspectives. The whole course is the most thorough and up-to-date EAL course I have ever attended. You covered every single aspect of EAL with a perspective that also supports whole-school literacy."

Valentina Spyropoulou, Optimist International School, Netherlands.

"Great training. Love the extensive range of activities and extra resources available to learners and teachers, and how adaptable it is to different levels."

Olga Hopper, Ranelagh Primary School, UK.

"Really useful to try the tools with a specific learning objective or text in mind."

Angie Bridgewater, Cauldwell Primary School, UK.

"An essential and fundamental course for schools and teachers who work with EAL children."

Alba Rosas, Harrow Haikou International School, China.

"Great takeaways."

Thomas Finlayson, International School of Geneva, Switzerland.

"Fabulous course. Amazing resources. I found it really helpful to see how we can use the children's home language to support the development of their second language. I also liked all the practical strategies that I can take straight back to school."

Maisie Brown, St Joseph's and St Gregory's Primary School, UK.

"The three days are packed with loads of information."

Maki Nishihara, Doshisha International School Kyoto, Japan.

"A huge amount of useful information and strategies to take forward."

Catherine Brennan, Better Bilingual, UK.

"This 3-day whole-school approach focuses on what our multilingual learners need. It empowers schools to consider the journey of each EAL student, from new to English to exiting the EAL programme. The course materials are clear and user friendly."

Daniele Sinniger, IPS Hilversum, Netherlands.

Online delivery

We were delighted to see real enthusiasm for our method of delivery.

"Really well organised for online delivery in this time. Thank you!"

Maisie Brown, St Joseph's and St Gregory's Primary School, UK.

"Great walkthrough of all activities. Caroline was really enthusiastic."

Thomas Goss, St Thomas CPS, UK.

"Fantastic facilitators!"

Sara Davidson, International School of Almhult, Sweden.

"Caroline and her competent team shared their extensive knowledge with us and are truly inspirational. Thank you!"

Daniele Sinniger, IPS Hilversum.

The breakout rooms were a particular success:

"Great use of break out rooms and productive discussion."

Sarah Court, Powys Local Authority, UK.

"Fantastic to have the breakout rooms to chat in smaller groups and to have new things modelled."

Aisling Gammon, St John Rigby Primary School, UK.

"I really appreciated the fact that the secondary teachers were put together in a group for some activities to have focused discussions."

Maki Nishihara, Doshisha International School Kyoto, Japan.

The chance to work with other participants was rated highly by many:

"It was really helpful to have the group chats and work together through the activities."

Naomi Rowlands, Dylan Thomas Comprehensive, UK.

"Lovely to be in breakout rooms and chat to EAL colleagues. I love teaching EAL, but it can be isolating as there isn't anyone in the school to share with."

Lenka Bayman, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, UK.



The more practical, hands-on activities were also a success:

“Opportunities to play and test different application[s].”

Shaheen Hussain, Central Park Primary School, UK.

“Great explanations and examples, as well as [the] practical side.”

Dorota Raeside, Bedford Academy, UK.

“Really gained knowledge with the use of different functions today - had time to experiment, build skills and practise.”

Sarah Court, Powys Local Authority, UK.

Looking ahead

How will the course affect the participants’ teaching in the future?

“It’s given me lots of ideas on how I can help teachers think about how they can use tools to improve English.”

Deborah Revolorio, International Schools Partnership.

“It’s given me lots of ideas on how I can help teachers to differentiate tasks for children with EAL.”

Olga Hopper, Ranelagh Primary School, UK.

“Outstanding course. The amount of ideas and resources I have to take back to develop in my school is amazing! A whole-school approach to a new way of looking at EAL is under way and in development, thanks to this course.”

Kirk Shuttleworth, Rounds Green Primary School, UK.

“[I] started with no real knowledge. Now [I] have a lot, and questions/lines of research and action to follow.”

Jill Burrige, Firs Farm Primary, UK.