

Papal Cross Award Project St Louis CS Kiltimagh 2016

Members: Catherina Cunnane, John Devaney, Michelle Flanagan, James Grady, David Irving, Ciara Kilkenny, Chloe McGuire & Ruairí Weiner

We decided to conduct a group project, with the help of our chaplain Trish O'Brien, where we would carry out different "Pay It Forward" events on Le Chéile Day. Unfortunately due to state examinations (Irish orals and music practicals) we were unable to do so on Friday the 15th of April alongside numerous other schools. Undeterred, we held our own Le Chéile Day on the following Friday, the 22nd of April.

We began planning weeks in advance, meeting at lunchtimes in the school's religion classroom. The first meeting took place on the 7th of April, where we shared ideas of various things we could do. Some ideas were unanimously accepted, while some others fell flat (like the idea of hiring an ice cream van – not exactly feasible). Eventually, we settled on the ideas at least, the actual groundwork was still to come.

Our plan was as follows:

- We would let everyone know it was Le Chéile week through posters (done by Ruairí, Chloe and Michelle) around the school, intercom announcements and one particularly inspired idea (Ciara's) where Transition Year students lay on the gym floor and made the letters "Le Chéile", of which a photo was taken and posted on the school's social media accounts (twitter, facebook, the school's own website).
- Posters would be put up around the school which you could pull compliment slips off to give to people throughout the day (these were designed by Michelle and Ruairí).
- One student would give a reading over the intercom in the morning, something memorable to honour Le Chéile day. After a few suggestions we settled on Max Ehrmann's "Desiderata", which Michelle would read, followed by Ms O'Brien telling everyone about Le Chéile day.
- Ciara and Catherina would go around to the First Year students at first class and give them all good deed slips to be carried out over the course of the day.
- At breaktime our school Trad group (which includes John) would play some live music in the circulation area for everyone to enjoy.
- All of us would give lollipops to random students at break and lunchtimes with Le Chéile stickers on them.
- Myself and Chloe would pick up-to-date, good feeling, upbeat songs that we would play over the intercom during the lunch break. We prepared a playlist of about ten songs.
- James would finish off the day with a reading over the intercom at last class.

All of this involved a lot of preparations. We met again on the 13th of April at lunch to divide out the work and make it fair, adding in a few more ideas (and vetoing a few others) as we went. The school chaplaincy team were also present for this meeting, and we got their opinions & feedback on our plans for the day.

At our final meeting on the 19th of April we finalised our plans. Everyone knew what their role was in the day's "Pay It Forward" events. We bought the lollipops and placed the Le Chéile stickers on them, made a playlist of the songs we had chosen to be played at lunchtime, printed off the readings for Michelle and James and had everything prepared on the morning.

On the 22nd of April all our work paid off. There was an atmosphere around the school that was different from the usual day-to-day vibe, it was more relaxed and fun. It was clearly noticed throughout the school community, as we received very positive feedback from teachers and students, some even asking if we could do these things on a regular basis.

Overall I found it a very enjoyable and rewarding experience, and the overwhelming positivity we saw as a result of our work made the effort all the more worthwhile.

David Irving