

TELLING OUR STORY

OUTCOME REPORT FROM

A portal at Wellington College



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01 Introduction

When designing this project, we asked: How can virtual environments build spaces for education promoting intercultural experiences that develop global competencies in students?

We wanted to bring a project that would inspire students to see themselves as a part of a larger world, understand the cultures and communities worldwide, engage with those communities and people with empathy, develop a feeling of collaboration across differences and self-reflect-through independence.

This project was developed to be a bridge-building device between students and young people from different countries and cultures. It was planned to help students and educators to break down the barriers that exist between people who see themselves as unlike or different. This project aimed to promote conversations to construct understanding between different cultures between young people who live in various parts of the world.

02 Executive Summary

Wellington College leads the way in many areas, one of the latest ways being a visit from the Shared_Studios Portal or "The Big Gold Box". Wellington College is the first UK school to bring the Shared Studios experience to pupils, a collaboration across three College areas, Global Education, Chaplaincy and Global Citizenship. In times when it has not been possible for pupils to have the direct experience of meeting other communities and cultures through travel programmes, this project provided the opportunity for learning, connection and understanding in a novel way.

Ana Romero, Head of Sustainability and Global Education Co-ordinator, explains how the project came about "I came across Shared Studios at a Conference and immediately saw the benefit it could bring to our pupils, allowing intercultural understanding and experiential learning through an immersive experience. By connecting with other communities and organisations across the world, pupils had the chance to really explore global issues and universal themes. The portal provides an experience as if the person you are talking to is in the same room, making it much more effective than other remote ways of connecting."

In February 2022, the "Big Gold Box" arrived at Wellington College with the aim of building core student competencies and creating lasting connections between Wellington College and communities across the globe through transformative conversations and challenging assumptions.

Each of the five days of the project was given a specific theme and linked with a different community. Day One was focussed on Global Education, linking with Kabakoo Academies, Bamako, Mali, recognized by the African Union, the UNESCO and the World Economic Forum as a significant innovator in global education and a top school of the future. Wellington pupils learnt more about cultural differences in learning and learning styles, being very surprised by the lack of a set timetable at the Kabakoo Academy.

Cara (L6th W) linked with students from "We are not numbers" in Gaza City, Palestine, a group that presents human stories behind the numbers in the news. "I didn't know much about Palestine before I entered the portal, and so I was interested in getting involved and hearing real-life stories and experiences. I was amazed at the strength of the human spirit in the face of such oppression and how they have to fight for everything, all due to the place someone is born in. The experience has really helped me start to rethink what I want to pursue as a future career; I am passionate about helping others."

Tuesday was devoted to Climate Activism, linking to The Green Protector in Kigali, Rwanda. Discussions often focussed on the approach to Climate Activism in the differing hemispheres and how impacts can change the approaches on each location, but with the common link of the need for everyone to act. This fostered an urgency to the collaboration between the global north and south to solve the climate crisis.

Hakan (Year 9, L) connected with footballers from the Naki-Football Academy, based in one of the largest refugee settlements in the world (Nakivale, Uganda). "I wasn't expecting much; then I met these wonderful people. I learnt that when you have more challenges to reach your goals, it gives you more determination to do it. I think I should try to be like them. I was surprised by their incredible mindset as I don't think people in the UK would cope well with their resources – geography is luck. It inspired me."

The "Big Gold Box" project took place during Empathy Week and is instrumental in exploring this key competency in a very direct way. "I am really pleased that we have had this project taking place during Empathy Week as I think it really did give pupils the ability to develop an understanding of people in other communities through the medium of conversation, highlighting both the differences but more importantly, the similarities we all share", noted Rebecca Park, Head of Global Citizenship and CAS Co-ordinator.

The final day saw a celebration of global culture with exchanges of music, dance and performance, helping pupils to understand how these practices inform the culture and their significance to each place. Pupils were able to share and connect with communities in Iraq, Uganda, Mali, Mexico and Rwanda.

Adrian Stark-Ordish commented, "As College Chaplain, I'm really interested in helping people explore their humanity and building bridges across difference. Connecting with other people on a deep level allows us to develop our humanity and understanding. I think this project has been really successful in delivering this aim".

03 Message from Project Leaders



Rebecca Park

Head of Global Citizenship, Wellington College

I am really pleased to have been able to work on this exciting project, not only as the first UK school to lead the way in this area, but also as a joint collaboration with Global Education and the Chaplaincy, exploring ways of offering pupils an interactive experience of connecting with other communities. Pupils appeared to be genuinely curious to know more about the people and organisations they met with, and I hope that this is the start of partnerships that allow collaboration and further learning for all involved. It was ideal to have this project running alongside "Empathy Week", allowing pupils to learn, connect and understand other communities in such a direct way. When talking to pupils after they had visited the "Big Gold Box" it was encouraging to hear their thoughts not only about differences with communities they talked to but also recognising the similarities between us all, whichever community they linked with, always making a connection.



Adrian Stark-Ordish

Chaplin, Wellington College

It's been really exciting to be involved in the big gold box project. As College Chaplain, I'm really interested in helping people explore their humanity and building bridges across differences. Connecting with other people on a deep level allows us to develop our humanity and understanding. It has been fantastic to work in partnership with other teams at College, and I think the project has been a great success. I found it powerful to meet with people in places like Gaza City, Kigali in Rwanda and Nakivale refugee settlement, and seeing our students come alive during those conversations and come out of the big gold box fired up by their experience was totally brilliant. I am really looking forward to the next stage of the project.

**Ana Romero**

Global Education Coordinator, Wellington College

When we first thought about bringing the "Gold Box" to Wellington, we never thought that we would be the first school in the UK to give pupils the unique experience of meeting communities and learning about their cultures virtually. The impossibility to offer our pupils our usual international programmes during the Covid19 pandemic, the significance of bringing this project to them gained even more relevance to continue promoting intercultural interactions through global competencies that prepare pupils for an inclusive and sustainable world. The collaboration we have established between different areas of the College has enriched the experience of the whole project massively, and we look forward to continuing this project for the following years.

04 Background

During the 2019 international conference of the Global Education Benchmark Group (GEBG), a portal from Shared Studios was on display. Educators attending the conference had the opportunity to experience first-hand the meaning of transformative conversations facilitated by curators in other portals located around the world. The concept was exciting but living the experience of spending time with the Afghanistan Students from The Afghan National Institute of Music performing was brilliant.

The idea of having immerse technology in a gold shipping container to create uniquely engaging experiences through curators that closely interact with their communities — from refugee camps to tech hubs — to bring a diverse range of participants and perspectives into Portal conversations where they identify participants, organise events, facilitate dialogues, and provide live language interpretation, seemed like an inspiring project to bring to Wellington College.

In 2022 under the framework of "Empathy" week, which took place from 21st -25th February, the areas of Chaplaincy, Global Citizenship and Global Education worked collaboratively to bring to Wellington College a "Big Gold Box". "Empathy" week was decided to be an ideal time for this project to take place as we liked the concept of its definition "the skill to understand another and the ability to create space for someone to reveal their authentic self, whilst reserving judgment".

Over the course of five days, pupils explored the key competencies of empathy, intercultural understanding and respectful relationships through interactive sessions with communities around the globe. They explored critical global issues and universal themes, including human and social rights, the climate crisis, beliefs and belonging, art and cultural expression, and global education. The project's main goal was to build core student competencies and create lasting connections between Wellington and communities across the globe.

05 Global Competence

The methodology used to assess pupils' global competence acknowledges that: Global Competence is the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others, to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development (PISA, 2018).

The Asia Society acknowledges that global competence articulates the knowledge and skills students need in the 21st century to structure this concept further.

GLOBALLY COMPETENT STUDENTS HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO:

Investigate the World

Globally competent students are aware, curious, and interested in learning about the world and how it works.

Recognise Perspectives

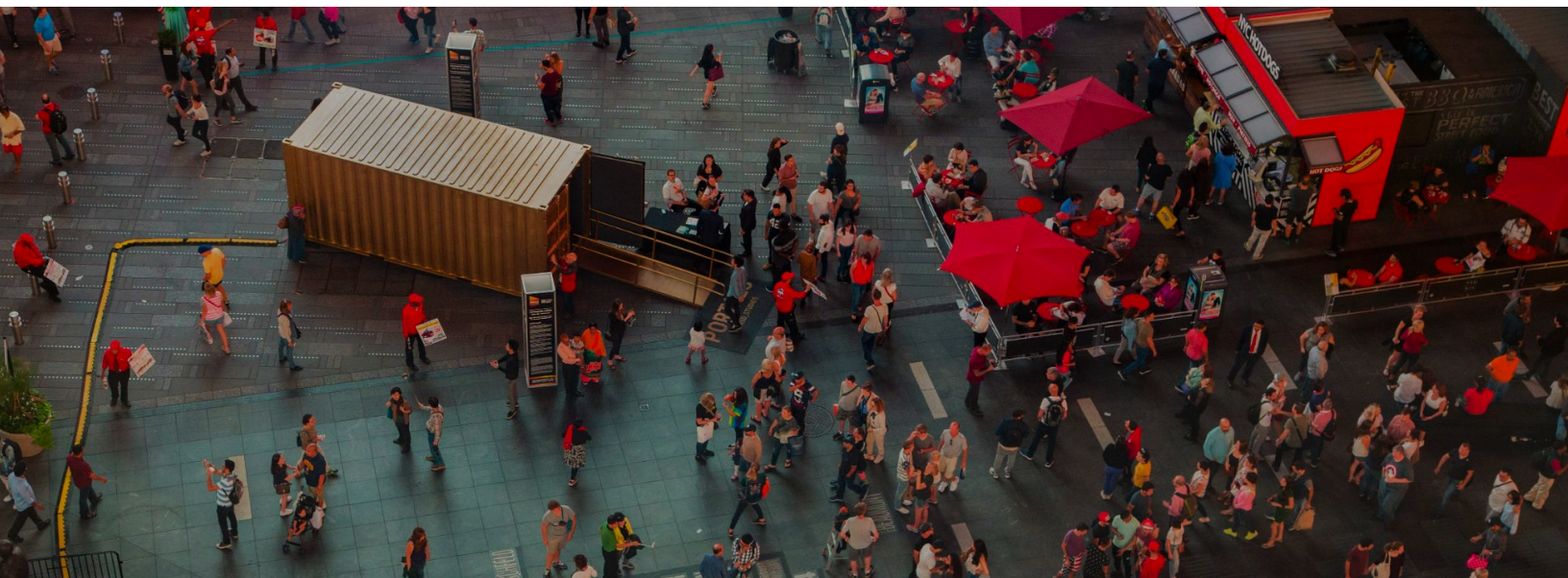
Globally competent students recognize that they have a particular perspective and that others may or may not share it.

Communicate Ideas

Globally competent students can effectively communicate, verbally and non-verbally, with diverse audiences.

Take Action

Globally competent students have the skills and knowledge to not just learn about the world but also to make a difference in the world.



The Four Domains of Global Competence



Mansilla and Jackson (2012) define global competence as "the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance" (p. xiii). In understanding global competence, it is helpful to consider the qualities of a globally competent person. The authors write that globally competent individuals: Are aware, curious, and interested in learning about the world and how it works. They can use the big ideas, tools, methods, and languages that are central to any discipline (mathematics, literature, history, science, and the arts) to engage the pressing issues of our time. They deploy and develop this expertise as they investigate such issues, recognising multiple perspectives, communicating their views effectively, and taking action to improve conditions. (p. xiii) In other words globally competent individuals are both knowledgeable about the world and they are effective in engaging with the world. They are also able to understand various points of view, communicate effectively, and are dedicated to creating a better world.

We have followed the GEBG (Global Education Benchmark Group) competency-based rubric to identify and measure the global competencies immersed in this project. The GEBG competency-based rubric helped us define intercultural communication and perspective-taking as the main competencies promoted with this project. As a transformative intercultural experience, this project was expected to encourage a great intercultural dialogue and engagement in the skills of these global competencies having a transformative impact on pupils attending the sessions. These competencies were also measured to build lasting connections between Wellington and the communities we met through the Big Gold Box.

The principal skills within these two main competencies to be achieved are:

- Understanding the world
- Engage with Empathy
- Collaboration across difference
- Self-reflect through independence

Goal – Competency-Based Rubric

Wellington College Goal	Competency (intercultural communication and perspective taking) Statement	Student Knowledge Outcome/s	Student Skill Outcome/s	Student Attitude/Disposition Outcome/s
Understanding the world (Citizenship, Justice, rights, SDGs)	Students can recognize and articulate their own and others' perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully in a way that demonstrates cultural, religious, and global literacy with curiosity and a transdisciplinary understanding of global issues.	Students will know...	Students will be able to ...	Students will (begin to) regularly/habitually...
Engage with Empathy (What does it look like, practice, build, after community experience). <i>Empathy Week definition of empathy: the skill to understand another and the ability to create space for someone to reveal their authentic self, whilst reserving judgement.</i>	Students can actively listen with empathy in the world beyond their immediate environment in order to act with compassion, in partnership with others, to improve conditions.	Students will know...	Students will be able to ...	Students will (begin to) regularly/habitually...

Collaboration Across Difference	Students can think flexibly in a dynamic world, communicate with diverse audiences, and collaborate effectively across differences through building positive relationships that honour the identities of others.	Students will know...	Students will be able to ...	Students will (begin to) regularly/habitually...
Self-Reflect through Independence	Students can use self-awareness to demonstrate self-management and responsible decision-making by acting with independence and self-confidence in new environments.	Students will know...	Students will be able to ...	Students will (begin to) regularly/habitually...

06 Assessing Student Global Competence

For the purpose of this project, we define intercultural communication and perspective-taking as follows:

- Intercultural communication is the ability to communicate with people from different cultures (Mitchell & Benson, 2018).
- Perspective-taking is the ability to understand how a situation appears to another person and how that person reacts cognitively and emotionally to the situation (Gehlbach, 2004).

To assess the project's main goal to build core student competencies with the "Big Gold Box" project, we adopted the concept developed by Dr Darla Deardorff, Affiliated Faculty at Duke University that considers Inter- and Intrapersonal skills.

According to Dr Deardorff, it is essential to consider human aspects in pupils beyond knowledge assessments and look into interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. For this project, we created a reflective survey with five questions aimed to assess real-world skills and attitudes presented in the Goal- Competency Rubric previously explained. The results shown below are a complete picture of students' intercultural development.

In total, 96 pupils attended one of the sessions offered during the five days the "Gold Box" was in Wellington. Students were asked to complete the reflective survey immediately after the session finished. The following questions and statements were asked:

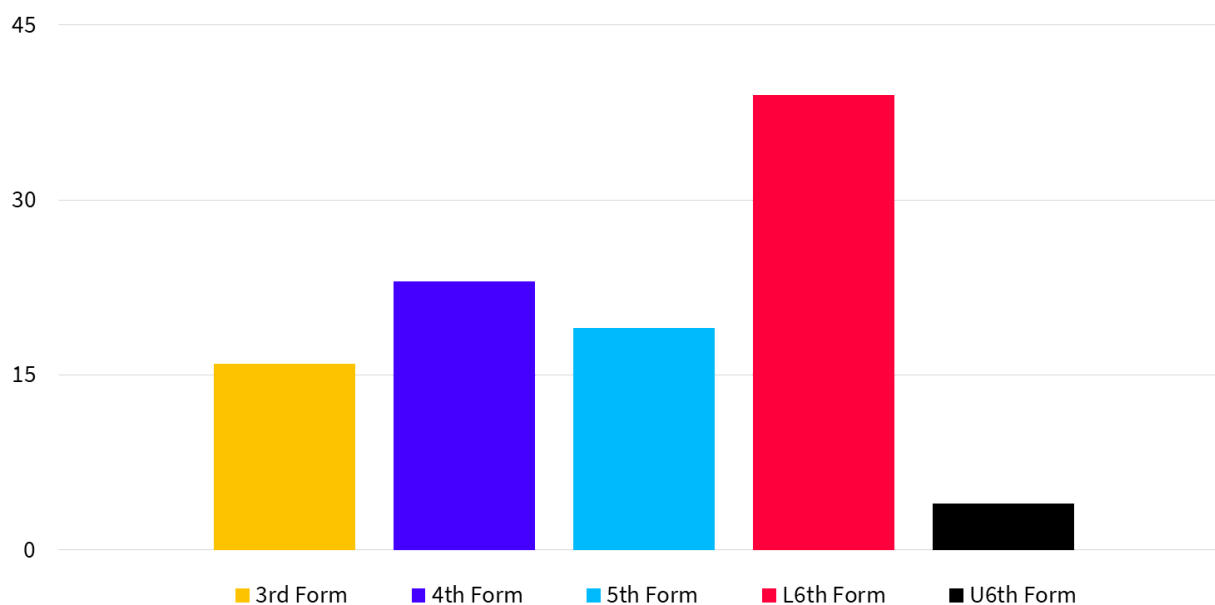
1. Year group
2. Boarding house
3. I learned something new today about people different than myself
4. My assumptions about people different from myself have changed.
5. My perspective on the connection theme has changed.
6. The conversation changed my perspective on global culture.
7. I was able to comfortably share my own views with others.
8. I feel a greater sense of connection to those different than myself.

RESULTS

Year Group

The Gold Box was an open experience for all the year groups in Wellington. The graphic below shows that the year group that attended the most sessions were in L6th Form (37 pupils), followed by 4thForm with (22 pupils).

1. My Year Group



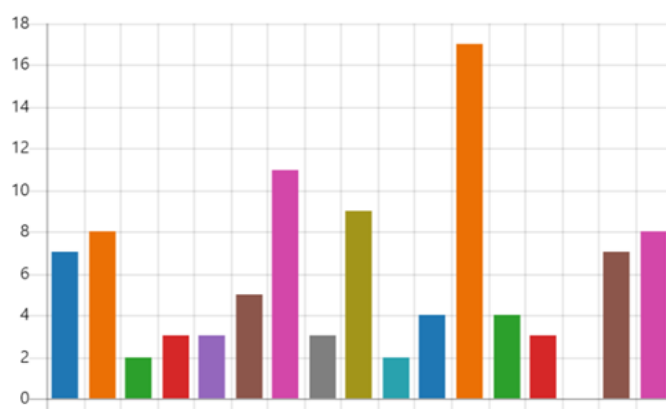
Boarding Houses

The below graph related to the boarding house that participated the most shows that the Orange participated the most with 17 pupils, followed by the Hardinge with 11 pupils. Students from the Stanley didn't participate in the experience.

2. My Boarding House

[More Details](#)

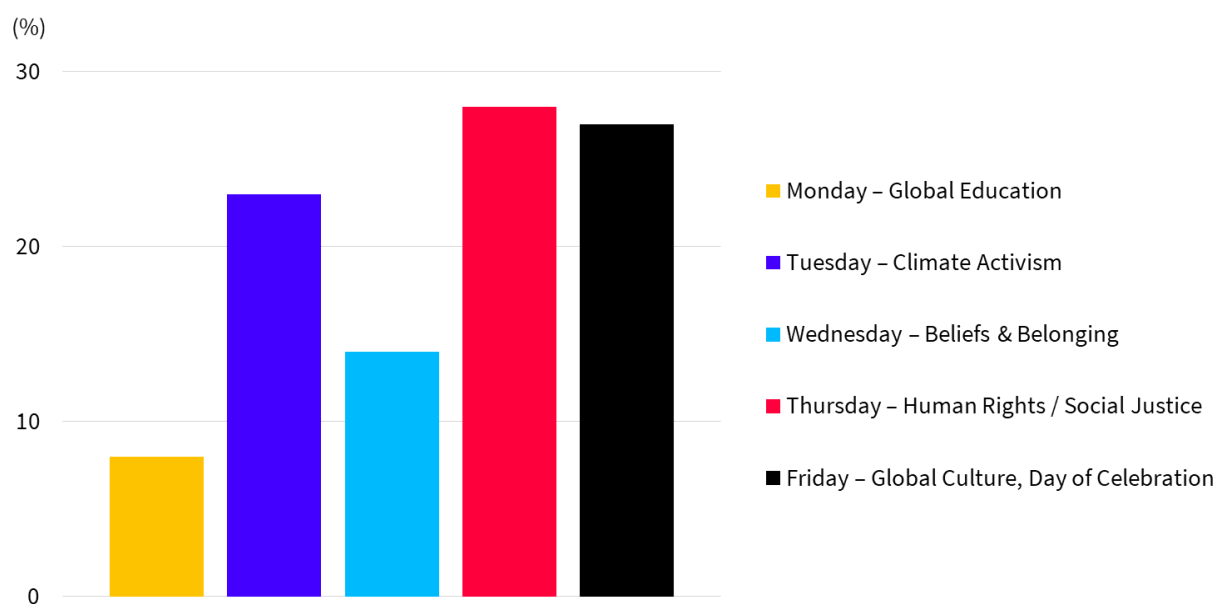
Anglesey	7
Apsley	8
Benson	2
Beresford	3
Blucher	3
Combermere	5
Hardinge	11
Hill	3
Hopetoun	9
Lynedoch	2
Murray	4
Orange	17
Picton	4
Raglan	3
Stanley	0
Talbot	7
Wellesley	8



Themes of the week

The graphic below shows which sessions were the most attended during the week that the Gold Box was in Wellington College. The day that attracted the most pupils was Thursday with the theme of Human Rights and Social Justice with the Portal in Nakivale, Uganda. The Nakivale Portal is situated near the centre of the Nakivale Refugee Camp, which is home to 230,000+ people from twelve countries across the African Continent. This refugee camp is one of the oldest and largest refugee settlements globally, where groups of different nationalities interact. Each of these groups enters the settlement with their own beliefs, practices, customs and ways of life and often remain segregated despite their proximity in the settlement to other cultural groups. While the differences between these groups seem vast, one thing unites them all — football! Shared Studios is working with the refugee-led organization Oportunigee, which helps refugees build skills and gain employment in Uganda. The Nakivale Portal has the distinction of being the first portal to be constructed using bottle bricks.

3. Which session have you attended?



In this interactive conversation, students learned more about the lived experiences of refugees by hearing their personal histories. In conversation with Naki Football Academy coaches and players, students were able to understand how the sport is being used to bridge differences between refugee communities, how the experiences of being a refugee are both similar and very different for various refugee communities, and how finding something in common can help build more empowered, diverse communities.

The second most attended day was the final day of the project, Friday. The theme of the day focused on promoting Global Culture Celebration. Pupils during these days discovered cultural traditions, performances, customs, and practices from five countries, Mexico, Iraq, Uganda, Mali and Rwanda. During this day, pupils understood how these practices inform culture, what they communicate about it, and their significance to each region.

The third day that gained relevance among pupils was Tuesday, showcasing the theme of Climate Activism. The Big Box connected with the Kigali Portal that is located at Impact Hub Kigali, in Rwanda's bustling capital city of Kigali, a spotless, green and organized city, and is run by Kurema, Kureba, Kwiga ("To Create, To See, To Learn"), a public arts social enterprise that uses street-arts and art actions to involve civil society in positive social change. In particular, the organization creates large-scale public artworks and works to develop new opportunities on both the supply and demand side of the creative arts economy in Rwanda. The Kigali Portal first launched in May 2016 inside Impact Hub's conference room, and in September 2019 relaunched with a new space custom-built into the rooftop cafe atop the Hub. Pupils got to discover the complexities of the climate crisis through an immersive conversation with Ineza Grace, founder of The Green Protector and youth climate activists from East Africa. Pupils were invited to collaborate with other youth, understand how the climate crisis impacts communities similarly and differently, gain strategies for taking action on climate in their communities, and build relationships with youth activists worldwide.

Wednesday, with the theme of Beliefs and Belonging and connecting to the Portal in Gaza, Palestine, attracted fewer students, but the experience for those who attended was incredible. Pupils went in deep conversations and interactions with members of the Mercy Corps and the Gaza Sky Geeks, where the Gaza Portal is hosted. They even danced together! Gaza Sky Geeks was founded in 2011 to build Gaza's start-up movement and is a part of a vibrant co-working space in Gaza City. In 2013, the Gaza Sky Geeks accelerator began connecting top GeeXelerator teams tasked with building usable products to global resources to transform Gaza's most talented youth into the Middle East's brightest business leaders. Religion, cultural traditions, communities, and families all shape our beliefs - but so do the stories we tell, and the stories told about us. Students got to know more about how narrative shapes the world through an interactive conversation with youth from "We Are Not Numbers", who are using stories to dispel myths, add nuance, and present the humans behind the numbers in news stories about Palestine. Pupils were able to understand the impact of storytelling on our understanding of ourselves and the world around us, engaging stories as a way of "seeing and hearing" others, and reflecting on how the stories we tell are sometimes very different from the stories we live.

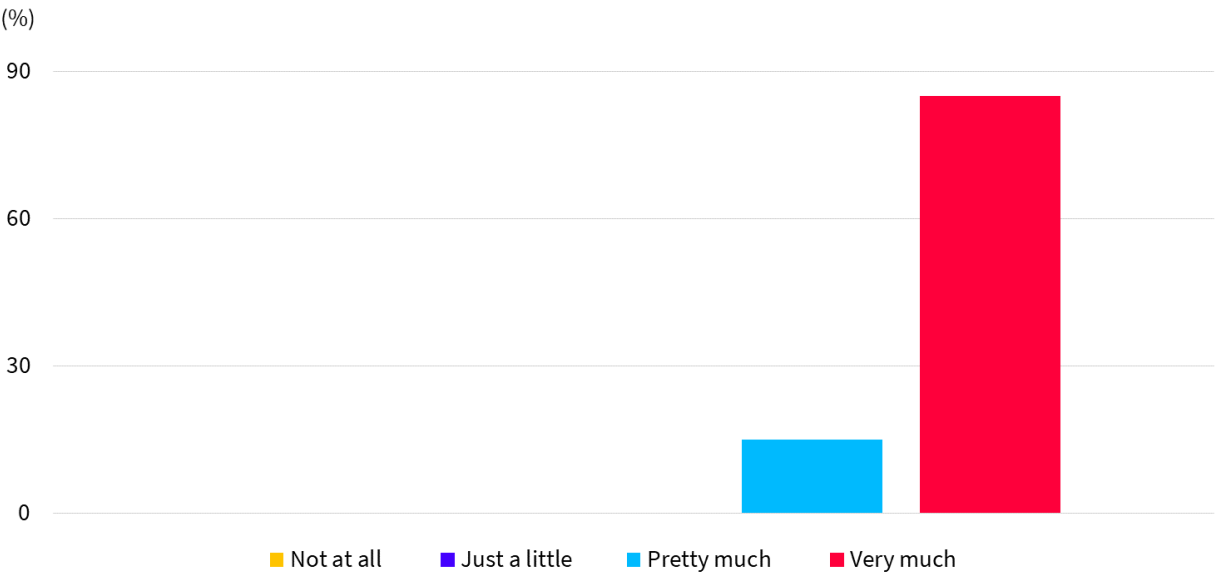
The first day in the programme and the one that received fewer pupils was Monday with the theme of Global Education. It is essential to mention that many students who signed up to come didn't show up during this day. This day, the Gold Box connected with the Bamako Portal located at Kabakoo Academies, a network of schools hailed as one of the World Economic Forum's Schools of the Future. Kabakoo Academies accelerates the world's transition to distributed and sustainable prosperity by empowering the African youths to leapfrog into better futures. The African Union and UNESCO have recognized Kabakoo as a significant innovator in education. Kabakoo's learning methodology can be seen. Pupils discovered cultural differences in learning, learning styles, and approaches to teaching through an interactive conversation with learners and mentors from Kabakoo Academy. This academy connects youth, local communities, and people to collaborate using technology and indigenous knowledge. Pupils were able to articulate different approaches to learning, reflexively consider their approach to understanding, and understand how epistemologies (ways of knowing) are shaped by culture. Students could reflect on their learning trajectories and exercise informed successfully.

During the different sessions, it was evident that the Wellington College Goals (understanding the world, engaging with empathy, collaboration across difference, and self-reflect through independence) established around our main competencies of intercultural communication and perspective-taking, students increased significantly their knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the communities they interacted with as demonstrated in the below graphics.

Learning something new about different people

In the below graphic, more than 80% of the sessions' pupils expressed to have learned something new about the communities and people they met. In this case, the experience entirely transmitted the competency of perspective-taking. This can tell that students were able to recognise and articulate their own and others' perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully to demonstrate cultural, religious, and global literacy with curiosity and a transdisciplinary understanding of global issues. In this sense, students will be able to feel confident to begin to acknowledge the value of interacting with other communities around the world.

4. I learned something new today about people different than myself



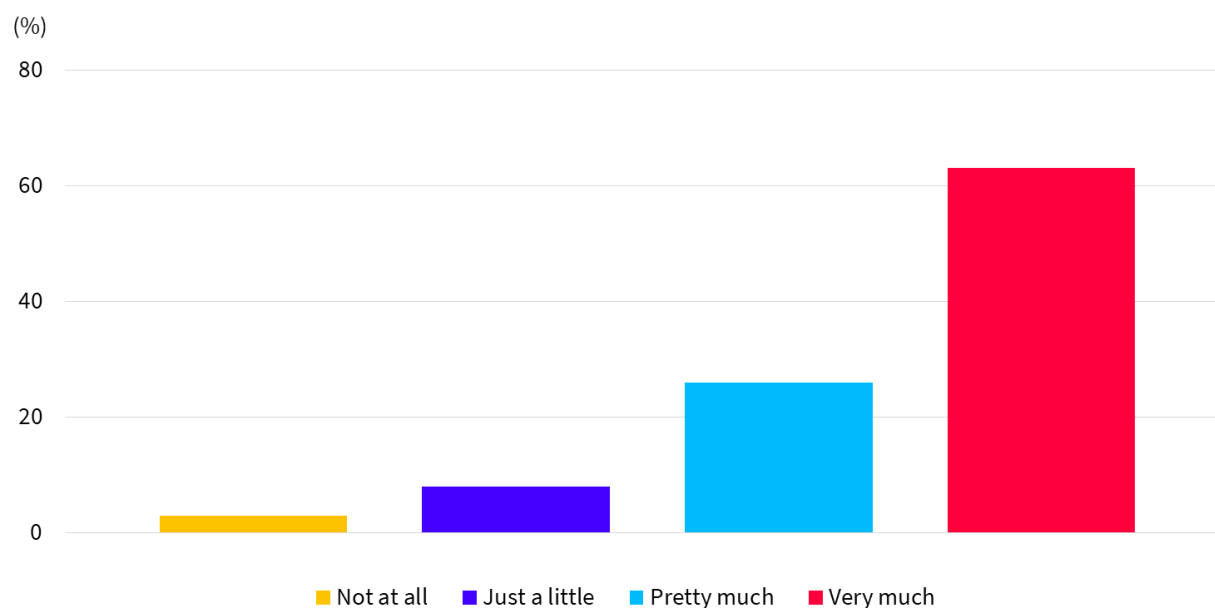
My assumptions about people different from myself have changed

It is significant to see that more than 60% of pupils participating in the sessions changed their assumptions about people different from them. It is possible to say that intercultural communication and perspective-taking competencies were fully embedded in the experience. It is possible to note that the goal of empathy was achieved through some core dimensions:

- Empathic understanding: a comprehensive understanding of others' experiences that develops knowledge. (Walther, Miller & Sochacka, 2017)
- Empathic orientation: dimension depicts empathy as a conscious preference toward human-centred evidence. This manifested the appreciation toward others' experiences and students aiming to understand others. Avoid judgement, respect others' responses and value the perspective of others. (Walther et al., 2017).
- Empathic mental process: This is an affective-cognitive interplay that highlights the importance of feeling others' emotions and purposefully trying to make sense of them (Kouprie & Visser, 2009)
- Emotion recognition: is about identifying the emotion(s) another person is demonstrating or experiencing. (Ickes, 2001). In this category is the Reading the Mind in the Eyes test (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001), where a person is asked to name the feeling a person is demonstrating based on only seeing that person's eyes.
- Shared feelings: is the most common measure of empathy in neuroscience and related fields. A shared feeling is usually measured as similarity of some physiological signals, including facial expressions (Light et al., 2015), bodily motions (Varni et al., 2009), and internal physiological signals such as heart rate (e.g., Kleinbub et al., 2019; Soto & Levenson, 2009).

These dimensions indicate a perceived value in learning from others, treating them respectfully, and being motivated to understand some real and pertinent aspects.

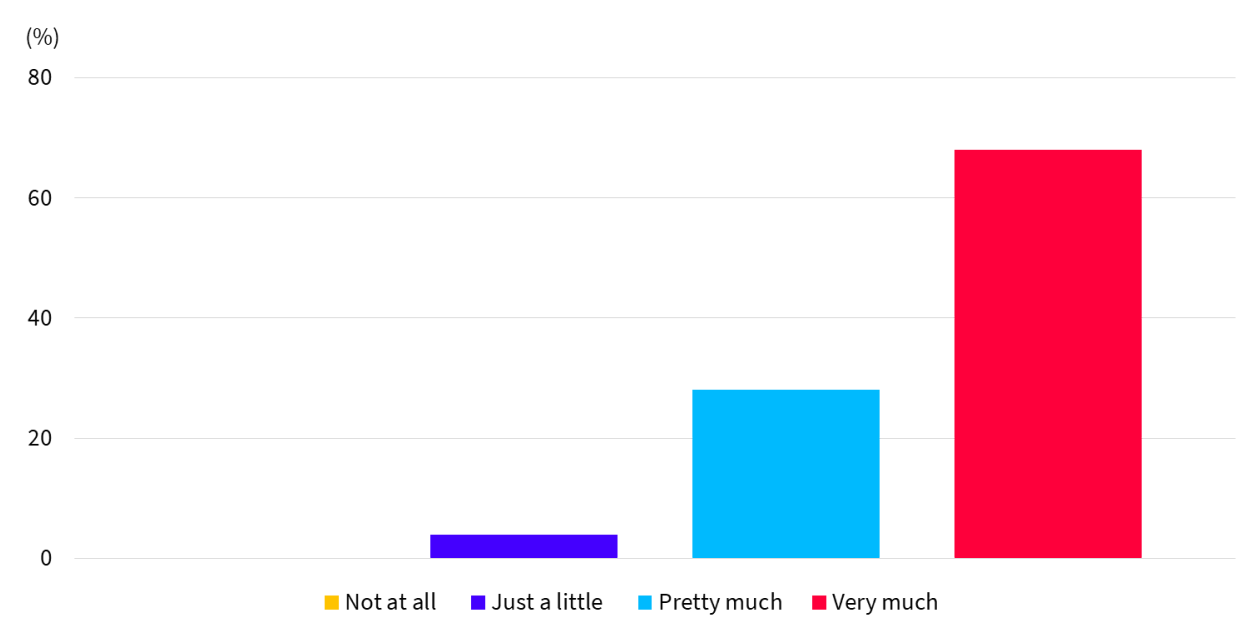
5. My assumptions about people different from myself have changed.



My perspective on the connection theme has changed

It is impressive to notice that almost 70% of students expressed a high degree of change in their perspective about the theme of the session they attended, but encouragingly 96% experienced positive change. From the perspective defined by the competency of perspective-taking, it is possible to say that students were able to understand a topic from someone else's point of view, acknowledge it and change their perspective. Students could have as well put themselves in the place of the others, recognising their point of view, experience and beliefs. This recognition creates the basis of understanding between people who interact and then form ideas about specific topics.

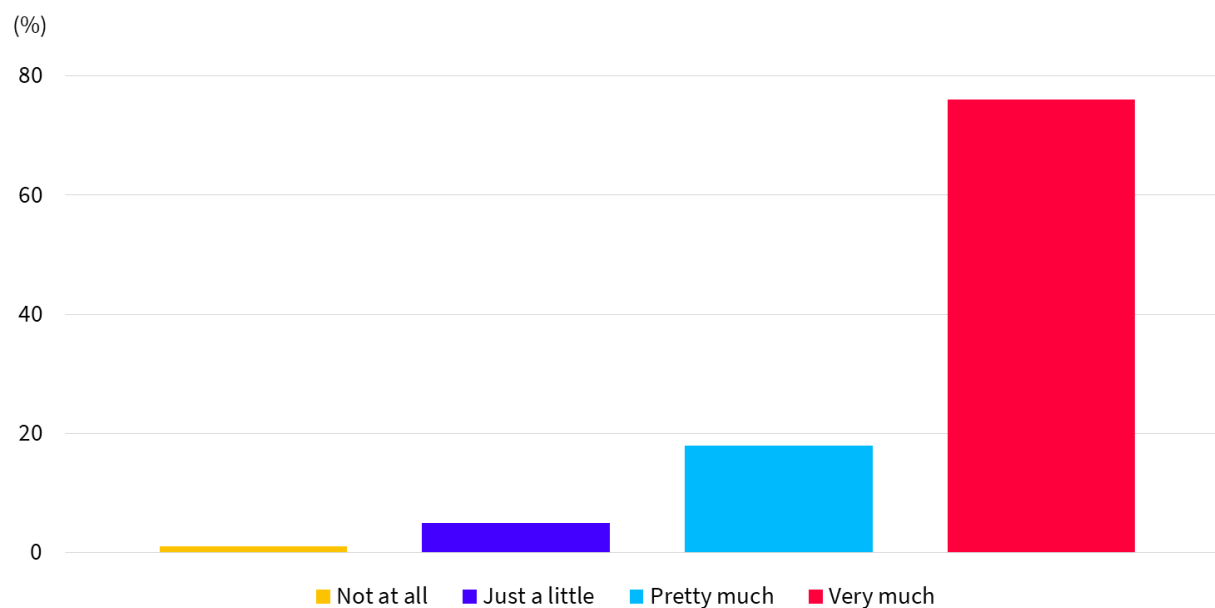
6. My perspective on the connection theme has changed



The conversation changed my perspective on global culture

More than 70% of the students that took part in this project expressed a change in perspective on global culture. For us, global culture is a set of shared experiences, norms, symbols and ideas that unite people worldwide. Cultures can exist at the international, national, regional, city, neighbourhood, subculture and super culture levels. (Featherstone M., 1990). It may be possible to say that this graph points out that for young people to make sense of their identity and develop a sense of belonging, establishing a connection with global communities and their own experiences is critical.

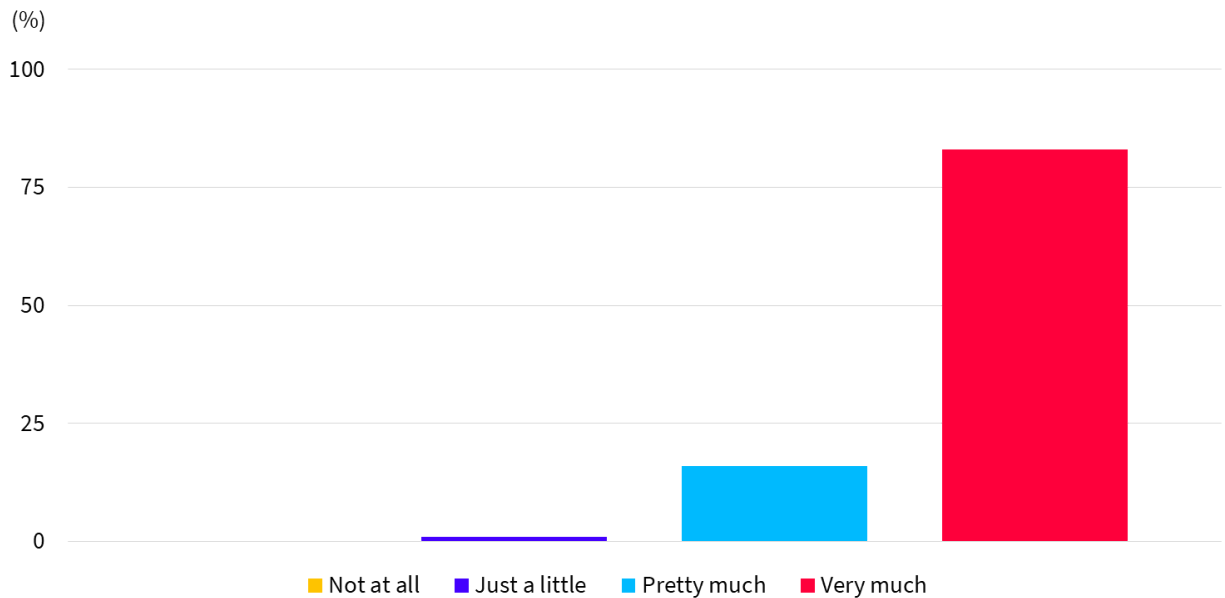
7. The conversation changed my perspective on global culture.



I feel a greater sense of connection to those different than myself.

More than 80% of the students who completed the survey expressed a greater sense of connection to those different than themselves. Students who engaged with empathy with the communities that they were having conversations gained this perspective because they engaged with the broader world through the Big Gold Box. They created connections in which they had the opportunity to self-reflect independently about their interaction with the communities they were exposed to. In each experience that the students attended, it was evident to notice that interacting with people from around the world, their perspective grew and helped them discover through a diverse set of dialogues that we are all humans sharing a humanity based on shared values.

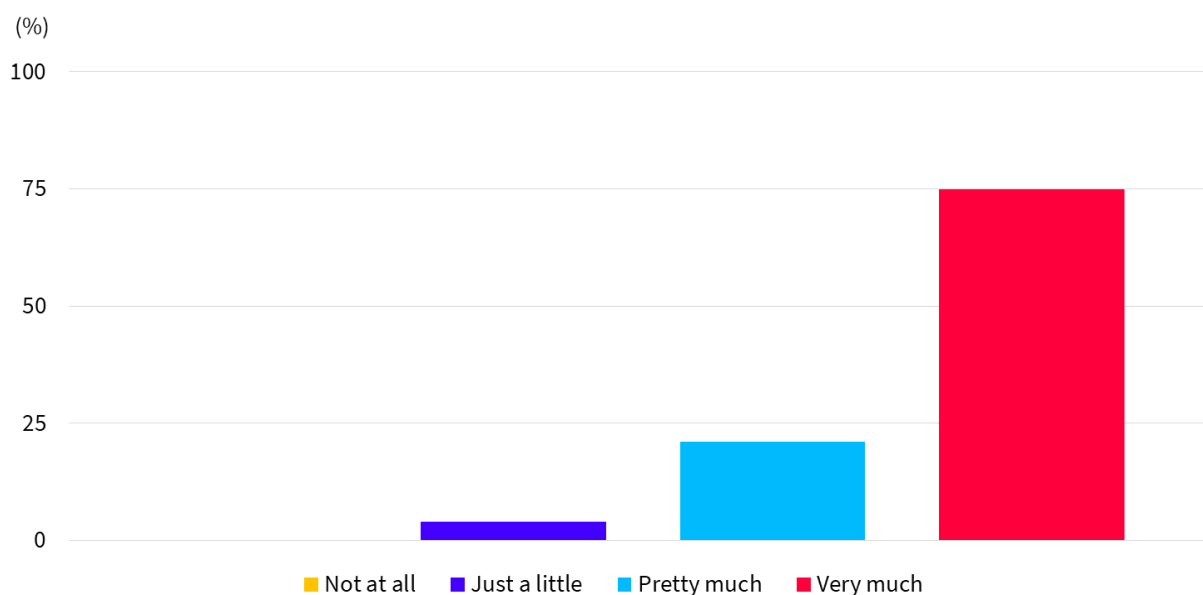
8. I feel a greater sense of connection to those different than myself.



I was able to comfortably share my own views with others

More than 70% of the students could share their own views with others comfortably. The Big Gold Box is a portal that connects people worldwide, as if in the same room. It provides the technology within a closed space to establish eye contact; build trust through dialogue with those ones that are in other parts of the world; it allows free movement and expression through body language. This environment enables self-reflection and independent interaction for students to immerse themselves in the culture that is located elsewhere and to cultivate identities.

9. I was able to comfortably share my own views with others.



07 Staff interviews outcomes

Lucy Atherton, Head Librarian at Wellington College

Lucy attended three sessions on three different days. The first one on the day of "Beliefs and Belonging" with Gaza City in Palestine with the organization "We are not numbers". She also attended one session on Human Rights and Social Justice with Nakivali, Uganda, and finally a Global Culture session with a DJ in Mexico.

Who did you connect with?

I found this meeting really inspirational because they were hopeful and honest, not thinking about their situation or problems. They were really curious to hear about our students and us, and it felt as everybody was in the room with them. It was just so fantastic! Then we had a dance with some girls who did Dabke dance, and we learned some of that. So there was a real interaction as well as the questions and answers. So it was perfect.

What made you get involved with the project?

Curiosity! First of all, I was inquisitive to know what it would involve as I wasn't obvious and being at the library's doorstep was another reason. But, actually, I thought that there was going to be lots of different small terminals and just linking up like zoom and that is why it was so inspirational because you go in, is very small, is very well organised and it is that small room that you feel you are actually in Gaza city with that group of people, which was quite surprising for me and exceeded my expectations.

What do you think the Wellington community may have gained from the experience?

I think I could see it with our students, that real connection with the individuals. Obviously, we know people or individuals are not just numbers, stats or figures in the news, but there was that real surprise that they were so interested to hear about our students' lives as well. For me, and hopefully is the same for students, I may want to know more about the situations of those people and connect more. So it was the start of a really good conversation.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Just to say that I also went to the one in Uganda, the Nakivali Football Academy. That was quite remarkable. It would have been useful to speak French as much as most of the guys were from Congo, but they shared their hopes and aspirations and how football helped them connect with different refugees from different countries. So that was really coming together through sports, so it was a different aspect again. And the final one I went to was on the global culture day, connecting with Mexico. So, there was a Mexican DJ and some of our students playing the guitar and so the performance there and the connecting with music, was great as well. I feel just so good to go to more sessions and to have it a go.

Polly Guttridge, HM and Spanish Teacher

Who did you connect with?

I was with the Gaza strip group.

Why did you choose to get involved in the project?

Well, really, because I was talking to you before the project started, and we were talking to do something on Duke Box with it. I was really intrigued by how this was going to work. You sold it as more than a team's course, so I was saying, is this metaverse? And then you say, no, this is not quite a metaverse. Firstly I was interested in what these people had to say, but in principle, I was interested in how you can connect with people from a completely different country, different kind of life and how that was going to seem natural if I was going to sit in a gold ship container. So I was very very curious about it, and I just thought it was amazing once we went in, I thought it was incredible.

What do you think the Wellington community may have gained from the experience?

It is just really a unique idea, a unique possibility. I was just astonished about how natural it seemed. I mean, we weren't sitting face to face but we almost were and it was so different from a video-call. It was much more powerful, partly because the screen covered all the wall and they were life-size sitting in front of us. So it was as if you were sitting in front of each other a quite short distance. And also is because in a normal video-call you have that annoying picture of yourself, so you feel self-conscious, and that didn't happen in the Gold Box, it was more like if you were talking to somebody. So what the Wellington community gain? Well, I have never talked to someone from Gaza before. It was just amazing and I think it is something that I will remember for the rest of my life. Just a little things they say about that I have no idea, such as this young people had grandparents who had lived in their house, their family house, which is now in the occupied territories. And they have passed the key from generation to generation as a symbol of hope. And this girl we were talking with had the key from their grandparents' house. And she said it may be stupid as they may not have the same doors or looks anymore. And we thought it was extraordinary. The other thing I haven't realized is that they can't travel. So for them going in the Big Gold Box and talking to us was the nearest they can get to travel. One of them has spent a time in the United States, one of them has gone somewhere else, and they have this sit in this sort of holding room. One of them was there nearly six hours and another girl was there for nearly forty-eight hours while they processed her. And they just can't get out from this very small area, and I just didn't realize that. It was just amazing to have these normal conversations with these "normal" young people in such a different environment from our own. For our students to talk to them, so easily, so naturally just about themselves and their lives, I can't think of another way you can do that, it was amazing.

What would you like to see for the future of the Big Gold Box?

I think we should put every Wellington College student in the Big Gold Box. I am not saying it will land a 100% with all of them, but even if it landed only with 50%, and I am sure it will be more than that, but if 50% of students were going to experience such a life-changing experience, having spoken to someone in Uganda in a refugee camp, just about their thoughts and their lives and their beliefs, or in Gaza or in any of these other places, that is so powerful. It will be worth taking the off-timetable of from the periods of the day and putting everyone in there. Certainly, nobody will have a negative experience. And the other thing that was amazing was the facilitator from the Gold Box, he was extraordinary. He had humour; he had compassion. He was absolutely brilliant because it was almost not noticeable that he was facilitating, just like he was part of the group and he was cheerful and friendly but he was actually immensely skilled for what he was doing. He really helped the process. I just think this would be such a powerful experience for everybody.

Tim Rothwell, Head of Geography at Wellington College

Who did you connect with?

I was there on Tuesday and connected with a community in Kigali, Rwanda, around the ideas about the environment and climate.

Why did you choose to get involved in the project?

Having done social justice for a couple of years now and also related to my academic teaching in geography, there was a link with some of the things we study on the course, such as teaching the response to climate change, and I was keen to see and hear different perspectives on a topic I think I know well but at the same time bringing it alive connecting with a community completely on the other side of the world, I thought it was a unique opportunity, no matter the broader curricular angle. But I was keen to be in the back of the box, and watching and observing Wellington College students connecting with the community was very interesting.

What do you think the Wellington community may have gained from the experience?

I think it was illuminating in a couple of ways. One for them was to see that there is quite a lot of similarities in the way we are responding to climate change and the climate crisis, as I was referring to in our session. But how the group of stakeholders are involved are the same sort of stakeholders that may be involved in the UK, whether that may be non-governmental organisations working with local governments, community groups' bottom-up ideas. Actually, hearing the passion and seeing the way they were expressed by the group in Rwanda, I thought sort it brought it to life. Secondly, the fundamental differences, something we reflected on was on the level of awareness around the climate crisis, that in the UK we give for granted that is high, but they were explaining that part of their education explains what the climate crisis is and their nature of its existence. It shook their complacency that this is sort of that people know about it and just hearing that completely different angle was a very enlightening moment and indeed for me.

Are there any other things you would like to either say about the gold box or future developments you would like to see?

I think the key thing is how to get more of my students in it and exposed to it. I think actually it relates actually with what I do with the social justice group and my teaching. Hearing those voices, I think it's such a powerful opportunity to almost feel slightly disoriented; when you enter in this box, you are literally sat opposite to people in another part of the world, and that is very powerful in what you can do with it. And I think the nature of it makes it more interesting and makes it stand out more if we were going to do that just over TEAMS in the classroom. So, I think there is something the event and the theatre that goes with it. So, I think getting more people exposed to it will be fantastic.

08 General Statements

Successful statements from pupils and staff are presented below.

Polly Guttridge, HM and Spanish Teacher

Dear Rachelle, Sandra and Cat

I was talking to Rebecca this morning about the Big Gold Box. We are likely to have it back (next year?). There is a Big Gold Box portal in Mexico City, and in the Uganda refugee camp there are a lot of young people from the Congo who speak French. It would be a really great opportunity to get some of our A level and IB HL students into the box during their lesson time to talk to the Congolese refugees in French and the young people in Mexico in Spanish. I don't know if any of you went in the 'portal' when it was here but I found it a hugely powerful experience and it would be amazing to get the pupils speaking in French/Spanish to young people having a very different life experience to their own.

I don't think there's anything that needs to be done now, but just putting it on your radar.

Polly

Anaya Kothari, Orange house pupil

Dear Miss Romero

I really enjoyed the experience today and learning about another culture and would love to be part of any similar experiences or follow-ups.

However, I do feel that many more people should either be aware or take part in these activities as I personally feel this should be a priority for Wellington, as we have the opportunity to do so. I do think if there is another way of contacting them without the box we should, to either strengthen our connections with them or to be able to fundraise, organize trips etc. I think the gold box or other similar opportunities should include boys and girls from all year groups, teachers too. Also, I do think you need a bit more time in the box (if that is possible) to fully get to know and have a conversation with them as it does take a while to feel comfortable. Another thing that could be useful in the next steps of this programme is perhaps more of a topical, pointed discussion with the different groups of people to learn and understand their perspectives and views, although I understand that the first interaction is just getting to know and understanding their situation.

Thanks so much for this opportunity.

Kind regards

Anaya

Josie Long, Psychology Teacher

Hi Rebecca

Thank you for setting up the big gold box project. One of my L6th was wowed by it, and has begun to completely rethink her career direction and UCAS ideas, moving towards international politics. She was deeply moved by the conversations with the Palestinian students.

Really inspirational – thanks again,

Josie

Charlie Sutton. HM of Stanley House

Hi Rebecca,

I hope you're well.

Just want to say quickly how phenomenal this initiative is - it will incredible and what an experience for the College and its community.

Thanks for sharing.

Charlie

09 Next steps

**01**

Continue bringing the Gold Box project in coming years to motivate further intercultural experiences among the Wellington community.

**02**

Open the experience to our partner schools.

**03**

Develop a portfolio of international programmes with the communities we have interacted in benefit of students to strengthen their intercultural connections.

**04**

Share the good experience and practice with the Wellington family, other networks and partners.

10 Conclusion

The experience of collaboration with Share Studios to bring the project of the Big Gold Box to Wellington College was very successful. This project has provided a unique opportunity for Wellington students to engage in meaningful intercultural communication, perspective-taking and develop skills related to global competence.

As educators, we believe that a project of this kind will benefit students powerfully and it will encourage them to be open-minded and empathetic. This project has encouraged students to see the world beyond their immediate environment. The conversations established also empower them in their own education. It could have inspired them to learn a language for example, or to become more interested in subjects such as geography, history, social studies, and politics. It could even lead them to go live, study, or work in another country when they are older.

We hope that the conversations and the interactions that the students have experienced during this project will help them to develop a sense of shared humanity with strong common values. Also, the students that participated in this project were taught the skills of global competence with the unique opportunity to participate in intercultural exchanges with different communities, exploring the world from a different environment that invited them to recognise the interconnectedness that can exist between communities of the world.

01	Students were able to know and understand the world within a different environment that changed their perspectives.
02	Students were able to engage in meaningful conversations while learning and developing different global competencies.
03	Students that participated in the project will begin to see the world with a different lens that recognises the interconnectedness that exist between different communities of the world.
04	This project created a world within the world for students to recognise the shared experiences among people.

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We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to have brought the successful Gold Box project to Wellington College.