

Chapter 2

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Key points

- There are many choices to be made and time will be needed to consider these thoroughly, before making a decision.
- You can express preferences when approaching a traditional placement but your training provider will not necessarily be able to meet them.
- A breadth of experience is useful when applying for jobs.
- Decide what you want to gain from an alternative placement and this will help you choose from the numerous opportunities.
- If you have funding, or the ability to fund, an international placement, this can be an amazing experience.
- All placements should enable you to reflect on pedagogical similarities and differences, as well as contributing to your development as a teacher.

Chapter 2

Case Study

Case Study: Carolyn – Art Gallery

After initially observing and examining what the gallery already had in place, I began to see the potential for using my own teaching expertise to adapt some of the existing workshops. I planned my own re-vamped sessions using the same resources in different ways. I gained the permission of the education officer to deliver these re-vamped sessions to visiting school groups. The first session I planned and delivered was called the Portraits session, aimed at a group of Key Stage 1 children.

The main learning objective for the session was to understand how artists reproduce the face in portrait work. The session was based around the visual stimulus of a sculpture and paintings of portraits displayed in the gallery. First the children would look closely at portrait work produced by artists before having a go at sketching and copying some of the facial features they could see in the artists' work.

Soon after the success of adapting and delivering the Portraits session, a local school contacted the gallery enquiring if they had a workshop suitable for their year 2 class, focused on the topic 'People Who Help Us' which they were studying in school. At the time the gallery didn't have any such workshops so I volunteered to do a new session which would be more suitable. Again I focused the session on a visual resource already present in the gallery – a huge landscape painting of Lake Windermere by eighteenth century artist Philippe Jacques De Loutherbourg. The painting is titled 'Windermere in a storm' as it depicts a stormy Lake Windermere with a small boat and its passengers in trouble. The painting shows some figures reaching out to help the passengers to safety. I entitled the session 'Helping Hands' and prompted a discussion with the children about people who might help in such a situation as depicted in the painting. Afterwards the children went to the workshop area where they could choose from a variety of practical, cross-curricular activities relating to the topic Helping Hands.

Towards the end of the placement, my confidence in using the gallery's resources as a tool for cross-curricular teaching had grown to such an extent that

I progressed to designing a whole new workshop for the gallery to use with future school groups. I based the session on a painting called 'The Gower Family' by George Romney. It aimed to combine teaching art and PE dance objectives.

I am pleased to say the workshop was a success; both the children and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and gained a lot from it. I asked the teachers of the visiting group to complete an evaluation of the session and was happy to read comments saying they were 'very pleased with the whole visit, the workshop was excellent – well prepared and delivered.' They said they felt their pupils benefited from 'the opportunity to visit a gallery, with a high standard of art work and to listen and work with such enthusiastic professionals.' To hear such comments from experienced teachers visiting the gallery was the real highlight of the placement for me.

Consider:

- Even if you do not undertake a placement in an alternative setting such as an art gallery, how could you utilize this facility to support your work with children? For example, could you prepare a pack in preparation for a trip to an art gallery, or could you collect resources from an art gallery that you could use in another setting or school?
- Are there local facilities, historical sites or environmental features that would be suitable for trips for children and students? Could you gain information from these and develop preparation packs?

Case Study: Stephanie – Cayman Islands

I will be undertaking my placement in the primary section of a prep and high school in the Cayman Islands, having involvement with children from kindergarten to year six. The School has a strong Christian ethos and boasts a multicultural student body taught by teachers of various nationalities. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum based on the National Curriculum of England and Wales and also satisfying the education requirements of the US, Canada and the Caribbean. This will give me the opportunity to experience a different way of teaching the National Curriculum and gain an insight into differences and similarities between ours and other countries' guidelines for education.

The school affords a range of excellent facilities to enhance the children's learning across an array of core and foundation subjects. Facilities include: numeracy and literacy learning centres, state-of-the-art computer lab with wireless connection to computers in every classroom, custom-designed library, a spacious art/science/DT room, large music room with smaller instrumental practice rooms, a multipurpose hall, and an astroturf playing field.

The role that I will be undertaking on this placement is simply to get involved in all aspects of life at the school. I will be observing and helping out in a variety

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of lessons, developing professional relationships with staff and students, discovering the history and culture of the Cayman Islands, learning about their cross curricular approach, along with the different learning styles adopted, and upholding the school rules and Christian values. Although I will not be teaching lessons myself, I will be actively involved in the children's learning, especially in my specialist subject, physical education.

During curriculum and extracurricular time, the students participate in many sports, both English and American, from all six areas of the PE National Curriculum. Some of these activities such as American football, softball and sailing are not often incorporated into British PE lessons hence this placement is providing me with a fantastic opportunity to broaden my knowledge, understanding, and experience of a range of different sports, which I can then go on to teach in the UK.

Participating in an alternative placement in an overseas country will enhance my teacher training, because it will give me a once in a lifetime teaching experience in a completely different environment to one that I am used to. Having the opportunity to work in a multicultural school with children of varying social backgrounds will really help me expand my awareness and comprehension of how a range of factors/influences can affect children's learning within an array of contexts.

While I'm on placement, I hope to immerse myself in school life, building professional, cooperative relationships with staff, so I can become a part of a committed, diverse teaching team. With the school curriculum, being based on the English one, but incorporating Canadian, American and Caribbean requirements. It will give me the opportunity to gain awareness of different frameworks, policies and practices. The School has a cross curricular approach to learning, so I will hopefully have the opportunity to increase my knowledge and understanding of a range of teaching strategies. I plan to be actively involved in the children's learning, showing respect for the supportive relationships and demonstrating the expected values and attitudes and behaviours.

Overall, I think participating in an alternative summer placement in the Cayman Islands will give me a valuable experience unlike any other and I cannot wait to experience what teaching in the Cayman Islands has to offer!

Case Study A

I think it is important to sample as much of each of the school years from Kindergarten upwards, as is possible. Rather than just sitting back and observing, I have enjoyed getting in among the children who have only been too happy to show me their work. My experience on this placement has also been that teachers

are more than happy to answer questions, even briefly breaking off their teaching, especially if something is being taught which I was not sure of.

The teachers were my primary source of language translation. There was also a program on my teacher's computer that would translate a word from English to Finnish, so I was able to produce a word list for myself. Also a couple of the children who could speak very good English became my unofficial translators when I was having problems communicating with a child near to them (which I am sure they enjoyed doing for me).

Case Study B

The linguistic and cultural preparation helped me to understand some of the customs and words in order to be polite. It meant that I was not so shocked with things such as the children removing their shoes in class, or saunas . . . It gave me an initial starting conversation when introduced to my family and an understanding of why there are such traditions.

The experience has given me more experience of teaching children with English as an additional language which will help me when faced with such a situation on placement and real life. I will use discussion more within lessons and I will value and feel empathy for children who speak more than one language and who may be struggling with English. In the future I will give the children more responsibility for their own work and I will try to use topic work more often as I feel it links the different subjects well.