



Collegiality and Creativity

High Cross College Tuam, Ireland

Eva Larisch, February - May 2024



‘Of course we share our materials!’

At High Cross College, teachers readily share their material designs with one another (via Google Drive) and ask each other about ideas for future material to be designed. They do not keep their material to themselves because they understand that the output will be richer and more easily available to allow for more time for what is most important: interacting with students and supporting them.

‘Why would we compete?’

Colleagues do not (really) compete with one another but understand that by working together they can cater best to the needs of their students. Teachers use breaks throughout the day to chat about what they are currently working through with their students and inspire each other.



HCC team: a sense of belonging



'We love you'

Closing line of speech of principal to beloved colleague to be retired that day.

During my time at HCC alone, I have witnessed warm celebrations of important milestones of four staff members (50th birthday, retirement, engagement, marriage) which were all held during the day (i.e. classes did not get cancelled but the students just had a surprise long break) and with loud music and lots of good craic! :)

The social committee had had organised the buffets and gifts and people just enjoyed themselves. The staff at HCC often actually feels like a group of friends/family (once again: competitiveness is comparatively low).

The noisiest space in school: the staffroom!

If you are used to quiet working atmosphere staff rooms (side-eye to Germany) and usually prepare your next lessons during breaks, you will be very surprised to find that at HCC, the noisiest space in school is not a classroom full of 13 year olds but - the staffroom!



*Colleagues perceive their job as merely one of many aspects of their life (different work life balance!) and **love** having fun during the breaks; laughing out loud, joking, gossiping - you name it. Immerse yourself in that bubbly atmosphere and get to know people! They will repay you in kindness and readiness to give you advice and take you to their classes.*

Collegiality in a nutshell

1. *Don't take yourself too seriously!
The other teachers don't do it either! ;)*
2. *If you talk to them, they talk to you. Don't stay on your intern table all the time! You want to get to know Irish people, right?*
3. *If you design material, share it with your colleagues - they will do the same! (be inspired by the cooperative mindset!)*

One of a vast collection of pieces of student art that enliven almost all corridors in school.

Emigration

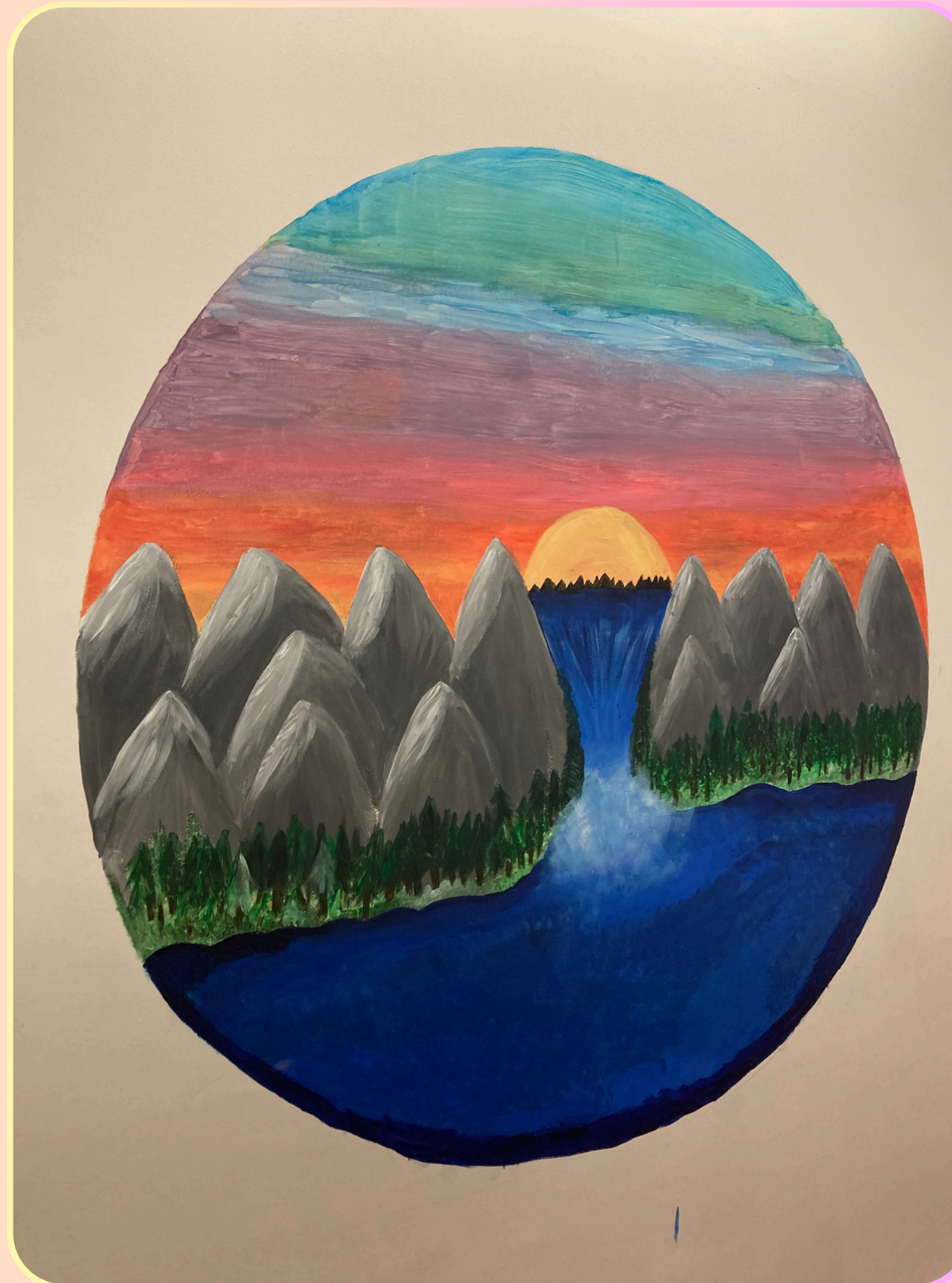


Creativity: Problem solving and fostering identity

A well-rounded human knows how to express themselves without words.



Students are routinely excused from class to get creative together: fostering creativity is a cultural good. Art is a highly valued subject here! (& no less important than, say, Maths or English)



Students co-create their learning environment: murals on South Campus (lots more to explore yourself!)





Junk Couture

Upcycling

meets

Creativity

meets

Project Management

Junk Couture is a project entirely self-managed by students: they source the junk, design and create the dresses, do the make-up and styling, and organise the photo session - all of which is done to feature all dresses in the annual school magazine. Students are encouraged to participate, i.e. they usually get excused from class etc. The project is aimed at increasing ecological awareness and problem solving skills.

Photos included with permission of people featuring, of course.



Wrap-up

If you want to get to know a whole new school culture where everything is not about grades and merit but also (or even more) about becoming a well-rounded, kind, versatile human being and teachers freely collaborate, I warmly recommend HCC to you!