

Global connections in the classroom



Carolyn Westgate, a teacher from Massachusetts, U.S.A., recently visited The Ripley Academy to share her studies in History and Education. Carolyn is in her fourth year at the Roger Williams University in Rhode Island, U.S.A. The University sponsored her trip, so she could gain a unique insight into teaching and learning. The connection between Ripley and Rhode Island began when Dr. Charlotte Carrington-Farmer, a former student of The Ripley Academy, and current Professor at the Roger Williams University, began working with Mr Shaw, History teacher at The Ripley Academy, with a view to exploring innovative practice in the classroom as a way of raising student aspirations.

Carolyn spent a week in England teaching History students and has helped the Year 9 students to understand the Cold War from an American perspective through student-led discussions. All the students at The Ripley Academy very much enjoyed and benefitted from Carolyn's American methods of teaching. In fact, Bella Causon, a Year 11 student at The Ripley Academy asked "Can you stay and teach us all year?"



Year 10 students working on a display to put up in Miss Westgate's classroom in America.

The students at the Ripley Academy got to engage in a moment of experiential learning when Carolyn handed American pennies out to all of them. All of the pennies were placed 'heads up' on their desks as she explained the tradition of only picking 'heads up' pennies to avoid bad luck. Many students asked who the man on the penny was. In reply, Carolyn asked if any of them had any prior-knowledge about Abraham Lincoln. Some students did recognise the name and recalled that he was the president who ended slavery in America.

Carolyn, Mr Shaw and Dr. Carrington-Farmer are looking forward to expanding this global connection to more students at the Ripley Academy and more American students. Plans are in the works for Carolyn and Mr to co-teach a lesson to both of their classrooms simultaneously via Skype.



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