

# Leader

QUARTERLY

**SUPPORTING OUR UKRAINIAN COLLEAGUES & STUDENTS**

"More darkness means more quietness in the evenings, when all that can be heard is the robin's song, the rook, jackdaw, raven or hooded crow, the distant squealing of gulls. I can hear so much more between"

Dara McAnulty (age 18) – Diary of a Young Naturalist

## Is your life cover right for you?



### Ivan Ahern discusses **3 key reasons** why you should review your life cover today...

Loved ones come first and foremost when we think about future financial security, like your spouse or children, who would be significantly impacted if you weren't there to provide for them. This could also be anyone in your life who would face a financial challenge if you passed away, for example by having to pay off any loans or debts that you have.

As with any insurance policy, it's important to review your life cover on a regular basis to ensure that you've got the right level of protection for your changing needs and to see if you could save money.

#### **1) Your circumstances have changed**

Buying a new home or having a child are two big life events that require a life cover change, but there are lots of others. Variations in your personal circumstances or even your lifestyle can mean that the life insurance you and your loved ones require has changed. You should ask yourself:

##### **Has your health status changed?**

For example:

- You've given up smoking
- You've been working out and lost weight

- You've been eating healthily and your blood pressure is down as a result

##### **Has your financial status changed?**

For example:

- Your income has changed
- You've taken out additional loans

##### **Has your marital status changed?**

- If you've gotten married, your spouse needs to be factored into your cover
- If you've gotten divorced, the list of beneficiaries on your policy needs to be updated

##### **Have you taken out other policies?**

If you or your partner has subsequently taken out other policies that include an element of life cover, you should review all policies collectively to ensure that you're not over-insured and that you're on the right policy type for your situation; for example single cover, joint cover or dual cover.

#### **2) You've never reviewed your cover**

If you own your own home, it's highly likely that when you took out your mortgage protection, you availed of the policy that your mortgage provider

offered you. If so, you should consider the following:

- Most mortgage providers deal with only one insurance company, which may not offer the best rates or terms available on the market
- Since you took out your policy, you've paid several years off your mortgage, so the level of cover you need has naturally decreased over time

#### **3) There are better policies available**

There are hundreds of life insurance policies available on the Irish market today and it can be mind boggling to find the right one for you.

The fact is that this is a highly competitive market and life insurance providers are constantly offering new types of cover, at more affordable prices. You should take advantage of what this market has to offer by reviewing your cover today.

Avail of your free life insurance review with Cornmarket today! For more information visit [cornmarket.ie/life-insurance](https://www.cornmarket.ie/life-insurance) or call us on **(01) 420 0998**.

## FROM THE EDITOR



Andreas Schleicher is a big hitter in global education. When he speaks people take notice. In a remarkable interview with John Walshe, he reveals views at odds with those previously expressed and different from what we have come to expect.

Not so long ago, the OECD's education expert Andrea Schleicher had told us we needed to modernise our 20th-century system's infrastructure and architecture. He urged us to reconsider the industrial outlook and design of our system, where students got taught one curriculum, which was heavily focused on the reproduction of subject matter, not focused on getting students to think outside the box, nor connected across the subject boundaries. He urged us to move beyond cognitive skills only, to also include social and emotional capacity.

*"The world rewards you for what you can do with what you know. And that's where the interaction between knowledge and skills is becoming so important".*

For him, Senior Cycle was too narrow and rigid. And so said all (most, at least) of us. That earned him the badge of a progressive reformer.

In this context, the interview with John Walshe is an eye opener. I won't do a spoiler but be prepared to meet a different Andreas Schleicher. In Leader we welcome disparate and contrary views as a means of shining a light. It's just that we weren't expecting these apparent differences from this same person.

Schleicher has, however, been consistent in his long promotion of both academic and vocational pathways and his advocacy for an integrated tertiary system (recently placed on our national agenda).

His argument that the pressures of the Leaving Cert can be reduced by strengthening relationships between students and teachers, as exist in Asia, will lead to interesting (heated, even?) discourse. Irish teachers, he says, need to spend more time mentoring and coaching their students outside the classroom. And technology will change the role of the teacher – it will soon outpace teachers in knowledge transmission.

Controversial stuff, indeed. This would require a reconfiguration of the role of the teacher as well as terms and conditions, which would, of course, be resisted in certain quarters and not necessarily on educational grounds.

We also carry a number of opinion pieces. Sean McDonagh looks at Ireland's changing demographics, highlighting both opportunities and "profound" challenges. Mark Fennell examines some important implications of *Looking at Our School 2022*. Through articles by Sarah Caden and Fidelma Brady, we look at challenges faced by children with Down syndrome accessing second level education. Brian Fleming, Judith Harford and Áine Hyland make the case for radical action to tackle historical educational disadvantage. Selina McCoy supports their case with current evidence.

Brian Mooney contrasts 1980s' Career Guidance provision with today's, which mirrors a dramatically changed Ireland. David Ruddy is puzzled why procedures for teacher underperformance are little used. Professor Luke O'Neill makes the case for having psychologists on the staff in every school. One school I know of – not private – hasn't sat around waiting. It employs a psychologist on a part-time basis from its own funds, such as the needs that staff don't feel qualified to meet.

We hope there is much here to inform and reflect upon. While space doesn't allow us mention all contributors, we are grateful to each one. As ever, views in this column are mine alone.

We are currently working on creating a forum for members to respond to Leader content, exchange views and create engagement. We plan to have this operational in early 2023.

Our thoughts this Christmas are with the people of Creeslough and our colleagues in Scoil Mhuire Primary School and the Rosses Community School.

On behalf of the Editorial Team, I wish members a restful, feet-up Christmas break. Put the laptop away, switch off school email and resist the temptation to drop into the office.

Take the break you deserve and need.

**Barry O'Callaghan**

# Leader

Quarterly

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# Unlock your students' potential with accessibility tools that support diverse learners

Supporting teachers so that you can drive student success is our number one job at Microsoft Education. That's why we've created resources and accessibility tools to help you meet every student where they are.

**72%**

of classrooms have students with individual education needs

**53%**





of classrooms have English Language Learners

**UP TO 20%**




of students are impacted by dyslexia

If your student experiences challenges with:



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-  **Immersive Reader:** helps students read and listen to text. It can even break words down into syllables or show words as pictures!
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-  **Reading Progress** within **Insights** is an efficient way for you as a teacher to assess reading fluency – helping you identify accuracy rate and trouble words.

## Vision, Hearing and Mobility



-  **Subtitles** are available for those with hearing difficulties in Teams, the Translator app, and PowerPoint's Presentation Translator.
-  **Built-in screen reader** in Windows' settings helps those with visual difficulties have everything read to them.
-  **Dictate** allows anyone with limited mobility to use their computer's microphone to dictate presentations and documents.

## Neurodiversity and Cognitive

-  **Microsoft To Do** is a free list, task, and reminder app that can help your students get organized as they work through their many lessons and activities.
-  **Reading View** in the Edge browser removes distracting ads and excess information, leaving only the main text and images on a website.


> [aka.ms/learningtools](https://aka.ms/learningtools)

## Mental Health

-  **Reflect** and **Insights** are tools within Teams. Use them to check on your student's social-emotional wellbeing.
-  **Flipgrid** is a safe video expression tool you can use in the classroom to help students learn to share their thoughts and support one another on important topics.

> [aka.ms/sel](https://aka.ms/sel)

## All Learners

-  **The Ease of Access Center** in the Windows operating system's settings allows you to personalize your computer in many ways to best support your child's needs, like with mouse actions, trackpad options, and keyboard preferences. (Select the **Start** button, then select **Settings** > **Ease of Access**).

Front & back cover  
photography  
by Charlie McManus

Front Cover



Back Cover



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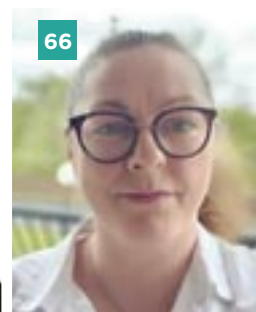
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# Presidential Musings

**Shane Foley**  
**President**



**W**riting to you as the President of NAPD this year seems quite surreal. At times I stop and ask myself “how did I get here?”, because the truth is that to be President of NAPD is a huge honour and a privilege.

Having sat at the Executive table for the last 5 years and having seen the 5 remarkable people who have put their hands up to lead our organisation, one could easily become overwhelmed by the expectations as to what the position entails. Each of my predecessors has taken on the mantle and has led our National Association with distinction. I am committed to continuing their legacy and I am really looking forward to this challenge.

Our Statement of Strategy, which runs from 2022 to 2027, will be our guiding roadmap for the next 5 years. During my year as President, I will work with you, laying the foundations of our Strategy, so that by 2027 the role of our school leaders will reflect the aspirations of our strategic goals.

**I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all our school leaders to join NAPD, because together we are stronger, and we *can* and *will* give you a voice.**

Our four strategic goals are:

- Sustainable Leadership
- Professional Development
- Connecting School Leaders
- School Leaders Voice

There is nothing in this Statement of Strategy that I do not believe in and that I have not advocated for since becoming a school leader. I am acutely aware of the challenges that some will face as school leaders. For those who step forward and embrace leadership roles, it is imperative that there is a strategy in place to sustain them and support them in their work.

## **DO NOT LEAD IN ISOLATION**

One of the most important things for all school leaders is to have a sense of belonging. This is where our national organisation can support us. NAPD can provide the conduit to connect school leaders through our National and Regional organisational structures and provide them with a voice. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all our school leaders to join NAPD, because together we are stronger, and we *can* and *will* give you a voice.

I believe that having an accessible network of support is critical to succeeding in your role. Initiatives such as the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) are especially important for new school leaders. Equally important is that those of us with experience in school leadership make ourselves available to support our colleagues especially through the mentoring programme.

**The issues school leaders face today are, in my opinion, no different to those that have existed for the last number of years. Sustainability in the role is perhaps, for me, the number one priority**

### **CURRENT ISSUES IN EDUCATION**

The issues school leaders face today are, in my opinion, no different to those that have existed for the last number of years. Sustainability in the role is perhaps, for me, the number one priority. If you have not already read the Deakin research; I would encourage you to do so. The findings are eye-opening in terms of the impact our current roles are having on our lives in a wider context and most notably on our health. We will take this knowledge and, working together with our partners in education, endeavour to progress a more sustainable role for our senior school leaders.

### **MORAL PURPOSE**

From the very beginning of my journey into school leadership I have been taken with Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2005) *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership* and I would like to share these with you:

1. School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning.
2. Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.
3. The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.
4. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.
5. School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.
6. Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.
7. A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness

Do these reflect your context, your leadership journey, your moral purpose?

**Ar aghaidh le chéile**

**Shane Foley,  
President**



**Trá Mór,  
oil on board,  
by Mary West**

## NAPD Executive 2022 - 2023



### *Back Row (left to right):*

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Sarah Gibbons,  
Deputy Principal, Old Bawn Community School, Dublin



# DIRECTOR'S DESK



PAUL  
CRONE

*“There is a feel about Galway you can wear around your shoulders like a cloak”*

Claire Fullerton, American author

I couldn't agree more. The cloak of professional friendships reacquainted, the cloak of professional collaboration in action, the cloak of working towards sustainable leadership in our schools and the cloak of personal wellbeing being prioritised. All of these were present in Galway during our first in-person Conference in 3 years. The energy, the passion and the dedication of our school leaders was on display for all to see over the three days.

I hope you returned to your school enthused, inspired and energised to continue to build the best school for your students as Zachary Walker advised. I hope you got to recharge your batteries and prioritised your own wellbeing during the few days.

If you couldn't make Conference 2022 then we hope to see you in October 2023 – back in Galway – as we plan to build on this year's Conference.

While in Galway, I was delighted to engage in many conversations with school leaders to hear their stories. Every school and school leader has a story, a context for your school. Your context plays such an important role in all of the decision that you make and your story reveals your context. When my story began, I was sure of one thing, and that was I never wanted to be a Principal. I heard people say “why would anyone want that job” and it frightened me. I lacked experience and confidence; I never sought the “power” or perceived power of the Principal and I could not understand how one person could do everything a Principal was required to do. I was probably right on all counts, so what changed?

Time.

Over time I grew in confidence and experience. I observed other leaders and began to think I could give that a go. I took the leap of faith and embarked on my leadership journey. Looking back, I was not aware that I was getting on a roller coaster, because of all the ups and downs and onto a ghost train because I never knew what was around the corner. “How much longer can I keep getting away with this?” was a constant thought in my head. I now realise that many of us suffer from “imposter syndrome” but I kept pushing forward regardless. I could call it naivety or stupidity but the real question is, was it real resilience in action?

We speak of moral purpose, authenticity and honest actions. It is my opinion that when we make

decisions that will positively benefit students, whether they be positively or negatively received, we have done the right thing and I tried to do the right thing one decision at a time. Growing and building the school towards a shared vision where consistent actions were fair, transparent and student focused. How could anyone argue with that?

At this juncture, I view my role, as Director of NAPD, to make one decision at a time for the benefit of the NAPD members. To make your position more sustainable, to support school leaders so you can be the best you can be and to be the voice of school leaders with the decision makers. Our Statement of Strategy sets out our goals for the years ahead and this is the shared vision for our Association.

Every decision that I make or recommendation that I make to the National Executive emanates from the Strategy Statement and will build the Association that we want and need. I need to hear your voice, I want and need to hear your story since this is the only way we can remain responsive to emerging trends and needs in our schools.

Remember this – your story is not finished; your story can be an inspiration to others, a positive story, it can have twists and turns and the main character in your story has editorial control. Get acquainted with yourself as the story writer, the editor and the main character. Invest in yourself, get to know yourself, take control back and write the story you want to tell.

As I get out to schools, please tell me your story. The collective experiences, insights and aspirations of our members is what sustains us and gives NAPD purpose. We are all in this together.

**Ar aghaidh le chéile.**

**Paul Crone, Director**

## DEPUTY DIRECTOR PAUL BYRNE



Lieutenant General Sean Clancy's keynote speech in which he referred to the journey from the novice practitioner to a place of professional competence got me thinking back to my own starting point as an apprentice in the Army Apprentice School in September 1983 as a member of the 28th apprenticeship class.

Sixty of us started in five different trades - motor mechanics, radio technicians, carpenters, electricians and fitter armorers. At any given time, there were three platoons of 60 apprentices in the Army Apprentice School.

The Army Apprentice School (AAS), located in Devoy Barracks, Naas, County Kildare opened its gates on 8 October 1956 and remained operational until 21 September 1998. Over this time, it trained approximately 2,000 apprentices. The AAS ceased to exist as a unit on 1 November 1998.

During its operation, the AAS was synonymous with quality education and high academic achievement. The AAS is recognised as having trained technicians of the highest calibre by industry, the Department of Education and the Defence Forces. It was one of the many success stories of Óglaigh na hÉireann. Thankfully, the Air Corps Apprentice School is still in operation.

The Army Apprentice School as an education facility was excellent, with top class teachers both military and civilian, working with state-of-the-art

equipment. All 180 apprentices lived on site. The skills which we learned – life skills, academic and practical skills – have stood us all in good stead in our diverse journeys to date.

As apprentices we sat both national and international examinations. In a recent RTÉ Nationwide report on the AAS, it was evident that many of the army apprentices have gone on to become leaders in industry, education and in the Defence Forces.

Lieutenant General Clancy in his Conference keynote address said that we develop our values on our journey to professional competence. So, what did I learn from my time in the AAS? The first and foremost, that comes to mind is loyalty. Loyalty to Óglaigh na hÉireann, loyalty to the AAS, to the fellow apprentices and fellow service men and women. This is a value that has served me and the organisations I have worked for well down through the years.

We talk today about the need to develop soft skills in education. Soft skills such as punctuality, self-care, teamwork were part and parcel of daily life in the AAS. A "mé féiner" would not have lasted the course

because life in the AAS was a team event.

You looked after yourself because your fellow apprentices/soldiers depended on you being your best self to contribute effectively and efficiently to the team. Neatness, attention to detail, how to fold your clothes, how to iron, how to pack properly, how to strip and make a bed or a weapon with speed and precision were skills we all learned. As a team it was vital that no one was left behind, so we helped each other in times of difficulty.

I know that I am probably looking back with rose tinted glasses and forgetting the 6am parades in the frost, when we wore pyjamas under the uniform to insulate from the cold. I am forgetting the four-mile morning runs in combats and boots with an FN rifle for balance, sometimes over your head. The endless square bashing (marching practice), the fact that we only got home twice a month and that drinking alcohol was forbidden in the

AAS regardless of your age. The toughness of the discipline regime created individual and group robustness, built a strong team ethos and, I would argue, it built a high level of resilience.

At any time, you could be called upon to lead your team and so we had to be leadership ready. As part of this leadership preparation, we had to develop effective communication and practical logistic skills. Our military training made us robust professional soldiers and our apprentice training educated us to be highly skilled and adaptable professionals. I happened to be marking examinations in the old vocational school beside the barracks on the day that the Officers' Mess and the commanding officers' house were being demolished. It was a sad sight to witness - the end of an era.

We are now at point in Ireland when there is a shortage of skills in many areas of business and industry, including trades. Thankfully, the number of apprenticeships is increasing and the value of gaining a high level of proficiency in key skills through a combination of theory and practice is once again being recognised.

I ask myself if I had the chance to start over would I have

chosen a different career path? The answer is most definitely no. The values, aptitudes, skills, and resilience I gained during my time as a member of the Defence Forces as a member of the AAS are the values I live by and the dispositions and skills that I draw on each day.

The friendships made in the AAS have sustained me throughout the years. Forty years on I look forward to each reunion to meet with the 28th platoon, now a bit older, a bit bigger but still imbued with the care and comradeship forged when we were young apprentices.

As a country, we need to prioritise the expansion of the apprenticeship model of education and actively encourage and promote the uptake of apprenticeships both in trade, the service industry and in business.

And, it would be wonderful to see the Defence Force re-open the Apprentice School and once again train apprentices to the highest standard that I was privileged, as a young man, to experience.

**Paul Byrne**

**Ní Obair In Aisce Í**



*Tim Geraghty making a presentation on behalf of NAPDR to former Editor and Past-President 2003-04, Derek West, to mark his retirement as NAPD Publications Editor.*

# THE LEADER PROFILE

## Andreas Schleicher

by John Walshe



If Andreas Schleicher ever appears on Mastermind, his specialist topic has to be 'global education systems'. He has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of individual systems and what they contribute to their societies and economies.

A German-born brilliant mathematician and statistician, he is highly respected for his work as head of the OECD's Directorate of Education and Skills. He initiated the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other international measurements that have created a global platform for policy-makers, researchers and educators to innovate and transform educational policies and practice.

Most impressive is the way he interprets data to illuminate trends, to critique and to counsel. His OECD work influences educational developments across the world, including Ireland, a country which he knows well.

While he's is not exactly a household name in Ireland, his forthright views could yet influence our debate on Senior

Cycle reform. Speaking from Azerbaijan to Leader, he lauded our "high stakes" externally marked Leaving Certificate exam as well as our "meritocratic" points system of College entry. If there is stress on students he says "don't blame the exam, blame the lack of quality of relationships between students and teachers".

He is also responsible for the OECD's annual update on the state of education around the world. It's called Education at a Glance but you need much more than a passing glance to take in the wealth of data in this massive tome. The 2022 edition dedicated a specific chapter to the COVID crisis and the shift from crisis management to recovery. It also had two new indicators on professional development for teachers and school heads and on the profile of academic staff.

While acknowledging that we in Ireland spend less of our GDP on education than most developed countries, he insists that "money does not buy you a good education. If you look at the outcomes (for Ireland) they are strong and growing".

Schleicher argued that "over the past two decades the share of young people getting advanced qualifications has grown markedly. Ireland is in the top growth levels". He rejects the view that if everyone gets a College degree then everyone will end up on the minimum wage. "In Ireland the promise that education is going to get you a better life has actually worked out".

### Senior Cycle Reform

He urges caution when it comes to Senior Cycle reform. "The Leaving Certificate is a high stakes exam but that is part of the secret of the success of Ireland. By setting a very high bar, you get people to think that hard work is valued in education". He describes our early childhood education as "poor" but argues our school system has helped most people to succeed and has created a high level of equity with very strong outcomes.

The current exam could be complemented by some element of teacher judgement. "But you saw what happened during the pandemic with grade inflation. The more judgement you bring in to this the more you will end up with social regression".

He maintains that "having something from outside the system that is accepted by society is really important. We see this across the world. The strongest performing and most equitable education systems do have something like Ireland, which has a clear set-up and goalposts".

"If you do not have a trustworthy currency your education system will unravel very quickly. Look to the places like the US where employers don't give a damn about what High School certificate you have and where universities set their own entrance tests".

He responds to claims that the Leaving Certificate causes too much stress by saying that "If you get rid of the test, you won't necessarily see lower anxiety. If you want to lower anxiety you need to strengthen the student teacher relationship and that is a very different story".

He says that "learning is not a transactional enterprise or business - it's a social and relational experience. The stronger the social fabric in school the less you have to worry about wellbeing and student anxiety. There is really strong evidence that in some of the toughest education systems where they have strong teacher support you see very strong student wellbeing".

He cites Asian countries "where life is tough and school is tough" but where there is strong resilience among the students because of good relationships with teachers.

He believes that Irish teachers need to spend more time with their students: "if you are a teacher in China or Japan or Korea you spend a lot more time with students outside the classroom. You know them all, you accompany them

on their journey, you know what they are and what they want to become. That creates very different relationships. That is what makes students manage anxiety. The quality of teacher student relationships is the best predictor of student wellbeing, of lower anxiety and better resilience. It has nothing to do with tests. It's the learning environment created in schools that matters".

His message for NAPD members is that "as a school leader you can create an environment where your teachers have time to do other things than teaching their students, create spaces where they can actually really know their students, who they are, what they want to become and accompany them on their journey. When you create that space you improve academic success, you improve equity, because you understand how students learn differently and that's the best guarantee to ensure wellbeing. Schools can think about creating a more collaborative culture - so that students don't fall through the cracks, so that teachers work around the needs of students and have the extra space and time".

"School leaders often see the limits rather than the opportunities. Principals say they don't have much autonomy or space to manoeuvre but when you look at the laws and regulations many things that school leaders think they can't do, they actually can".

Good student teacher relationships are becoming more important. "Technology is going to outpace teachers very soon in knowledge transmission. A teacher can't compete with some of the tech-based learning systems already. That just makes it even more important that teachers become greater mentors; greater coaches; greater designers of innovative learning environments, greater psychologists, greater social workers".

Helping young people to navigate their learning and life and aspirations is going to make teaching a lot more demanding. It also requires a different attitude and different work organisations in schools. This is where we can learn most from Asia where a teacher is very good at relating to their students, very good at bringing every student into the classroom, into the picture, into social learning."

### The Points System

On selection for higher education, he says that "meritocracy and fairness are really important. Ireland comes close to how things should be in that regard". Looking to the future he says that in tomorrow's world, learning content and delivery will be provided in many different ways, for many more people. "We would hope that education systems would overcome artificial selection systems. But as long as they exist, the points system is probably the most meritocratic way of making sure the best places go to the most talented people, not to the wealthiest which is often the case in other countries".

He argues strongly for better integration between the worlds of work and higher education but notes a lack of willingness by Irish universities to engage with the future of work. He believes they should do much more to anticipate the evolution of labour.

He says that "in the future great places of work are going to be great places of learning and great places at anticipating changing labour demands". At the moment, the current higher education provision works well in Ireland, he argues. "Most people with a degree get strong benefits but now is the time to think about post-secondary education as labour markets become more flexible and jobs change more quickly. We need to take bold moves towards an (integrated) tertiary education system. You won't necessarily get it with mild incentives".

His comments are timely as DFHERIS is publishing a new document on deeper links between further and higher education – suggestions include funding for joint courses and co-location of FE and HE institutions. Clearly Andreas Schleicher believes that we should go much further to achieve real integration.

Finally, he laments the fact that so many young people still see vocational education and training as a last resort and

not as a first choice: "you have to create a level playing field for different types of provision and learning. Skills need to be like a currency that can be accumulated in different ways".

An award-winning journalist, **John Walshe** was appointed special adviser to Ruairi Quinn who was Minister for Education and Skills from March 2011 to July 2014. Prior to that, John was an educational editor, mostly with the Irish Independent but also with *The Irish Times* in the early 1990s. He was a consultant to the OECD in Paris, where he was involved in four major studies on education.



He is the author of 'A New Partnership in Education', which chronicled many of the major changes in Irish education in recent decades and he also wrote 'An Education' which recounted his experience as a Ministerial adviser. A graduate of both NUIG and UCC, John was born in Galway city. He is currently a consultant and commentator on educational issues.

## THINKING OF RETIRING?

Our attitudes to retirement are changing. Retirement is now considered a new beginning. It is the conclusion of a particular phase in our lives but also the opportunity to embrace new experiences and fulfil dreams that the busyness of daily living did not permit. Just as we prepared extensively to enter the world of work and engaged in CPD throughout our careers, it is entirely appropriate that we should invest extensively in planning for modern retirement.

Two themes, Lifestyle and Financial, will be explored in an interactive and engaging environment.

Lifestyle modules will include the following:

- Transition to Retirement
- Security & Supports
- Keeping Connected
- Health & Wellness

Financial modules will include the following:

- Pensions
- Taxation
- Money Matters
- Wills, Probate & Powers of Attorney

The programme is suitable for members contemplating retirement over the coming years and not just this year. Our advice is that the sooner one becomes aware of the various issues surrounding the retirement process the better, since it enables anyone contemplating this step to make adequate preparation for the transition.

NAPDR plans to offer this comprehensive programme in February 2023 in conjunction with NAPD. Expressions of interest can be registered in confidence by email to [info@napd.ie](mailto:info@napd.ie) marked Pre-Retirement Programme.

# NAPD Conference Reports

## The Galmont Hotel & Spa, Galway, October 2022

### NAPD CONFERENCE OCTOBER 2022

- Reports of every Keynote and Workshop follow on the next 13 pages. Each report is an individual take which doesn't set out to report on each and every item; rather it aims to give a flavour of the contents.
- The Conference site, within [www.napd.ie](http://www.napd.ie), contains recordings of Keynotes and Workshops. It also contains Conference photographs shot by Dominic Lee.
- Scan the QR code across to gain access – you will then need to sign in using your NAPD login details.
- Email [info@napd.ie](mailto:info@napd.ie) if you have difficulties gaining access.



SCAN ME



# Conference Keynote – Dermot Whelan

by Patricia McDonagh

When talking to people waiting for the first keynote speaker, Dermot Whelan, I realised I was the only one in my group who had never heard him on the radio or seen him on the television, so I was coming to him fresh and I wasn't disappointed. Everyone had spoken highly of him and I could immediately see why.

He was funny, engaging, welcoming and his message was powerful – simple but powerful. He spoke of the usefulness of stress (more later) and its dangers while making us laugh along the way. He was so funny we were de-stressing as we listened.

Dermot was not afraid to show his own vulnerability while explaining his own issues with stress, and his belief in how meditation had improved his life. He spoke of how, while driving to Kilkenny to take part in The Comedy Festival and feeling a little stressed, he had what he thought was a heart attack while driving. Thankfully it turned out to be a panic attack but he realised he needed to change his life and to do that he turned to meditation.

He spoke respectfully of how Principals were high achievers, up for a challenge and leaders of teams, but with this responsibility came stress for many. He described it as the "shoulds" monsters in your head, those "always-on" feelings, constantly checking emails, WhatsApp etc. He talked about rushing through life, but not enjoying the golden moments.

He pointed out the ways short term stress can be good for us: it improves performance; we have better cognitive function, boosts our immune system and increases resilience – think of the actor before a show or the sportsperson before a game. However, the effects of long-term stress are unhealthy and dangerous. They include: anxiety, depression, tiredness, difficulty sleeping and more.

Dermot understands that to function healthily we need to manage stress. He explained it as turning down the volume in our heads for all those "shoulds", those feelings of impostor syndrome and the voices saying you're not good enough. After his panic attack he went to the United States to study meditation techniques and he has been doing them now for 10 years.

Through a series of slides and a lot of appropriate humour, he brought us on the journey to meditation:

- Myth-busting: you don't have to sit in the lotus position, nor do you have to find a lake side shore with warm sunshine or even clear your mind of all thoughts
- Benefits: lower heart rate, lowers blood pressure, reduces the stress hormones, slows down breathing and strengthens the immune system

- Further benefits are that you feel less anxious less depressed, more optimistic. You get better sleep, you're happier, you make better decisions, have better memory, are more creative and have a longer attention span
- The Science, a study in Harvard University, showed that in less than two months of doing these exercises, parts of the brain had changed. The stress parts of the amygdala had decreased and the good parts had increased
- The 5 techniques are not very difficult, but I recommend you watch the download of his presentation on the NAPD website to understand them

Dermot finished off by bringing us through the techniques and giving helpful tips on switching off:

- Build a routine such as RPM; Rise, Pee, Meditate or RAW, Right After Work
- Programme yourself conscious or, as Dermot says, set your Google Maps and find your natural stress relief

I found listening to Dermot enjoyable – he was funny and so sincere in his beliefs that meditation had changed his life for the better that he made me want to try these simple techniques immediately and make them part of my routine.

Being a school leader can be very difficult, especially now, after Covid and I think giving five or ten minutes a day to these scientifically proven techniques could make us all happier in our jobs. By demystifying the aura around meditation he has made it more accessible for everyone as well as more appealing.

If you missed his presentation and unfortunately many people did, because the room was less than half full, I would really encourage you to watch the downloaded video – you'll have a good laugh as well as help saving your sanity.

As Dermot said – it's a lot cheaper than medication.



**Patricia** was Principal of Malahide Community School from 2012 until her retirement 2017. She was President of NAPD in 2006-2007.



## Conference Keynote – Lt. Gen. Sean Clancy

by Paul Byrne

Delegates were privileged to have Lieutenant General Seán Clancy, Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces deliver an inspirational keynote address on *“Resilience in Leadership - How We Keep Going”*. His keynote explored personal resilience, its importance to individual leaders, to their teams and their organisation, drawing on thirty-eight-years’ experience as a military pilot and commander.

Seán outlined his journey from a novice practitioner to a place of professional competence and the importance of mentoring, coaching, and training on that journey.

*“Leadership matters. It’s a huge part of the job, it is important to you, and it is important to those around you. Leadership starts with you, it’s about you, it’s about those who follow you”*.

He reflected on his first days as Chief of Staff, the evacuations from Kabul, the first land war in Europe since WW2 and the resultant accommodation challenges. Leadership is a roller coaster, with highs and lows.

Seán used an example of an accident involving a helicopter to show the difference between robustness and resilience. The robustness of the crew, from their training, saved the day and new safety procedures followed. Seán and his team were developing a vision paper outlining the capacity to provide search and rescue from Roscommon. It took resilience to not let political pressure stop the development of this valued service.

*“We train for robustness, we educate for resilience, hence we have the term soldiers and scholars.”*

Seán outlined four areas to consider resilience: physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental.

He advised building resilience in ourselves, in our teams and organisations. He used the example of five Christmas tree baubles representing family, friends, health, works and soul to show how to develop personal resilience in the four areas listed above. He asked if one of the baubles were to be rubber, which one would it be and suggested that it would be work. Work hard and work efficiently to build your personal resilience, then transfer that resilience to your team.

Seán suggested we ask ourselves the following questions:

- Am I looking after my followers?
- Am I in creating the environment for them to support me as a good leader?
- How do I build resilience into the team?

He suggested looking at the team to see:

- Who do I see as future leader?
- Who do I need to develop as a future leader?
- Who to focus on to build succession?

Examples lessons from mission command:

- The Leader says what needs to be done, but not how to do it
- Accepts that mistakes may will happen and people will learn from them

- The mission is the task and decentralised execution allows for growth of resilience in the team

Culture permeates every organisation and there will be disruptors such as curriculum change, leadership change which can disrupt the growth of resilience.

He asked us to question of ourselves:

- Are we diverse in our thinking?
- Have we made assumptions or are we planning effectively for the future?

Culture is based on ethos; the climate is set by the leader by treating everyone fairly and equally with transparency. He used the analogy of a hand in a bucket of water – while your hand is in it, it occupies the space, but once removed the water fills the hole. A good leader can step away without leaving a hole.

Seán suggested positive steps for the future:

- Take care of your physical health
- Project positivity, hope and convey wisdom
- Use preemptive action to enable
- Challenge people in their tasks
- Building team resilience also builds personal resilience
- Listening is most important and hardest form of communication
- Accept mistakes may happen and take risks
- Facilitate people doing jobs because they want to, not because they must
- Be kind to yourself, the good days outnumber the bad
- There will be days when you need every ounce of resilience you have
- Celebrate success

Seán Clancy’s keynote was engaging and informative. I have only touched on some of the wisdom Seán shared. We are grateful to him for sharing his knowledge and experience. We look forward to continued engagement with him on the NAPD Corporate Advisory Board, where NAPD benefits from his, and others’, wisdom.



**Paul Byrne** is Deputy Director of NAPD. He is a former President 2016-17.

It was no surprise that NAPD Conference 2022 Striving for Sustainability – Our Leaders Our Schools Our Future would feature a keynote presentation on climate change and our progress to date.

School leaders are well aware that this is the most pressing issue of our times and are deeply conscious of the passion and commitment of young people to do something about this emerging crisis.

Dr Augustenborg gave a very informative and sobering analysis of what needs to be done by all of us to avert a climate catastrophe. She outlined where we are at and how little time we have left to avert going beyond an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoid the biggest crisis facing humanity.

Here are some salient points from her presentation:

- We have now a target of net zero emissions by 2050 enshrined in Irish legislation. This is an enormous challenge and means adapting and redesigning our infrastructure and our society. Our schools will be central to this change.
- Everything and everyone affects climate change but those who will be most affected will be young people and their children.
- We need to move from a linear to a circular economy and the good news here is that we are a leading EU state when it comes to remaking, reusing and recycling. There is the potential to create 100,000 jobs in the next decade if we are determined, innovative and creative.
- Unfortunately, we are regarded as climate laggards in most other areas particularly in regard to climate change and emissions. Our emissions are going up rather than down - with agriculture and energy the biggest problem.
- We are graded a moderate C on the climate leadership board since we are not meeting our international commitments to achieve a 50% reduction in carbon emissions. Despite recent legislation we have a long way to go.

So how does this impact on our schools and what are the challenges for school leaders?

This is the single most concerning issue for young people. They are facing a very different lifestyle and world. We need to hear their voice at every level of society and capture their knowledge, passion and creativity. A recent Citizen's Assembly on Diversity and a Youth Assembly allowed space to develop ideas and policies with important suggestions from young people.

## Conference Keynote – Dr Cara Augustenborg

by Kay O'Brien

Our education system and school leaders will be required to play a significant role in order to capture innovative and creative ideas from young people and will need to change a packed curriculum to allow young people to express their views and fight for change.

All subjects will need to be adapted. Leaving Cert subjects Climate Action & Sustainable Development and Politics and Society will play a part and go some way to giving young people a voice in this critical area of change.

Projects that promote creativity, a love of heritage, nature, diversity, sustainability, recycling, science and innovation such as NAPD Creative Engagement, Young Scientist Exhibition, Junk Couture and the Green Schools Programme will in some small way tap into the concerns of young people.

Individual changes will make a small but important impact but the real change will occur when there is large scale community and national change and all our systems including our education system adapts and radically changes focus.

To change everything takes everyone.

Once again, school leaders will be called upon to plan for reform and implement radical measures to support and empower young people to raise their voices for change.

You can view Dr Augustenborg's presentation on the NAPD website. You might consider sharing with colleagues and students to start a conversation on future policy. You might also visit *Flood Risk Map Finder 2050* to see what parts of our cities, towns, homes, schools and local communities are at risk of flooding by 2050 if we exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius

The clock is ticking. Alarm bells ring louder and louder. There isn't a Planet B.



**Kay O'Brien** is chairperson of NAPD Arts Heritage and Culture (ACH) Committee. She is a former President of NAPD. She retired as Deputy Principal from St Ciarán's Community School, Kells Co Meath in 2014.

## Conference Keynote – Zachary Walker

by Mary Keane

Zachary Walker 's keynote was in response to the question "How do we build learning in a sustainable way? What can we ask and what things we can do"?

He said that our first responsibility as school leaders is to make the school the absolute best so that people will want to lead it. He described the hedgehog concept – school leaders should focus on what they can do best. Leaders can't do everything well; so better to focus on what you can well and stop doing the things you can not.

He also stressed that the quality of the leadership support is the number one reason a teacher decides to stay working in a school. Therefore, the future of a school depends on the things its leader does today. The things leaders inspire teachers to do emerges the strongest factor in school's future and development.

He advises leaders to asks themselves 'are you a meerkat or an ant'? Meerkats continuously scan the horizon for threats and opportunities. Ants keep the head down and stay busy, carrying everything on their backs.

He asked about the supports that leaders provide for the development T&L – "what are the instructional pillars in your school"? He advised school leaders to control the controllables, be intellectual, driven by data, be proactive not reactive, be innovative in making changes before you have to – don't wait for others to identify and dictate what needs to be done.

He spoke about school culture and what leaders bring into the room – school leaders need to be cognisant of their personal core behaviours – these are crucial. He advises leaders to assume good intent from staff, to talk to people not at people, to give credit to others, to get on and do the work without complaining. And, importantly, have fun and stay playful.

He asks of school leaders "who sits at your table? Who do you engage with? With diverse groups, leading to thinking outside the box or with those who think similarly, resulting in groupthink?

What kind of energy do you bring with you? Are you giving your teachers permission to be awesome"? Leaders must take care of the staff – leaders are responsible for "healthy not happy". They must create a healthy environment but are not responsible for making everybody happy

He listed the attributes that people look for in a leader:

- transparency
- participation in decision making
- neutrality
- communication

The school's culture is the leader's legacy – it's what they leave behind.

Zachary made a very important statement, placing responsibility on today's generation of school leaders: "you are the biggest factor that people go into leadership". We must model a positive and purposeful leadership – not one categorized by moaning and whinging. We must ask ourselves how we present leadership to others. How do aspirant leaders see us as leaders?

I found this to be a very beneficial talk, which will have leaders ask serious questions of themselves - what they do as leaders, how they go about it, what type of leadership they model for others to considering following them into leadership – or not. Zachary was very direct, inspirational, no faffing; it wasn't based on a theoretical approach, rather it was practical and accessible.

If you haven't seen this presentation, I recommend you make it your business to do so.



**Mary Keane** retired as Principal of Christ King Secondary School, Cork in 2019. She was President of NAPD in 2017/2018.

One word incorporating one theme occurred more than any other in President Rachel O'Connor's address – goodwill. With a broad-brush stroke, Rachel returned time and again to position goodwill at the heart of the big issues of concern to members and to those we serve.

**Key points in presentation:**

- Goodwill steered the system through the Covid crisis – with no training and little or no support, we did what was best for our school communities.
- Extra resources were given to schools during Covid but catch-up will take a long time.
- Skyrocketing anxiety levels are putting massive pressure on already limited resources. Schools are not equipped to deliver therapeutic and counselling solutions. We need increased supports from HSE therapeutic and counselling services, so that we don't require to wholly rely on the goodwill of guidance counsellors, year heads, class tutors, mentors, buddies, and check and connect teachers.
- Ukrainian children have been welcomed into our schools and our communities, with people going out of their way to afford a generous welcome.
- In the middle of a teacher recruitment crisis, goodwill, in many instances, is keeping schools open. Rachel lost count of the number times they called in 'a favour' in the staff room looking for cover for colleagues – again, leaning on that collective goodwill.
- Rachel questioned the merit of the 2-year PME involving "an extortionate expense following a 4-year degree ... a barrier to entry into the teaching profession".
- While there was insufficient ICT support in schools, she welcomed the continued investment by the DE.
- NAPD is committed to support meaningful change in Senior Cycle in the best interests of students but doesn't want some of the negative experiences of Junior Cycle to be repeated.
- Rachel welcomed NAPDs continued involvement in the implementation group where "our input will be solution focussed, progressive and student-centred".
- Post primary education should be just that- post primary education - and not a gateway to higher education.
- The establishment of SOLAS, QQI, ETBs and the Dept of Further and Higher Education have dramatically changed the post-secondary landscape. There are specific challenges to FET provision within the post-primary system – "if FET is to be seen as an equivalent alternative, rather than a safety net, it must be resourced accordingly as an

## Conference Keynote – Rachel O'Connor

by Barry O'Callaghan

equal part of an integrated tertiary education system".

- She welcomed that the scope of accountability has been widened in Looking At Our School 2022 to include other leaders, Deputies and Boards of Management. We need an urgent review of governance structures to ensure a collective responsibility and to avoid the buck stopping with same one person – the Principal.
- "Results are stark" in the Health and Wellbeing survey by Deakin University. The demands of the job are having a serious impact, including stress, burnout, sleeping troubles, depressive symptoms, somatic stress and cognitive stress.
- School leaders needed specific administrative support. An NAPD proposal made to the DE would ensure leadership sustainability, making the post of Principal more attractive, ensuring stronger retention and resulting in less human error and greater efficiency.
- The noble aspirations about school leadership contained within LAOS 2022 are being undermined by the "insurmountable administrative burden" on leaders.

The leitmotif of Rachel's keynote is that the essential ingredient for the healthy functioning and wellbeing of our schools, for the benefit of those working within and, most importantly, for those it serves, is ... goodwill.

It's the glue that holds the disparate parts together. It's also the icing on the icing on the cake. From my own understanding of those who choose school leadership, goodwill will always be there. It's part of our DNA, part of who we are and what we do.

Goodwill, however, is elastic. Worn thin, it leaves the tires threadbare. The car becomes harder to steer; the destination no longer guaranteed. Kieran Golden, 2019 President, quoted by Rachel, was correct – 'the system can only get lucky for so long'.

Yes, Minister?



**Barry O'Callaghan** is the publications editor of NAPD. He is former Principal of Senior College, Dún Laoghaire, now Blackrock Further Education Institute.

## Conference Keynote – Norma Foley T.D.

by Tim Geraghty

The Minister for Education, Norma Foley, opened her address by expressing her great pleasure at being at the NAPD Conference and her appreciation to President, Rachel O'Connor, and Director, Paul Crone, for the invitation to be there. She appreciated the warmth of her welcome and the hospitality extended to her officials at the previous evening's banquet. She thanked the President and Director for their ongoing engagement with her Department on behalf of NAPD and extended her congratulations to incoming President, Shane Foley, and incoming Vice-President, Regina Butler.

The Minister expressed her deepest sympathy to all affected by the terrible tragedy in Creeslough, County Donegal.

The Minister was gracious in her appreciation of the work done by school leaders during Covid and acknowledged the challenges that had to be faced and dealt with. She drew attention to the extra €700m allocated to support students in their efforts to catch up on lost time.

She recognised the generosity of communities in welcoming Ukrainian refugees and the compassion of school leaders in making provision throughout the school year for those forced to flee their country. Over 12,000 students had already been enrolled nationally and the Ukrainian ambassador had conveyed to the Minister her deep gratitude for the efforts to make Ukrainian Students feel at home.

Her department had provided 600 extra language teachers, is working with the Teaching Council to ensure rapid registration of Ukrainian teachers and is providing additional supports through NEPS and the NCSE.

The Minister was adamant that the rise in the cost-of-living increase should not be a barrier to education and has provided approximately 40% increase in capitation grants. There is also an increase in SEN funding and in provision to support wellbeing and anti-bullying measures.

On a broader front, the Minister is totally committed to Senior Cycle Reform. She is aware of the strengths of the current programme but also its shortcomings. She

is determined that the array of talents which young people possess should be afforded a diversity of learning pathways and assessment modes that will allow those varied abilities to be recognised and grow and flourish. She referenced Drama, Film & Theatre Studies and Climate Action & Sustainable Development as new Senior Cycle programmes to enhance learning opportunities.

She emphasised the importance of student wellbeing and of the student voice, and mapped out a way forward for proposed reforms.

The Minister expressed her gratitude for the role that school leaders had played in ensuring that the State exams have been held successfully in difficult circumstance and especially the holding of a second Leaving Certificate examination this year. She appreciated the support of school leaders in the State Examinations Commission's efforts to recruit examiners and is reviewing the holding of the orals at Easter.

The Minister concluded by acknowledging that leadership is not easy but commended school leaders for their unwavering commitment to ensuring that each generation of students is so responsibly cared for.

The round table discussion between the Minister, Director and President that followed focussed on the administrative burden on school leaders, Senior Cycle reform and the recruitment and retention of teachers.



**Tim Geraghty** is a former Principal of St Tiernan's Community School, Balally, Dublin. He is also a former Deputy Director of NAPD. He was President of NAPD 2009-2010.

## Conference Workshop – Mark Sparvell

by Frances Neary



I had the pleasure to sit through Mark's workshop on 'The Case for Social-Emotional Learning and Technology' which was packed with useful resources and practical hands-on skills that can be very easily rolled out in our schools.

Mark demonstrated PowerPoint and PowerPoint live, which is free and available on office.com, showing all of the useful tools for students and teachers. This programme helps students practise, rehearse, give feedback and contribute to presentations.

It is very simple, user friendly and inclusive, supporting every student and their abilities. As a school leader PowerPoint live is transformational and makes presentations, engagement and feedback so much easier. It is well worth exploring. It will no doubt make a difference to preparation and planning and also be a useful tool for school leaders, teachers and students who can create fun, creative and interactive presentations.

A new feature of Microsoft Teams was demonstrated. This feature is an emotional check in to recognise and value the space of emotion. The feature allows the students to pause and reflect on their external and internal factors that might influence how they think and react.

The new feature is very visual and user friendly and is a great check in for teachers to gauge how their class is emotionally in real time. This check in can then help the teacher direct their class and respond to the

findings as they present. It's a fantastic real time tool will make a huge difference in class.

Mark's strong interest in emotional intelligence was evident in his energetic and engaging delivery. His supporting of facts, examples and expert knowledge in this field resulted in a presentation that gave the attendee the ability to see the true benefits for these ICT tool within the class and whole school.

This was a very beneficial workshop for a school leader and well worth sharing with teachers within your school. The tools/features that were demonstrated support wellbeing in so many ways. The potential for the emotional check in is limitless, as it can be used in all aspects of school life.

If you didn't get to attend this presentation, I would highly recommend logging onto the NAPD website and viewing it. I have shared it with my own staff staff and I look forward to the feedback from our school community.



**Frances Neary** is Principal of Trinity Comprehensive, Ballymun, Dublin. She is also an NAPD National Executive Board Member.



## Conference Workshop – Dr Cara Augustenborg

by Regina Butler

**D**r Augustenborg conducted this workshop in the context of thinking about the needs of future generations in a sustainable sense. The framework for this work is based on the United Nations Sustainable Goals. These have brought major developments and improvements in areas such as hunger, HIV and keeping more children at school for longer.

Now we are looking at Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how we can incorporate them into our educational curricula in order to create awareness of the issue and to help us to address societal and student needs and anxieties.

Cara explained the 3 pillars of sustainability: Environmental, Economic and Social. Each SDG has integrated targets which can be worked at on a company/school/region /country level. Each target has indicators which measure success. Some targets have more data on them than others.

Cara says it is important for us, in our context, to look at how Climate Action can be integrated into the Primary, Secondary and Third Level curricula. She took the example of a Parisian primary school where the first project they ran was a one-week pilot – ‘car free week’ - where no cars dropped off or collected pupils at the school.

A second project was where the teachers and pupils monitored food waste. One week every year they measured the daily amount of food waste and then

shared this information with pupils. In this project they also introduced the use of a metal tray to present the food instead of dishes. This consequently cut down on dishes to be washed (which not only saved water but the tray doubled as a bullet proof vest!).

In Ireland, the NCCA says that as part of their Climate Action Module, Climate Action is to be a core component in Irish Education by 2025.

It is notable also that county councils have Climate Action central to their agendas and this is forming a part of their fundraising narrative.

At school level, we can immediately address the climate anxiety that students and staff feel by taking the first step by measuring each person's own carbon footprint.

“The Take One Programme”, by Valerie Lewis of Tipperary ETB, was quoted by workshop participants as a very valuable piece of work done in this area of Climate Action. This programme has received additional funding from the DE and is now available nationwide. All the preparatory work is done for the teacher on the Sustainable Development Targets, which have been broken down into Units of Learning ready for use by teachers in the classroom.

All in all, Dr Augustenborg gave a high-quality workshop on Climate Action which was expertly researched and delivered.



**Regina Butler** is Principal of Scoil Mhuire, Cork. She is also Vice-President of NAPD.

# Conference Workshop – Aidan Ryan

by Ceola McGowan



It was a pleasure to listen to Aidan Ryan speak about the Theory of Positive Psychology, linking it to his life story, our lives and the lives of our students. There is so much talk of resilience and mental health in the media and the world of celebrity, that a lot of ambiguity has been created and sometimes the really important messages and lessons are lost.

The primary focus of this workshop was to differentiate between robustness and resilience and to clarify the meaning of each. Aidan believes that learning to be robust should be our priority. With his background, he used examples of military examples showing the difference between the two.

Robustness is the ability to cope on a daily basis while resilience is widely misunderstood since it is, and should only be, needed in certain situations in our lives. Aidan wonders if we should be trained for robustness, should we spend more time training others, in our case, our students, to roll with the punches of day-to-day life?

Resilience, he believes, is learned through informal education. It is a lifelong learning, hopefully only to be required in rare situations.

Because of the time constraint of the workshop, Aidan chose to highlight only one of the pillars of psychology. He spoke about the essential skill of savouring the good times. Our attitude to life and our situation can change everything. We have control

over our attitude. Our brains are wired in such a way that makes it easier for us to be negative.

But if we train ourselves to have a positive attitude and if we build a bank of positive experiences which we can turn to in challenging times. Remembering good times can sustain us in difficult times. We need to learn to pause and enjoy the good moments in life.

This can have a meaningful impact on people. By changing one's disposition to a more positive state this can have a real impact on one's existence in good times and bad. To paraphrase a well-known quote, *"people do not remember words that are spoken but they do remember feelings they caused"*.

As leaders, it is incumbent upon us to understand resilience in ourselves and in others. We need to develop a positive environment for those whom we lead, so that in our school communities we learn to deal with the adversities of life.



**Ceola McGowan** is Deputy Principal of St. Clare's Comprehensive, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim. She is also an NAPD National Executive Board Member.



## Conference Workshop – Zachary Walker

by Sarah Gibbons



**W**e were told we would be uncomfortable. We were told we would be active and we were told that we are the responsible for our actions as leaders. With that warning, delegates were treated to an honest, energetic and interactive keynote delivered with humour and expertise, full of reflective moments on how we are operating in our schools by Dr Zachary Walker.

Following on from his superb, thought-provoking keynote, which left attendees bursting with ideas, discussion points and tangible ideas on how to improve and change their school culture, systems and behaviours, Dr Zachary Walker facilitated two high energy workshops packed with practical actionable tips as to how we, as leaders, can ensure that we are building sustainability in our schools.

Titled *15 Tips in 30 Minutes*, the workshops primarily focused on small, yet inspiring changes that we can integrate into our everyday lives. These practical tips for sustainability and positive school cultures are quick and easy to implement, with massive and immediate effect.

Suggestions varied from simple and effective such as ensuring we write emails with the audience in mind, such as using first names as much as possible, avoiding 'I' and thinking about the order of the names with multiple recipients. He also suggested more complex and vulnerable approaches to working with our colleagues, such as admitting our flaws out loud, to inspire others who may fear failure to learn how to

accept feedback as a constructive exercise in order for our schools to flourish.

While addressing meetings, and acknowledging Irish time, Dr Walker made a compelling case for the use of structure, ensuring that we do not run over time by having strategically placed clocks, revisiting using AOB as a final - and regularly rushed - agenda item and ensuring that we include praise and 'shout outs', acknowledging the positive work that has taken place.

The effect of a handwritten thank you note was met with the realisation that we all love to receive one and the power of changing our narrative from 'Yes, but' to 'Yes, and' was coupled with the recognition as to how we can encourage, inspire and develop future leaders, those brilliant colleagues who are our succession plans, the future of our schools.

Zachary encouraged us all to stay playful and have fun – and it is fair to say that he demonstrated that he lives by his own rules. There was an overwhelmingly positive response to these workshops, with delegates after session 1 having to be gently encouraged to leave, in order for session 2 to commence.

And while he was correct – we were uncomfortable at times, we also had the opportunity to realise that we are indeed responsible for our actions and we have the power to make the small changes that are necessary to ensure that we create a sustainable future for ourselves and for our schools.



**Sarah Gibbons** is Deputy Principal in Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, Dublin. She is also an NAPD National Executive Board Member.

# Conference Workshop – FET Workshop

by Sorcha Ní Dhonnacha

Andrew Brownlee



## What a new funding model means to the FET Colleges

In June 2022, SOLAS published the final report by the Independent Review Panel on the FET Funding Model Review. The recommendations of this report have great implications for the funding of FET as a whole and for FET Schools and Colleges in particular. This new model heralds a move to an outcomes-based funding model in common with most international FE systems.

This workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the implications with the Chief Executive of SOLAS, Mr Andrew Brownlee. Andrew welcomed the observations and feedback from FET Principals and Deputy Principals on the new model.

The following recommendations were discussed by Mr. Brownlee along with their implications for the FET sector:

**Recommendation 1:** Advance to a streamlined funding structure with ETBs, funded through five discrete pots, thereby enabling greater autonomy and flexibility.

**Recommendation 2:** Shared definitions for use of the funding model with associated targets should be agreed by SOLAS and the FET sector and enshrined in the Strategic Performance Agreements.

**Recommendation 3:** Weightings should be used to account for variations in resource intensity, cost, and strategic initiative.

**Recommendation 4:** Intelligent, data-driven reporting and monitoring through use of PLSS will be the foundation of the new funding model. Funding will be allocated based on accurate PLSS data input and analysis.

**Recommendation 5:** Outcomes-based funding should be applied based on numbers of learner completions in the previous year. FET provision and funding will be driven by learner demand and socio-economic need.

**Recommendation 6:** Bespoke funding solutions will be put in place that recognise the unique character of FET, including for apprenticeship and Youthreach provision, with quantitative and qualitative measures in place to ensure focus on outcomes and impact.

**Recommendation 7:** Strategic, multi-annual planning will support the new funding approach, agreed and delivered through the SPAs.

**Recommendation 8:** Programme harmonisation across all FET provision with a focus on agile course development, which can respond to regional needs, alongside more consolidated branding of courses in line with the Future FET strategy.

Overall, the outcome of the feedback was positive, with attendees feeling that the new model is a way forward for PLC Colleges.

The workshop ended with the announcement that Dr Rory O' Sullivan was retiring as Chair of the FET/NAPD committee. His successor, Dr Markita Mulvey, wished Rory well and thanked him for his commitment and dedication to the FET sector and his colleagues over long years.



*Tá Sorcha Nic Dhonnacha ina Príomhoide, ar Coláiste Teampall Mhichíl, Longfort. She is also an NAPD National Executive Board Member.*

# Conference Workshop – Coimriú ar fhorbairtí agus ar chompháirtíochtaí reatha COGG

**Le Feargal Ó Giolláin**

**B**híontach an deis í seo dúinn ag Ceardlann 7 bualadh le chéile 'beo' don chéad uair le nach mór trí bliana. D'fhreastal os cionn fiche feisire ar an gceardlann a chuir Pádraig Ó Beaglaoidh agus Peadar Ó Loideáin ó ChOGG ar fáil dúinn.

Dhírigh said ar na hacmhainní atá curtha ar fáil ag COGG agus dár ndóigh na forbairtí atá idir lámhe acu don todhchaí.

Luadh an 'Leabhrán Téarmaí' don chéad bhliain ach go háirithe – acmhainn foclóra, frásaíochta agus gramadaigh ó gach ábhar do dhaltai na céad bliana.

Taispeánadh fiseán dúinn ar chonas rochtain a fháil ar 'An Tairseach' agus conas é a úsáid. Is éard atá sa Tairseach ná acmhainní cruthaithe ag múinteoirí do mhúinteoirí, i nGaeilge i réimse ábhair SS agus AT. Déanann COGG dearbhú ar cháilíocht na Gaeilge sna hacmhainní seo.

I measc na comhpháirtíochtaí reatha atá COGG bainteach leo ná;

TG4 Foghlaim, IFI (An Cailín Ciúin), Tuiarisc.ie (rannóg na bhFoghlaimoírí), PPL1(mapaí teanga), Saoloibre.ie, CLG-Ceannairí an Todhchaí, Iriseoirí an Lae Amárach (TG4 & UCG), Vifax (Ollscoil Mhaigh Nuad), Irishleabhar Eipic.

Tá leabhar Gearmáinise don SS á fhorbairt acu freisin, maraon le páipéir samplacha don SS nua.

Chomh maith leis an gcur i láthair cuimsitheach seo pléadh Comhdháil do Scoileanna Gaeltachta agus Gaelcholáistí atá á eagrú don 20ú Aibreán 2023, in ÓStán na Páirce, an Muilleán gCearr. Chuireadar dréachtphlean an lae faoinár mbráid agus lorgaíodh smaointe ón gceardlann maidir le míreanna eile ábharacha ar chóir díriú orthu. Ardaíodh Gaeilge T1 don SS agus AT agus dár ndóigh earcú múinteoirí dár n-earnáil.

Ba mhaith liom ár mbuíochas a chur in iúl don chur i láthair spreagúil, misniúil a tugadh dúinn. Is fiú an t-aitheantas a thabhairt do ChOGG as an méid oibre atá ar bun acu dúinn san earnáil seo.

Tá sé tábhachtach a lua go raibh Gean Gilger ó ETBI agus Peigí Ní Chonghaile ó Ghaeloideachas inár

dteannta. Tá sraith ceardlainne eagraithe ag Gean agus BOOÉ don earnáil Ghaelscolaíochta ar fad a bheidh ar siúl ar líne i rith na scoilbliana reatha. Táimid uilig ag treabhadh an ghoirt chéanna agus is mór an chúis dóchais dúinn é go bhfuil na heagraíochtaí go léir, NAPD, COGG, ETBI agus Gaeloideachas ag obair as lámha a chéile chun tacaíocht a thabhairt dár n-earnáil agus é a chur chun cinn. Gur fada buan a mhairfidh an comhoibriú seo.



Tá **Feargal Ó Giolláin** ina Phríomhoide ar Choláiste Chillíain, Baile Átha Cliath. Is é Cathaoirleach, Fochoiste Gaeloideachas an NAPD.

MARY NIHILL



DONAL O'REILLY



The workshop explored the impact of the allocation of additional Deputy Principals in larger schools. The emerging themes from research carried out by the CSL in conjunction with the 3 Management Bodies and NAPD are:

- Personal and professional benefits for both Principal and Deputy Principal
- Leading Learning & Teaching prioritised with some schools setting this as a criterion for the selection of the additional Deputy Principal
- Many schools consulted with the school community in advance of the appointment of the additional Deputy Principal
- Increased engagement with LAOS
- Significant development in leadership capacity eg weekly meetings with the Middle Leadership Team which are minuted, actioned and followed up ensuring accountability
- Recognition of the need for professional learning for the SLT reflecting the new dynamic

Two questions were posed.

**First Question:** what are you doing in your working relationship with the Principal/Deputy Principal that makes you a good teammate?

The emerging answers included: having defined time for the SLT to meet, with one group taking three days per year for the purpose of forward planning; Deputy Principal felt they were consulted and their opinion had worth; that the two-way communication gave a sense of ownership.

## Conference Workshop – CSL

by Deirdre Hickey

The theme of trust arose in the second workshop - such as the importance of the Principal not micromanaging tasks for which the Deputy Principal had responsibility. Facilitating individuals in the SLT to use their own skillset; however, this was countered by the opinion that individuals, while playing to their strengths, should not remain in their comfort zones and become entrenched in roles.

### Second Question:

What are you doing in your working relationship that could be getting in the way of positive teamwork?

The feedback to this question from both workshops included the importance of ensuring that the Principal permits the Deputy Principals to fulfil their roles and not take over. Decisions making and the underpinning rationale needs to be transparent. Once a decision is made the importance of a unified stance was considered very important. On occasions, the Principal might not consult with the Deputy Principals to make a more expedient decision can erode positive teamwork. In addition, should the Principal not delegate work, it can indicate a lack of trust.

The workshops concluded with a mentimetre poll seeking a response to: what insight have you gained from this workshop that will enhance the Senior Leadership Team in your school? The results from both workshops will be shared with participants.

Finally, Mary encouraged all Principals to avail of coaching from an executive coach. The funding for this is provided by the Department of Education. Once the Principal completes coaching, the SLT can avail of three coaching sessions with the same coach or with a different coach.



**Deirdre Hickey** is Principal of the Teresian School in Donnybrook, Dublin. She is also an NAPD National Executive Board Member.

THE CARNEY ANGLE

WELL YOU DID SAY THE PRINCIPAL HAD TO HAVE A VISION!



I see a Christmas tree.

Dec 22

# Do our schools need psychologists

Professor  
Luke O'Neill



I am a big fan of Lucy Kellaway. For many years she was a journalist in the Financial Times but in 2016 she announced that she was leaving to become a Maths teacher. She then moved on to teaching business studies and recently said "I'm not remotely repentant about what I've done. I have not been bored for one second. I am so interested in what I am doing that I have become a bore to my old friends".

She has also co-founded a charity called 'Now Teach' which helps people to change career and bring their experience into the classroom. She's been very keen on encouraging professionals of all kinds, and particularly people in the City of London to give up their jobs and become teachers, bringing their life experience to the job. She has written a memoir about her decision to go into teaching at the age of 57, called 'Re-educated'.

There are some great quotes, including when she writes about her new life:

**“Even though it is far more tiring than my old one, it doesn’t stress me out in quite the same way. I think this is because it’s not actually about me. It’s about the students”**

Or, when she reflects over the events of a particularly stressful day:

**“I did some bad things and some good things. And that, it seems to me, is good enough”**

But the main reason I write about her is an article she recently wrote for her old employer, the Financial Times, about anxiety in secondary school students. She wrote about how the teenagers she has been teaching are the most unhappy group of students she has had to deal with. Just like in Ireland they spent months learning at home online. They also had to contend with the stress of lockdown, unable to meet their friends or take part in key rites of passage, so important for their mental health.

She quotes Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner for England, who told her that the number of young people with a probable mental health disorder had risen from one in nine before the pandemic to one in six. The number of children being treated for a mental health disorder is a record 420,000. She reports other startling statistics, with the Coalition for Youth Mental Health in Schools reporting a quarter of young women in England having a mental health disorder and a third of girls aged 16-18 having self-harmed.

The situation is likely to be very similar in Ireland, as I'm sure many school leaders are experiencing. A survey carried out in December 2021 in Ireland (<https://publichealth.ie/blog-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-mental-health-of-people-living-on-the-island-of-ireland>) revealed that 45% of 15-24 year olds described their mental health as 'bad'. Those with a probable mental health problem rose from 10% in 2016 to 15% in 2020/21.

27% of young women reported a probable mental health problem. In Aug 2021 the Irish Times reported how COVID19 had been a 'perfect storm' for eating disorders among teenagers, with a sharp rise in cases. There was a 61 per cent increase in admissions to psychiatric units for children and adolescents between 2019 and last year.

Lucy writes that the most obvious indicator that teenagers



are in trouble is that they are absent from school. She says that there has been no sign of this letting up, even though the lockdown ended over a year ago. Her school has made a big effort, phoning students and even sending a minibus around to get them out of bed and bring them to school. Absenteeism however remains a problem. She quotes one of her students who, when asked about her poor attendance, said: "Why should we come to school when during lockdown we taught ourselves, which Lucy says is not unreasonable".

What can be done about all this? Lucy writes that most teachers are poorly equipped to deal with distress on this scale. Principals and Deputy

Principals are likely to be as ill equipped. Her instincts tell her to plough on with lessons regardless. Schools are wondering what to do - whether to be 'hard or soft' on students. But the experts she talks to say it's difficult to know what to do. More pressure on students might exacerbate the problem. She discusses how anxiety, low mood and unhappiness are not illnesses.

Students need to be given coping skills. Students who are unwell need professional help with counsellors. She writes that teachers shouldn't try to 'play the shrink' however. But one expert, when asked if teachers should go soft on students or ignore the issue, says that "teachers have been thrown to the dogs. You are damned if you do and damned if you don't". I would think the situation is even more stressful for school leaders who after all have to carry the can when it comes to students but also when it comes to looking out for stressed teachers who carry this extra burden.

I think that Lucy's article is very important for Principals and Deputy Principals everywhere. I also know that this is recognized as a very important area, since before the pandemic. I add my voice to highlighting its importance. School leaders, teachers and students all need support in these post-pandemic times. Are the current psychological services sufficient? Do schools need psychologists on the staff to help? Career guidance counsellors can help of course but what's happening to students goes way beyond career guidance. Are these extra stressors a reason for why it's difficult to fill the post of Principal and Deputy Principal, or another reason for early retirement?

These are important questions for the Department of Education to consider, to ensure that the necessary support for Principals, Deputy Principals, teachers and students are put in place in these still challenging post-pandemic times.



**Luke O'Neill** is a Professor of Biochemistry in the School of Biochemistry and Immunology in TCD. He is also an author, social and media commentator and distinguished musician.

# REFLECTING ON 100 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN IRELAND

## Was Equality ever a Priority?

**Brian Fleming, Judith Harford  
and Professor Áine Hyland**

Irish Educational Studies recently published a special issue on educational disadvantage which we co-edited. In it we included an article under the above title. The following is a substantially abridged version. A copy of the article is available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2022.2085765>

The section of the 1916 Proclamation that is most frequently referenced is that which States: "The Republic guarantees religious and civil rights, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness of the whole nation and all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally ..." For its time, the document was progressive in social and economic terms.

### THE EARLY DECADES

In relation to equality of opportunity in education, the history of the first four decades of the State can be quickly summarised. The ideal was quite regularly espoused by politicians in deference to those who led the Independence movement. The reality, however, is that no serious steps were taken to introduce the necessary reforms (Harford, 2018). This period is widely recognised as one of conservatism and insularity, crystallised by a symbiotic relationship between the State and the Catholic Church, which promoted a mutually reinforcing agenda of Catholicism and nationalism, 'a static system for a static society' (Garvin, 1994).

The 1960s, however, was a transformative decade in the history of modern Ireland which witnessed a paradigm shift in education policy. Developments at that time have been covered in detail elsewhere (Fleming and Harford, 2014; Harford and Fleming, 2018; O'Sullivan, 1992; 2005; Walsh, 2009). The key development at this time was, of course, the introduction of free second-level education, announced in September 1966 by then Minister of Education Donogh O'Malley. The 'O'Malley reforms' resulted in greatly

increased numbers continuing their education beyond primary level. This was the one and only time that education policy became a primary focus of government and not just that of the line Minister. His actions are firmly lodged in the folk memory but two features are often overlooked. He realised that more needed to be done but his package of initiatives was not implemented in full. Also, one of the public servants most closely identified with the initiative drew attention some years later to the fact that further initiatives were needed but this was ignored (Hyland, 1971). Nothing significant ensued until the mid-1980s. Gemma Hussey was the first Minister to acknowledge that the reform of the 1960s, while significant, had not led to the introduction of an equitable education system. She and her successors, Mary O'Rourke and Niamh Bhreathnach, began to introduce the notion of equity into policymaking, that is the recognition that equality of opportunity implies unequal treatment in the allocation of resources to those most in need. Each of them introduced initiatives designed to tackle educational disadvantage.

### THE 1990s: GROUNDS FOR OPTIMISM

The 1990s was a key period in the development of education policy. Various important reports and government policy papers were published, including an OECD Review of Irish Education (1991), a Green Paper, *Education for a Changing World* (1992), a subsequent government White Paper, *Charting Our Education Future* (1995) and *Educational Disadvantage in Ireland* (Kellaghan et al., 1995). In 1993, a National Education Convention was held which received a wide range of submissions from interested parties and discussions ensued in public session at the convention. The Secretariat, consisting of seven distinguished educationalists, produced a report in due course (Coolahan, 1994). Like the other publications, it highlighted the problem of educational disadvantage suggesting that it required 'urgent attention.'



## THE EDUCATION ACT (1998)

Following protracted consultation and discussion in the 1990s, the Education Act (1998) was finally passed when Micheál Martin was Minister. It aimed 'to make provision in the interests of the common good for the education of every person in the State including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs ....' The Act provided for the establishment of an Educational Disadvantage Committee (EDC), an independent expert group operating on a statutory basis. During its three-year life, it made four written submissions to the Minister for Education covering a variety of topics including how educational disadvantage might be identified and defined for the purpose of targeting resources. In its final report (2005), it emphasised that schools alone would not achieve educational equality and that the report should move the debate beyond school-based education.

## DEIS

The DEIS (Delivering Equality in Schools) plan was launched by Minister Mary Hanafin in 2005. It introduced a new integrated school support programme 'to bring together, and build upon, existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage'. Meanwhile, no replacement EDC was ever appointed, notwithstanding the legislative requirement in the Education Act – a very strange action on the part of successive Ministers. In essence, it represented a rejection of the notion that tackling education disadvantage required a whole of government approach: DEIS returned the issue of educational disadvantage to the responsibility of the Department of Education (DE) and to schools.

Even though the DEIS programme was subject to ongoing evaluation, no fundamental change in its structure or focus has been introduced since it commenced in 2005 (Fleming and Harford 2021). Moreover, policy decisions taken in relation to educational disadvantage continue to focus almost exclusively on school-based initiatives with little or no engagement with other government departments or local and community groups. Regular reports on the DEIS initiative show that the attainment gap in Irish post-primary education is being narrowed but only at a very slow pace. Most recently, it has been widely acknowledged that those students living in circumstances where home learning resources are limited have been most severely impacted by the pandemic (Harford and Fleming 2021).

## CONCLUSION

As we celebrate the centenary of the State's foundation, it is reasonable to expect that our policymakers and society generally would engage in some reflection. Hopefully, the pandemic has proven to be a wake-up call. We have seen the important and varied role schools play in society, and the many weaknesses and inequities in the system, which have existed for years, have been exposed for all to see (Harford 2021).

Over the course of the twentieth century, equity in Irish education was seen purely in terms of access. Just one

serious effort was made to bring that about and, as we have seen, the reform in the 1960s failed to achieve the Stated objective despite the many improvements that ensued.

The 1998 Education Act expanded the objective to include the notion of equity in terms of participation. However, the fundamental policy changes necessary to bring that about were never introduced. Indeed, the DEIS programme, as is designed and structured, will ensure the preservation of social class advantage for decades to come (Fleming 2020). We know that the educational experience of young people has a hugely significant impact on their life trajectories under various headings.

The costs to the individual and society of failures in our provision can be hugely significant. Surely in a mature and just society, the fact that a child has been born into poverty should not ensure that s/he has little or no chance of fulfilling her/his full potential. If we are to break the inter-generational nature of poverty in many communities, an equitable, inclusive and well-resourced education system is a *sine qua non*.

For the vast majority, the Irish education system proves to be more than adequate. As a result, there are powerful forces happy with the status quo. So, to bring about fundamental change, political leadership and courage will be needed. Happily, Seán Lemass has left us a template.

We need a Taoiseach who prioritises education in the context of a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy and remains committed to reform. Part of this commitment will be to ensure that a greater proportion of the State's expenditure is devoted to education.

Also essential is an equally committed Minister for Education who is given time to bring about change in the context of a whole of government approach. In the Education Act, we committed ourselves to ensuring that we have a truly inclusive education system in which the needs of all students must be addressed effectively. This objective was restated when we signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and is part of the current Programme for Government.

A serious effort to achieve this objective is long overdue.



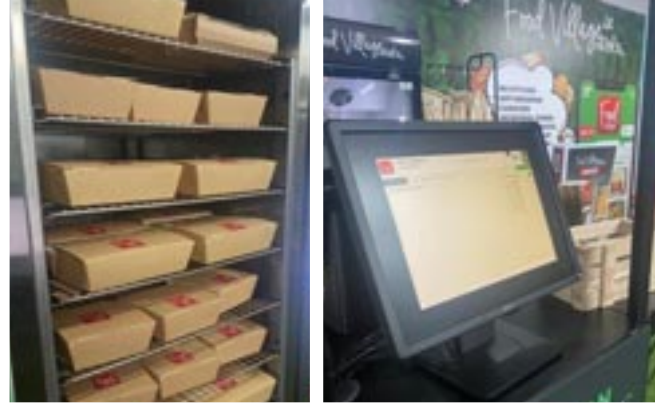
**Brian Fleming** was Principal of Collinswood Community College and is a former member of the NAPD National Executive.



**Judith Harford** is Professor of Education and Deputy Head of the School of Education, UCD.



**Áine Hyland** is Emeritus Professor of Education and former Vice-President of University College Cork.



## The key to your School meal solutions!

Food Village would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every person who dropped by our stall at this year's NAPD Conference. It was a truly amazing experience for Food Village and our team. Thanks to the NAPD Conference we are delighted to be welcoming a lot of new schools to the Food Village service and the new way forward in hot and cold school meals.

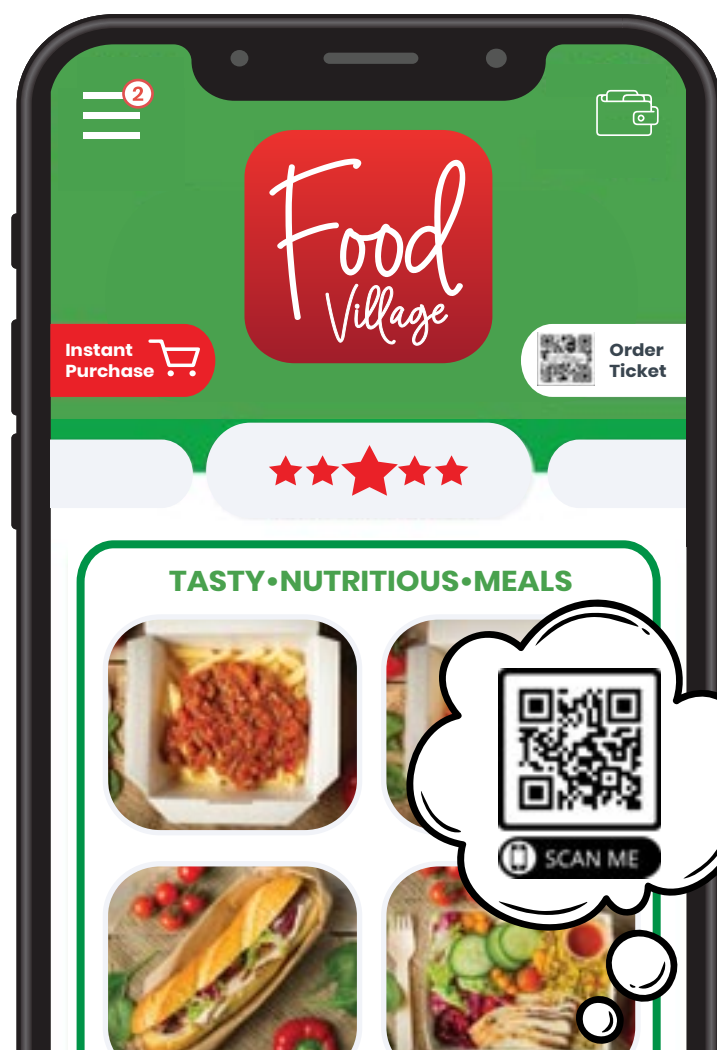
**Food Village offers teaching staff & students a choice from over 160+ full meals, snacks, treats and drinks all at a very competitive price.**

From start to finish, Food Village looks after your entire school meals service from supplying the I.T and ordering systems, meeting with each year to show them how to download our unique ordering app and linking their collection key tag. All aspects of the service are managed by a dedicated fully trained support team.

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# ANALYSING EDUCATION

By Sean McDonagh

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE



### SOME EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES

The populations of the nations of Europe, including Ireland, are undergoing major changes – changes that will add to the many challenges confronting society. The population pyramid, the population by age group, is changing fundamentally in each country. The planning of society, of its economy and national services, including education, must respond to and anticipate these changes.

Census information and other up-to-date population studies are vital to national planning. The educational system is strongly affected by demographic change and its performance and capacity to adapt can also affect and influence regional demographic change.

The preliminary results of Census 2022 show an increase in the population of the Republic of Ireland since 2016. The 2021 Census in Northern Ireland also showed an increase there.

This note, for discussion, seeks to draw attention to some facts about demographic change and to suggest some educational contexts and responses to them.

## CENSUS 2022: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The 2022 Census reveals a total population of the Republic of Ireland of 5,123,536, an increase of 361,671 or 7.6% on the population in 2016. It is an increase of about 540,000 or 11.9% on the population of 2011. This level of population was last experienced in the 1840s.

Every county showed a population increase since 2016, with increases varying from the smallest, 4.5%, to the largest, 14.1%. Dublin increased by 7.7% and its increase of 103,342 represented 28.6% of the national increase. Dublin and the Mid-East (Meath, Kildare, Wicklow) accounted for 166,127 or 45.9% of the national total.

Table 1 shows the % population increase by county since 2016 revealed by Census 2022. 13 counties exceeded the national average increase of 7.6%, with 10 of them in Leinster. 13 counties increased by less than the national average.

**Table 1: Population, % Increase by County, 2016-2022 (State 7.6%)**

|                            |   |  |                       |                           |
|----------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Meath 12.9<br>Kildare 11.0 | Longford 14.1   |  |                       |                           |
| Wicklow 9.2                | Wexford 9.2   | Waterford 9.4                              | Leitrim 9.5           |                           |
| Dublin 7.7                 | Carlow 8.8<br>Laois 8.2<br>Westmeath 8.0<br>Louth 7.9 |  | Roscommon 8.4         |                           |
| <b>DUBLIN/MIDEAST</b>      | <b>REST OF LEINSTER</b>                               | <b>MUNSTER</b>                             | <b>CONNACHT</b>       | <b>ULSTER (3 cos.)</b>    |
|                            |   | Clare 7.2<br>Cork 7.1                      | Galway 7.1            |                           |
|                            | Offaly 6.0  | Limerick 5.4<br>Kerry 5.1<br>Tipperary 5.1 | Sligo 6.5<br>Mayo 5.2 | Cavan 6.6<br>Monaghan 5.6 |
|                            | Kilkenny 4.5  |  |                       | Donegal 4.5               |

Census 2022

The largest increase was recorded by the second smallest county, Longford. The two next largest increases were in Meath and Kildare, whose combined populations are now 10 times that of Longford, having increased by more than the population of Longford. In the period 2011-2022 the stock of habitable dwellings increased in Meath and Kildare by 12% – the highest increase in the State.

Economists write of the role of dynamic cities and their environs in economic and population growth. The counties that contain the three cities Cork, Limerick and Galway each had a population increase less than the national average of 7.6%.

The county with the fourth city, Waterford, grew by 9.4%, more than the national average. A county which adjoins Waterford City, Kilkenny, had, with Donegal, the lowest growth, 4.5%.

In north Dublin, Fingal grew by 11%, well above the national average. Combining the results of Fingal, Meath and Louth suggests strong growth possibilities for the Dublin/Belfast corridor which contains four of the five largest towns in the Republic: Drogheda, Dundalk, Swords and Navan.

All the counties of the Wild Atlantic Way grew by less than the national average.

## POPULATION BY PROVINCE

Table 2 gives the population (in '000) by province from census 2022 and in 2011 and 2016. The population has increased by 7.6% since 2016 and by 11.9% since 2011.

**Table 2: Population by Province, 2022, 2016, 2011, '000, % change.**

| Province                | 2011  |         | 2016  |         | 2022  |         | Change since |       |
|-------------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|--------------|-------|
|                         |       |         |       |         |       |         | 2011         | 2016  |
| <b>Ulster (3 cos.)</b>  | 290   | (6.4%)  | 297   | (6.2%)  | 312   | (6.1%)  | +6.1%        | +5.3% |
| <b>Munster</b>          | 1,244 | (27.2%) | 1,280 | (26.9%) | 1,364 | (26.6%) | +9.6%        | +6.0% |
| <b>Connacht</b>         | 562   | (11.8%) | 551   | (11.6%) | 589   | (11.5%) | +8.7%        | +6.9% |
| <b>Rest of Leinster</b> | 700   | (15.3%) | 727   | (15.3%) | 785   | (15.3%) | +12.1%       | +8.0% |
| <b>Dublin/Mideast</b>   | 1,801 | (39.3%) | 1,907 | (40.0%) | 2,073 | (40.4%) | +15.1%       | +8.7% |
| <b>Total</b>            | 4,581 | (100%)  | 4,762 | (100%)  | 5,124 | (100%)  | +11.9%       | +7.6% |

Table 2 illustrates the largest population growth over the past decade was in Dublin and the Mid-East (Meath/Kildare/Wicklow). The Rest of Leinster also grew by more than the national average. The other provinces grew by less than the national average, with the least growth being shown by the three Ulster counties.

The population of Northern Ireland, the six other counties of Ulster, was recorded in their 2021 census at exceeding 1,903,000, having grown by about 2% from 2016 and 5% from 2011. The population of all-Ireland now exceeds 7m. with the Republic contributing about 72.9% and Northern Ireland 27.1%. The population in Northern Ireland is the highest ever recorded while the population of the 26 counties of the Republic is the largest since the 1840s.

For comparison, the population of England at 59,489,800 grew by 6.6% in the 2011-2021 decade. For the first time those aged 65+ exceeded those under 15. Wales at 3,107,500 grew 1.4%, less than all English regions. Scotland, with 5,515m. in 2021 had grown 4.2% since 2011.

The challenge for Ireland with this larger population now – a population that will undergo major change – is to achieve and maintain the highest international standards for its educational and knowledge infrastructure.

In 2022 the 53,672 first round CAO offers of Higher Education places to applicants from the Republic of Ireland were distributed as follows: Ulster (3 cos.) 6.5%, Munster 27.0%, Connacht 12.6%, Rest of Leinster 16.4%, Dublin/Mid East 37.5%. The offers exceeded the population % (Table 2) in all regions except Dublin/Mid East. Dublin itself with a population of 1,450,701, 28.3% of the total, received only 23.9% of the CAO offers.

In 2022 UCAS made 13,650 offers of places to applicants from Northern Ireland. Of these 9,600 (70.3%) were in Northern Ireland, with 3,140 in England, 690 in Scotland and 220 in Wales. In the past a majority of those from Northern Ireland accepting places in Britain did not return to Ireland on graduation. The offers were to about 8,000 females and 5,600 males.

## FERTILITY RATES

Population change, nationally and regionally, is obviously affected by natural change (births minus deaths) and by net migration (immigration minus emigration). The international reputation of the educational system, its welcome and its provision for immigrant pupils and students at all levels can be major influences in the attraction of talented immigrants and their families.

The population increase of 361,671 between 2016 and 2022 was made up of 171,338 (47.4%) natural increase and, significantly, a majority 190,333 (52.6%) through net migration. In the year to April 2022, 58.2% of immigrants had third level qualifications.

Fertility rates, i.e. the average number of children per woman, has been declining across Europe and the developed world. The replacement rate is 2.1. In 2018 the fertility rate across the EU was 1.55, well below replacement. In 2021 the rate in Ireland was 1.7. Compared to the past, school pupils in the future will have fewer siblings and will live in smaller households.

Ireland, like so many developed countries, no longer fully reproduces its population. As a former country of large emigration, it now relies on immigration to complete its employment and skill needs.

Across Europe and in Ireland women are giving birth to their children later in life. In Ireland the average age of first-time mothers in 2021 was 31.6 and for all mothers 33.3. Ireland is undergoing societal change. In 2021 34,271 (58.6%) of births were registered as within marriage. (In 2021 in the UK for the first time in history a majority, 51%, of births were registered as being outside marriage.)

The 58,443 births in 2021 were 21.7% less than the 74,630 births in 2011. Of these 45,381 (77.7%) were born to mothers of Irish nationality. Of the remainder, 8.4% were from the Eu15-Eu27 and 2.1% from the Eu14 (excluding Ireland). The UK accounted for 2.0% of mothers and other nationalities 9.8%. Schools, colleges and society in the future will be enriched by not only migrant young people of various cultural and language backgrounds but also by Irish-born young people of diversity also.

The distribution of the 58,443 births in 2021 by province was Ulster 6.0%, Munster 26.3%, Connacht 11.3%, Rest of Leinster 15.3% and Dublin/Mid-East 41.0%, closely matching the population distribution in Table 2.



## AGEING AND DEPENDENCY

Consistently low birth rates and growing life expectancy are transforming the shape of the population age pyramids across Europe. EU countries including Ireland are transforming to an older population structure with profound implications. A major educational response is required to the challenge and transformation this presents.

**Table 3: Age Structure 2021: 0-14, 15-64, 65+, % population**

|                            | 0-14 | 15-64 | 65+  |
|----------------------------|------|-------|------|
| <b>Republic of Ireland</b> | 19.9 | 65.3  | 14.8 |
| <b>EU</b>                  | 15.1 | 64.1  | 20.8 |
| <b>Northern Ireland</b>    | 19.2 | 63.7  | 17.2 |
| <b>England</b>             | 17.9 | 63.4  | 18.7 |
| <b>Scotland</b>            | 15.6 | 64.8  | 19.6 |
| <b>Wales</b>               | 16.4 | 62.3  | 21.3 |

Table 3 considers the Age Structure in 2021 of Ireland, the EU and the UK by noting the percentage of the population in three categories: young people 0-14, working age people 15-64 and older people aged 65+.

Ireland now has a comparatively favourable population structure within the EU or compared to the UK. The Irish share of young people, 19.9%, is the highest in Europe. With Luxembourg, Ireland has the lowest share of population aged 65 or over. It is through the excellence of the educational system – at all its levels – and its inclusiveness that this favourable population structure now can be transformed into a long-term advantage.

The Median Age of the EU population is increasing. In 2021 it was 44.1 years. In that year, Ireland, after Cyprus, had the second lowest Median Age of 38.2 years.

Age Dependency Ratios may be used to study the support given to younger (0-14) or older (65+) people by people of working age (15-64). In 2021 the Old Age Dependency Ratio, the ratio of old to working age people, for the EU was 32.5%, with just over three people of working age for every person 65+. That year, the Old Age Dependency Ratio for Ireland was 22.6% with four working people for every older person.

The Old Age Dependency Ratio is growing across Europe, including Ireland. A response to that growth has to be an increase in the productivity of the workforce, in the excellence and relevance of their qualifications and in the extension of working lives and workforce participation. The educational system has a major role in this response in promoting high level skills, and life-long reskilling and upskilling opportunities. Ireland's larger and aging population requires an immediate increase in the caring professions – doctors, nurses, dentists, carers etc. A greater female participation in STEM careers is advocated. These demographic challenges coincide with major technological changes and with the greening and digitalization of society.

Japan, a country recognised in the 1970s as a world economic and technological power, suffered a population decline of over 700,000 in 2021 and 3m. since 2008. In Japan, those aged 65+ now account for nearly 30% of the population while those of working age, 15-64, have fallen below 59%. The Old Age Dependency Ratio is close to 50% - close to two workers for every older person. Japan's fertility rate is about 1.3. Japan's median age is 48.6.

### Future Labour Force

With low birth rates, increasing longevity and old-age dependency rates, together with major change in future skills and work practices, future labour force planning should be a national priority.

Ireland has some advantages. Its population structure, Table 3, now is favourable compared to European competitor countries. Table 4 shows the employment figures for Q2 2022 when 2,555,000 were employed, an employment rate of 73.5%, the highest ever recorded. Of these 2,011,000 were in full-time employment and 544,000 worked part-time. Females accounted for 41% of full-time employees and a majority, 68%, of those in part-time employment.

**Table 4: Employment, Male, Female, Q2 2022, '000.**

|                  | Male  |       | Female |       | Total |
|------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| <b>Full-Time</b> | 1,186 | (59%) | 825    | (41%) | 2,011 |
| <b>Part-Time</b> | 174   | (31%) | 375    | (68%) | 544   |
| <b>Total</b>     | 1,360 | (53%) | 1,220  | (47%) | 2,555 |

**A future major challenge is to upgrade the qualifications of the workforce to the higher skills required in the emerging changing technological, digitalised and green society and economy.**

Over the previous year, the Labour Force had grown by 121,300 to 2,674,500, giving an unemployment rate of a low 4.6%. The CSO speaks of demographic and participatory effects contributing to the increase. In the future, much emphasis will be placed on immigration – the attraction of highly qualified migrants and returning emigrants – as a key factor in manpower planning. The causes of the emigration of some Irish graduates – and its temporary or permanent nature – will now receive closer examination.

Ireland has a further advantage in the educational attainments of its workforce. The completion rate of upper secondary, 95%, is high by European standards as is the rate of attainment, 55% of tertiary education qualifications. A future major challenge is to upgrade the qualifications of the workforce to the higher skills required in the emerging changing technological, digitalised and green society and economy.

### **EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE**

Ireland's favourable population structure now – which will change – can be transformed into a long-term advantage by the comparative international excellence and inclusiveness of its educational provision at all levels.

Demographic change through low birth rates and a growing old age dependency rate now brings additional challenges to the educational system. Greater productivity, higher workforce participation and longer working lives require the conferring of the highest skills with reskilling and upskilling opportunities. The challenges of demographic change are in addition to the challenges presented by technological advance, the greening and digitalization of society and changing work practices.

Ireland's future is now strongly dependent on its ability to attract talented qualified migrants. The educational system – at all levels – can be a major attractant. It must cater excellently for the children of migrant workers from various cultural and language backgrounds. It also must cater professionally for Irish children with non-Irish parents and various home languages. Interschool collaboration and national virtual learning initiatives may play a constructive role in a multicultural enrichment.

English is the major global language. It is by far the most studied foreign language at upper secondary level in the EU. Brexit has caused Ireland to be the only Anglophone country in the EU which should make Ireland attractive to many investors and migrants. Ireland enjoys the EU free movement of people and also a free travel area with the UK. The Irish educational system should fully exploit this fact by the extensive provision of English language studies and courses through English in a variety of formats and by the attraction of international students at graduate and post-graduate level. Talented international students may choose to live and work in Ireland after graduation.

Globally, millions of people claim Irish heritage. Major educational initiatives could build strongly on these international links. They could include varied opportunities e.g. semester or Summer courses to study that heritage or opportunities to become international students in Ireland. Such initiatives could be important drivers of a reverse migration of Irish talent back to Ireland.



Seán McDonagh is a former Director of an Institute of Technology and a former University Lecturer in Mathematics. He was Director of the Skills Initiative Unit promoting actions to increase the supply of technicians to the Irish economy. He was a member of the national Expert Group for Future Skill Needs. Recent activities have included membership of an international group advising on Educational Strategy in the Sultanate of Oman. He was keynote speaker at a European Conference of the Universities of Applied Science in the Hague and at a meeting of the Danish University Colleges at Kolding. He has spoken on education in Columbia and at the national conference of the British Educational Studies Association.

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# Looking at Our School 2022 – a commentary –

Dr Mark Fennell

## **‘KNOW THY IMPACT’**

With these words, John Hattie summed up his core message from the largest meta-analysis of effective teaching and learning strategies in the English language.

He went on to be more specific and said that teaching is most successful “... *when teachers meet to discuss, evaluate and plan their teaching in light of the feedback evidence about the success or otherwise of their teaching strategies and their conceptions about progress and appropriate challenge. This is not critical reflection. But critical reflection in the light of evidence about their teaching*” (Hattie, 2012, P22).

‘Looking at Our School 2022’ (LAOS 2022) echoes this claim: *‘The most powerful agent of improvement is a well-integrated system of evaluation ...’* (LAOS, 2022 p10).

As the recently published framework for the third cycle of mandatory school self-evaluation (SSE) and of external inspection, LAOS 2022 seeks to ensure that school communities and inspectors approach the collaborative task of school improvement with a common language and shared assumptions.

LAOS 2022 is for the most part unchanged. It contains editorial amendments to the 2016 edition and aligns with

current policy priorities. Key principles are stated. Interestingly, it now explicitly ‘respects the professional agency and autonomy of the teacher and school leader’. Similarly, 2022/56, the DES circular directing SSE from 2022-2026 gives greater scope for school choice than in previous cycles. Is there a tacit invitation to greater local, professional initiative?

## **SSE - WHO OWNS THE PROCESS?**

Yet how many teachers actually feel empowered by SSE? Do they not more frequently groan at what is seen as an external imposition, more work, a constant policy churn? Principals have testified that SSE is indeed not commonly well received by staff (O’Brien et al 2019). Has this really changed much after Covid?

Nevertheless, SSE has the potential, as LAOS 2022 suggests, to validate collaborative local decision making. As a long-time advocate of SSE put it, ‘schools must speak for themselves’ (MacBeath, 1999). How then can sometimes surly compliance evolve into authentic professional agency? That goal, both cultural and technical, defines a central challenge school leaders of learning must wrestle with.

To get more buy-in, maybe we should look afresh at what we are selling.



## AUTHENTIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Perhaps a good starting point would be to commit to a no-nonsense criterion of usefulness. The only justification for school self-evaluation – school improvement planning is that it leads, directly or indirectly, to significant, lasting improvements in the quality of students' learning, engagement, and wellbeing. Clarity and seriousness of intent are essential.

Once an ambitious purpose is nailed to the door, the challenges can be squarely faced. Most improvement efforts take time, more time than a typical SSE cycle, in fact. They often disrupt existing practice before they can deliver benefits, so may be perceived as ineffective or worse in the short term. Dispersal of effort leads to superficial and transient change. Implementing substantial change over time is the hardest task a leader of learning faces. Leaders are the ones who must keep the fizz in the bottle. The message must be, choose wisely, go deep, keep going, avoid distractions.

Smart engagement with LAOS 2022 can certainly play its part in this.

### LAOS 2022 – SSE / SIP

The LAOS 2022 framework is well researched and authoritative. The 32 standards, with the accompanying statements of effective and highly effective practice, within the 8 domains of learning and teaching and leadership and management, reflect dominant themes in current school improvement scholarship. Key themes shaping the standards reflect this: evidence informed teaching and decision making, leadership with a strong focus on learning and teaching, ever deepening professional collaboration relentlessly committed to improvement in practice, distributed leadership, learner formation, with a skilful, active and vocal student at its centre and alignment to emerging new curriculum, among others (Leithwood et al, 2020).

LAOS 2022 supports the six-step SSE process by directing its gaze at features of school life and classroom practice that are known to make a difference. Systematic SSE should then weed out glib or self-serving opinions, impressions that often confirm what people already think or are the product of group think among likeminded colleagues. Above all, the verb 'look' captures what resonates most. Look, see, delay judgment and gather evidence - these are the key messages of the SSE approach to using LAOS 2022. For this, an evaluative mindset is required, ready to question assumptions and assume different perspectives.

Of course, school culture is not necessarily hospitable to evaluation or improvement planning. Teachers are not natural evaluators. They struggle to gather and interpret data and to convert it into valid evidence (Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2020). Yet knowing where to look and what to

look for is a start. The next step is to use this information wisely.

## STATEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE AND HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: USES AND LIMITATIONS

How do the statements work in the task of evaluating practice? This is best answered by looking at a couple of practical and important examples.

In the domain 'Teachers' Individual Practice' one of the four standards is: 'Selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning intention and the students' learning needs'. One of the statements of highly effective practice is as follows:

*'Teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively for a variety of purposes including the stimulation of substantial student responses, the facilitation of deeper engagement **with lesson content and the extension (sic) of learning beyond the lesson'** (Bold type marks the addition of high effectiveness)*

In the domain 'Teachers' Collective and Collaborative Practice; one of the standards is 'Value and engage in powerful learning and professional collaboration'. One of the corresponding statements is:

*'Teachers view collaboration as a means to improve student learning and also to enhance their own professional learning. They engage in constructive collaborative practice **and in collaborative review of their own practice.'***

## HOW CAN WE USE STATEMENTS LIKE THESE TO EVALUATE PRACTICE AND FOCUS EFFECTIVE ACTION PLANNING?

Both standards and corresponding statements indicate central features of formative assessment and professional collaboration respectively. They fix attention on broad-brush representations of desired practice. What they cannot do is prescribe the actions to achieve their aims. They are indicative rather than prescriptive. So, it is up to practitioners in SSE to use them as prompts, not to reach evaluative judgments there and then, but rather to marshal more fine-grained evidence of what effective practice would look like and what its guiding purposes are. Wide stakeholder consultation may be desirable, but insight into evidence-based practice is essential.

In both cases, it is such focussed, evidence-informed understanding of detailed practice that sets the level at which any proposal for action might be pitched. Much is known about what conditions support effective formative questioning and professional conversations. It also helps to ensure ready access to concise, accessible, high-quality evidence, such as is provided, for example, by an organisation like the Education Endowment Foundation or through high quality CPD.

Bottom line: the quality of an evaluation and consequent improvement plan will never exceed the quality of an understanding of what good practice is and of the core purposes it aims to achieve. Delivery of worthwhile development, and ownership of the SSE process, hinge on this.

Transient and superficial decisions are the bane of SSE, though they may conjure a temporary illusion of progress. The key take-away is that the statements are where inquiry and learning start, not finish. Two forms of evidence, from within the school or classroom, and from the wider field of knowledge of good practice need to be blended, so that judgments and decisions sensitive to context may lead to plans of action that promise something more than a routine process that does little more than go through the motions.

Indeed, probably the best sign that this was happening would be if colleagues proceeded to write their own follow up statements of effective / highly effective practice. They would be more detailed and pinpoint issues of concern or proposals for action, so that they help to guide the implementation and evaluation of the improvement plan that the exercise gives rise to.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

LAOS 2022 is potentially a highly useful framework. It can help to transform the culture of SSE. Teachers might come to endorse a seriously ambitious process if they see that it enhances their work in the classroom rather than distracts from it. Committed and savvy leadership is required.

Effective implementation is the next step. SSE serves school improvement planning. This is arguably insufficiently theorised or supported in the current SSE model.

'Looking at Our Implementation 2022' might be a useful successor publication. But that is another story!

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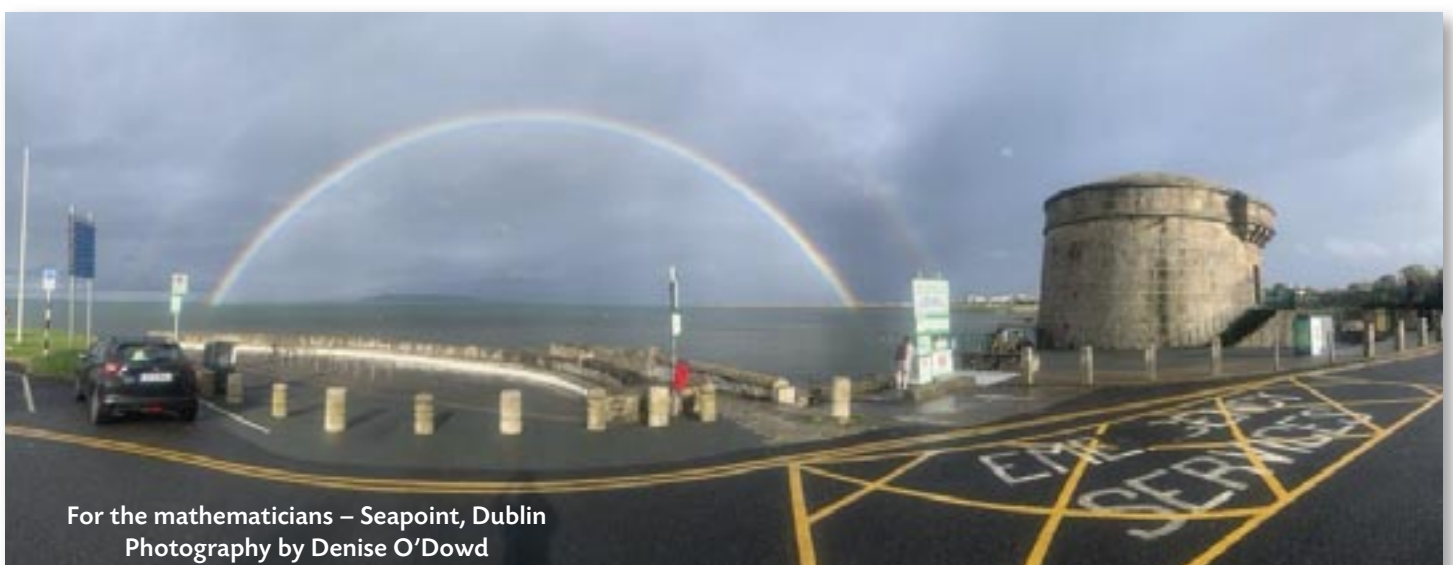
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He has worked with the JMB on Leading Learning for newly appointed Principals and Deputies. Mark taught in NUIG, UCD and Maynooth on initial teacher training, leading learning and development planning. He worked in school development planning and school self-evaluation in SDPI for over a decade. He is currently teaching and supervising part-time on M.Ed. programme in TCD.



For the mathematicians – Seapoint, Dublin  
Photography by Denise O'Dowd

# NAPD's new President...

# Shane Foley

*In his own words*



**Where it all began** – I was born in Ferbane, Co Offaly and attended Primary school in Cloghan. I went from there to St Joseph's and St. Saran's Secondary school in Ferbane, which was run in the most part by the Sisters of Cluny as they had a boarding school for girls in the town.

**College** – I attended NUI Maynooth, where I did a BSc and H Dip in Ed. I completed my teaching practice in Coláiste Chiaráin in Leixlip.

**Career** – My first teaching job was in Scoil Mhic Shuibhne, on the north side of Cork city. Many know it now from the film/series – it's where the Young Offenders went to school. I taught Maths, Physics, Science, Electronics, and Computing. For its time this school was a leading example of adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the students.

From there I went to Saudi Arabia for a year and taught Maths to all levels. On returning to Ireland, I began working for Co Dublin VEC, now DDLETB. I worked in Donaghmede, Jobstown and Castleknock CC. In my second year in Castleknock I was appointed to an AP1 position. Over the years I carried out many duties for my POR: State and house exams, IT, Year Head, timetabling which served me well for my next appointment when, in 2010, I was appointed DP in the newly established Adamstown CC. In 2012 I was appointed Principal of Dunshaughlin CC, a Co. Meath VEC school. More recently, I was provided with the opportunity to head up the brand-new start-up school in Enfield under the patronage of LMETB.

**Involvement with NAPD** – From the moment I was appointed as DP in Adamstown CC I joined, which for me was so important as it represented the real voice of school leaders in Ireland. I remember attending my regional meetings which were always such a great way to network and learn. From my appointment as a DP, I have attended

Conference every year. I was fortunate to have been elected to the executive of NAPD, where I have served as Region 3 rep.

**Biggest issues in Irish Education today** – I think that we often focus in on one or other issue that is topical on the day. However, if we were to look back on our own schooling and trace our own experience as teacher/school leader then I believe that while we have made big strides for our students, we still need to develop our schools so that there is a clear focus and zero tolerance on bullying type behaviours. As school leaders it is our job to create the sort of environment where our students feel safe and have a voice.

**Priority issues as President** – As President I want to play my part in the development of our Statement of Strategy. Everything in this resonates with the issues that I have been articulating on behalf of school leaders. The very essence of being a school leader is contained in this.

**The one big change I would make if I was Minister** – Expand the remit of NAPD to include a responsibility for research on leadership issues and initiatives in our schools. In particular, I would provide a clear funding stream to provide school leaders with the opportunity to engage with such research.

**And finally – What people might not know about me** – In my spare time you will most likely find me on the sideline of a GAA pitch, either as a supporter or a coach. I am fortunate to have four children who are all involved in sport which means a lot of other things in life have to take a back seat. So right now, there is no time for skiing in Alaska, chasing whales at Tierra del Fuego, snowboarding in the Himalayas, snorkelling off the Gold Coast of Australia – plenty of time for that when I get the "sum lump"!

# Erasmus+: First Steps to classroom collaboration across Europe

Deirdre O'Brien

Innovation in the classroom is essential for teachers looking to stimulate young minds. This can be both daunting and rewarding in equal measure.

The Erasmus+ programme offers a clear pathway for Irish secondary schools to develop and share new ideas in education throughout Europe. For 35 years, opportunities have existed for training and job-sharing initiatives in the youth sector. Teachers have been a part of the programme for much of that time. Between 2021 and 2027, the European Commission plans to support another 10 million learning mobility and cross-border cooperation projects.

The popularity of the programme is evident. In a recent survey, 89% of participants said that Erasmus+ provided invaluable support to schools when addressing national educational priorities, which would not have been possible without project participation. Between 2014 and 2021 over 1,100 teachers across Ireland participated.

There are two types of projects, known as 'Key Actions'. No matter what type, a successful Erasmus+ project becomes central to school life and benefits the school, staff, and pupils alike.

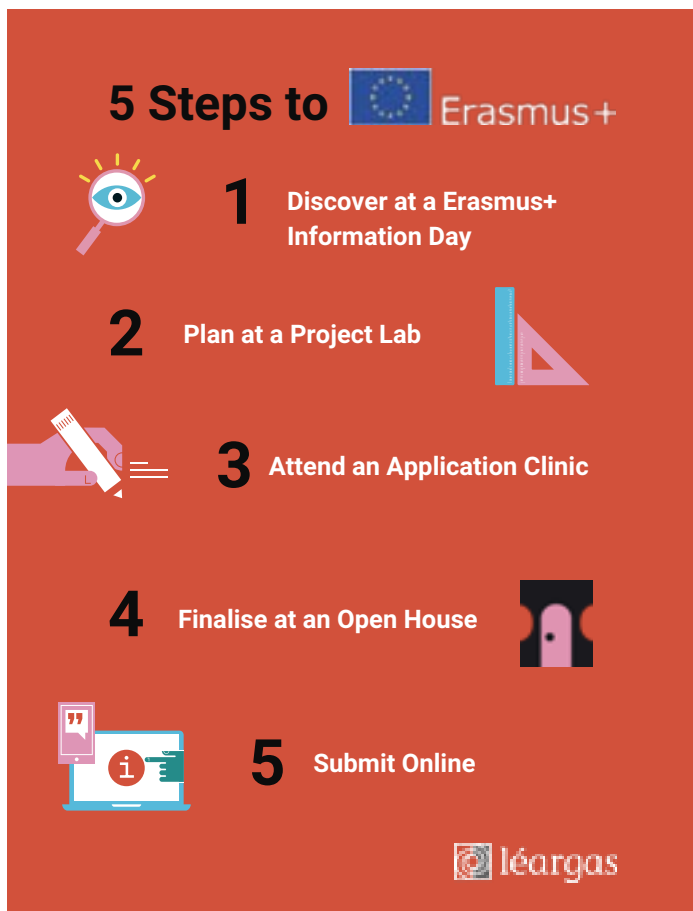
Under Key Action 1, staff members can travel abroad for short job-shadowing or training periods designed to assist the whole school.

Under Key Action 2, schools and education organisations can lead or join a strategic partnership. In this collaborative international project, organisations work together to raise standards in teaching and learning by developing and

*The popularity of the programme is evident*



Staff at Davis College Mallow, Co Cork, participated in job shadowing and learning opportunities with teachers in Norway, Germany, Spain and Italy.



sharing new working methods or research. These can be school-only partnerships, partnerships between local/regional authorities, or partnerships between schools and other education and training organisations.

As one example, Davis College in Mallow, Co. Cork, benefited from job shadowing and learning opportunities with schools in Norway, Germany, Spain, and Italy. The project included students, teachers, special needs assistants, management, and other ancillary staff, who participated and focused on increasing physical and mental well-being. New sports and activities, including taekwondo, handball and yoga, were introduced and healthy foods were made available in the school canteen.

According to Ronan O'Sullivan, the Erasmus+ coordinator at Davis College, "our teachers brought new ideas into their classrooms, which resulted in increased enthusiasm and motivation from staff and students alike, raising standards across the curriculum. In addition, the transnational collaboration allowed us to be part of a European collective".

Before applying, interested schools should understand that Erasmus+ is orientated around a school's needs rather than those of the individual teachers. Organisations must agree on strategic priorities and how Erasmus+ can help pursue these goals.

Implementing successful Erasmus+ projects requires

support from the whole organisation, which may be challenging if there is no history of such projects or a reluctance to get involved.

Interested first-time applicants are advised to attend an Erasmus+ information day, where they can find information on funding opportunities available and partner with schools. Together, they walk through critical steps in applying and what considerations exist. Léargas also encourages potential applicants to sign up for our newsletters, where information on deadlines and new programmes is featured.

Schools can subsequently connect with Léargas experts at "project lab" events where an idea is developed so that it meets the needs of the school.

As a further example, St Joseph's Secondary School, Rush, Co Dublin embraced this need and partnered with schools in five countries across the EU to examine identity, language and culture by turning folk tales into a range of comic books called "Strip to Identity". Student were enthusiastic in their feedback and they appreciated the interactive teaching form.

An alternative starting point may be for teachers to look at eTwinning, a European initiative that digitally connects schools for collaborative projects. These projects can begin immediately after registration and be as short or long as desired and so they are well suited to individual class work.

Whichever way is chosen, there is support for applicants to apply and identify actions that support teaching goals in the school.

The Minister for Education, Norma Foley, has recognised the importance of Erasmus+ by saying "the impact of the Continuous Professional Development is felt not only by an individual staff member but on a whole school level. The opportunities for knowledge and skills transfer, sharing ideas and experiencing different systems are exciting and rewarding for the whole school community".

Erasmus+ will undoubtedly see more opportunities for teaching staff and students to develop a Europe-wide perspective of education.

**LÉARGAS** manages national and international programmes in youth work, education, and training, including **Erasmus+**, **European Solidarity Corps** and **eTwinning**.



**Deirdre O'Brien** is the Senior Support and Development Officer with the Erasmus+ for Schools Education, with Léargas in Ireland.

# Belong To

Stephen Cassidy

A new report from Belong To, the national LGBTQ+ youth organisation, uncovers the harsh reality of life at school for 1,209 lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) second level students across Ireland. Despite significant positive progress in recent years in Irish society with legislation, national strategies, and policies to protect LGBTQ+ people in Ireland, the 2022 School Climate Survey found that school is still not a safe place for LGBTQ+ students.

The survey asked second-level students who identify as LGBTQ+ about their feelings of safety, instances of LGBTQ+ discrimination, experiences of harassment, and availability of school-based support and resources for LGBTQ+ students, in the most recent academic year. This year, 1,209 LGBTQ+ students took part in the survey in Ireland. The research found that 76% of LGBTQ+ students feel unsafe at school, 69% of LGBTQ+ students hear homophobic remarks from other students, while 58% of LGBTQ+ students heard homophobic remarks from school staff.

Positive indicators from the report include that 99% of LGBTQ+ students said that they know at least one school staff member supportive of LGBTQ+ identities. Findings



show that this level of support leads to LGBTQ+ students being more likely to feeling accepted by their peers, having an increased sense of belonging and being less likely to miss school to avoid victimisation.

CEO of Belong To, Moninne Griffith (she/her) commented that: "in the past two years, we have witnessed the rollback of LGBTQ+ rights internationally, the growth of the far right, and horrific violence inflicted on members of the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland. There is still a long way to go for these changes in laws and policies to translate into change experienced in the everyday lives of LGBTQ+ young people".

She went on to say that "this research highlights the urgent need for educators, parents, schools, policymakers, and politicians to listen to LGBTQ+ students and to learn from them. We must ensure the safety and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ students who are seriously at risk. We need the government to integrate LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusion to teacher-training



courses and implement outstanding actions under the LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy”.

She added: “we can see the positive impact when LGBTQ+ students feel supported by staff and we are grateful to inspiring teachers and schools across Ireland who have worked on LGBTQ+ school safety and inclusivity for years and have saved lives through these interventions. Together, we can create a better future for LGBTQ+ young people at school - a future where they feel safe, equal, and valued”.

### Anonymous responses to the School Climate Survey include:

**“I think a big part of my depression in life has been since I found out I’m gay when I was 14-15. At first, I hated myself because of it. I used to pray and wish I was ‘normal’ because that’s how students in school treated LGBTQ+ people”**

**“The worst experience I had was in PE. We were doing push ups and I wasn’t keeping my back straight. Someone commented I had my ass in the air because I was gay. I laughed it, off but afterward he and two other students attempted to assault me”**

This is the second iteration of the School Climate Survey research being conducted in Ireland, published by Belong To and the Teacher’s College at Columbia University, New York. The report was also conducted in 2019. A full copy of the report is available on [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org).



### So, what can schools do?

In the research, students reported how effective school-based interventions can improve the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ young people. An astounding 99% of LGBTQ+ students reported that they know at least one school staff member supportive of LGBTQ+ identities. There has been a year-on-year growth in participation of Stand Up Awareness Week, Belong To’s annual anti-LGBTQ+ bullying campaign, with 75% of second-level schools participating in 2021.

Earlier this year, a large number of schools applied to participate in Belong To’s whole-school community LGBTQ+ Quality Mark. Findings show that this level of support leads to LGBTQ+ students being more likely to feeling accepted by their peers, having an increased sense of belonging and being less likely to miss school to avoid victimisation. Inspiring teachers, school leaders, guidance counsellors and schools across Ireland have worked on LGBTQ+ school safety and inclusivity for years and have saved lives through these interventions.

Stand Up Awareness Week will be running again in November 2023. There are plans to bring in a new cohort of schools into the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark process next year.

Contact Belong To for more information.



**Stephen Cassidy** is the Education & Training Officer at Belong To. The Education & Training Department at Belong To works to support educators in schools and alternative education to create safe and supportive spaces for LGBTQ+ young people. For further information contact Stephen at [stephen@belongto.org](mailto:stephen@belongto.org)

## Underperformance of a Member of Teaching Staff – is there a Remedy?

David Ruddy  
B.L.



**Scenario:** Joan is a teacher in the school for the two last years. Parents have complained that she is not teaching her curriculum subjects or correcting students' work. Classes are noisy and planning is not evident. The Principal, Catherine, has spoken to Joan, discussed classroom management and offered the support of an experienced member of staff. This was subsequently declined. Unfortunately, there has been no discernable improvements. Several parents have threatened to invoke the school's parental complaints procedures if the matter is not resolved.

### What can Catherine do?

The starting point is that the Teaching Council Code of Conduct (2016) obliges teachers in the first instance to maintain appropriate standards of teaching and to personally address competency issues when they arise. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that he/she avails of all opportunities of assistance towards remediation of professional competence issues.

Responsibility for dealing with underperforming staff at the initial stage falls on the shoulders of the school Principal. The Principal's authority to deal with such issues flows from

Section 23 of the Education Act 1998. The act states that "The Principal shall have responsibility to give direction to teachers to carry out instructions from the Board of Management (BOM). This includes day to day management of the school, guidance and directions to staff and allocation of classes and timetables." When a teacher is underperforming it can be a competence or conduct issue. Often it can be a mixture of both. The above scenario is a competency issue. If the Principal feels that informal efforts have failed to remediate the situation, what course of action is open to her?

Circular 0049/2018 (ETBs) and Circular 0049/2019 (Secondary, Community & Comprehensive) provides a mechanism for dealing with underperformance. The title, whilst a little intimidating, "Procedures for the Suspension and Dismissal of Teachers", offers a pathway for schools to address underperformance. Suspension or dismissal would be a very last resort. These Procedures were agreed by unions and management bodies across the education sector.

There are five possible stages in relation to competency:

### Stage 1:

Informal – The teacher is given a copy of the procedures and the required improvement is discussed with the Principal. Critically, at this stage the assistance of the



**The teacher will have an opportunity to respond. Where the Board is of the view that there are sufficient grounds for improvement, it will charge the Principal with defining the required improvement plan for the teacher in question. A period of 3 months is afforded to the teacher.**

Professional Development Services for Teachers (PDST) can be sought to support the teacher with competency issues. The PDST have a skilled team of advisors to assist.

**Stage 2:**

If there is no improvement, the issue is escalated, with the Principal preparing a report for the BoM in relation to the required improvements. The teacher will have an opportunity to respond. Where the Board is of the view that there are sufficient grounds for improvement, it will charge the Principal with defining the required improvement plan for the teacher in question. A period of 3 months is afforded to the teacher.

**Stage 3:**

External Review – If the required improvement has not been achieved then the BoM will request the Chief Inspector to arrange for a review of the work of the individual teacher. The BoM will review the report of the inspectorate following visits of the assigned inspector to the school. If no improvements are identified the BoM will proceed to the next stage.

**Stage 4:**

Disciplinary Hearing – The BoM will consider the Inspector’s report and a response from the teacher. Disciplinary actions open to the BoM includes the following:

- Final written censure
- Deferral of an increment
- Withdrawal of an increment or increments
- Suspension (for a limited period and/or specific purpose) with pay
- Suspension (for a limited period and/or specific purpose) without pay
- Dismissal

**Stage 5:**

A disciplinary appeals panel appointed by the Minister may hear an appeal by a teacher from a finding by a BOM under Stage 4. Following recent High Court decisions, a BoM is

mindful to adhere to Stage 5 finding unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Circular 0072/2011 provides the mechanism for dealing with underperformance of special needs assistants. This Circular should be read in conjunction with Circular 30/2014. The latter Circular lists duties of an SNA. Statutory instrument 146/2000, published in accordance with the Industrial Relations Act 1990, is the appropriate reference point for managing ancillary staff.

**OBSERVATION**

A Mason Hayes & Curran survey of school leaders conducted during a webinar for schools in November 2020 asked the following two questions:

**Question 1:** Is managing underperformance of the following staff an issue for you?

|                          |     |     |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|
| Teaching Staff           | YES | 63% |
| Ancillary Staff          | YES | 49% |
| Special Needs Assistants | YES | 31% |

**Question 2:** Do you feel confident in managing underperformance?

|     |     |
|-----|-----|
| YES | 15% |
|-----|-----|

Given the above results, it is puzzling to ascertain that the procedures are not very much used. The PDST and Department Inspectorate that would be involved at stages (1) & (3) report that their services for supporting schools are not in much demand.

This would indicate that we really don’t have an issue with underperforming teachers or else that school leaders are reluctant to initiate the formal procedures. Such reluctance is possibly based on lack of familiarity with the procedures, and there being no competency norm. Sometimes schools have a sticking plaster response with the allocation of classes around the problem.

Ultimately not dealing with underperformance compromises the entitlement of students to an appropriate education and can have a demoralising impact on the vast majority of staff who work so diligently in our schools.



*David Ruddy works with Mason, Hayes & Curran LLP as an adviser and training.*

**For further information on this article, contact David at [druddy@mhc.ie](mailto:druddy@mhc.ie)**

# NAPD Mentoring for Deputy Principals on a Regional Basis has commenced!

Máire Ní Bhróithe



Group mentoring sessions have commenced for newly appointed Deputy Principals (DPs). This year it was decided to arrange DP mentoring on a regional basis. Last summer NAPD held training for new Deputy mentors and now each region has 3 trained Group Mentors who look after all the new DPs.

Groups vary in size around the country, depending on the number of DPs in the region. Regions 4 and 9 had so many new Deputies that they decided to break up the group and held meetings in three separate locations. This means that this year there are now 13 mentoring groups nationwide.

All groups held their first meeting before mid-term and are now in the process of planning the second meetings for early December. Over 80 Deputies attended their first session, with many more set to join in for the second meeting.

Meetings were held in various Education Centres and hotels, beginning with a lunch together and followed by a meeting, lasting up to 2 hours. Issues discussed included Supervision & Substitution, responding to critical incidents, motivating staff, first encounters with challenging parents, having difficult conversations with colleagues and their own well-being and time management.

Mentors reported that there was an excellent level of engagement among the mentees and that it really was an incredibly positive experience for both mentors and mentees. There was a general feeling that everyone was

grateful to leave the busy nature of their school buildings on that day, to take time for themselves in creating a space to talk, to be listened to and to reflect.

Groups engaged in wide-ranging discussion around of the opportunities and difficulties they were experiencing in their new roles. There has been a noticeable sense of honesty and willingness to share.

NAPD wish all newly appointed Deputies the very best in their new role and hope that their first year will be one to be remembered for all the right reasons!

Go n-éirí libh.

*If you are a new Deputy Principal and would like to join one of the mentoring groups, please Email: [mentoring@napdi.ie](mailto:mentoring@napdi.ie) and our Mentoring Co-ordinators Máire Ní Bhróithe and Mary Keane will be back in touch with you and place you in a regional group.*



**Máire Ní Bhróithe** is  
NAPD Mentoring Co-ordinator.

# THE IMPACT OF MENTORING NEWLY APPOINTED PRINCIPALS IN THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

**Susan Burke**

*“The mentoring programme affords a real opportunity to develop their practice in a very professional manner. I believe it embeds the practices of professional dialogue and reflection as basic leadership practices” –*

**Professor Christine Forde**



In August 2015, the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) was charged with initiating a number of key supports for school leaders. Amongst them was a formal mentoring programme for all newly appointed Principals. Mentoring, a Department of Education funded initiative, sought to harness the experiential expertise of Principals in creating a network of collegial support throughout the system.

January 2016 saw the commencement of invitations to experienced Principals to train as mentors, with a view to engaging in a mentoring relationship with newly appointed Principals. Since 2016, over 600 experienced school Principals have volunteered to train as mentors with CSL.

The Mentoring Programme is a substantial investment by the DE in the sustainability of Principalship and is subject to quality assurance review and evaluation of impact. A survey of participants on the Mentoring Programme was included in the evaluation reports on the work of CSL (Fitzpatrick’s Consultants 2018; 2020). A review based on the collated evaluation data was conducted in 2019 to support the ongoing development of the Programme (Forde 2019). This current report builds on the two previous reports and focuses specifically on the question of the impact of the programme.

The evaluation report clearly illustrates the positive contribution of mentoring to school leadership in the Irish education system.

It was found that:

- the programme is well-established in the Irish education system

- high levels of recruitment indicate that the majority of school Principals appointed to their first post have participated in the programme
- retention rates are also high, with between 96%-98% of pairings annually continuing through to the end of the programme
- the response to the programme on the part of both mentees and mentors is very positive
- there is strong evidence of a focus on the professional growth of the mentee – building confidence, strengthening self-care and a sense of self-efficacy
- there is strong evidence of building the leadership practice of the mentee including dimensions of relational and of strategic leadership
- mentors consistently report substantial benefits for themselves – a place for reflection and an opportunity to review their own leadership practice
- mentors highlight their increased appreciation of the importance of active listening, active listening skills, open-ended questioning, and solution-focused discussions with staff, which they look to transfer into their role as Principal
- the Professional Learning days are highly appreciated by mentors, providing high quality learning opportunities for experienced Principals

There is evidence to indicate that the mentoring process supports school development, the building/strengthening of strategic and curriculum leadership and leadership of

change. It was found that the Professional Learning days provide a simple but effective means of sustaining high quality mentoring over the course of the programme. There is also evidence of system level impact as the proportion of newly appointed Principals engaging with the programme has increased indicating evidence of increasing leadership capacity.

In line with DE intended outcomes, the building of greater connections between school Principals, the creation of communities of practice through the Professional Learning days and networking of highly experienced Principals across the system has contributed significantly to building a professional learning culture.

## **PARTICIPANTS' REACTION TO THE MENTORING PROGRAMME**

The mentees' reaction to the CSL mentoring programme is overwhelmingly positive. There was much appreciation of the support and guidance that mentors provide. The readily available support as issues arise in school, is described as invaluable. The personal attributes and skills of the mentor are an important aspect of the positive reaction of the mentees. Among the most frequently cited attributes and skills are:

- the building of confidence via affirmation, reassurance and the provision of a safe space
- showing empathy by being a respectful, interested good listener
- being a positive person through calmness, a sense of humour and enthusiasm for the role
- providing an honest and fresh perspective, asking pertinent questions and maintaining a non-judgemental position

For mentees, the professional experience of the mentor as a school Principal is also a significant factor. The mentor brings "wisdom from past experience" which is critical in the mentoring process.

## **IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AS A LEADER**

Given the nature of mentoring as a form of experiential professional learning, it is unsurprising that there is strong evidence of a significant positive impact on the professional growth of the mentees. Through mentoring, mentees can explore the emotional and relational aspects of leadership and build the personal and interpersonal skills of leadership. For mentors, this is also an opportunity to reflect on these dimensions of leadership and renew their role as a school leader.

The impact on the professional growth of the mentees is evident in several areas. The mentoring process supports their transition into Principalship. The first year in post is a

critical period (Purdie 2015) where newly appointed Principals can feel overwhelmed: "To trust someone enough to say, 'I don't know what I'm doing,' I spend so much of my day pretending to be sure of myself that it is hard to say to someone that I'm doubting myself".

As mentees experience the isolation and loneliness of school Principalship (DeMatthews 2021), mentoring is a vital source of support. Despite the fact other Principals are helpful, it is good to have a designated mentor" and "good support in a lonely position". Mentoring also provides a safe space: "it's good to have someone to ask about issues you are unsure of in a safe environment".

Similarly with the mentors, their reaction to the CSL Mentoring Programme is overwhelmingly positive: "I genuinely believe it [the mentoring programme] affords a real opportunity to develop practice in a very professional manner. I believe it embeds the practices of professional dialogue and reflection as basic leadership practices".

Many mentors reported that they found being mentored as a newly appointed Principal very helpful in their first years in post. The mentors report that they find working with a newly appointed Principal a rewarding activity. The mentors value the opportunity to talk through issues and practices with their mentees: "I really appreciate talking to another Principal" and often mentors find their own experiences are validated. Mentoring is a period of reflection and a positive developmental experience for themselves.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

The evaluation highlights a wide range of areas where mentees and mentors reported that they gained new knowledge and skills – for the mentees through the mentoring conversations, for the mentors also through both the mentoring process and Professional Learning days.

Since the evaluation was conducted during a COVID dominated period, pandemic related issues were often to the fore. However, the relational aspects of leadership such as communication, conflict management and self-management strongly emerged as focus points of mentoring relationships with strategic planning, teaching/learning and workload appearing to a lesser extent.

This gives clear indication of the steep learning curve that exists regarding relational skill development to facilitate the creation of space and time for increased focus on leading learning in schools.

## **SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT - IMPACT ON SCHOOL CULTURE AND IMPROVEMENT**

The CSL mentoring programme is making an important contribution to the task of consolidating understandings about the contribution of school leadership for both school

and system-level development and improvement. The CSL mentoring programme complements Misneach, the induction programme for newly appointed school Principals.

Through these programmes, newly appointed Principals build on experience and acquire a range of skills and understandings necessary for the role of school leadership. Further, the CSL mentoring programme is contributing to the development of a culture of professional learning across the system: engagement in mentoring is helping to underscore the importance of this area in school leadership development.

Following a period of unprecedented challenge, it can be asserted with confidence that support for the development of mentoring and professional network communities has never been more significant.

Although mentors and mentees reported they missed the

face-to-face meetings, the mentoring process was predominantly transferred effectively to zoom, telephone calls and emails. The virtual mentoring programme remained a positive developmental process, supportive of both mentees and mentors as they jointly faced the uncertainties posed by the pandemic.

CSL thanks Professor Christine Forde for her thorough and committed work in conducting this review. To access the full report, go to [www.cslireland.ie](http://www.cslireland.ie)



**Susan Burke** is the post-primary co-ordinator in CSL.



The View, oil on board, by Mary West

# Inequalities in Educational Outcomes:

## insights from the latest research

**Professor Selina McCoy**

**Economic and Social Research Institute**



The pandemic has shown that families possess different resources – economic, social, and cultural – with which to respond, cope and support their children in times of crisis. Fears of widening gaps are prevalent and stakeholders are aware that this divergence may prove difficult or impossible to overcome, a fear supported by research on academic slippage over school holidays and unplanned interruptions to regular schooling (Carroll and McCoy, 2021).

Ireland is by no means unique. Evidence from other European countries points to a notable negative impact of the pandemic on the academic and socio-emotional wellbeing of students. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds consistently suffered larger losses, particularly in terms of their academic development (European Commission, 2022).

Evidence for Ireland highlights the highly intersectional nature of disadvantage, and the key mediating role of education in lifelong outcomes.

Research highlights that educational attainment is a key mediating factor between poverty in childhood and in adulthood, pointing to the crucial role of policies that seek to reduce persistent inequalities in educational outcomes, from early childhood through to higher education.

This includes access to high quality early education, additional supports for the most disadvantaged schools and children and measures to ensure greater equality of access to third-level institutions (Currigan et al., 2022).

Recent research also shows that young people with additional needs were more likely to have experienced vulnerabilities that negatively impact their educational outcomes. Students with additional needs were more likely to have had conflict in interactions with their mother, had negative interactions with teachers, come from economically vulnerable households and attended schools with socioeconomically disadvantaged populations.

More widely, the evidence shows that educational engagement during the primary and second-level years is central for students' long-term (educational) trajectories. Attendance, parental expectations and positive relationships with teachers play a crucial role in where students are over a decade later. Positive interactions with teachers are particularly critical and act as a protective factor for students at risk (Carroll et al. 2022a).



Selina McCoy

While the DEIS programme has shown strong results in tackling achievement, attendance and engagement gaps, adequately supporting the complexity of needs their students are facing clearly demands more resources. The scale of differences in the profile of, and outcomes for, DEIS students raises questions over whether the current DEIS model is adequately resourced to meet the challenges facing many young people in DEIS schools.

Extra resources and targeted efforts for those most at risk of educational disadvantage are needed to ensure that the education system is actively combatting inequality rather than simply maintaining it (Carroll et al., 2022b).

It is also interesting to note that inclusion can and does work for some, but not others. All else being equal, students with physical or sensory disabilities at age 9 are as likely to attend higher education as those without a disability. Young people with intellectual disabilities and specific learning difficulties are less likely to attend higher education, but this is largely shaped by their examination performance in our high stakes system.

However, evidence shows particular difficulties facing young people with a socioemotional or behavioural difficulty. Their unequal access to higher education is not fully moderated by achievement, socio-economic background or other characteristics – this group is clearly faring less well in their educational progress. Targeted supports both in school and as they transition to post-school settings are therefore key to meaningfully including these students (Carroll et al., 2022a).

The challenge for school leaders and teachers now is balancing a focus on academic development and catch-up, with supporting wellbeing. Evidence from Belgium and Germany shows that in postcode areas with summer schools the test scores of lower socio-economic students were significantly more resilient during the pandemic than in postcode areas without summer schools (European Commission, 2022).

But supporting and maintaining academic progress needs to be achieved alongside initiatives to promote staff and students' mental health and flourishing. Positive education approaches can be an important resource to promote resilience and flourishing in students, focusing on developing young people's strengths and skills for happiness and their psychological, social, and emotional health in the educational context (Arslan & Burke, 2021).

Wellbeing programmes are now well-embedded at Junior Cycle, but Senior Cycle students need to be similarly supported. Given the evidence that students experiencing socioemotional and behavioural difficulties fare least well in terms of their chances of progressing to higher education, specialised and general supports in addressing these needs are paramount.

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Assynt, Scotland  
Photography by Grham Powell

# Take 1 Programme

Education for Sustainable Development in Post Primary Schools



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

*The Take 1 Programme supports post primary schools to communicate, raise awareness of, and embed Education for Sustainable Development in learning and teaching, as part of a 'whole school' approach.*

## Valerie Lewis

The Take 1 Programme was developed to address ongoing and emerging concerns aligned to climate action and climate justice. Viewed through the broad lens of sustainability and global citizenship, it has an ambition to provide all students with an opportunity to engage in learning about the interconnected nature of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while reflecting the central transformative promise to “leave no one behind” (United Nations, 2015).

Targeting post primary senior leaders, initially in the Education and Training Boards sector, participants are provided with an introduction to education for sustainable development (ESD). They are guided through a process of embedding information aligned to global citizenship, sustainability and the SDGs in Learning & Teaching, through the learning outcomes of Junior Cycle subjects.

By mapping learning to the prescribed syllabus of every subject, the Take 1 Programme demonstrates a built-in approach, which can be experienced as a natural element of formal and non-formal learning. The training programme, highlights how every student in every class through every subject, can experience the interdependent nature and impact of ESD.

Following Take 1 Programme training, participants are encouraged to put their understanding into action by engaging in in-school activities which showcase their learning. Activities can occur in the formal, non-formal or informal school community and can demonstrate ongoing actions or the beginning of their school's ESD journey. There are two structured opportunities for schools to showcase their engagement – May Day for Sustainability and Take 1 Week, usually taking place after training workshops have been completed.

Take 1 Week is an opportunity for a more comprehensive demonstration of engagement, where teachers are invited to teach *one* Class group, *one* Lesson, about *one* SDG over the course of *one* Week. Activities are shared on the school twitter account, including a brief description of events including a photograph or image, encouraging schools to demonstrate whole school commitment and collaboration.

The Take 1 Programme approach reflects the recently updated text of Looking At Our School 2022 and responds to the principles which view schools as “dynamic learning organisations” and “students as active agents in their learning (p. 9). In the statements of practice included in the domains of the Learning & Teaching dimension, students are recognised “as key contributors to our sustainable future” and supports them to be “enabled to act responsibly for a more sustainable world” (p27). In Leadership & Management,

effective practice aligned to sustainability encourages schools to demonstrate how it values and promotes a commitment to sustainable development through practice and policies embedding the “principles of sustainability in the daily routines of the school” (p38).

The proposed introduction of the Senior Cycle subject Climate Action and Sustainable Development is welcome. It responds to student concerns and interests aligned to this comprehensive topic. However, for those students who will not have the prospect of studying this new subject, the Take 1 Programme provides an opportunity for engagement which can motivate and empower them to become informed active citizens. The Take 1 Programme is not intended to be utilised ‘instead of’, but rather to compliment, working side by side to highlight the interconnected nature of global citizenship.

The Department of Education currently funds the Take 1 Programme and considers it “an important element of its 2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development” as it endeavours to equip learners with the relevant knowledge (the ‘what’), the key dispositions and skills (the ‘how’) and the values (the ‘why’) that will inspire them to become informed active citizens (DE 2022, p17).

The programme is now planning for its next phase of expansion, which will invite expressions of interest from Principals and Deputy Principals in post-primary schools across all sectors. This next pilot training phase will commence in early 2023, and will replicate and build on Take 1 Programme implementation to date.

### Further information:

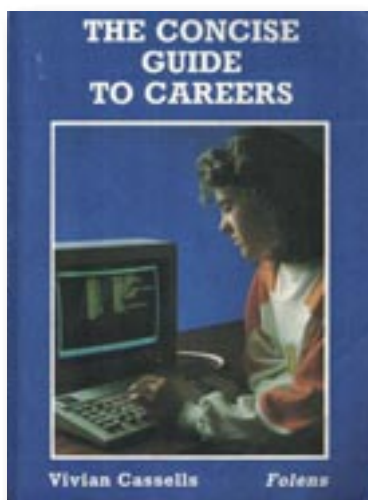
- OECD Global Teaching Insights – Embedding the SDGs in Irish National Curriculum
- ETBI Journal of Education (Vol 2:1, June 2020) – Education for Sustainable Development
- Search #take1week2022 on Twitter
- [www.take1programme.com](http://www.take1programme.com)
- [valerie@take1programme.com](mailto:valerie@take1programme.com)



**Valerie Lewis** is Take 1 Programme Director and Assistant Professor of Education for Sustainability, School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies at Dublin City University.



# The Leader Reviews



**Title:** The Concise Guide to Careers

**Author:** Vivian Cassells

**Publisher:** Folens

**ISBN** 086 121 200 2

**Date:** 1986

**Reviewer:** Brian Mooney

**A**vivian Cassells was a founding father figure in Irish Guidance Counselling. He was my colleague from the time he left the Marist order as then Principal of Moyle Park, Clondalkin and entered the teaching staff of Oatlands College in 1986 – the year he published his book “The Concise Guide to Careers”.

He became my mentor on my entry to the profession of Guidance Counselling, shortly before his retirement in 1998 and was an invaluable guide and support to me when I became President of the IGC three years later in 2001.

He had by then been prevailed upon by the Department of Education to take up the position of Acting Director of the National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE).

Together we set about to strengthen the profession of

Guidance Counselling in the interest of our clients, both in second level education and to adults in a range of settings.

## THE CHANGED FACE OF IRISH GUIDANCE COUNSELLING

In 2014, I wrote my own textbook for school leavers titled “*Start your Career Journey Here*”<sup>1</sup> which aimed to support students in making that transition from second level onto the first step of the career journey of life.

To re-read now, in 2022, Vivian’s “*The Concise Guide to Careers*” gives me an insight into his world view at that time and provides a reminder of the opportunities which school leavers then encountered.

In writing my own textbook, my focus was on guiding students through the process of decision making in 5th and 6th year, with reference to all of the sources of information to inform that process, all of which are now online.

Vivian, on the other hand, was in 1986 attempting to give students an overview of all of the occupational opportunities available to students in Ireland since there was no online presence - the internet was not yet publicly accessible. The role of the Guidance Counsellor in 1986 was to be an expert in information on career opportunities.

The creation of the [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie) website in 2004 during my term of president of the IGC and the subsequent development of the [www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie) in 2007 provided information on career opportunities with up-to-the-minute data.

The advent of comprehensive websites with career information transformed the role of the school’s guidance counsellor from that of a source of information, as provided in Vivian’s book in 1986, to that of a guide on how to research information and come to a decision on the next appropriate step in the educational/career journey.

As educators of children, we must of course remain mindful that having accurate sources of information readily available online does not ensure that all students or parents supporting their children’s transition from schooling will interact effectively with the data. The Guidance Counsellor still needs to support and monitor each student’s exploration of the data. What they no longer need to do, however, is what Vivian’s book needed to do in 1986 - provide the information.

## WHAT DOES VIVIAN'S BOOK TELL US ABOUT 1980S IRELAND?

It was a depressing place of recession and government cutbacks, in which the key goal was the attainment of a well-placed job.

In discussing careers in the Arts, Vivian states *"it's difficult to make one's living in Ireland being a professional in the arts"*. He expresses similar misgivings about a range of possible career options, pointing out their precarious earning potential. In referring to a career in Dance, Vivian references opportunities in Jury's Cabaret during the tourist season!

Some years ago, a former student of Oatlands College, Glen Power, who is now the drummer in the hugely successful band "The Script", recounted to me his disappointment at being advised by Vivian that aspiring to be a musician was well and good, but to make sure to secure a well-paying job first, and to supplement his income with anything he might earn as a musician.

Vivian's book is set in Ireland prior to Italia '90 and the explosion of Riverdance. It was Ireland before the Celtic Tiger, when anyone with a spark of ambition saw their career outside of the country.

It was an Ireland of cutbacks in schools. Vivian references the closure of Carysfort teacher training college since the government anticipated decreasing numbers of pupils in our schools as our young adults fled abroad to progress their careers.

In referring to aviation, Vivian refers exclusively to Aer Lingus as it was the sole carrier at the time. Ryanair had yet to be created.

When Vivian wrote his book in 1986 it was still in an Ireland in which jobs in the banks, civil service, the army, An Garda Síochána, insurance, nursing were highly valued and got extensive coverage. It was also an Ireland in which careers were still divided along gender lines, even though Vivian states in his introduction in bold print that *"All careers listed in the book are open to males and females"*.

All the photos throughout the book tend to be gender specific. Anything related to clerical roles, hairdressing, are female. Business roles or engineering are exclusively male, as are all apprenticeship roles. Furthermore, every person appearing in these photos are white Caucasians.

## CELEBRATING TODAY'S IRELAND

Reading Vivian's book today, 36 years later, speaks to the huge advances we have made as a nation over that time.

Within an educational context, and from a career guidance perspective, we in Ireland over this short time frame have moved from aspiring to support our students to successfully secure employment at level 2 on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - safety and security of employment, to levels 4/5, seeking to support and direct our students towards career opportunities which gives them a sense of self-esteem and hopefully self-actualisation.

This transformation in what we can aspire to for our students has been made possible by the incredible pace at which our economy has become a world leader in so many fields. We have become Europe's "Silicon Valley" for many high-tech industries, as well as in areas such as aircraft leasing.

Outside the economic sphere, we are no longer amazed when our male and female golfers are among the world's best, when our ladies win silver world medals in hockey and multiple gold medals in boxing. Our creative arts are still benefiting from the Riverdance explosion. Our actors grace the world stages in films and drama productions. We have travelled a huge distance from the Ireland reflected in Vivian's book.

Those of us who have had the pleasure to staff Ireland's schools and colleges over the past fifty years can be immensely proud of what we have achieved.

None more so than the late Vivian Cassells, who dedicated his entire life to supporting second level students in progressing through school and onto their individual career journeys, initially as a Marist brother in their schools in leadership positions, and in the final portion of his career as Guidance Counsellor and colleague in Oatlands, and most importantly as loving husband to Ann.

Vivian died in 2016. He did the State much service. May he rest in peace.

1. "Start your career journey here" Publisher by The Educational Company ISBN 978-1-84536-638-4.

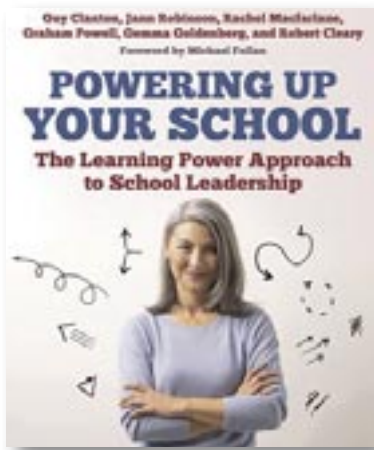


**Brian Mooney** was educated at Oatlands College (1961-71). He studied Politics, Economics and Philosophy in UCD from 1973 to 1976. He returned to Oatlands to serve as teacher and Guidance Counsellor until he retired in October 2019.

Brian has been a regular education columnist for the Irish Times for the past 20 years.

He served for six years on the Education Finance Board, established by the Oireachtas to manage a fund of €12.8 million on behalf of the former residents of institutional care. Brian was President of the Institute of Guidance Counsellors in 2001 and from 2004-2006.

In 2019, Brian was awarded an honorary PhD in Education by the National University of Ireland (NUI) in recognition of his lifetime's contribution to Irish education.



**Title:** Powering Up Your School:  
The Learning Power Approach to  
School Leadership

**Author:** Guy Claxton, Jann Robinson,  
Rachel Macfarlane, Graham Powell,  
Gemma Goldenberg & Robert Cleary

**Publisher:** Crown House Publishing

**ISBN** 978-178583456-1

**Date:** 2020

**Reviewer:** Evan Kirwan

**P**owering Up Your School is the fourth in a series of publications about the 'Learning Power Approach' (LPA), which champions the belief that education is about fostering positive and productive dispositions among both teachers and students alongside their knowledge and subject expertise. This publication prides itself on going beyond so-called "vague platitudes" on school websites about "helping all students fulfil their potential" by encouraging readers to reflect honestly and specifically about what they wish to offer their students. As a values-led framework, *Powering Up Your School* reminds readers that at the heart of every school must be a concern with the development of young people's characters and staying true to this can result in the development of confident and capable learners.

What brings this publication to life are the very endearing and candid case studies that are strategically dotted throughout. These case studies depict the realities of implementing the LPA in schools from a range of stakeholders' perspectives which should offer very relatable experiences to all profiles of readers. Readers may be drawn to the story of the newly-appointed headteacher who is seeking to change existing school culture or the proactive classroom teacher fascinated by the science of learning. Perhaps it's the school staff member charged with capturing the increasingly important student voice and exploring what learning is like on the other side of the desk.

The authors are admirably open from the outset that this book is not a silver bullet, nor is it an all-encompassing, step-

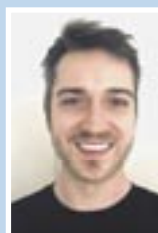
by-step instruction manual on how to solve all of the teaching and learning plights of our time. Instead, it offers readers the opportunity to pause, reflect and, most importantly, contextualise key points about the Learning Power Approach in terms of their own school and their own situation.

To that end, the book includes an effective reflection and summary mechanism with a "Wondering" segment in each chapter, providing prompt questions for readers to identify the elements that are most relevant and pertinent to their own school context and indeed their own position within that context.

Refreshingly, the book maps a middle-ground between the extremes of 'traditional' and 'progressive' teaching practices and challenges popular beliefs that these styles are mutually exclusive – this publication proposes that the fruits of both can be harvested effectively. For example, it notes how school teachers' language about learning can encourage effective learning dispositions in students and an easy-to-use menu of questions are provided which teachers can use in their interactions with students in order to foster such dispositions.

This book is certainly a great reference point for readers too in that it points to a wealth of research, resources and other publications which may help readers to delve deeper into some of the core values and key points discussed in *Power Up Your School*.

This book would certainly be of particular interest to newly-established schools, or indeed schools that are actively engaging in reimagining and reconstructing their guiding school vision in line with the rapidly changing educational, societal and economic landscape in which we find ourselves.



**Evan Kirwan** is a PhD student in the Institute of Education at Dublin City University. He is a teacher educator on the Professional Master of Education (PME) programme and also supports student teachers on school placement.

### Write a Review?

Would you like to write review of a book or movie relevant to education, schools and schooling, management & leadership or anything just interesting... ?

A long review can be in region of 700 words, a shorter (and snappier) review in the region of 200 words.

# Where will Mary go Next?

Sarah Caden

Journalist Sarah Caden describes the challenges in identifying a suitable secondary school for her daughter, Mary. This is followed by Fidelma Brady who outlines the position of Down Syndrome Ireland on schooling for children with Down syndrome.

My younger daughter Mary spent the whole summer asking if I could believe she was going to be 12.

"Can you believe it?" she would ask, as her birthday arrives on the eve of return to school and puts a full stop to the summer. "Can you believe I'm going in to 6th class?"

I couldn't believe it. For so many more reasons than Mary meant. When she was born 12 years ago with Down syndrome, into what seems like another lifetime, I couldn't have imagined her as this kid on the brink of adolescence, keen on Justin Bieber, keen to walk to school on her own, finding me painfully embarrassing.

Twelve years ago, I did not dare think so far ahead as to imagine her getting to 6th class in the mainstream school where her sister also went. Back then, I wondered would she be able to go to the same creche as her sister. She did, on

**Last week, some boys from Mary class called to the door and asked did she want to come to the local park. She never got her shoes on so fast. I went up to collect her later and, on the way, home she asked, more than once: "Can you believe I was at the park with no parents?"**

both counts and now, here we are, teetering on the brink of the teens and the end of primary school. A time of change and of uncertainty.

Can I believe it? No, I can't, and, to an extent I fear it, even as that seems so at odds with Mary's delight in being "all grown up".

People tell you, when your child with a disability is born, not to think too far ahead. There's no point. The future, if you're lucky, will happen, and you'll deal with it then. Don't think about the elderly women you used to see when you were young, walking hand-in-hand to mass with their adult children with Down syndrome. Don't think about the way everyone felt a bit wary at school of the child who, I realise now, had an intellectual disability. Don't think about the people who say that, around 5th class, "the gap widens".

I have no choice but to think about that now. The gap widens between your child with Down syndrome and their peers. It widens and it widens. I watch it every day and it's almost a physical exertion to face it. Not just because it's hard to see, but because when you become the parent of a child with a disability, you do not miraculously shed every prejudice you ever held. The waves of distress come over the fact that she is different, the worry that her life will be less than theirs, the sorrow that there may be experiences they will enjoy that will never be available to her.

The mistake in this is in thinking that the difference makes her less than them, her life and experiences of less value. I should know better after 12 years, but while I can do something

about my own prejudices, I can't fix anyone else's or reshape the world she must inhabit.

The gap widening is only a problem if it makes Mary unhappy. It's only a problem if it leaves her isolated. It's actually OK if she's different, if she has an intellectual disability, so long as the world still includes her.

Which is where you start the worry about secondary school. I never let my mind go there when she was younger. I got very good at not thinking too far ahead and when you're back in the 'will she walk/talk/cycle a bike?' stage, secondary seems aeons away.

Also, her primary school experience has been so good that we've been spoiled, I have come to realise. They have embraced her and encouraged her almost as fiercely as her family has. I know that if we had ever suggested taking her out of that school at any point, they'd have put up a powerful resistance. She has blossomed there, academically and socially. She knows that she belongs. That's all any of us want.

Over the years, I have faced up to my desire for her to go to mainstream secondary, as if it is the better option than a special school.

Mainstream school isn't the better option if she doesn't feel that sense of belonging she has enjoyed so far, which has boosted both her schoolwork and her sense of self. Attending mainstream secondary won't make her a more successful or 'good' person with Down syndrome. It won't be a win if she isn't happy, if she doesn't have friends, and if she's the only person in that school with an intellectual disability.

When I wonder, latterly, where is the inclusion in mainstream secondary schools, I go back to the numerous parents I know who approached their local schools to get the kind-but-firm speech that while their child would, of course, be welcome there, was it really the right place? There are nice ways of saying no. The school was too academic. How would the student cope with French or Science or moving from class to class? No, they didn't have any other children with an intellectual disability. And the ASD unit is only for a student with ASD, which is good, but can mean that everyone thinks all special needs are sorted.

You hear the government saying they are pumping money into all this and finding school places for children and it's easy to think 'those kids' are sorted. Job done, we're very inclusive.

Many parents of a child with a disability who could cope, with supports, would like them to at least try mainstream secondary. They would like them to attend the local school where maybe they could continue to walk or cycle there and back each day, possibly graduating to doing the journey on their own. Possibly picking up a pint of milk in Tesco on the way home, getting to know people, pushing their independence, not necessarily at the same pace as their peers but in a real and meaningful way.

This all sounds great, but I'm not convinced it's worth it if your teenager is the only one with an intellectual disability in the school. Inclusion is opening the doors for more than the odd outlier kid with an intellectual disability who decides to push

ahead with accessing a mainstream secondary. Schools can convey this subtly: "We don't have other students like yours. We have no other students like yours applying.' In other words, this will be a lonely place for your child, knocking around with an SNA all day".

Then, if you push for that, is it for your child's sake or to make yourself feel better? To try to fit Mary into a world that doesn't seem open to accommodating her seems like failing to appreciate who she is. Adolescence is hard enough without feeling like the odd one out.

An option for a lot of kids would be a mainstream secondary school with a special class for intellectual disability, offering what could be the best of both worlds in terms of inclusion. Those schools are few and far between, with a small number of classes and extremely limited availability each year. Special schools, too, are often oversubscribed in terms of applications.

I cannot believe that Mary is 12. I cannot believe how much I underestimated who she could be when she was born. The gap widens now, which means the work is in making sure that the world in which she grows into an adult doesn't underestimate or under-serve her. I have heard too many stories about lonely teens with Down syndrome, bored teens without anything to do once they hit 18, purposeless adults who don't have a job or something to get up for in the morning.

It makes me angry when it always seems to be parents who set up training courses, therapy centres, social farms and sports clubs. I look at the Special Olympics clubs Mary attends and marvel at all those volunteers who give their time for free and feel sad that this is exceptional. It seems that unless you inhabit this world of disability, you just don't get it.

Schools are so inclusive now, people say, when they ask where Mary's going after 6th class. Funnily, they rarely expect she's going where their child is going. Everyone thinks inclusion happens somewhere else, when it should be right under our noses, all the time.

Last week, some boys from Mary class called to the door and asked did she want to come to the local park. She never got her shoes on so fast. I went up to collect her later and, on the way, home she asked, more than once: "Can you believe I was at the park with no parents"?

The answer was, of course, no.

May she never stop surpassing those expectations.

***This article was first published in the Sunday Independent.***



**Sarah Caden** is a journalist with the Sunday Independent.



## Inclusion at Post-Primary Level for the Student with Down Syndrome

Dr. Fidelma Brady

Inclusive education for teenagers with Down syndrome in mainstream post-primary schools in Ireland is a relatively recent development which needs to be promoted and nurtured. The majority of students with Down syndrome now successfully attend mainstream primary school, demonstrating that inclusive education is not just possible, but beneficial. This needs to be continued into the post-primary setting.

Research indicates that inclusive mainstream placements lead to the best outcomes for students with Down syndrome. Therefore, it is important that all schools create a positive learning environment to support students to succeed. While it may seem to be a daunting prospect, teachers are already armed with the skills necessary to teach all children, regardless of their needs.

Having feelings of apprehension about the arrival of a student with Down syndrome in your classroom is normal. Down syndrome does not define the child. Teenagers with Down syndrome vary in their learning and physical abilities as much as typically developing teens do with their own learning strengths that teachers want to capitalise on during lessons.

Calling students with Down syndrome developmentally delayed is misleading - they simply have a different learning style. Awareness of the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of this learning profile will encourage progress and will help their teachers devise appropriate, meaningful and relevant activities for the student. Encouraging success is the best motivator for the student's learning.

### PROMOTING WHOLE SCHOOL INCLUSION

Starting out in a new school, the student with Down syndrome needs to feel part of the school, whether in the classroom or not. Backed by a consistent policy on inclusion, the whole school ethos ideally reflects the active inclusion of students with special needs. The entire school community – leaders, teachers, secretaries and caretakers alike – is responsible for ensuring that the school's inclusion policy is maintained during daily interaction with the student with Down syndrome.

Treat the student with Down syndrome as you would any other teenager, but allow more time for daily interactions, such as changing classes. While the teacher has primary responsibility for the student's well-being, other school staff can be made

aware of the student's needs. At the same time, the Board of Management, Principal and Deputy are responsible for the development, implementation and regular review of the school policy on inclusion.

### ENCOURAGING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Positive school and classroom environments are great indicators of how invaluable the contribution of all school personnel can be in fostering the kind of accepting and helpful atmosphere that allow a student with Down syndrome to prosper effectively.

### BENEFITS OF INCLUSION

Regardless of differences in the learning profiles of students with Down syndrome, participation in mainstream education is a major stepping stone for the successful transition of all youths into adulthood. As adults, many people with Down syndrome lead fulfilling and fairly independent lives with a minimal level of support. Mainstream schooling is essentially about giving students of all abilities the right to a balanced education and that means including every student in the community.

Why mainstream? Research has consistently shown that students with Down syndrome gain academic, social and behavioural advantages from being educated with their typically developing peers in mainstream schools. This includes second level schools. There is no research showing any benefit of education in special classes or special schools for children who have Down syndrome. With appropriate support and accommodations, students with Down syndrome can benefit from mainstream schooling and inclusive education has benefits for all students.

Inclusion is first and foremost an attitude. A decision that your school community is a place where all are welcome – not *'all are welcome as long as we have enough resources'*, nor *'all are welcome as long as we don't need to change too much'*. Once this decision is made, key questions will follow – how? who? what needs to happen? - but you start from the place of acceptance and inclusion.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As always, I acknowledge the work of Professor Sue Buckley, Down Syndrome Educational Trust UK, which continues to provide inspiration in paving the way towards an inclusive educational experience for teenagers with Down syndrome.

**Dr Fidelma Brady** is the Head of Education with Down Syndrome Ireland, supporting children with Down syndrome on their journey through school at all stages - preschool, primary, post-primary and special school. She also provides support, information, advice and training for schools and teachers to assist them in the provision of appropriate education for children and young people with Down syndrome. Fidelma can be contacted at [fidelma@downsyndrome.ie](mailto:fidelma@downsyndrome.ie)





**ISSU**  
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL  
STUDENTS' UNION

Anjelica Foley  
ISSU Welfare Officer

## How lessons learned from Covid-19 can improve education

Looking back on the last two years is painful for us all, the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on our lives, our economy and undoubtedly our education system. However, while the pandemic created huge challenges for the education sector, it also created a need for adaptation.

Owing to the intelligence, creativity and innovation of the school community, solutions to a vast number of the challenges brought on by the pandemic were found and developed. In this article I explore how some of the changes made to education during the toughest periods of the pandemic can enhance learning and improve school life.

During school closures, technology had a vital role in ensuring students were still able to learn. Prior to Covid-19, aside from specialist computer rooms, the use of technology in the majority of schools had been limited to teachers and school management. For many schools this was the first time students were extensively using technology. Whilst the need for virtual classrooms no longer exists, having online spaces such as Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom can still be beneficial learning aids.

Uploading notes, presentations and homework assignments can be of huge benefit to students and teachers alike. This is a practical way to ensure that students who are absent due to matches, student council, or suffering from illness or bereavement can still catch up with their classwork and minimise disruption.

Even when present in the classroom, students often find themselves scrambling to copy down notes from PowerPoint presentations. In doing so,

they miss the most vital parts of their classes; asking questions, easy to follow explanations from their teachers, all of which helps the student understand the material. This is something that cannot be uploaded online but the notes can and, where possible, should be.

Students' families routinely spend excess money on grinds and online notes services, but this is inaccessible to those from more financially vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds. Uploading notes is a feasible and practical solution that would ease this financial burden on parents.

As school leaders, this presents itself as an opportunity to create a more modern school environment. Incorporating International Computer Driving License (ICDL) courses, computer skills classes, along with a wider integration of technology, provides students with opportunities to develop valuable skills which will later stand to them in employment. In an increasingly online world, technology should be embraced by schools, not shunned.

As we are all keenly aware, education reform in this country is a painstakingly slow process, yet during the pandemic, education reform had to happen, and quickly. The Leaving Certificate is a prime example of this and over the course of the pandemic exam content, duration, and even format has had to change. The Leaving Certificate Established, is by its very nature inflexible, as for the most part it is a two-year course distilled down to a set of terminal exams. The ISSU and numerous other organisations, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child among them, have long advocated for reform, yet the first ever

deviation from terminal exams happened out of necessity. The respective examinations of 2020, 2021 and 2022 were effectively trials, giving valuable, practical information about how to approach reform, what works and what doesn't.

In previous years, students have had to sit the Leaving Certificate come hell or high water, in the throes of grief after losing a parent or close family member and even while hospitalised. During the pandemic an alternative set of exams was facilitated for these students as well as those who had to isolate during the regular schedule of exams.

We must acknowledge that for the students who sit delayed exams, it is of genuine necessity for them and overall leads to better outcomes for those students. No student should be forced to sit such arduous exams as the Leaving Certificate while coping with severe illness or sudden bereavement. Exams should take place in exam centres and never in hospitals. Facilitating delayed exams for these students is not due to a desire to give them an edge or advantage over their counterparts but merely a kindness – showing these students compassion at a time when they need it most.



**Anjelica Foley** is a 19-year-old student from Wicklow. She has been involved in many different youth advocacy and

activism groups since the age of 16, including Fridays For Future and the ISSU. She is currently Welfare Officer of the Irish Second-Level Students Union.

# Wolf Academy and Wellbeing Education

Cormac Noonan



**W**olf Academy was founded by myself and my brother, Daryl Noonan, in 2020. Having both gone down very different paths since leaving secondary school, we both felt a strong desire to share our stories of our schooling so that young people wouldn't make the same mistakes as we did.

## BACKGROUND

I spent two years of my life on the streets of Dublin. No, I wasn't homeless but I was trying to help those who were. During the week, I worked as an IT Consultant with Accenture but every Sunday I was at the top of Grafton street with a bunch of people (those with and without homes) sharing pizza, playing music and engaging in conversation. I started Pizza Sunday Club out of a desire to help give those on the streets a sense of community and support.

After doing this for two years, I started to realise that if we really wanted to fix the root cause of homelessness we would have to start much earlier. We would have to start with education. Most, if not all of the people I met, suffered some form of childhood trauma that caused them to disconnect from themselves. Their disconnection and inability to process the trauma had led to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and addiction.

My brother Daryl had gone down a path of alcohol and drug abuse for over 10 years. He puts it down to his inability to express his emotions and connect with how he was really feeling. To him the alcohol wasn't so much the problem but the solution he found to numb all of these unwanted feelings.

My own struggles were different. I suffered with very low confidence and lack of self-worth. This led me to believing that if I achieve enough things (going to Trinity, getting a great job etc.) that I'd finally feel good enough. But I realised that the inner void I felt couldn't be filled with external achievements and that's what forced me on my own path to reconnect with myself.

Young people today are more distracted and disconnected from themselves than ever before and depression and anxiety rates are continuing to rise. Our aim with Wolf Academy is to share our stories and practical tools that young people can use to connect back to themselves.

## TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

We use our real, personal stories to connect with young people. Stories have the power to deliver life lessons that are more likely to stick, by the use of Imagery and emotion that allow students to imagine themselves in the role of the storyteller.





Once the stories have inspired the students and have helped to engrain these life lessons, we introduce practical tools to help them to connect back to themselves. Over the past year and a half, we have worked in 51 schools across 19 counties and we've received excellent feedback from both students and staff about our ability to connect with, and motivate, students, such as:

***"Absolutely amazing experience, easily the best talk we've had in years"*** – Robert Matthews, TY Co-ordinator, Teresian School, Dublin

***"It was so so inspirational and I felt really good after the talk"*** – female student, Mount Anville Secondary School, Dublin

***"The most important part for me was the worksheets from Cormac's book, where I planned my future and my goals in life. I think it gave me a real headstart on my future life"*** – male student, Salesian College, Kildare

## RETREATS

Throughout the school year, our vetted coaches provide overnight retreats in nature for 6th years. These retreats give them a chance to get away from all the distractions of our modern world, to slow down and reconnect with themselves and with nature.

Back in 2011, IBM conducted interviews with 1,709 CEOs around the world and the skills they most needed in employees were collaboration, communication, creativity and flexibility. These are some of the traits we aim to instil in our young people, getting them working together in small teams, communicating and problem-solving out in the wild.

To facilitate our retreats, we have access to multiple venues across the country, depending on where schools are based.

## WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Our approach to wellbeing is holistic, in terms of empowering the students and giving everyone a role to play in shaping the culture of collaboration and openness in our schools. We have recently developed our Whole School Approach to Wellbeing, which caters to boys, girls and mixed schools.

We come into a school for a day and deliver a one hour talk for Junior Cycle, a one hour talk for Senior Cycle, a teacher workshop and a parent webinar.

We also get Senior Cycle students set up with our 6-week online *Living Cert Program*.

We have drawn a lot of inspiration from Jim Breen and his work in schools with Cycle Against Suicide. Jim has further refined that holistic approach with *I Am Here*, which allows any organisation to prioritise their team's mental health and wellbeing. There are many parallels here what we are doing in the Wolf Academy. We have been in discussion with *I Am Here* about incorporating elements of their award-winning program into our *Living Cert Program*.

As with any holistic culture change initiative, it is important to bring as many people on the journey with you as possible. Our ethos of inclusion and empowerment also incorporates teacher and parent workshops, so we can ensure that our approach makes lasting change across the board.



**Wolf Academy™**

**Cormac Noonan**  
Co-Founder, Wolf Academy

**W: [www.wolfacademy.ie](http://www.wolfacademy.ie)**

## Ireland's First Civil Engineering Apprenticeships bridging the shortfall in supply of engineers in Ireland

### Emma Britton

The skills shortage in the Civil Engineering profession has been an area of concern for many years. Due to the nature of the profession, it is closely linked to the construction industry and therefore considered to be volatile and at the mercy of the country's economic strength. This is not the case – Civil Engineering is so much more. As the name suggests, it is the profession tasked with the creation, improvement and protection of the environment in a sustainable manner, designing, building and maintaining our civilian infrastructure. This encompasses everything from our water/wastewater network, roads and railways, our energy network and homes, schools, offices, buildings and hospitals. These are all things we take for granted but would find difficult to live without.

Civil engineers are employed across the following sub-sectors of the construction industry:

- Government agencies and Local Authorities – the clients responsible for commissioning projects and managing assets
- Consulting – supporting clients in planning, designing and managing construction projects
- Contractors – constructing the assets e.g. buildings, roads, bridges, energy supplies and utilities networks
- Suppliers – providing specialist materials and products to contractors

In 2020, Engineers Ireland reported that *"skills shortages continue to be a major concern, with 91% of engineering leaders listing this as a barrier to growing their workforce"*<sup>1</sup>. This reinforced the findings of SOLAS in the National Skills Bulletin 2019, who when discussing the civil engineering profession stated that, *"with declining output from the education and training system, the number of graduates is not expected to be enough to meet growing demand"*. It was

also suggested that *"These shortages could therefore be exacerbated in future years"*<sup>2</sup>.

In 2021, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, published *Building Future Skills; the demand for skills in Ireland's built environment sector to 2030*<sup>3</sup>. The report identified that skill shortages at national levels, are deemed to be the most significant obstacle in the successful delivery of Project Ireland 2040, and addressing the commitments made by Ireland in the *Climate Action Plan 2019*. The Expert Group went on to say that *"it is vital to consider the lag between graduate output and the sectors' employment prospects, where course selection amongst students appears to be based upon a current perception of an industry and not necessarily future growth prospects"*. This is evident when we consider the decline in civil engineering and building undergraduate awards in the 10 years from 2008 from circa 2,200 to 780.

PricewaterhouseCoopers published the PwC Young Workers Index 2015<sup>4</sup> and the Youth Employment Index 2022<sup>5</sup>. In these reports they assess how well OECD economies are fostering the economic potential of their young people, with the aim of improving understanding of how they can be encouraged and enabled to realise their potential, which will in turn benefit our future economy and society.

One of the metrics discussed in the reports is the NEET (20 to 24-year-olds, not in employment, education or training). In 2006, Ireland's NEET was ranked 7th out of 38 OECD countries, unfortunately this ranking fell to 29th in 2014. Interventions such as the development of consortium led apprenticeships have increased Ireland's ranking to 24th, which is good, but there is still much work to do. Ireland's NEET rate for 20-24-year-olds is currently 14%, over 5 percentage points higher than Germany. It is estimated that closing this gap would increase Ireland's GDP by about €6bn.

In early 2020, IT Sligo (now Atlantic Technological University) began looking into the feasibility of developing a work-based mode of delivery of our Civil Engineering Programmes. Coincidentally, also at this time, changes to



the Industrial Training Act, 1967 were being considered, based on proposals to remove certain wording within the Act (these proposals were backed by Engineers Ireland). This wording was considered to be a barrier to the engineering profession. This would open the door for more engineering programmes to be delivered by an apprenticeship mode, which had formerly been excluded.

Initial discussions with industry began in Spring 2020 with very positive results, as industry viewed this as a sustainable pathway to attract new talent and upskill existing staff. In 2021, the following representative bodies formed a consortium to steer the development of these programmes. The membership of the Civil Engineering Apprenticeship Consortium comprises of representatives from the following bodies:

- Civil Engineering Contractors Association – a subsidiary of the Construction Industry Federation, the Irish construction industry’s representative body. Its membership comprises civil engineering contractors across Ireland.
- Engineers Ireland – membership association responsible for professional development and registration of civil engineers across all industry.
- Local Government Management Agency – a State agency that works collaboratively with all 31 local authorities to support the coordinated and cost-effective delivery of local government services and policy.
- The Association of Consulting Engineers of Ireland – a voluntary, self-regulatory professional body representing the business and professional interests of firms and individuals engaged in Consulting Engineering.
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland – established through a merger of the National Roads Authority and the Railway Procurement Agency in 2015; its purpose is to provide sustainable transport infrastructure and services, delivering a better quality of life, supporting economic growth and respecting the environment.
- Irish Water – Ireland’s national water utility which is responsible for providing water and wastewater services throughout Ireland.

The consortium was keen to develop attractive pathways to various levels of qualifications. Initial proposals for four standalone apprenticeships were submitted to the National Apprenticeship Office for development, ranging from Higher Certificate (Level 6) to Masters (Level 9).

The consortium plans to begin recruiting onto the Levels 6 and 7 in September 2023, with the Levels 8 and 9 to follow a year later. The indicative programme will be that apprentices attend online lectures one day per week and an additional day per month on campus (for labs and workshops).

The other four days per week will see the apprentices in the workplace, learning on the job’. The industry believes

the apprenticeship mode of delivery is well suited to the profession of Civil Engineering. Apprentices will get hands-on experience of the modules they are studying while in their workplace, giving them a deeper understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing it. The employers engaged with agree that the work-based nature of these programmes will ensure that transferable skills are developed before graduation.

The Civil Engineering and Construction Industry has always been predominately male and there has been very little change in this in recent years. Unfortunately, the numbers of females choosing a career in the construction industry is a disappointing 8%. It is expected that these programmes will make a career in civil engineering more appealing to women and address the gender imbalance currently being experienced.

Studies have shown that a greater cognitive diversity within a team increases its chances of success. If everyone working on a team have the same viewpoint, for example all single gender, then there is a risk that the typical way of thinking will not be challenged. Having gender diversity within a working group will promote an inclusive environment where everyone is valued and contributes to the teams output. It makes sense that if half of our population are women, then ideally half of the profession entrusted with designing and building the world around us should also be women.

This is an exciting new initiative, creating a career path to the Civil Engineering profession in Ireland. Being led out initially by Atlantic Technological University, with the first planned level 6 and 7 cohort intake in September 2023, it is envisaged that this national programme will ultimately grow to include the Levels 8 and 9 and be delivered by various providers across the country.

The civil engineering apprenticeship programme is planned to be transformational, and, over time, bridge the shortfall in supply of engineers in Ireland, providing those skills critical to the delivery of Project Ireland 2040.

- 1 Engineers Ireland, 2020; “Engineering 2020. A barometer of the profession in Ireland”
- 2 SOLAS, 2019; “National Skills Bulletin 2019”
- 3 Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), 2021; “Building Future Skills; the demand for skills in Ireland’s built environment sector to 2030”.
- 4 PWC (2015) Young Workforce’ Index: How well are OECD economies developing the economic potential of their young people?
- 5 PWC (2022) Youth Employment Index, Building a resilient workforce for the future



**Dr Emma Britton** is a member of the Civil Engineering and Construction Staff at ATU Sligo. Emma is secretary to the Civil Engineering Consortium and has been seconded to the development of the Civil Engineering apprenticeship programmes.



# YOUTH PROGRAMMES

## Schools as Safe Spaces for young people to talk about Sex, Healthy Relationships and Pornography: How Dublin Rape Crisis Centre youth programmes can support educators

Caitriona Freir and Ciara Lynch

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is the oldest and largest Rape Crisis Centre in Ireland. Alongside its regular training for frontline professionals and organisations, over 15 years ago DRCC developed specialised youth programmes to raise awareness about and prevent sexual violence amongst young people by equipping them with the awareness and skills they needed to make positive choices and to support themselves and others.

The programmes also aim to help young people understand the possible negative impact of their own behaviour on others. Thanks to funding from the Department of Justice, DRCC regularly delivers training to those working with young people, including teachers in various school settings throughout the country. The training is available to all those who work with young people in youth work, education, and social care settings. In 2022, staff in more than 40 schools nationwide were trained in our *BodyRight* programme, with approximately 20 of those schools opting to receive additional training in our follow-up programme, *Let's Get Real*.

### BODYRIGHT

DRCC's main youth programme, *BodyRight*, grew out of the need for young people to have safe, facilitated conversations on several key issues, including what is healthy behaviour, what is violent behaviour, understanding consent, and understanding how to be more conscious of the potential impact of their engagement with the online world.

DRCC's training also focuses on preparing the teacher to facilitate the programme by providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver the *BodyRight* programme in a safe and trauma-informed way.

DRCC regularly receives queries from teachers and other professionals, requesting guidance on how best to facilitate discussions on healthy relationships, consent and how to support young people in navigating the online world. They are seeing first-hand what not discussing these issues is doing to young people: They end up with problematic messages about gender, power, pleasure, body image, consent, sexual health and sexual behaviour. This is also evident from regular calls to DRCC's 24-hour National Helpline (1800 77 8888) from parents who are supporting their children after they have been impacted by these various factors.

### LET'S GET REAL

The *Let's Get Real* Programme is a media and porn literacy programme developed and introduced by DRCC in 2019. Since then, there has been significant demand for this programme from teachers. *Let's Get Real* provides professionals with activities, resources, and supports to enable young people to be more critical consumers of online media, culture and pornography. DRCC's Education team know that the teachers who come to us for training and delivering the programme in schools are only a small proportion of the staff who actually need the training in order to get the education out to all our young people. Some teachers mention barriers to delivery, including not being given adequate time to do the training or not having the space in timetables to facilitate it.

There are fantastic schools and teachers coming to DRCC for the training and going on to deliver it to young people, but it is evident that there is a much higher need out there. DRCC's recent research on consent<sup>1</sup>, as well as reports from the National Youth Council of Ireland<sup>2</sup>, tells us that young people look to learn about consent and healthy relationships at school. Indeed, DRCC's own Youth Advisory group have been highlighting the need for effective, inclusive education around consent and pornography since the group was formed in 2020. DRCC believes that schools are an ideal place for young people to be educated on these topics and what we really need is for the themes contained in our programmes to be part of the curriculum in all schools.

Eoghan Cleary, a teacher in Temple Carrig School Wicklow, who has delivered our programme since 2019 speaks below about the positive impact both the *BodyRight* and *Let's Get Real* programmes have had on the whole school. He, like others from schools training with DRCC, underlines how important it is to have a whole-of-school approach to delivering this programme. Through all school staff having an understanding of the programmes and what is involved, the students have a safe space where supports can be woven into the programme delivery. This is especially necessary for the leadership of the school to understand the programme and its delivery methods, to support its implementation and to provide space in the timetable for these conversations to be had.

*"The culture created in the BodyRight classroom has fed into discussions in other classrooms, into the corridors at lunchtime, into the social lives of the students outside of the school and even into our staff room and the lives of our teachers, so much so that the entire school community has this year elected to specifically examine our unconscious gender biases as both staff and students in an attempt to ensure that all genders experience the same treatment and are enabled to avail of the same opportunities when it comes to their education in our school. And this has all initially stemmed from the issues addressed in the BodyRight programme" – Eoghan Cleary*

Indeed, in a recent *Irish Times* feature, Eoghan describes in great detail his experiences of delivering DRCC's Youth Programmes, as well what he has learned from his own students about where and what they are learning about sex and their subsequent views on gender roles, consent and healthy relationships.

We receive consistently positive and affirming feedback from teachers and educators who have completed our trainings, stating how much better equipped, resourced and empowered they feel to deliver the *BodyRight* and *Let's Get Real* programmes with the young people with whom they work. They regularly report feeling more confident and capable in delivering the content, facilitating discussions, responding appropriately to difficult topics, as well as handling sensitive issues professionally and carefully.

An additional and essential aspect of our training is in recognising the impact of vicarious trauma. More than ever, teachers, youth workers, and educators are dealing with challenging social issues. We in DRCC believe that educators themselves need to be mindful of the impact this work can have on them and to be supported in their engagement with this work. That is another reason why our trainings are trauma-informed. We focus on enabling the professionals to deliver the youth programmes, while also ensuring they themselves are supported and sufficiently resourced in their engagement and interactions with young people and the issues they are facing.

## INFORMATION ON DRCC YOUTH PROGRAMMES

We offer these trainings 7 times a year, with each course taking place for 4 mornings over 2 weeks. The training is run online and so has a nationwide reach. The first two sessions of *BodyRight* give the teacher the scaffolding to deliver the programme with inputs on:

- Myths and attitudes in relation to rape and sexual assault
- The impact of sexual violence and trauma
- The law in relation to consent, sexual violence in adults and with young people
- The impact of trauma and child sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment
- How best to meet a disclosure of sexual violence in a trauma-informed way
- Self-care and resourcing for the worker

The **BodyRight** manual of activities for facilitation with young people covers:

- The nature of sexual violence
- Consent
- Supporting peers who have been affected by sexual violence
- Sexting and online coercion and exploitation

The **Let's Get Real** manual of activities on media and porn literacy covers:

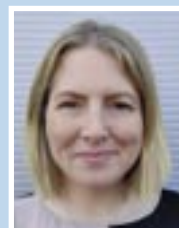
- Gender norms and the media
- Pop culture messages about identity and sexuality
- Porn world versus reality
- Development and pornography
- The Impact of pornography
- Pornography and consent

For information on training or to book a place or for more information on DRCC's services and wider work please contact Dublin Rape Crisis Centre Education – [www.drcc.ie](http://www.drcc.ie).

The 24-hour National Helpline is available to anyone who needs support or information at any time, including those supporting a victim/survivor. Call 1800 778888 for free, non-judgmental and confidential support. Online webchat support is also available as well as a text service for deaf or hard of hearing callers, and an interpreting service in more than 200 languages for those whose first language is not English.

- 1 [https://www.drcc.ie/assets/files/pdf/healthy\\_sexual\\_encounters\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_consent\\_-\\_debrief\\_to\\_drcc\\_-\\_final\\_-\\_october\\_2021.pdf](https://www.drcc.ie/assets/files/pdf/healthy_sexual_encounters_the_role_of_consent_-_debrief_to_drcc_-_final_-_october_2021.pdf)
- 2 <https://www.youth.ie/documents/consent-and-the-youth-sector-what-do-we-know-executive-summary/>

**Caitriona Freir** is Education & Training Manager in Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. Her role involves training in a number of different settings on supporting those impacted by sexual violence. She previously worked as DRCC's Youth Programmes Co-ordinator where her role involved developing and training in youth sexual violence awareness and prevention programmes. Before joining DRCC, Caitriona was a youth worker, with a focus on teenage health delivery for young people.



**Ciara Lynch** is Education and Training Officer with Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. She also works part-time as a Psychotherapist. Previously, Ciara worked as a Primary Teacher and has always had a passion for SPHE, RSE, Mental Health, Philosophy, and Mindfulness in Education.





# EEPN

(European Education Policy Network)

## Annual Conference 2022

Paul Byrne

The European Education Policy Network annual Conference (EEPN) 2022 took place in the Knightsbrook Hotel in Trim, County Meath on 3 and 4 November. The Conference title was *Teachers and School Leaders towards a Sustainable Whole School Approach for Quality and Inclusive Education*.

Over eighty participants from across Europe had the opportunity to discuss the research to date and the policy recommendations published.

EEPN is a Europe-wide network of relevant organisations (policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and stakeholders) driven to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation at different governance levels and to support European Commission (EC) policy work on teachers and school leaders.

This network is building on existing activities developed at European level, especially initiatives and projects supported through European Union programmes in the field of education. The coordinating body of the 4-year project which started in January 2019 is the European School Heads Association (ESHA). The network currently has 29 partners from 18 countries.

The EEPN mission is to promote co-operation, policy development and implementation at different governance levels and to support the European Commission's policy work on teachers and school leaders. In this, the third and final year of the project, the focus was on the teachers and school leaders towards a sustainable whole school approach for quality and inclusive education.

The work done within the network provided the following:

- Highlights report describing the research process.
- Four research papers approaching the main topic from different perspectives.
- Policy recommendations based on the research findings that offer a basis for policy development and implementation at different governance levels and inform the work of the EC on the new roles and competences required of teachers and school leaders in the digital age for inclusive quality education.

The Conference opened with a plenary session facilitated by Eszter Salamon. NADP President Shane Foley welcomed all delegates to Ireland and to his home ground in Trim. ESHA president Chris Hill of NAHT UK officially opened the Conference.

The Conference started with a keynote by Michael Teutsch, the Head of the Schools and Multilingualism Unit of the EC's Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture who emphasised the importance of research around teachers and their appreciation for the work of the Network.

Yaroslav Turyanskyi, President of the Revived Ukrainian Gymnasia Association of Principals gave a thought-provoking presentation in conjunction with a video on the extreme difficulties in keeping an education system up and running in a country torn apart by war. He thanked all the countries who are currently giving assistance to the eight million Ukrainian citizens who have been forced to seek sanctuary during this conflict and thanked ESHA for the support being shown to his organisation at this time.

The next keynote address was given by the recently retired Chief Inspector of Education in Ireland, Dr Harold Hislop. Dr Hislop's excellent presentation had the title, *Leading the Learning we want for Young People: Some Reflections from Ireland*, and looked at the following areas:

- How good is the quality of Irish education?
- Strengths and challenges
- What informs our approach to challenges? School and system culture.
- A supportive eco-system
- How a balanced approach to external and internal quality assurance can help: An Inspectorate perspective

Dr Hislop spoke on both the strengths and the challenges in the Irish education system and his open and brilliantly delivered keynote was very much appreciated by all delegates. The slides from his presentation will be made available in due course.

Dr Hislop's address was followed by a highlights report which described the research process and its limitations as well as

the summary of the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations of all four research papers on the new roles and competences required of teachers and school leaders in the digital age for inclusive quality education in all EU countries. The research has been developed by members of the EEPN project partnership, based on resources and examples identified by partnership members.

The Conference continued with four facilitated workshops which examined and sought discussion and feedback on the four research papers which had been circulated to all attendees.

### Research paper 1: Teachers' and School Leaders' Competences and Support for Effective Blended Learning

Since recent developments and circumstances have put the spotlight on blended learning as a new desirable approach to the learning process, this research starts from "the basics", addressing the main questions, such as what defines blended learning, but also what the types of teachers' and school leaders' competences for effective blended learning are and finally how can they be supported in this process.

One of the findings is that when educational technology is combined with strong and competent teachers, it makes for a classroom where teachers can build powerful relationships and direct their attention to where students need them most. Additionally, important avenues that can support this process according to the relevant research were identified:

- Formal Continuous Professional Development
- Self-assessment tools.
- Teacher networks

### Research paper 2: A Whole School Support and Networking to Ensure School Success for All

A whole school approach (WSA) was introduced by international bodies as a key factor for quality education as well as to build up an inclusive system that provides education for all. It belongs to a learner-centred vision of education, within a community framework. This research analysed WSA, by examining various practices, policies and models that promote a positive school culture, bring school actors and stakeholders together, involve the entire school community, etc.

### Research paper 3: A Whole School Approach for Sustainable Development, with a Particular Focus on the Role and Competences of School Leaders to Support the Implementation of it

This research paper aims to offer an analysis of various approaches and frameworks to identify the role and competences of teachers and school leaders to support the implementation of a whole school approach for sustainable development, bringing together policy examples, good practice and research evidence.

One of the main findings is that Education for Sustainable Development should be cross-disciplinary, participative, interactive, related to life, conducted in a non-authoritarian environment, cognisant of the challenges of societal diversity and co-constructed with parents and the community as well as the school. Additionally, the high potential of the notion of "Classrooms linked to Communities" for supporting students to co-create social change projects was recognised within analysed projects.

### Research paper 4: Schools as Learning Communities to Support Teachers' and School Leaders' Professional Learning and Well-Being

Professional learning and well-being were approached in this research paper through the perspective of system theory which conceives educational organisations as open systems in interaction both with their external and internal operational environments.

Researchers wanted to explore the definition and status of professional learning and well-being and expand the understanding of the role of the educational system and educational organizations in supporting it but also open the discussion about how to ensure the sustainability of that support.

### Policy recommendations

Policy recommendations are based on the research evidence that project partners have compiled within a framework of topics for the third year within the 4 research papers. These recommendations provide an opportunity for policy makers and stakeholders in education to align them with different national, regional, and institutional circumstances, within a framework of enhanced cooperation among different stakeholders in education that includes consultation within their own constituencies.

The EEPN policy recommendations were debated in lively interactive plenary sessions and the participants had the opportunity to share their views and their own practice related to the 4 research topics in workshops. The Conference also provided an opportunity for EEPN partners to discuss various follow-up activities they are planning once the funding period is over.

The Conference ended following a plenary session by Petra van Haren the Director of ESHA, who thanked NAPD on behalf of all in attendance for facilitating the Conference.

The EEPN newsletter will be published on the 10 December 2022 and it will outline various initiatives EEPN partners are envisioning to continue the works started within the European Policy Network on School Leadership EPNoSoL and EEPN.

The EEPN newsletter will be available as a link in the December NAPD New Bulletin.

# Insurance Matters



*In this insurance review, we outline three accidents that have occurred in our schools which have instigated claims and which have been finalised in the courts in the last year. It should be noted that the courts have returned to pre-pandemic practice, which is positive, but court hearing lists are prolonged in many regions.*



**Emma Coughlan**  
*Allianz Claims Relationship  
Manager*

## **CASE 1: STUDENT FELL OFF CHAIR IN CLASSROOM**

**T**he school received a letter of claim alleging a student, the claimant, fell off a defective chair in the classroom and injured her back. The insured was unaware of any incident occurring in school, as it was not reported at the time of alleged incident. The student was not out of school following the incident according to attendance records.

We investigated the matter and met with the school's caretaker who advised he was not aware of any incident and there were rarely any issues with the chairs. The caretaker confirmed there was no inspection system in place for chairs, which was an exposure for us.

We carried out in depth investigation with the school, engineers, and our legal team. Following receipt of the claimant's medical records we put the claimant on full proof of their injuries. The claimant was able to tell us the exact classroom they were in, the teacher they had, the receptionist they attended to for an ice pack and the student (friend) who attended the receptionist office with them. We interviewed all witnesses mentioned by the claimant who outlined they have no recollection of this incident.

We were happy to run this case based on the school's evidence. This case was going to be a 'swearing match', one word against the other. We appeared in court with our witnesses and legal team and ran the case. The judge heard the case and ultimately found in favour of the claimant and made an award to the claimant for injuries.

### **Judgement**

This case comes down to credibility. It would not be unusual for a teenager or a middle-aged person to cover up some discomfort due to embarrassment following a fall. The judge said: "Do I think the accident happened? I do. Do I think it happened in the classroom? I do. Do I think it occurred due to a defective chair? I do. The fact of the matter is that the plaintiff, in my opinion, is entitled to succeed by the narrowest of margins as this is an 'all or nothing' situation".



## CASE 2: FALL IN SCHOOL YARD

The insured received a letter of claim alleging the student had fallen in the yard, causing injuries to their face and head. We arranged an investigation and met the school's witnesses. A teacher on yard supervision witnessed this incident. The students were on break in the yard and the yard was supervised. The injured party/claimant was running around and tripped over herself hitting her head off a gate.

At the time the teacher was looking in that direction and saw the injured party fall and tended to the injured party within seconds. First aid was applied and parents called. The injured party confirmed to the teacher that they had tripped over their own feet when running.

We were happy to defend this claim based on evidence that we had obtained. We had strong witnesses who had seen the accident occur. The school had a strong supervision rota and supervision ethos in place which was well documented and there was no defect in the accident locus. We appointed our defence team and agreed this claim should be strongly defended.

During the hearing, the injured party alleged they fell over a drainage grate in the yard that was defective. Our witness was able to outline that this was not the area the injured party was running in and there was no contact with the grate.

### Judgement

The judge was impressed with our witness. He noted that the teacher gave clear evidence that was succinct, accurate and in line with the contemporaneous note that the teacher had taken on the day. The judge was satisfied the claimant was running towards the gate and not running near the gate.

The judge said unfortunately even when the children are supervised in the playground, it is impossible to avoid physical injury. The judge had sympathy for the injured party but dismissed the claim awarding costs against the claimant's 'Next Friend' (parents).

## CASE 3: STUDENT INJURED PLAYING SPORT DURING PE CLASS

We received a letter of claim outlining a student was injured in PE class. We investigated the matter fully. All students were partaking in PE class with a PE teacher present. The PE class plan was to play basketball. This was the second week of playing basketball in PE class. According to the PE teacher, the student/claimant tried to block the ball and was unfortunately injured in the process, sustaining a wrist fracture.

When legal proceedings were served, the claimant alleged the class was unsupervised, that there was a lot of messing going on and the teacher was not present when incident occurred. From our attendance with the teacher, we were satisfied this was not the case.

During our investigation we identified that the PE class was adequately supervised, the PE teacher was fully qualified and had a class plan in place (approved by Department of Education and recommended on the Leaving Certificate Curriculum). The PE teacher was also qualified in first aid and attended to the claimant accordingly before calling parents.

We appointed our legal team and sent instructions to defend this claim. We set the matter down for hearing and met with our legal team and witnesses prior to hearing date. We were happy to fully defend this claim based on the PE teacher's evidence.

We attended court with our legal team and witnesses on the morning of the hearing. We were approached for settlement offers and we declined to make any offers and advised we would strongly defend the claim. As we entered the court room our legal team was advised the claimant/student was withdrawing their claim.

# Workshop – Become a Leader of Learning in your School

Barry O’Callaghan



Graham Powell



Armando Di-Finizio

Portlaoise  
November 2022

Graham Powell has been introducing teachers and leaders from Irish schools to the *Learning Power Approach* for ten years now; he has always been keen to help embed these practices across the curriculum and culture of schools and Colleges. The recent workshop in Portlaoise provided us with clear and compelling examples of how this has been achieved through the example of specific and contrasting schools from across Ireland – with complementary evidence coming from an experienced UK Principal, Armando Di-Finizio (Italian by name, otherwise 100% Scottish!).



Graham Powell

The session began with an introduction to the *Learning Power Approach* that provided participants with opportunities to experience what lessons feel like – from a student’s point of view – and require from teachers if they are to build the learning capacity of their students. This workshop showed how these, easy to absorb, techniques are applicable to all areas of the curriculum and are compatible with the Junior Cycle and the Leaving Cert curriculum. All this was placed in the context of well-grounded international research – and Graham Powell’s own experience in a variety of different educational settings – that clearly indicates the pressing need to look radically at the way we teach and how students learn if we are to prepare them for a future that will be more challenging and uncertain than ever before.

**Coaching is not about telling people what to do but rigorously helping them to recognise their goals and explore practical ways of achieving them. This applies not only to teaching young people but also to developing colleagues.**

This opening session was complemented by an input by Armando Di-Finizio, who has been a successful Principal in three UK schools, all of which started from a low base before he introduced these ideas and approaches. His recent book, *A Head Full of Ethos*, reviewed in the Autumn Leader, provides a wealth of sensible, practical advice as how best to create a culture of learning for all students, regardless of background or ability. His self-effacing candour set the tone for engagement and buy-in from participants.

The substantial second session was taken by 4 Irish Principals, who provided an inspiring and honest appraisal of the work they had undertaken, the progress they have made, pitfalls avoided, a realistic assessment of where they are now and an account of what they need to do to take learning forward in their schools. Above all, the Principals stressed that these approaches ensure that excellent test and exam results are secured, while also providing students with the learning habits they will need to thrive in the digital age.

The sheer positivity Janice Uí Bheoláin, Coláiste de Lacey Ashbourne, Yvonne Lucey, Regina Mundi Cork, Gerard O’Leary, Celbridge CS and Colm Ó Corcora, Coláiste an Croi Naofa Cork was energising and inspirational. Given the constraints and limitations caused by Covid, it would not have been surprising for the Principals to say that these ideas and approaches were attractive but impossible to maintain. Nothing could be further from the truth. Together with Armando Di-Finizio, they showed how change can be managed, not through top-down initiatives and impositions

## Follow Up Spring Courses – Graham Powell – Learning Powered Approach

|                              | Title                                      | Aimed at  | Max places |
|------------------------------|--|---|------------|
| Wednesday<br>8 February 2023 | Newcomers                                  | Those who attended a Newcomers' course in October 2022, together with those who are new to, and interested and in, Graham Powell's Learning Power Approach.   | 40         |
| Thursday<br>9 February 2023  | Returners                                  | Those who have attended courses in the past – including those who experienced the Returners' Refresher Workshop in October 2022.  | 40         |
| Thursday<br>2 March 2023     | Become a Leader of Learning in your School | Those who attended the Become a Leader of Learning Workshop in November 2022 and are looking to put these ideas in practice in the coming academic year. Those who missed the opening day are also welcome. | 50         |

- All workshops run from 9am to 1pm and will take place in Midland's Park Hotel, Portlaoise
- Cost: €70 per person per workshop
- Registration via the NAPD website → Professional Learning Tab

but through validating current practice in schools and appealing to the core values and aspirations of colleagues, students and their parents.

Each one of them stressed that the *Learning Power Approach* 'is not an initiative' but a way of enhancing current practice in ways that make sense. The wealth of practical insights and advice presented provided all who attended with many ways forward for Learning & Teaching, as well as whole school management.

A follow-up day is planned for 2 March 2023. Graham will open proceedings by exploring the ways in which schools have used coaching techniques as the central plank for leadership of learning in classrooms and across the school as a whole. Coaching is not about telling people what to do but rigorously helping them to recognise their goals and explore practical ways of achieving them. This applies not only to teaching young people but also to developing colleagues. A practical workshop session will enable participating schools to begin to put these approaches in place as a complement to the *Learning Power Approach*.

The greater part of the workshop will be spent on planning

ways forward with individual schools. Having shared the ideas of the five Principals, who will be present again, participants will be helped to create strategic plans for learning that will enable them to move forward from where they are at present to where they feel they need to be at the beginning of school year 2023 - 2024 and beyond.

The watchword of all sessions provided by Graham over the years has been – *Useful*. It is his intentions that all who attend – be they school/College teachers or leaders – go away with practical advice and activities that they can enact immediately and continue to develop over the longer term. In addition, he has also been eager to establish self-sustaining networks that build on existing good practice in Irish schools that do not rely on him as a regular returner.

The experience gained from the Covid years of remote learning as well as the sharing of ideas and resources without the need for people to be in the same place as each other, provides us with great opportunities to work more closely in support of each other.



Yvonne Lucey

### John West-Burnham

As we go to print, we have heard of the sad passing of John West-Burnham. John was the person who pointed NAPD in the direction of Paul Ginnis, Mike Hughes, Graham Powell and Guy Claxton. NAPD's L&T programme over the last 10 years is directly attributable to John. He was a warm, witty and generous man and a wonderful educationalist.

Ar dheis Dé anois.



As educators, we know only too well that we shouldn't assume what knowledge our students have. It's better to ask the questions and check for understanding. How many of us assume that our staff and students know what they can do to address climate breakdown or the biodiversity crisis? We often hear students and teachers reference recycling as a solution. Recycling isn't a significant solution. It shouldn't be the first thing that comes to our mind.

The Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN) has developed the '5 Minutes of Sustainability' Initiative. Students produce 5-minute videos that focus on the actions that we can take, an explanation of how that action helps and the impact of taking that action.

Senior leadership teams can allot 5 minutes once a month for a whole school conversation. Each video has ideas for school projects and CBAs too. The videos are on the ISSN website ([www.issn.ie/5-minutes-of-sustainability](http://www.issn.ie/5-minutes-of-sustainability)) and students can log what actions they have taken.

Changing a culture takes grit and hard work. It won't happen overnight. These videos are not a silver bullet. Nevertheless, in my school, Árdscoil na Mara in Waterford, they have sparked conversations between staff and students.

To foster a culture of agency and empowerment, we have set up a mentoring system whereby our students in our Environmental Leadership Team are assigned a tutor group to mentor. They have set up a rewards system to gently nudge students to take these actions.

The new *Looking at Our School 2022* framework highlights that highly effective schools 'prioritise and promote, as a core value, a commitment to sustainable development'. It encourages the school community to collectively develop and implement practices and

policies to embed principles of sustainability in the school's daily routines. 5 Minutes of Sustainability will help you to do just that!

It enables students to contribute positively and actively towards a more sustainable and just world.

**What can YOU DO IN YOUR SCHOOL to address the CLIMATE and NATURE emergency? ITS EASY! ...**

-  **Once a month get** your whole school to watch one of our **5 MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY** videos
-  **Learn** about simple actions we all can take
-  **Record** the actions you are putting into practice
-  **Start conversations and spread the word** to encourage action



**FIND A NEW VIDEO EACH MONTH ON ISSN.IE WEBSITE**

**Patrick Kirwan** teaches in Ardscoil na Mara, Waterford. He founded The Irish Schools Sustainability Network (ISSN) to provide a forum for teachers and students to work in partnership to accelerate climate and ecological action. You can follow Patrick on twitter @growgardeners or catch up with the ISSN @IrishSchSusty or visit their website [www.issn.ie](http://www.issn.ie).



# BEKIND IN INDIA



Martina Flanagan



Sometimes another's journey can lead to life changing pathways for their family and friends. In 2004 my then 16-year-old son, Shane, went to volunteer with his school in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India. On his return he encouraged his father to volunteer the following year to witness life in this amazing city.

Kolkata is known as "The City of Joy", and this captures the spirit of the wonderful people who live there and their joy for life. But for every time of laughter there is a time of sadness. Where there is poverty and homelessness there is a need for support and kindness.

When visiting Kolkata, my husband Brian was deeply affected by the poverty he witnessed and thus began his personal journey and the journey of his family, friends and our community.

In 2007, we set up a small charity, **Bekind** Ireland ([www.bekind.ie](http://www.bekind.ie)), and through the support of friends and the community we now have a home for 25 children aged 6-18, the "Bekind Boys". These children no longer live on pavements or under bypasses or on railway platforms. They live together in a comfortable house where they receive an education, clothing, medical care and a safe environment. They are an inspiration.

The philosophy of our charity is to give these children back their childhood. **Bekind** Ireland is a completely volunteer-led organisation. Nobody

We have just returned from Kolkata. Brian, Shane, and I visited during midterm and brought 10 volunteers to bring the **Bekind** Boys on a short holiday, giving them the care and love they deserve.



takes a salary or expenses and so all donations make an even greater impact.

**Bekind** Ireland has brought several groups of students from various schools to Kolkata since 2008. This has allowed these students to experience first-hand the work that **Bekind** Ireland is doing and in many cases has inspired students to take up careers in nursing and other caring professions.

Many thanks to NAPD for their kind donation of backpacks to our 24 boys. They were so excited and will use them for their soccer kits, cricket gear and much-loved swimming classes.

Our motto - if you can't be there, be kind.

**Martina Flanagan is Deputy Principal of St David's CBS, Artane, Dublin**

**Bekind** (IRL) CLG trading as "Bekind Ireland" is an Irish company limited by guarantee (Company Number: 448441) and Irish registered charity (Charity Number: CHY 17971), with its offices at 33 Woodpark, Castleknock, Dublin D15KP6R, Ireland.



# NAPD Covers

**Scan** the QR code



to download the **PDF**

# Allianz Ireland

## Allianz Ireland's Chief Customer Officer, Geoff Sparling, speaks about their proud partnership with Olympic and Paralympic Movements.

At Allianz, our purpose is about securing people's futures and giving them the courage they need for what's ahead, no matter what. As part of this mission, we are committed to working alongside organisations that live by the same values as we do and that reach into every part of the community.

By partnering with these organisations, we aim to make a meaningful difference for society and the communities we are part of. This is an integral part of our sustainability strategy. The best way we can do this is by giving the strongest platform possible to the passion points that matter most to our customers.

## The Olympic and Paralympic Movements

Globally, Allianz Group began its eight-year worldwide partnership with the Olympic & Paralympic Movements on January 1 2021, building on a collaboration with the Paralympic Movement that had been established in 2006.

In Ireland, we've supported Paralympics Ireland, the body responsible for preparing Irish athletes to compete at the Paralympic Games, since 2010 making us the longest standing supporter of Para sport in Ireland, something myself and all the team in Allianz are extremely proud of.

Last year we entered into a three-year partnership with the Olympic Federation of Ireland so we are fully behind Team Ireland on their road to Paris 2024 in both the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Our partnerships with Paralympics Ireland and the Olympic Federation of Ireland directly align with a core strategic priority for us in Allianz in terms of gender equality, diversity and inclusion. Working with both

organisations to build on our long history in Para sport, where we have always aimed to create visibility for and drive support of Para sport and the athletes involved. Our shared ambition is to support all our Irish athletes in the lead up to Paris as well as bring the Games to life for Irish fans.

The work we do through our partnership builds on our rich history of supporting people and communities across Ireland to unite through a shared love of sport, something we are very passionate about. We know this passion is shared by the Irish public and in particular young fans of our Irish athletes. Through the schools network across the country at both primary and secondary level, this passion and excitement for sport can be stoked in the athletes of tomorrow.

## Supporting our athletes

Supporting Irish athlete's has always been an important part of our partnership with Paralympics Ireland. Having a shared goal with our athlete ambassadors has been a key feature of our work together and has been at the core of its success.

Listen to Ellen Keane's The D-Word wherever you get your podcasts.



Cold feet on Djouce, Co. Wicklow

Photography by Charlie McManus

