



Sat 11th November 2023



Hybrid Conference (online and Marino Institute of Education)



Being, Becoming and Beyond: SPHE in Children and Young People's Lives



Wellbeing at the Centre of Being, Becoming and Beyond



Developing a Positive School Culture and Climate



Relationships, Sexuality and Identity



Leadership, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement



SPHE in the Wider Curriculum Context



Children and Young People at the Heart of Learning



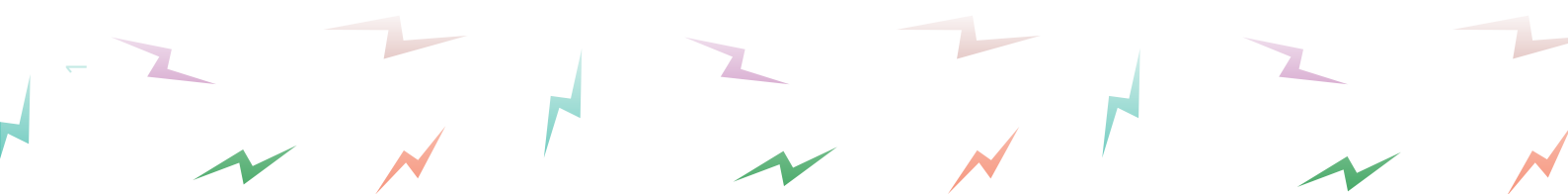
Care and Consent



Book of Abstracts

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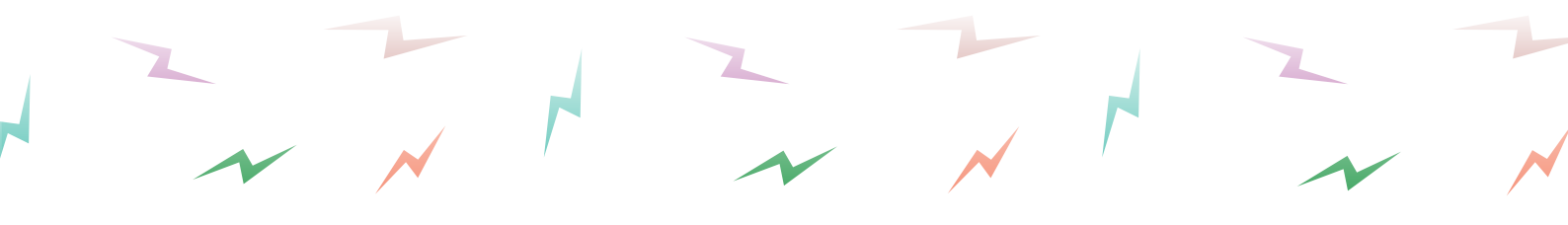
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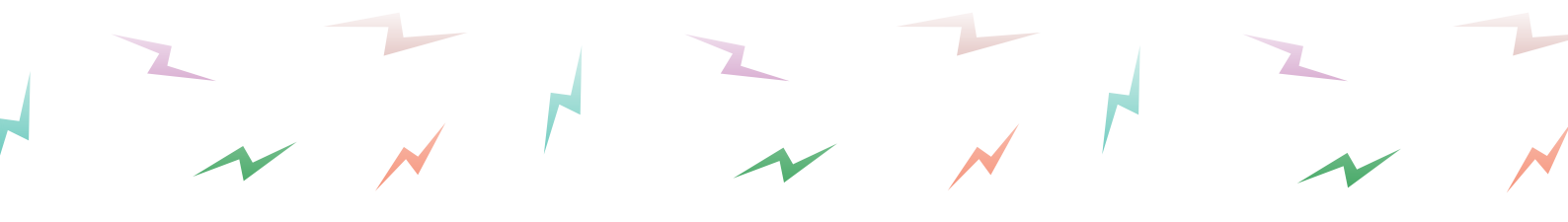


Silence and sexuality: An exploration of RSE provision in the Irish Primary Sector

Sexual health has long been on the political agenda in Ireland, which is evident in policy documents such as the *Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy Guidelines (1997)*; *the Irish Study of Sexual Health Relationships (2006)*, *The National Sexual Health Strategy 2015 - 2020 (2015)*, and the *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Report (NCCA, 2019)*. With a history of more than half a century in Europe, sexuality education is known to have positive and life-long effects on the health and wellbeing of young people and is associated with healthier sexual behaviours and sexual outcomes later in life. Taking this as our starting point, this paper explores RSE provision through the words and worlds of 5th and 6th class pupils, along with a cohort of primary-school teachers and pre-service teachers. It seeks to uncover the voices that are listened to most and those who are silenced. This paper draws on two separate research projects. The first is a collaborative project between academics and school staff in a Dublin primary school involving the co-construction of a new primary-school framework in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) which supports teachers' ongoing learning and practice in this area and which centres pupil voice and teacher experience. The second is a three-partner institution research project engaging pre-service teachers in conversations about gender and sexuality. Overall, three themes are discussed: silence in RSE practice and RSE experiences; childhood and sexuality education; and the status of RSE in Irish primary schools.



Dr Suzanne O'Keefe & Dr Patricia Kennon, Maynooth University



Autistic and gender diverse: Belonging and flourishing at school

Gender identity is at the fore of much discussion nationally and internationally at present. The revised Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum will teach students about gender identity and sexual orientation. In the curriculum document one of the areas of focus states that students will “appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways.” My research focuses on the lived school experiences of autistic trans and non-binary students in the Republic of Ireland. This paper will examine the literature pertinent to the school experiences of autistic gender diverse students and will address the following themes:

- the politics of visibility
- inclusivity labour
- modalities of inclusion
- the complications of religion in relation to gender identity in Irish schools

The importance of the inclusion of gender identity in the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum is of significant importance as the use of appropriate language and behaviour towards gender diverse students has been linked to better mental health and educational outcomes for students (Jones et al., 2016). Carefully considered pedagogical approaches in relation to the teaching of gender identity in schools may support schools in moving beyond tokenistic attempts to neutralise gender (Neary, 2021) and support gender diverse students to feel seen, validated and accepted within the school community.

Preliminary findings of my research will also be presented in brief and will be situated within themes identified above.



Maggie Green, ATU Donegal

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Jones, T. et al. (2016) ‘School experiences of transgender and gender diverse students in Australia’, *Sex Education*, 16(2), pp. 156-171. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1080678>.

Neary, A. (2021) ‘Trans children and the necessity to complicate gender in primary schools’, *Gender and education*, 33(8), pp. 1073-1089. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2021.1884200>.

Engaging our pupils as active citizens

SPHE aims to support children to become active and responsible citizens (NCCA, 1999). Indeed, (Greene, 1985, p.4) posits that "surely it is an obligation of education in a democracy to empower the young to become members of the public, to participate and play articulate roles in the public sphere". Being an active citizen looks different for everyone and can involve spreading awareness on a topic we are interested in, lobbying people in power to make change, or finding creative innovative ways to speak up for what you believe in.

However, the practicalities of engaging primary school pupils as active citizens can be challenging. Teachers are often, understandably, concerned about the potential for engaging in action to give rise to controversy in the school or wider community, or that engaging in action might place children in a vulnerable position.

This workshop will take participants through a framework for action designed specifically for primary school children (Titley and Golden, 2023). The framework focuses on empowering teachers to support children to engage in action which is safe, achievable, age-appropriate, yet remaining focused on enacting change. The framework includes four steps: research, plan, act and share, and reflect. The approach to action which the framework promotes is child-led and offers guidelines for the teacher to act as facilitator, supporting pupils to design and carry out action on topics they are passionate about.

Opportunities to engage in action supports children to come to know themselves as important citizens in society and learn that their voice matters.



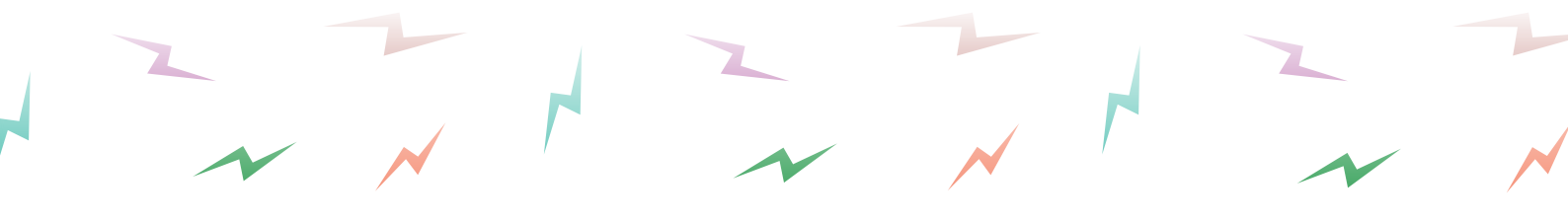
Dr Brigid Golden, Mary Immaculate College

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GREENE, M. 1985. The Role of Education in Democracy. *Educational Horizons*, 63, 3-9.

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TITLEY, A. & GOLDEN, B. 2023. Framework for Action. In: GOLDEN, B. (ed.) *Global Citizenship Education. Curious Teachers, Critical Classrooms*. Ireland: The DICE Project.



Being the DLP! Their mandated reporting experiences in Irish primary schools

Pursuant to the Children First Act 2015, registered teachers with the Teaching Council were assigned mandatory child protection obligations for the first time in December 2017. National research was conducted in 2019 and again in 2023 with Designated Liaison Persons (DLPs) in Irish primary schools to ascertain their schools' experiences of these new statutory obligations. Online surveys were emailed to all primary schools on the Department of Education school database (n = 3,221 in 2019, n = 3227 in 2023). 387 DLPs responded in 2019 and 647 in 2023, representing a response rate of 12% and 20% respectively. Findings indicate that neglect is the category of abuse which the majority of schools encounter most frequently (69.5% and 63.6% of schools in 2019 and 2023 respectively) followed by emotional abuse in 2019 (15.8% of schools) and physical abuse in 2023 (21.2% of schools). Only 1.7% and 2.7% of DLPs in 2019 and 2023 respectively indicate that sexual abuse is the category of abuse with which their school deals most frequently. Almost half of DLPs in 2023 (49.4%) indicate they are less confident in dealing with sexual abuse, followed closely by 45.3% reporting less confidence in dealing with emotional abuse, 22.5% indicating less confidence in dealing with neglect, and 15.4% indicating less confidence in dealing with physical abuse. 87.3% of DLPs in 2023 indicate they have contacted Tusla for child protection advice whilst 54.2% have made a child protection referral without first seeking Tusla advice. It can be concluded that despite sexual abuse being the category with which schools deal with least frequently, and with which DLPs are least confident, it still amounts to 3 out of 10 referrals to Tusla from DLPs. In the context of 'becoming' in children's lives, it is recommended that supports for school's address DLPs' lack of confidence in dealing with categories of abuse, specifically sexual abuse and emotional abuse.



Dr Mia Treacy & Dr Margaret Nohilly, Mary Immaculate College

"Being Well"- The place of Spirituality in developing a sense of meaning in life for children in the primary school curriculum

The *Primary Curriculum Framework* key competency of 'Being Well' acknowledges the place of spirituality in developing and experiencing a sense of meaning in life for children. Spiritual wellbeing and spirituality have received much attention in academic discourse and research in recent years. Spiritual wellbeing is the linking of the two concepts of spirituality and health. Spirituality, like wellbeing, does not have one agreed definition, but rather is understood in terms of attributes and characteristics. It can be comprehended as exploring human values, the personal search for meaning and moral issues (Rossiter 2010). Spirituality, in the literature, is often understood to be concerned with a person's sense of connectedness, or relationship with Self, Others, the World, and for some, God (Adams *et al.* 2008; Hyde 2008). As Irish society becomes more secular and grapples with what spirituality can be in this new reality, this paper explores how the SPHE curriculum, as part of the Primary School Curriculum, can support all children in developing their spiritual wellbeing. It argues that spiritual wellbeing can contribute to increased self-confidence and self-esteem, which play an important part in shaping identity; identity being a key factor in spirituality. Allowing children to explore their inner life, find their place in the world and seeking answers to the 'big' questions in life, all lead to a greater sense of wellbeing. Spiritual wellbeing within an SPHE curriculum will support children to explore their sense of being in the world, to become active and full citizens, and explore the possibilities of now and beyond.



Dr Maurice Harmon, Mary Immaculate College

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- Adams, K., B. Hyde, and Woolley R. (2008) *The spiritual dimension of childhood*, London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Hyde, B. (2008) *Children and spirituality: Searching for meaning and connectedness*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
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Being and becoming comfortable with addressing difference in the classroom

Being different is a fundamental part of being human. These differences might include, but are not limited to, gender, social class, citizenship status, ability, age, ethno-racial identity, culture, sexual orientation personality, interests, worldviews, values and behavioural patterns (Jacobson & Mustafa, 2019). In the Irish context, SPHE is the subject area which most specifically focuses on creating a classroom culture which accepts and validates children's diverse identities (NCCA, 2022, 1999). SPHE extends beyond discreet curricular time, however. In addition to being a subject which offers many opportunities for cross-curricular integration, its principles permeate the everyday lives of children through inclusive school climates and the hidden curriculum.

Supporting diverse identities has become more challenging in recent times as the politics of identity have become increasingly contentious. Taking account of the key challenges outlined in the international literature, which include teachers' perceived lack of knowledge, confidence, and capability in addressing diverse identities (Carlile, 2019; Forrest, et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2018; Priest et al., 2014; Walton et al., 2014; Yared et al., 2020; Zack et al., 2010), this paper seeks to supports teachers to engage in difficult conversations with children and to normalise and affirm their diverse identities. It foregrounds classroom-based practice and argues for social justice-oriented pedagogies which foreground equity, agency and social literacy (Kavanagh et al., 2021).



Dr Anne Marie Kavanagh, Dublin City University

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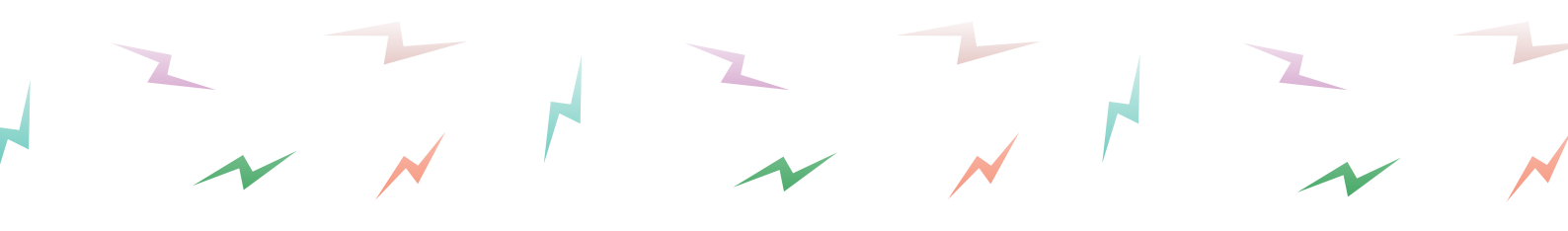
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Walton, J., Priest, N., Kowal, E., White, F., Brickwood, K., Fox, B., Paradies, Y. (2014). Talking culture? Egalitarianism, color-blindness and racism in Australian elementary schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 39, 112-122. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0742051X14000055?via%3Dihub>

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Zack, J., Mannheim, A., & Alfano, M. (2010). 'I didn't know what to say...': Four archetypal responses to homophobic rhetoric in the classroom. *The High School Journal*, 93 (3), 98-110. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.0.0047>



Being and Becoming: Lessons learned from an arts-based narrative inquiry with primary school children and their experiences of a Social-emotional and academic learning programme.

This paper is set within a narrative inquiry project researching eight primary school children's experiences of the social-emotional and academic learning program 'You Can Do It (YCDI) Program Achieve' (2007). This paper explores the impact of YCDI in schools and highlights some considerations for schools currently implementing or planning to implement SEL or wellbeing interventions. The timing of this article is particularly relevant in the Irish context, given the introduction of a new "Wellbeing" curricular area in the recently published Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools (2023), which places emphasis on children's social and emotional wellness. Using a narrative inquiry framework (Clandinin, D. Jean, and Michael F. Connelly. 2000. Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research. 1st ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers), this paper tentatively addresses two main questions: how did the program impact the children's lives both within and outside of school, and how do these findings contribute to the knowledge base of YCDI and other school-based SEL and wellbeing interventions? Through art, the researcher made visible the children's experiences of the YCDI programme and the impact the program had on their lives. Such understandings were deeply personal, contextual, and temporal. Through this process, the children also made visible their being and becoming, their identity formation, by telling stories that took place on and off the school landscape. The findings of this paper tentatively open up new ways teachers and schools might re-orientate themselves to better attend to students while also highlighting ways the YCDI program and other SEL and wellbeing interventions work on children in unsuspecting and perhaps challenging ways.



Dr John Meegan, Hibernia College

References:

Clandinin, D. Jean, and Michael F. Connelly. 2000. Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research. 1st ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

'Just let them have a say!' Students' perspective of student voice pedagogies in primary physical education

Student voice pedagogies have been cited as a powerful educational tool in engaging children in the learning process. As the new Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023) places a focus on students' active participation in their learning experiences, the role of student voice pedagogies in primary education has been brought to a forefront. The perspectives of the teacher and of primary-aged children on using student voice pedagogies as part of everyday practice need to be considered.

Within this research, student voice pedagogies were implemented and explored as part of one teacher's regular practice in primary physical education (PE). Data sources included post-lesson reflections, a researcher journal, and transcripts from meetings with a critical friend. Qualitative data was also collected from two consecutive cohorts of children ($n = 39$) over a 6-month and 9-month period respectively, and consisted of the children's written entries in their PE scrapbooks, along with transcripts from focus group interviews ($n = 4$, with 16 total participants).

Findings show that providing children with *space, voice, audience and influence* (Lundy, 2007) within PE lessons is important to them, and greatly mattered to how they experienced learning in PE. However, the implementation of student voice pedagogies takes time, and necessitates a period of trial and error for both teacher and students; while the students need help in developing and sharing their voices, the teacher needs to learn how to listen to, nurture and act on their students' voices.

The findings illustrate the value of student voice pedagogies as everyday practice to the quality of children's experiences in PE. While primary PE provided a viable starting point to help students navigate the first steps of agency in their learning, these findings can be applied to the SPHE curriculum and the wider primary school curriculum, in line with the principles of the Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023).



Grace Cardiff, Mary Immaculate College

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Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." *British educational research journal*, 33(6), 927-942.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)(2023). *Primary Curriculum Framework*. Dublin: The Stationery Office



Wellbeing in Education: Its potential to support Children's Being and Becoming

Recently, the *Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools* was published (DE, 2023) and the inclusion of wellbeing as an area of learning is a new departure for primary education. This paper considers the implications of the inclusion of wellbeing as an area of learning at primary level and its potential to support children's being and becoming. The philosophical, conceptual and educational basis for the inclusion of wellbeing as one of five core areas of learning at primary level is outlined. While the focus on wellbeing in education may be quite recent, its philosophical basis has a long history. A Content Analysis for the philosophical basis for the inclusion of wellbeing as an area of learning is presented. Thereafter, a number of conceptual frameworks which support the educationalization of wellbeing are considered. Specifically then, the aspects of learning and development that are supported through a sense of wellbeing are clarified. Among these are; higher academic achievement, positive behavior, social emotional competence, reduced anxiety and mental health issues, values development and support for learners 'at risk' of poor levels of wellbeing. These research findings result from a systematic literature review in the area of wellbeing commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (Nohilly *et al.* 2023).



Dr. Fionnuala Tynan and Dr. Margaret Nohilly, Mary Immaculate College

References:

Department of Education (2023) *Primary curriculum framework for primary and special schools*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Nohilly, M., Tynan, F., Martin, R., Pope J., Bowles, R., Dillon, M., Farrelly, G., Harmon, M., Kitching N., La Cumber G., Ní Chroinín D. and O'Sullivan L. (2023) *A systematic literature review to support curriculum specification development for the area of wellbeing*. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Available: <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/wellbeing/>.

Maintaining the silence: the school leadership response to homophobic bullying in the 10 years of the anti-bullying procedures

The research reported in this paper sought to determine the level of awareness among school principals in primary schools in Ireland where homophobic bullying is concerned. It is a follow up study to original research conducted in 2014, and is 10 years after the publication of the Department of Education Anti-bullying procedures for schools, which outlined how both primary and post-primary schools needed to implement measures to respond to homophobic bullying.

International research has previously shown that school leaders as animators of school climate are often lacking in their responses to this type of bullying [Walton, G. 2004. "Bullying and Homophobia in Canadian Schools: The Politics of Policies, Programs, and Educational Leadership." *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education* 1 (4): 23-36; Pizmony-Levy, O., and J. G. Kosciw. 2016. "School Climate and the Experience of LGBT Students: A Comparison of the United States and Israel." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 13

(1-2): 46-66; Taylor, C. G., E. J. Meyer, T. Peter, J. Ristock, D. Short, and C. Campbell. 2016. "Gaps Between Beliefs, Perceptions, and Practices: The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-Inclusive Education in Canadian Schools." *Journal of LGBT Youth* 13 (1-2): 112-140].

This research sought to ascertain once again whether school principals in Ireland have had experience of dealing with this type of bullying, whether they believe it is a significant issue and what they perceive their role to be in relation to addressing homophobic bullying. The research focused on the views of school principals because of the critical role they play in policy implementation and school organisation. The original research (Farrelly, O'Higgins-Norman and O'Leary 2016) revealed that one in every two school principals had responded to homophobic bullying and that these same principals did not always consider the use of homophobic pejoratives to constitute homophobic bullying. The results for this 2nd study are very similar and reveal strikingly similar figures to the first study. The paper points to the need for further education and training for school leaders on the topic of homophobic bullying. In order to help children understand the implications of the use of homophobic pejoratives, this paper argues the need for teachers to acknowledge difference and different types of relationships within relationships and sexuality education (RSE), otherwise their perspectives will contribute to the many silences that surround this topic in primary schools in Ireland.



Dr Gerard Farrelly, Mary Immaculate College



Restorative Practice

Restorative practices are a field within the social sciences that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities.

Though newer to the social sciences, restorative practices have deep roots within indigenous communities throughout the world (IIRP). Restorative Practice is based primarily on a set of core values and the explicit promotion and enhancement of particular skills such as the ability to empathise and to find solutions to specific problems.

This workshop seeks to explore how this practice allows for building and nurturing trust between and with people. RP provides a structured approach in the form of a scaffold, which helps build and sustain relationships, and provides a focus which allows for the potential growth of positive relationships to become established between people.

One of the key elements of RP is to build and nurture relationships and by using restorative circles, it is possible to address issues and conflicts that arise and to support children and help them grow in confidence by interacting with others in the restorative circle setting. This workshop would explore the use of restorative circles as an active learning methodology in SPHE and explore how feelings can be spoken about in a safe way and how through the structure of the circle, different learning objectives, key topic and concepts can be explored and discussed.

The development of each relationship is based on a set of core values. These values include respect, and being respectful of everyone, including towards people someone maybe doesn't always see eye to eye with or even like. Through the development of empathy, and promoting understanding of perspective taking, people can learn to respect each other and where someone is coming from in terms of their own expression of thought and feelings. In our efforts to show empathy, as human beings we are able to harness the notion of fairness into our relationships, and therefore can also account for our own actions and hold others to account for theirs. The workshop will consider the restorative values and how they form the backbone of the practice and how they underlie the principles of RP.

This will be an interactive workshop which briefly explains how RP works, the values it seeks to promote and to explore restorative circles, which are a practical and key tool that can be used across the SPHE curriculum and the whole of school life from very early years to much older children/students and adults too.



Dr Gerard Farrelly, Mary Immaculate College

Sexuality education: a study exploring the use of participatory exercises in aiding young people's understanding of the complexities of sexual wellbeing and relationships.

Introduction

To give young people the best chance of embarking on safe, healthy and enjoyable sexual lives, the subject matter, intention and delivery method of sex education must be re-considered. In this paper, the potential for the use of alternative, arts-based methods of teaching sexuality education in school settings was explored, placing an emphasis on student voice.

Methodology

A review of the literature surrounding the design of sexuality education programmes, including a gender framework and a rights-based comprehensive sexuality education framework was undertaken. Qualitative methods of data collection, along with researcher observation of participation in workshops, were chosen due to the size and scope of the study. The study was undertaken over a 3-day period with 23 post-primary students, aged between 16-17, in one school in Dublin in 2019. It consisted of a pre-workshop focus group, 2 workshop sessions; one with 10 students and one with 13, and a post-workshop focus group. Focus groups sought to examine young people's critical evaluation of current sexuality education, and their experiences and evaluation of the research workshop.

Workshops were designed using practical, participatory drama-inspired exercises that supported nuanced understanding of concepts related to sexual health: consent, boundaries, communication etc. Low-focus group drama exercises were selected that encouraged trust and communication in new groups. These allowed participants to experience practical expressions of trust, consent and touch in a manner unrelated to sex and sexual contact, while providing a reference point for these concepts in sexual situations. Data was analysed using thematic analysis.

This study was limited by the scale and small sample size drawn from one school in suburban Dublin. Similarly, the majority of the participants' secondary school education took place in this school, and each attended local primary schools. Therefore, their experience does not reflect that of all Irish young people. While this study was presented to an approximately evenly gendered target group, as participation was voluntary, the final gender ratio of participants was greater than 11: 1/female: male. This naturally led to an over-representation of the female voice.

Findings

Irish young people are ready and eager for extensive sexuality education that addresses issues that influence their lives in an in-depth, practical and relevant way, and they respond well to alternative participatory methods of indirect instruction. This key finding is explored through seven themes relevant to the research questions; Positivity, Experiential Learning,



Consent, Teachers and Teaching Methods, “The Facts”, Gender and Respect. Findings are presented with the student’s voice throughout the process, together with researcher observations.

Conclusions

Young people’s testimony supports the view that Irish school-based sexuality education is failing to engage them in a relevant and productive way. Indirect instruction in the form of drama-based participatory exercises show potential to allow young people to explore complexities related to sexuality in an abstracted, safe environment and help them build a skill set for real-life events.



Ellen Corby, Queen Margaret University Edinburgh

Get Set! Using common drama-based activities to deliver age-appropriate, effective, shame-free and fun sexuality education.

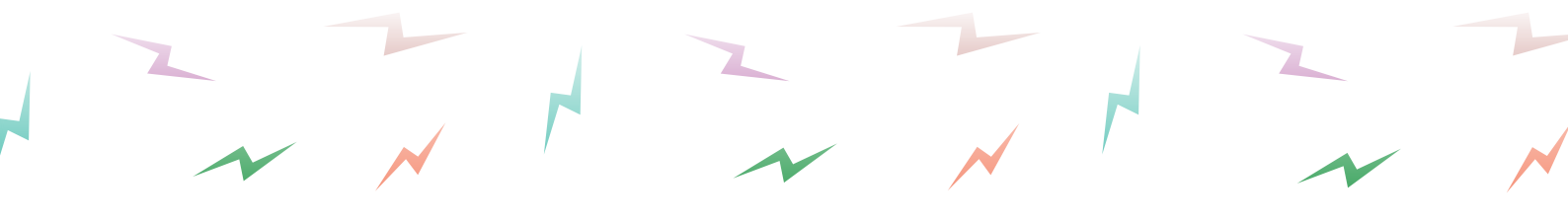
This workshop will showcase interactive exercises that facilitate learning around the body, sex and sexual health that can be used in the classroom and in other educational settings. While this workshop has been adapted for a primary school aged cohort, these exercises are appropriate to facilitate discussion within any age group. Participants will be invited to take part as students in these participatory exercises and group discussions, to experience first-hand the learning that takes place when an arts-based approach is employed. This will allow them to expand their understanding of comprehensive sexuality education, and further develop their own practice and skillsets. Activities have been chosen covering a variety of topics, and using various methodologies - this workshop is designed to give participants experience of the different approaches that the facilitators have found most useful in their practice.

The content will include:

1. Welcome, session background
2. Active warm-up: get to know us, one another, and the space.
3. Activity 1 - Power Puppeteering: How do we navigate physical interactions in a positive way? How can we take responsibility for our own behaviour, our safety and the safety of our partner?
4. Activity 2: Forum Theatre exercise - how can we positively intervene to help when someone is feeling uncomfortable with a conversation about their changing body?
5. Activity 3: Developing bodies - Menstruation activity that allows for active exploration of menstrual products, how they work, and all those questions about periods, answered!
6. Session finish: Warm down exercise, Q&A.



Kelly O'Doherty, Dublin City University & Ellen Corby, Queen Margaret University
Edinburgh, Sexuality Educators



How do school leaders and teachers promote the well-being of care-experienced children and young people and how can SPHE help?

At the beginning of 2023, there were 5,597 children and young people in care¹ in Ireland. Many of these children will have faced trauma, upheaval, and uncertainty in their lives, which in turn can affect their wellbeing and educational outcomes. Members of EPIC's Youth Council have long identified that schools play a critical role in the care journey and have a significant impact on the outcomes of care-experienced people.

In 2022, EPIC conducted a scoping exercise with teachers and Principals across Ireland, and with care-experienced children and young people, on how schools can best support children in care, and build #CareAware learning environments. In response to the information gathered, EPIC launched a project in partnership with the Tusla Education Support Service to build the capacity of teachers and Principals to engage with the care system through the development of dedicated resources designed by care-experienced children themselves. EPIC believes that examining SPHE provision through the lens of the child or young person in care will help schools identify their specific needs and requirements, and enable an informed, child-centred response.

This workshop will begin by introducing EPIC. We will then outline the current situation of children in state care and their education situation (including numbers, educational outcomes and case studies) and the role of teachers and school leaders in supporting them. We will then explore how the SPHE curriculum strand on "Myself and My Family" provides an opportunity to celebrate different family structures and promote positive messages around children in care.

By the end of this workshop, participants will have a better understanding of the challenges faced by children and young people in state care, and of their specific needs in school; strengthened capacity to support care-experienced children and young people in the classroom; and increased knowledge of the resources available for further guidance on the care system.

This workshop will use a mixture of presentation and discussion. Please note that this session may contain content that is sensitive in nature.



Tara Madden, Empowering People in Care

References:

¹ The term care broadly refers to children living outside of their original home – for example in foster care, residential care, special care and supported lodgings.

Enhancing Body Image and Self-Esteem: Integrating the 'Dove Confident Me' Resource into the SPHE curriculum at both Primary and Post Primary level

The impact of body image on the well-being and development of young people is widely recognised, influencing their physical and mental health, educational outcomes, aspirations, and interpersonal relationships. To address this critical issue, the 'Confident Me' resource was meticulously designed by body image experts as part of the Dove Self-Esteem Project, in collaboration with the National Schools Partnership. These academically validated lessons designed by The Centre for Appearance Research at the University of West England Bristol, aim to foster a healthy body image among young individuals during the challenging transition to adulthood.

This proposal presents an opportunity to introduce the 'Confident Me' resource, which has now been aligned with the Irish curricula, through an interactive workshop, specifically tailored to support educators in effectively integrating these lessons into the SPHE curriculum at both Primary and Post Primary levels. With a targeted focus on 10 to 16 year-olds, these lessons offer a comprehensive framework for promoting self-esteem and body positivity.

The proposed interactive workshop aims to empower teachers by familiarising them with the 'Confident Me' resource and facilitating their implementation in the classroom thus helping educators to effectively equip young people with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate societal pressures and develop a healthy body image.

Alternatively, the presenter could offer a concise overview of the 'Confident Me' resources as part of your conference Teachmeet, encouraging engagement and collaboration among attendees.

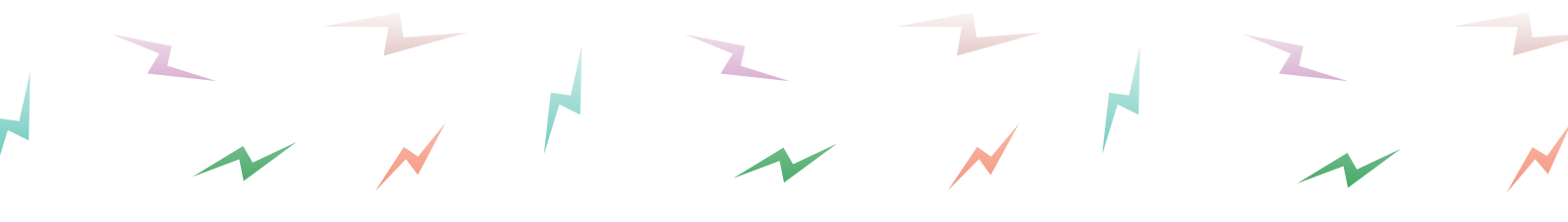
This submission seeks to contribute to the 'Confident Me' initiative's mission of promoting body confidence and self-esteem among young individuals. By equipping educators with the necessary tools and strategies, we can create a supportive environment that fosters positive body image, thereby enhancing the overall well-being and academic success of students.

Below is a link to the Confient Me resources for further information.

[Dove Self-Esteem Project Ireland - National Schools Partnership](#)



Suzanne Graham, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB



Well-being in a Climate Crisis: Understanding current well-being and possibilities for 'well-becoming' through education

UNSDG 13 aims to strengthen countries' climate resilience and adaptive capacity. Ireland's climate is changing in line with global trends, with a temperature increase of, on average, 0.8° since 1900 and an increase in average annual national rainfall of approximately 5% in the past 30 years. Children represent a particularly vulnerable group who are likely to suffer disproportionately from climate change, due to their life course exposure and bio-physiological, developmental-behavioural, and social factors (Helldén et al., 2021; (Holm, Miller, & Balmes, 2021; Leffers, 2022). Considering climate change from a psychological perspective, this paper will draw on the literature to consider the impact of climate change on the mental health of children and young people and the role of education as a protective factor, particular the areas of wellbeing within the curricula. The impact of climate change on mental health occurs through direct and indirect pathways, such as the experience of extreme weather events and from the existential threat that awareness and knowledge of the ecological crisis brings. Using person-centred and systems models of development, it will consider how the educational context can mitigate/moderate some of the effects on well-being through engagement with environmental issues to help children feel more in control and hopeful. In particular, it will draw on and integrate the 'being well' and 'being an active citizen' competencies and the wellbeing/SPHE curricular areas of the primary curriculum framework to develop the possibilities for well-becoming and beyond.



Dr Ashling Bourke, Dublin City University

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Gratitude practice as a boost for teacher wellbeing

“Would a regular gratitude practice positively impact the social and emotional wellbeing of an Irish primary school teacher?”

Teachers' wellbeing is essential, not just for their benefit but for their students, it is a protective factor of children's wellbeing (Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, DOE 2018). Teacher wellbeing needs nurturing, as it supports student wellbeing. Gratitude Practice boosts teacher wellbeing (Howell 2012). This mixed methods study assessed if practicing gratitude positively impacts the social and emotional wellbeing of a sample of six Irish primary school teachers. It used a twenty-one-day action research gratitude intervention, compiled of a variety of evidence-based exercises (Emmons 2013; Seligman 2005). The methodologies used were a pre- and post-intervention PERMA questionnaire (Butler and Kern 2016) focused on the Positive Emotions, and Relationship scores, coupled with semistructured interviews. The gratitude practice increased the teachers social and emotional wellbeing, they conveyed that gratitude boosted positive feelings, and helped them cope with stress. Participants reported an increase in relationship satisfaction. Some felt more tolerant. The quantitative data supported their experiences with significant improvement in 'Positive Emotion' and 'Happiness' scores. Participants stated that their gratitude practice positively affected their classes, subtly, and they plan to introduce gratitude to their schools. This study provides an example of a simple, quick, and effective wellbeing practice for teachers, which may also benefit students. This research is unique as is the first to explore the impact of a gratitude intervention on Irish primary school teachers. This study contributes meaningful participants' experiences to aid the understanding of why gratitude improves wellbeing.



Mary Jo Kennedy, Mary Immaculate College

References:

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Chess for social & cognitive skills

Ficheall is the network of primary school teachers in Ireland who promote the playing of chess in schools for the social and cognitive benefits it has for students. The network was founded in 2017 and now numbers more than 500 teachers in 350 primary schools around Ireland. The Ficheall, as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, is co-ordinated by the Ficheall Board of Directors of 7 working primary school teachers and principals from varying school contexts. Ficheall was established in 2017.

Puzzled by the question of where chess sits in the curriculum, if at all, in 2020 I completed a Masters dissertation to evaluate the Effect of Chess Participation in my own school (a 400 pupil, co-ed, urban, non-DEIS school in Co. Cork). Expecting my ethnographic methodology, which consisted of observing and interviewing students and teachers regarding their engagement with chess, to land close to the maths curriculum than any other subject, I was surprised that instead it sat comfortably in the SPHE curriculum. Armed with this knowledge, Ficheall has developed a series of 10 beginner lessons on chess which develop SPHE curriculum objectives from 1st to 6th class. Feedback from teachers who have used these lessons has been overwhelmingly positive and has backed up the research findings again and again in both mainstream classroom and SET settings.

Our proposal is to showcase this practice by primary schools as part of an hour-long workshop at the conference. It could also be presented as part of a teachmeet but our preference is a workshop.

Indeed, the Ficheall network is growing year on year as we have created a Department of Education approved summer course to train teachers in the methods outlined above. In 2022, 306 teachers completed the course nationally and next week (July 3-7) a further 350 teacher are registered to complete 20 hours training in the Ficheall lessons and overall initiative which culminates each year with non-competitive chess tournaments, Féile Fichille, between the classes that complete the Ficheall lessons. In Spring 2023, 6,500 attended 64 such events. This video shared on our Twitter profile explains all this even better.



Liam Murray, Lucy Bradfield & Damien Fallon, Ficheall

I have to talk to young people about what?!: Preparing SPHE teachers for consent education

Consent Ed is a sexual violence prevention programme designed to empower young people through education about consent and healthy relationships. Its primary objective is to diminish the prevalence of sexual violence and online sexual harm in our communities by enhancing knowledge and fostering healthy conversations between young people and adults. A cornerstone of Consent Ed is its holistic approach, catering to both junior and senior cycle courses while aligning with the SPHE and RSE outcomes. Designed as a toolkit for teachers to use in response to new learning outcomes, this initiative offers a comprehensive range of teaching materials and capacity building training for educators.

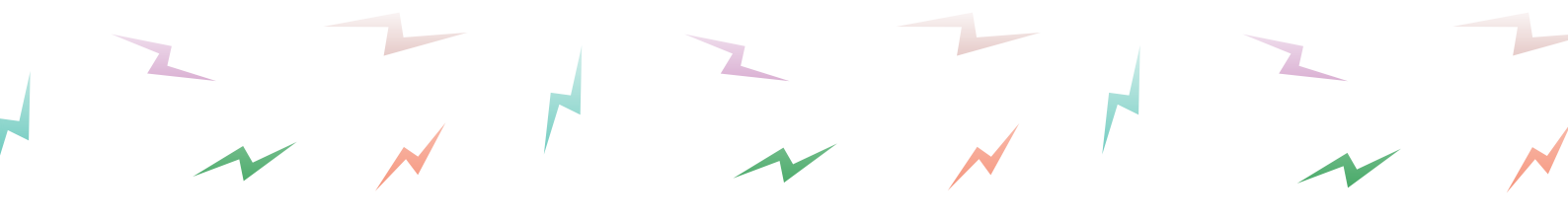
The project recognises the pivotal role educators play in shaping students' understanding of consent and preventing sexual violence. Through comprehensive training, we equip educators and youth workers with the necessary tools, knowledge, and resources to create a safe learning environment in which to meaningfully engage young people and facilitate sensitive discussions.

Embedded within Consent Ed are carefully curated and designed resources that serve as invaluable signposts for students, offering prevention tips and informing them of available supports and services should they find themselves in need. By doing so, the curriculum ensures that individuals are well prepared to navigate potential risks and respond appropriately to harmful situations. Topics covered include: boundaries, distinguishing healthy versus unhealthy relationships, the essence of consent, fostering healthy sexual behaviours, addressing online sexual harm, and recognising the signs of sexual violence and exploitation.

This workshop will provide attendees with an abbreviated session of Consent Ed's teacher training course. The full-length teacher training course covers information around consent, disclosure training for teachers, facilitation training for delivering this niche course material, and opportunities for experiential learning through role-play teaching scenarios. To give a taster of the above, this session will focus on disclosure training and a first look at and brief overview of the newly designed Consent Ed handbook and lesson plans.



The Consent Ed Project Team, Carolyn Brohan, Sianna Williams, Cathy Browne, & Amy Crane, Tusla & Galway Rape Crisis Centre



'Understandings of relationships and sexuality education provision for children with moderate general learning disabilities in Ireland'

Since its introduction to the Irish curriculum in 1995, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) has been implemented in Irish schools, in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). My research investigates understandings of RSE provision for children and young people with Moderate General Learning Disabilities (MoGLD), prior to them reaching eighteen years of age, and explores perspectives of the conditions necessary for RSE provision according to their teachers, their parents and teacher educators.

This workshop emanates from this qualitative research set within the interpretivist paradigm. Ontologically based in relativism and emanating from a rights-based, social justice theoretical framework, the sexuality needs and rights of young people with MoGLD will be explored. In my initial research, semi-structured, individual interviews conducted with parents, teachers and other stakeholders resulted in the identification of themes, following thematic analysis. Varying participant beliefs, assumptions and perceptions of reality were explored and valued as information on barriers to and supports needed to improve RSE provision for children with MoGLD, was discussed. During this task-focused workshop participants will be provided with an opportunity to share practice and to engage in collaborative discussion through engaging with current issues as identified within the initial research.

Issues related to and attitudes to the provision of RSE may contribute to or distract from equity of access and, in turn, affect the dignity and wellbeing, the 'Being and Becoming' of young people with MoGLD. While focussed on and leading to understandings of the RSE needs of children and young people with MoGLD in their preparation for the 'Beyond' of adulthood, there exists possibility for application with a broader cohort of learners.



Dr Audrey Johnston, St Nicholas Montessori College

Practical Strategies for Building Parent Engagement and Communication in SPHE: Fostering Collaborative Partnerships for Effective Implementation

Effective communication and engagement with parents is an essential component of SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) in primary school. Misconceptions, strong views, and challenging conversations often arise with parents regarding key areas of SPHE, such as friendship and bullying, RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education), inclusion of LGBT identities, The Stay Safe Programme, and child protection. To ensure effective, holistic and a child-centred implementation of SPHE with shared responsibility, it is crucial to establish strong partnerships that involve and value the contributions of parents. This workshop aims to explore practical ways to build engagement through communication as a whole school with parents in SPHE. The workshop will address various aspects of communication and engagement in SPHE planning, including:

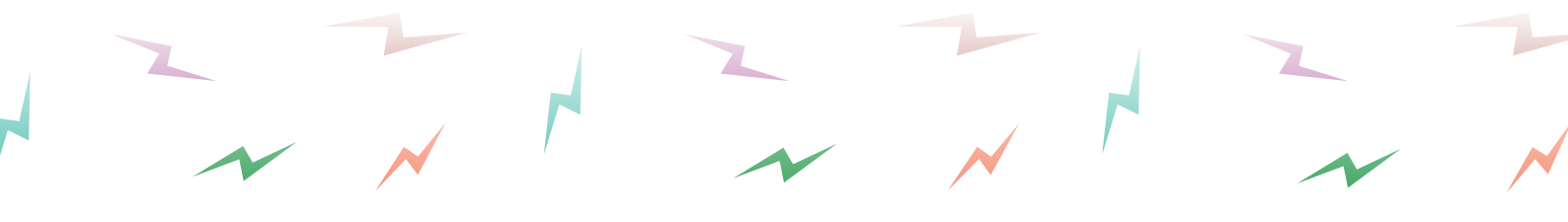
- Communication within and outside of the school: Participants will learn strategies for creating a welcoming environment and actively listening to parents. Effective communication practices, both in-person and through various channels, will be discussed.
- Valuing parent opinions through democratic processes: The workshop will explore methods for involving parents in decision-making processes, ensuring their opinions are respected and valued. Examples of democratic practices in SPHE planning will be shared.
- Fostering appropriate home-school communication: Participants will examine the importance of establishing effective channels of communication between home and school. Emphasis will be placed on listening and considering views and concerns of both parents and teachers. Practical approaches for facilitating productive communication will be provided.

By considering these areas, a collaborative partnership model can be established to ensure a consistent SPHE experience for children, connecting their lives at home, in school, and in the community. These partnerships foster positive parent engagement through communication, based on trust and mutual understanding.

For children to fully realise their potential in SPHE, it is crucial to establish purposeful and productive relationships between home and school. This workshop aims to equip participants with practical strategies to foster collaborative partnerships and effective communication, ultimately supporting the holistic development of children in SPHE in their being, becoming and beyond.



Paul Knox, Dublin City University



'Putting some 'SASS' into LGBTQ+ inclusive practices and wellbeing promotion in post-primary schools'

Despite societal and legislation changes in Ireland over the last decade, schools remain sites of significant stress and harm for LGBTQ++ young people. Recent survey data reveals that 76% of LGBTI+ students feel unsafe in school, with 1 in 3 students having skipped school at one point to avoid adverse treatment (BeLong To, 2022). These findings highlight the need for urgent research into evidence based tools made available for schools and teachers to assess and challenge anti-LGBTQ+ school environments.

The SASS toolkit was developed, for both BeLong To Youth Services and the Health Service Executive (HSE), to assist post-primary staff in creating safe and supportive schools that are fully inclusive of LGBTI+ young people. The aim of this research study, which took place from 2020 to 2022, was to evaluate the effectiveness of the current SASS toolkit. In total 22 post-primary schools registered to participate with 19 completing the entire research study journey: SASS online rapid tool, e-Learning module, Zoom training session. The research design used survey data, including both Likert scales and open-ended qualitative questions, to evaluate each of the SASS tool action areas and staff experience using the rapid assessment tool (n=752). In addition, survey data was used to evaluate the accompanying staff training and e-Learning module provided to teachers alongside the SASS tool.

The data findings, participant feedback and recommendations of this research study informed the development of *Belong To's LGBTQ+ Quality Mark*. This accredited initiative for LGBTQ+ safe and supportive schools is embedded in existing school policy, frameworks and curricula, in particular the DE's (2019) *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* e.g. the four key areas of wellbeing promotion (DE 2019, p.), from an LGBTQ+ perspective.



Dr Seline Keating & Sharon Heron, Dublin City University

The *Nuts+Bolts* of Being, Becoming and Beyond: Using a reflective framework to evaluate a school's anti-bullying measures

"Would a regular gratitude practice positively impact the social and emotional wellbeing of an Irish primary school teacher?"

Given the evolving social and technological context in which children are growing up in today, significant bullying prevention and intervention updates in both RoI and NI have been made e.g. *Cinéaltas*(2022;2023); *Effective Responses to Bullying* (2022). Both aforementioned publications place an emphasis on adopting a whole-school education approach to bullying e.g. adopting *UNESCO's 2020 whole-education approach*; and a priority on wellbeing promotion e.g. *Children + Young People's Emotional Health + wellbeing in Schools Framework* (2021).

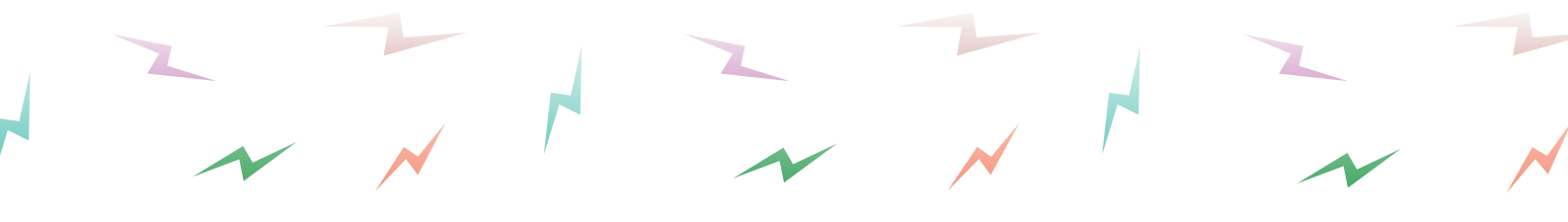
The transferral of a school's anti-bullying policy into practice is key and a cornerstone of pupils' wellbeing, thus policy oversight arrangements are crucial. *Nuts+Bolts* contributes to effective bullying prevention and intervention measures by providing schools with a specific framework to use when evaluating their current anti-bullying measures. Rather than focusing solely on what a school is not doing, *Nuts+Bolts* positively highlights the areas in which a school is succeeding. The framework adopts a whole-school staff approach to policy evaluation by including principals, teachers, Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), secretaries and caretakers rather than targeting school management. This is fundamental as all school personnel may witness bullying and need to know how to intervene in an effective manner.

The data gathered provides schools with a comprehensive overview, and concrete data, of their current practice, which is beneficial when creating a meaningful action plan for improvement. *Nuts+Bolts* may be used annually by schools, thus indicating its sustainability and longevity, but also the availability of comparative data for schools to utilise too. This current project indicates the transferability of the reflective framework to other jurisdictions.

*This is a SCoTENs funded project between DCU IoE and Stranmillis University.



Dr Seline Keating, Dublin City University



Teachers' experiences of working with a bereaved child in the primary classroom, with an exploration into teacher-reported supports and strategies

This research explores teachers' experience of working with a bereaved child in the primary classroom, with an exploration into teacher-reported supports and strategies implemented. According to Parsons (2011), child bereavement can be linked to a range of psychological, social, emotional and academic difficulties, which if left unsupported can manifest into significant long-term impacts. Abraham-Steele and Edmonds (2021) believe that schools are well positioned to offer support to bereaved children. Despite this, there is a significant lack of evidence to support this claim as research from an educational perspective has been sparse. Therefore, the central aim of the study was to determine teachers' conceptualisations of children's grief (psychological, social, emotional and academic) and as to how the grieving child is supported at whole school and class level.

A qualitative method was used to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with fourteen participants, all of whom were fully qualified primary school teachers with varying amounts of teaching experience.

Five main themes emerged, namely: societal changes around the area of bereavement, teacher training and confidence at being presented with grief and loss, teacher supports and strategies implemented in the classroom, teachers' conceptualisation of children's grief as well as whole school approaches to bereavement.

The findings indicate that this is a relatively new area in schools, with the school community recognising the shift in roles from family to school, advocating strong lines of communication between both settings. Nonetheless, most teachers in this study found it difficult to provide bereaved students with sufficient support and believed both Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) did not offer adequate grieving training. It was revealed how parental bereavement has a profound impact on a child which can cause high levels of anxiety in the short-term and can impact a child's social, emotional and academic development in the classroom context. The study also highlighted that there is inconsistency regarding the bereavement supports available at primary school level with some supports implemented including the SPHE curriculum, Bibliotherapy and Acknowledgement of the death. Teachers' conceptualisation of children's grief was found to be complex as children grieve differently at different ages.

The findings would suggest that there is a need for greater bereavement training to be introduced to assist all primary school teachers and staff. The study would also indicate that whole school bereavement policies need to be reviewed, updated and implemented consistently in schools. Further research investigating how bereaved children can be better supported in the Irish context is recommended.

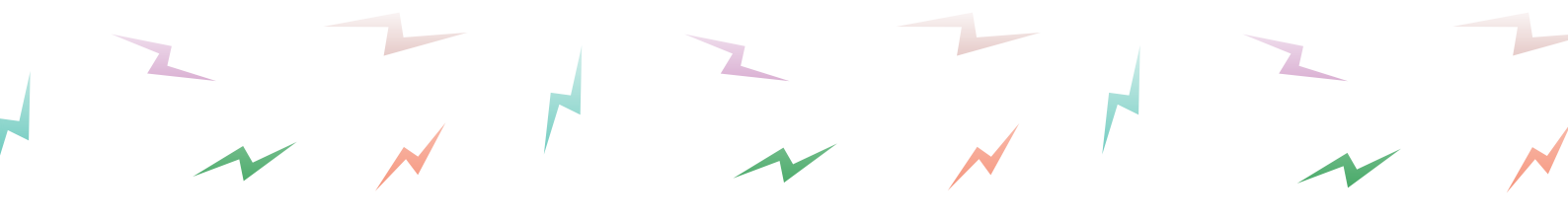


Rebecca Conlon, Hannah Dolan and Feargal Ó Laighin, Marino Institute of Education

References:

Abraham-Steele, M., & Edmonds, C. (2021). A thematic analysis of teachers' perspectives on supporting victims of childhood bereavement in British primary schools. *Review of Education*, 9(3), e3297.

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The A Lust for Life Primary School Mental Health Education programme and its integration with the SPHE curriculum

A Lust For Life is an Irish mental health charity, and over the last number of years we have been developing and rolling out The A Lust For Life Schools Programme. A free of charge 10-week, teacher led, evidence informed programme that was written by Clinical Psychologists, Education Specialists including primary school teachers as well as pupils and parents. The programme itself is strongly linked to the SPHE curriculum and aims to enhance the emotional literacy, wellbeing and resilience of primary school children, equipping them with the essential tools to manage the ups and downs of life. The programme undergoes independent annual evaluations led by the School of Psychology in UCD, as well as a recent evaluation by the DCU School of Education, and to date the programme has reached over 59,000 pupils in 1,000+ schools around Ireland.



Leda Connaughton and Fiona McGuire, A Lust for Life

SPHE agus an Ghaeilge: Practical strategies to aid primary school teachers in utilising CLIL in their SPHE lessons

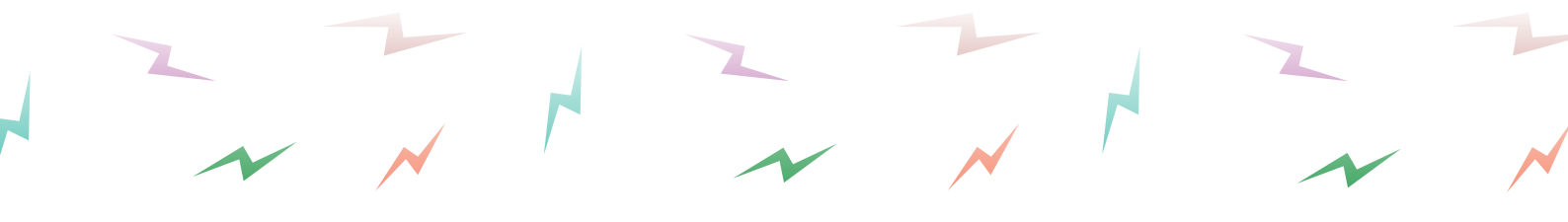
Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) involves teaching another curriculum subject, or aspects of another subject through a second language which is not that of the learner's mother tongue for example - teaching SPHE through the medium of Irish (NCCA, 2018). Research shows that language learning is "more effective when it is combined with content learning in another subject other than the language being learned" (NCCA, 2018). This bilingual, interactive workshop will aim to highlight effective opportunities where CLIL can be deployed throughout the teaching of SPHE in primary schools and provide educators with practical strategies to develop and improve student's proficiency in Irish without negatively impacting on the subject area being taught i.e. SPHE. Bilingual mindfulness practices and lesson settling-in activities will be demonstrated and explored throughout this session with particular emphasis on the active learning strategies recommended in the SPHE Teacher Guidelines, more specifically on providing opportunities to incorporate an Ghaeilge during these active learning activities in SPHE lessons. Participants will be made aware of the range of SPHE resources that are currently available as Gaeilge and as to where to locate them. A short demonstration will be provided into a selection of these resources with participants getting a few minutes to peruse some of these Irish SPHE materials. Bígí Linn!



Feargal Ó Laighin, Marino Institute of Education

References:

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Enhancing emotional regulation through dance: The intersection of SPHE and PE

The Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools (Department of Education 2023) has introduced Wellbeing as a broad curricular area encompassing Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education (PE). There are natural opportunities for integration between these subject areas, including through dance, which has been reported to support social-emotional competence and physical skills (Georgios et al. 2018; Victorson et al. 2022) in primary-school children.

This study examined the effects of a six-week guided dance intervention with 138 pupils in five third and fourth classes in one all-girls suburban Dublin primary school. The intervention consisted of pupils partaking in two structured dance routines each morning for ten minutes, before the start of formal lessons. The dances were chosen from the Just Dance website, and shown on each class's interactive whiteboard.

This study adopted a pragmatic paradigm using a mixed methods approach. A pre-experimental design, one group, pre-test/post-test study design structure was implemented. The quantitative data (which this paper reports) was analysed using Microsoft Excel. Each morning prior to, and following, the universal dance intervention, pupils reported their emotional status using the categories from Zones of Regulation (Kuypers 2011). Many pupils transitioned across 'Zones' in their self-ratings. The 'Green Zone' (focused/content/motivated) was the most commonly selected zone in all occurrences, showing most pupils come to school emotionally regulated and remain emotionally regulated after the dance intervention. The most common daily transition was from the 'Blue Zone' (bored/tired/lethargic/unmotivated) to 'Green Zone', which indicates that the intervention supported the emotional regulation of these pupils. The least commonly chosen 'Zone' by pupils prior to the daily intervention was 'Red' (heightened emotions), although there was no percentage change in the 'Red Zone' before and after the intervention which highlights the importance of going beyond universal interventions to support pupils with more significant emotional difficulties. This intervention supported pupils in BEING more emotionally regulated, and in BECOMING ready to learn. Who knows what may lie BEYOND? This paper clearly illustrates the benefits of integrating aspects of SPHE and PE through dance for better outcomes.

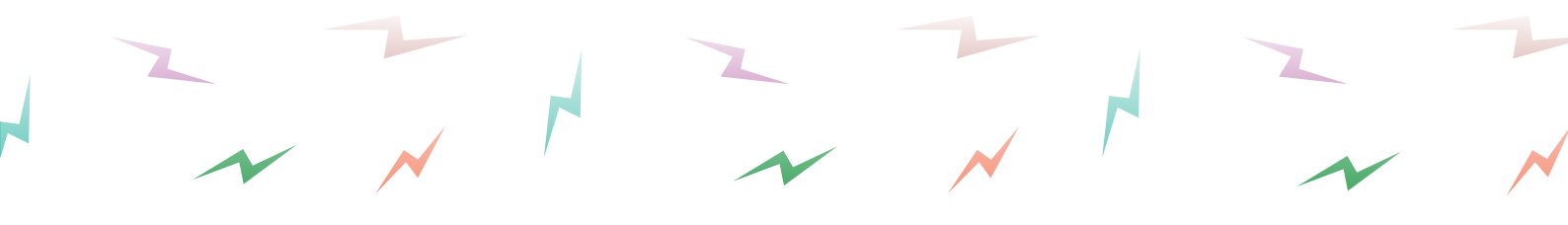
Bronagh McGeary and Dr Fionnuala Tynan, Mary Immaculate College

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Department of Education (2023) Primary curriculum framework for primary and special schools, Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Georgios, L., Ioannis, G., Olga, T., Dimitris, C., and Maria, K. (2018) 'The Effect of a Traditional Dance Program on Health-Related Quality of Life as Perceived by Primary School Students', *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(1), 96, available: <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v6i1.2878>.

Kuypers, L.M. (2011) *The Zones of Regulation: A Curriculum Designed to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control*, Santa Clara, Ca: Think Social Publishing, Inc.



Victorson, M.K., Spears, G. and Foshay, E. (2022) 'Practical resources for dance educators! Using SEL strategies in the K-12 dance classroom: Practices from three Chicago dance educators', *Dance Education in Practice*, 8(2), 4-9, available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23734833.2022.2059219>

