

Language Matters

Consultative Conference on Education 2022

Beatha teanga í a labhairt

Comhdháil Chomhairleach ar Oideachas 2022



Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore
18ú – 19ú Samhain 2022



Fáilte

Dear Delegate,

We are delighted to welcome you to Tullamore for the 2022 INTO Consultative Conference on Education. The title of this year's conference is *Language Matters*, a particularly timely topic for the teaching profession to consider in a year when children fleeing from the atrocious war in Ukraine have unexpectedly found themselves sitting in classrooms in every county in Ireland learning as Gaeilge agus as Béarla.

Language really does matter as it is our primary method of communication. Whether it's spoken or written, it is the most effective method of communication between people. It allows us to express our feelings, thoughts, desires and more. The language we use as teachers is the primary way children in our classrooms learn. Whether through singing, drama or games, language permeates our days in school both formally and informally.

How best to teach language to children and the integration of modern language into the Irish primary curriculum are two of the topics being addressed by speakers in Tullamore. Workshops will appeal to teachers North and South, covering personal approaches to teaching language and telling stories to pupils across the island of Ireland, as well as supporting teachers in dealing with classroom preparation and working with language curricula.

One of the papers discussed as part of the literature review in this booklet highlights the fact that around half a million people in Ireland now speak a language other than Irish or English. The opportunities and challenges brought about by Ireland's changing population, the discussion around the effect of these demographic changes on our national identity and the impact within our education system will be to the fore at this conference. A Chinese proverb says, "To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world" In an ever-changing world this is now more relevant than ever.

In 2019 teachers from around the country met at the Education Conference in Kilkenny to discuss the emerging primary curriculum. Three years later, the conversation continues as we look at ways to ensure that future generations have optimum opportunities to learn languages.

Tá súil againn go mbainfidh sibh uilig taitneamh agus tairbhe as an gComhdháil.

Yours sincerely,



John Driscoll
Uachtarán CME



John Boyle
Rúnaí Ginearálta

Clár

Friday, 18 November

2.30pm	Registration
3.00pm	Opening of conference John Driscoll, INTO President
	Launch of Ashling Murphy Memorial Entrance Scholarship Eugene Wall, Mary Immaculate College
	Aidan Gaughran Cathaoirleach, INTO Education Committee
	Presentation by INTO Education Committee: <i>Language</i> Fiona Garvey, District 12 Majella Sutton, District 13
	Máirín Ní Chéileachair, INTO Director of Education, Research and Learning
3.45pm	Tea/coffee
4.15pm	Discussion groups
5.30pm	Keynote address: <i>Is There Really Room for Another Language in an Already Over-crowded Curriculum?</i> Karen Ruddock, PPLI
6.15pm	Launch of 10th edition of the <i>Irish Teachers' Journal</i>
6.30pm	Wine reception sponsored by Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union

Saturday, 19 November

9.30am	Workshop A
10.45am	Tea/coffee
11.15am	Workshop B
12.30pm	Presentation to INTO Bursary winners
	Keynote address: <i>Languages in the Primary School: What Have We Learned?</i> Professor Pádraig Ó Duibhir, DCU
1.45pm	Críoch

General information

Registration

Registration opens at 2.30pm on Friday, 18 November. We ask you to assist the INTO staff by completing your delegate card, which is in your pack, prior to your arrival at the registration desk.

INTO communication policy

Please be advised that photography, videography and/or live streaming will be taking place at this event. These materials may be used by the INTO and included in publications, media materials, promotional materials, digital platforms and social platforms. If you do not wish the INTO to use your image, please go to the registration desk and inform staff. The INTO can then take reasonable steps to comply with your wishes

Car park

There are 500 complimentary car parking spaces available on site.

Absence from school

The Department of Education has given approval for leave of absence for delegates to attend the conference. A copy of the correspondence is included in your pack and is also available on the Education Conference page on the INTO website. However, substitute cover is not available.

Conference evaluation

Delegates will be contacted after the conference with a link to a short online questionnaire for the purposes of evaluating the conference.

Exhibitors

The following are the exhibitors in attendance and their stands will be located in the lobby area outside the main conference hall

- ✎ ABC School Supplies
- ✎ Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union
- ✎ EMU Ink Publishing
- ✎ INTO Global Solidarity Network
- ✎ National Council for Special Education
- ✎ Outside the Box Learning Resources
- ✎ Primary Planning Tool – in association with CJ Fallon

Wine reception

The wine reception has been kindly sponsored by Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union.



Follow the conference on social media @INTOnews #EdConf22
Full coverage of the conference plenary sessions will be available on the INTO website.

The Education Committee

The INTO Education Committee (EDC) was established in 1967 to advise the CEC on matters relating to education. The EDC consists of one representative from each of the 16 INTO districts, each elected for a three-year term. The committee meets five times a year. Since its establishment, the EDC has considered a wide range of matters relevant

to teachers, including special education, social inclusion, curriculum review, assessment and teacher education. The committee hosts consultative conferences on an annual basis, including discussion groups, workshops and a range of interesting keynote speakers. The EDC looks forward to welcoming you to the conference and hearing your views.

Ashling Murphy Memorial Entrance Scholarship

The INTO and Mary Immaculate College (MIC) are pleased to launch the Ashling Murphy Memorial Entrance Scholarship at our conference. To cherish Ashling's memory, this scholarship will be awarded to a first year Bachelor of Education student in acknowledgment of their exceptional talent and achievements in the area of traditional Irish music. Professor Eugene Wall, President MIC, will launch the scholarship at 3pm on Friday, 18 November. We are very pleased to welcome members of Durrow National School Trad Group to our conference.



Keynote presenters



KAREN RUDDOCK

Karen is the Director of Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI). She oversees the implementation of key actions in *Languages Connect*, *Ireland's Foreign Languages in Education Strategy*, which includes the *Say Yes to Languages* primary languages sampler module.

Karen's career is defined by leadership across diverse cultures and her current team is made up of 14 nationalities. In addition to her management roles, she has taught at second and third level across three continents in the public and private sectors and has experience of curriculum development, teacher education, consultancy and training.

PROFESSOR PÁDRAIG Ó DUIBHIR

Pádraig is the Director of SEALBHÚ, the DCU Research Centre for the Learning and Teaching of Irish.

He has extensive experience as a primary teacher and principal in the Irish-medium sector before taking up a role in teacher education. His primary research focuses on second language acquisition and pedagogy applied to minority language teaching. He has conducted many research studies related to the teaching and learning of Irish. He is joint editor of the *Journal of Immersion and Content-Based Language Education*.



Discussion groups and workshop venues

Please refer to your name badge (A – E) to find your assigned **discussion group**. Discussion groups will be facilitated by members of the Education Committee. Delegates choose **workshops** at registration

Room	Discussion Group Friday 4.15pm	Workshop A Saturday 9.30am	Workshop B Saturday 11.15am
DE Williams I	A	<i>Say Yes To Languages! Language sampler module in primary school</i> Salvo Cacciato	<i>Say Yes To Languages! Language sampler module in primary school</i> Salvo Cacciato
Manly Suite	B	<i>Exploring and using the Primary Language Curriculum</i> Rory Collins and Shane Leonard	<i>Exploring and using the Primary Language Curriculum</i> Rory Collins and Shane Leonard
Goodbody Suite I-II	C	<i>Spraoi agus súgradh i múineadh na Gaeilge i Scoileanna T2</i> Fiona Nic Fhionnlaioch	<i>Spraoi agus súgradh i múineadh na Gaeilge i Scoileanna T2</i> Fiona Nic Fhionnlaioch
Goodbody Suite III-IV	D	<i>'Nach te an rud an Ghaeilge? Isn't Irish a warm thing? Learning Irish language and song: an autoethnographic approach</i> Dr Seán Mac Corraídh	<i>'Nach te an rud an Ghaeilge? Isn't Irish a warm thing? Learning Irish language and song: an autoethnographic approach</i> Dr Seán Mac Corraídh
B Daly Suite	E	<i>Tell Me Another One: storytelling and language enrichment</i> Liz Weir	<i>Tell Me Another One: storytelling and language enrichment</i> Liz Weir
Main Conference Hall		<i>Researchmeet</i> Aoife Mullen	<i>Preparation for teaching and learning</i> Jacinta Regan and Gillian O'Connor

Workshops

Delegates may choose **TWO** Saturday workshops at registration. Please be aware that workshops will be filled on a first come, first served basis.

RESEARCHMEET – AOIFE MULLEN – MAIN CONFERENCE HALL (9.30AM ONLY)

The *Researchmeet* is an organized but informal meeting where participants are called on to present the findings of their own research. This year's presentations will be by the 2022 *INTO Bursary Award* winners.

PREPARATION FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING – JACINTA REGAN AND GILLIAN O'CONNOR – MAIN HALL (11.15AM ONLY)

Using the document *Preparation for Teaching and Learning - Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools* this, workshop aims to support teachers and school leaders in making classroom preparation more useful, purposeful and practical. It will begin with an overview of the rationale for the development of the guidance. Following this, the key messages of the guidance will be explored through a range of activities. Finally, the workshop will present a suite of materials, including the recently launched *Getting Started* booklet, developed to support teachers and school leaders in adopting the approach to preparation set out in the guidance.

SAY YES TO LANGUAGES! LANGUAGE SAMPLER MODULE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL – SALVO CACCIATO – DE WILLIAMS I

In 2022/23, with the programme in its second year, over 700 schools are involved in a sampler module introducing 50,000+ primary pupils to a modern foreign language or Irish sign language. The context is framed by the Department of Education's *Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education* and the NCCA's *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, which offers scope for including foreign languages education in a revised curriculum. This workshop will present the aims of the module, the resources and methodologies used and report on the experience of year one. Teachers will also be involved in some of the activities forming part of the module and asked to offer suggestions/ share their experience.

EXPLORING AND USING THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE CURRICULUM – RORY COLLINS AND SHANE LEONARD – MANLY SUITE

This workshop will provide participants with a broad overview of the key components and messages of the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile*. It will also provide participants with an opportunity to explore the *Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning* and make links with how it can support the implementation of the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* in a variety of classroom contexts. Participants will be guided to use learning outcomes to formulate supportive language learning experiences for students.

SPRAOI AGUS SÚGRADH I MÚINEADH NA GAEILGE I SCOILEANNA T2 – FIONA NIC FHIONNLAIÖCH – GOODBODY SUITE I AND II

Sa cheardlann phraiticiúil seo beidh béim ar mhúineadh na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2. Ag úsáid *Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* mar bhunús, bainfear úsáid as stráitéisí, cluichí agus tascanna oiriúnacha sa seisiún a bheadh úsáideach chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn i scoileanna T2. Déanfar tagairt do réimse áiseanna úsáideacha agus míneofar an tábhacht a bhaineann le spraoi agus súgradh i scoileanna T2. Beidh plé freisin faoin bhfeasacht teanga agus na deiseanna atá ann chun é seo a fhorbairt sa seomra ranga.

'NACH TE AN RUD AN GHAELGE? ISN'T IRISH A WARM THING? LEARNING IRISH LANGUAGE AND SONG: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH – DR SEÁN MAC CORRAIDH – GOODBODY SUITE III AND IV

Seán will discuss his professional and personal journey in learning Irish as a second language, in gaining an appreciation of literature and the song tradition in the Irish language and their work in teaching Irish.

TELL ME ANOTHER ONE: STORYTELLING AND LANGUAGE ENRICHMENT – LIZ WEIR – B DALY SUITE

Since language begins with listening and speaking, storytelling is an ideal way to expand a young person's vocabulary and cultivate a love of the spoken word. Getting children involved in storytelling can help build their confidence, increase their fluency and activate their imaginations. This workshop will give participants practical tips on working with storytelling in classrooms to encourage children's creativity.



Workshop presenters



Liz Weir, MBE
Writer

Liz is a professional storyteller and writer based in Co Antrim.

With almost 50 years of experience, she has an international reputation and has performed at storytelling festivals worldwide. She is a founder committee member of Storytellers of Ireland/Aos Scéal Éireann and a mentor for the Poetry Ireland Writers in Schools scheme.

Liz is Storyteller in Residence for the Armstrong Storytelling Trust (www.armstory.org.uk) taking storytelling into communities in Northern Ireland. Formerly Children's Librarian for the city of Belfast, she delivers workshops to teachers, parents and childcare staff at home and abroad. Liz is the author of two collections of stories, *Boom Chicka Boom* and *Here, There and Everywhere*, published by The O'Brien Press.



Jacinta Regan
NCCA

Jacinta is a Director for Curriculum and Assessment for Early Childhood and Primary Education at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Prior to this, Jacinta worked as an Education Officer at NCCA in the areas of SPHE, primary developments, Aistear and the review and re-development of the *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* curriculum for Community National Schools (CNS). Jacinta trained as a primary teacher at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. She worked as a teacher for a number of years while completing her M.Ed (School Leadership) at Maynooth University. She is currently a final year doctoral student at Dublin City University.



Gillian O'Connor
NCCA

Gillian is an Education Officer for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

Prior to joining the NCCA, Gillian worked as a primary teacher and a special education teacher in a variety of school contexts including multi-grade, single grade and special school settings. Having completed postgraduate studies in special education at the University of Galway and an MSc in Psychology of Education at the University of Bristol, Gillian joined the NCCA to contribute to the work on curriculum and assessment developments across early childhood and primary education.



Dr Seán Mac Corraidh
St Mary's University

Seán is a Senior Lecturer in St Mary's University College, Belfast where he lectures in Irish language and literature, curriculum studies and immersion education on BEd and liberal arts, PGCE and masters courses. He has published widely on Irish studies, literary translation studies, folklore, bilingualism, bilingual education and immersion pedagogy.



Salvo Cacciato

PPLI

Salvo is a secondary school teacher of French and Italian on secondment to Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) as an Education Officer since 2021. He is currently working as Project Leader of the *Say Yes to Languages* sampler module for primary schools.

Previously, Salvo worked for three years as an advisor for Modern Foreign Languages with JCT. He has a passion for exploring the role of digital technologies in language learning and is an advocate for plurilingual education and early language learning. He is also a member of the Board of Directors at Mother Tongues and the Chairperson of the Association of Teachers of Italian in Ireland (ATI).



Rory Collins

PDST

Rory is a primary teacher on secondment from Ogonnelloe NS, Co Clare, where he worked as a mainstream teacher in a multi-grade setting.

As an advisor since 2016 on the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Literacy team, Rory supported teachers to implement the *Primary Language Curriculum* (PLC) and assisted schools with the self-evaluation process. He was also involved in the design of workshops and materials to support literacy instruction. In 2019, Rory was appointed Team Leader for Primary Literacy and Reading Recovery. This role involves the provision of sustained support for the *PLC* and the design of supporting materials and resources.



Shane Leonard

PDST

Shane is a primary teacher on secondment from St Peter's NS, Monasterevin, Co Kildare, where he worked as a mainstream class teacher.

He has a strong interest in the areas of language and literacy. Since 2019, he has worked as an advisor on the PDST Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) team. In this role, he facilitated and supported schools in the implementation of the *PLC/ Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* through seminar delivery as well as in school support. In 2022, Shane was appointed team leader for Primary Language Curriculum.



Fiona Nic Fhionnlaioch

Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

Is múinteoir bunscoile í Fiona atá anois ag obair mar léachtóir i Roinn Froebel, Ollscoil Mhá Nuad. Bíonn sí ag plé le *Modhanna Múinte na Gaeilge* agus le cleachtas athmhachnaimh. I measc na spéiseanna taighde atá aici, tá múineadh agus foghlaim teangacha, guth an pháiste, forbairt na litearthachta agus measúnú teanga, go háirithe maidir le sealbhú na Gaeilge.



Review of the latest language and literacy research

The INTO Education Committee has reviewed some key pieces of recent research from Ireland, Australia and the USA in the areas of language and literacy and formulated this information piece to highlight and summarise their conclusions and recommendations. Teachers may find this informative as they progress with the teaching of language in Irish primary schools.

The science of reading

The science of reading takes two general forms: a phonics-based approach and a comprehension-based one. Both approaches have their proponents and detractors. Some researchers have concerns that there hasn't been enough rigorous investigation of the evidence in this area. Some approaches have been refined so often that the original intention may have been lost, or what has come into general practice is deemed to be the right approach simply because it is common practice.

There are obvious and proven benefits to both types of reading instruction. However, it is the role of the skilled professional to integrate both approaches for the benefit of the pupil.

Just as each pupil has their own individual skills and learning style, it is the role of the teacher to integrate approaches in a manner which will be of greatest benefit in their context.

The teacher is the best judge of the pupil's needs at school level. However, the 'system' will also determine how successful the approach has been, using methods such as standardised testing.

A new system of interrogating outcomes is needed and further discussion and consultation are vital.

The question of how to effectively teach reading to children has been discussed for years. The pendulum has swung from a code-based to a phonics approach then back again. Each method claims to be backed by evidence.

Teachers would benefit from reading *The Sciences of Reading Instruction* by Rachael Gabriel. It may confirm what they already know. We need keep an armoury of methods at our disposal. We also need to develop the skills, expertise and experience to decide which method or combination of methods is best in any given situation. This advice is timely given the focus in the new primary curriculum on the role and importance of the agentic teacher.

Good teachers matter

Educational policy makers, at various levels, have begun to recognise the importance of teacher quality. Pupils of effective teachers score significantly better on standardised tests and assessments regardless of which curriculum materials, pedagogical approach or reading program is selected – expertise matters!

Over the last decade, Richard Allington and his colleagues at the National Research Centre on English Learning and Achievement have been studying some of the best elementary teachers. Teachers were selected from schools that enrolled substantial numbers of poorer children, and which reflected the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of modern society.

The evidence gathered from observations and interviews indicate that good teaching has six common features :

- 1. Time** – Where children engaged in reading and writing for as much as half a day, literacy improved significantly. Extensive reading practice with both guided and independent reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency and provides the opportunity to consolidate the skills and strategies needed.
- 2. Texts** – Children need a rich supply of books they can successfully read with a high level of accuracy, fluency and comprehension. Opportunities to integrate complex skills/strategies into an automatic, independent, proficient reading process are vital. An outcome of using multi-level texts, not 'one size fits all' textbooks or worksheets, led to the acceleration of literacy development in the lowest-achieving pupils.
- 3. Teach** – Teachers provided explicit demonstrations of the cognitive strategies used by good readers. They modelled the thinking that skilled readers engage in when decoding a word, self-monitoring for understanding, summarising or editing. They also modelled writing and comprehension to good effect.
- 4. Talk** – Teachers encouraged, modelled and supported purposeful, problem-solving, curricular-linked talk across the school day. Conversational rather than interrogational talk was modelled; teachers and students discussed ideas, concepts, hypotheses, strategies and responses. They used open questions with multiple correct answers and the talk was personalised and thoughtful.
- 5. Tasks** – Greater emphasis was placed on longer tasks that were more substantive, more challenging, required more self-regulation and some choice. The children read whole books, completed individual and group research projects and worked on tasks that integrated several content areas. Children were more engaged and less often off-task in these contexts.

6. Test – Students’ work was evaluated based on effort and improvement rather than achievement. All students could be successful as their improvement was noted based on their starting and ending points. There was little to no test preparation as teachers believed that good instruction would lead to enhanced test performances, and the data proved this.

Good teachers understand that their choices about how to teach, what to teach and what curricular materials and tasks to choose are a matter of personal professional responsibility.

Enhanced reading proficiency rests largely on the capacity of teachers to provide expert, exemplary reading instruction.

The question for the education profession is: Are we creating schools which allow teachers to become more expert?

Language development and ASD

Globally, there are more bilingual speakers than monolingual speakers. Little research evidence exists regarding social communication development and outcomes for bilingual children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Most research to date involving children with ASD has been conducted with monolingual children (English speaking only). The lack of evidence on language development in bilingual children with ASD may lead to educators and healthcare professionals providing inaccurate or conflicting advice to parents. This is discussed in detail in the article *Longitudinal Social and Communication Outcomes in Children with Autism Raised in Bi/Multilingual Environments* Siyambalapiya, S. et al, 2021.

Many professionals still recommend that children with ASD should use only one language at home or to use only the majority community language.

Siyambalapiya’s study challenges such advice. They found that:

There were no significant differences in terms of social and communication skills development between the bilingual and monolingual children with ASD over a 12-month period of early intervention.

It is important to note that a large body of research exists confirming the benefits of bilingualism generally. Findings support the positive effects of using multiple languages on cognitive, linguistic and academic skills. Exposure to more than one language is not confusing for children raised in bilingual homes, as they can successfully learn two languages at the same time (Holf and Core, 2015). However, there seems to be an assumption that in the case of children with ASD, a single language use would reduce the complexity of linguistic input and facilitate language processing and learning. The findings of this study suggest

that there is no basis on which to discourage home language use with bilingual children with ASD.

The findings of most studies, while encouraging, are limited by the fact that only four studies have investigated outcomes for children when receiving intervention. One such study by Seung et al. (2006) investigated longitudinal treatment outcomes of a Korean-English bilingual child with ASD over a period of two years. This study, and the other limited studies in this area indicate support for providing intervention to bilingual children in both languages.

This research project differs from previous studies by involving a larger sample of children, 120 in all, 60 bilingual and 60 monolinguals in matched pairs. It measured the social and communication skills of the children at intake and any changes in these skills over a 12-month period of early intervention. The intervention was described as a ‘naturalistic developmental behavioral intervention’ and consisted of a full-time group-based programme (20 to 25 hours per week) using a multidisciplinary approach. It was delivered in classrooms with an adult-child ratio of 1:4, involving small and large group activities and was based across one state in Australia.

The study’s finding that bilingual children with ASD made similar progress in social and communication skills development as their monolingual peers suggests that educators and health professionals should support parents choosing to use their home language.

Reawakening Irish language learning

Reawakening the Irish Language through the Irish Education System: Challenges and Priorities by T J Ó Ceallaigh and Áine Ní Dhonnabháin discusses the issue of teaching the Irish language, our national and first official language. Irish is currently an obligatory subject from primary to Leaving Certificate level in the education system. The inclusion of Irish as an official language of the European Union in 2007 created the need for Irish translators and interpreters and acknowledged:

The Irish language as an essential element of Irish identity which must be protected.

Irish continues to be a topic which evokes a wide range of opinions and emotions as evident from writings on the language question. From the 1970s, parents have put Irish governments under pressure to establish Irish-medium schools and it was interesting that this impetus came from the ground up.

The *20-year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030* aimed to increase the number of people with a knowledge of Irish from 1.66 million to 2 million and the number of daily speakers of Irish from 83,000 in 2010 to 250,000 by 2030. The education system is viewed as the vehicle to achieve this.

Research across the three categories of primary and post-primary schools, English Medium, Scoileanna Gaeltachta and Gaelscoileanna has shown the following:

English-medium schools are deemed to achieve inadequate results despite 1,500 class hours and a notable



minority fail to attain mastery in Irish listening, speaking and comprehension skills. However, 71% of respondents in a 2009 survey (Edwards J., 2009) saw the language as central to the history and culture of Ireland. Gaeltacht Irish-medium schools have the challenge of high percentages of school-going children with little or no Irish upon starting school. In 2010, only 60% of children starting school spoke Irish as their first language.

Irish-medium immersion education has students achieving higher L2 proficiency than L2 students in English-medium education. However, they fail to acquire native-like syntactic competence and lack idiomatic conversational features natural to native speakers.

The difficulty with linguistic proficiency levels among some teachers and the problems many teachers have in implementing a convincing pedagogy is well documented.

There are positive factors that may influence student engagement with Irish.

The increase in immigration numbers means more than 514,000 people in Ireland speak a language other than Irish or English. This has created an awareness of the importance of Irish as an element of national identity and global diversity.

The *20-year Strategy for the Irish language 2010-2030* proposes to develop and support teacher education and strengthen Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht areas.

The primary language curriculum is an integrated one and it is envisaged that this will help language acquisition and development.

There is a recognised increased demand for Irish language courses at third level and blogging and tweeting through Irish are of interest to students.

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta continues to support the diverse language needs of the educational sector by providing resources, support and research initiatives.

Best practices for language instruction

Best practices in Literacy Instruction by Linda B Cambrell calls for teachers to be 'needs focused' when delivering a well-planned and fully inclusive literacy curriculum. The teacher needs to use their professional judgment to draw on the pupils' strengths, to deliver lessons based on evidence-based best practice that are differentiated to suit the needs of the room but remain contextually relevant to the learner.

Teachers should use explicit learning outcomes for literacy that are highly motivating and engaging for pupils whilst encouraging higher order thinking.

Through the provision of a predictable, safe and positive learning environment, the teacher should share their vision for literacy and set high expectations for their pupils.

Pupils should be constantly challenged to improve their literacy skills. In providing an adapted and differentiated literacy curriculum, which is competency led and sensitive to the visible and invisible cultures in the room, pupils can reach their full literacy potential.

The following best practices are highlighted to motivate teachers as professionals:

1. Motivate pupils through 'choice' - reading and writing should be intrinsically motivated to remain authentic, rewarding and valuable. Teachers should provide a wide variety of high-quality literacy materials. Lessons should be a combination of whole class and small group instruction. Pupils should be encouraged to collaborate and develop the skills required to share and critique each other's work. Literacy should be viewed as a tool to access all aspects of the curriculum.
2. Using a 'gradual release of responsibility' model, pupils will develop skills for deeper comprehension of text. Teachers need to provide targeted learning outcomes and give specific understandable feedback. This scaffolded approach allows pupils to master the basic literacy skills required and develop their critical thinking and comprehension skills.
3. Pupils should be exposed to a variety of genres. It is important that literacy activities should be used in all curricular areas.
4. Reading requires pupils to engage in 'close reading' of the text. Pupils must take time to examine the many layers of the text to ensure deeper understanding. They must read, reread and critically analyse the text to answer high-order questions.
5. Instructional-levelled texts are vital to ensure reading is a pleasant and engaging experience. Proficient readers are intrinsically motivated by the text with which they are engaged.
6. Literacy is within all aspects of the curriculum and each lesson should be seen as an opportunity to teach reading and writing. Pupils will become more confident through higher engagement.
7. The teacher should be seen as the 'facilitator of knowledge', not the knowledge provider. Dialogic discussion is vital. Teachers need to provide a safe space where open-ended questioning is used to develop deeper comprehension.
8. Quality literacy assessment should be based on formative and summative assessment. It is important to gather information and having analysed this, set conditions conducive to quality inquiry-based literacy learning. Pupils should work individually and collaboratively to find ways to improve their literacy skills.
9. Teachers must provide time for self-selected reading and writing. More time spent reading is linked to producing more proficient readers.
10. Digital literacy has a vital role to play in the modern classroom. Pupils and teachers need to develop their digital literacy skills. They need to be confident in non-conventional print.

In conclusion, it is important to be an informed and critical reader of research.

Careful reading, evaluation, and interpretation by thoughtful and informed educators offers our best chance at realising the full value of what this priceless tool – research – has to offer.



Language is more than the ability to read, speak, write and comprehend - language is the doorway to wisdom.

A special kind of beauty exists which is born in language, of language, and for language.

- Gaston Bachelard

Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow.

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world.

- Chinese proverb

Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about.

- Benjamin Lee Whorf

A different language is a different vision of life.

- Federico Fellini

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

- Ludwig Wittgenstein

One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.

- Frank Smith





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