



Literacy Association of Ireland  
*Cumann Litearthachta na hÉireann*

VI:22/10/24

**48<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE**

*Marino Institute of Education  
8 & 9 November, 2024*

**48<sup>ú</sup> COMHDHÁIL  
BHLIANTÚIL**

*Institiúid Oideachais Marino  
8 & 9 Samhain, 2024*

# LEADING LITERACY

*Laying Foundations for Future Success*



# AG TREORÚ LITEARTHACHTA

*Bunús a Leagan agus Tairbhe a Bhaint as*

**CONFERENCE PROGRAMME  
CLÁR NA COMHDHÁLA**

**#LAICon2024**



## NAVIGATING THE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



The programme is presented in **digital format**. Only a printed overview of the timetable will be available on the day. Use the hyperlinks in the Table of Contents below and throughout this PDF to learn about the many sessions taking place over Friday 8 and Saturday 9 of November. The purple box on the top right of each page will return you to the overall **conference schedule**.



## NAVIGATING TO THE CONFERENCE

The conference is taking place on the beautiful grounds of *Marino Institute of Education*. **Free parking** is available on campus, but public transport is encouraged. The **I23 and N2 bus routes** stop outside Marino Institute of Education and there is also a **bicycle rack** available on campus.



[Find more information on directions to campus here.](#)

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## LAI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2023-2024

### OFFICERS

<b>President:</b>	Clara Maria Fiorentini
<b>President Elect:</b>	Patrick Burke
<b>Past President:</b>	Claire Dunne
<b>Secretary:</b>	Róisín Ní Mhulláin
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Miriam Colum

### MEMBERS

Adrian Lohan	Susan Nic Réamoinn	Maureen Colleran
Cillian O'Sullivan	Jennifer O'Sullivan	Sylvaine Ní Aogáin
Regina Dunne	Máirín Wilson	Gene Mehigan
	Tara Concannon-Gibney (FELA rep)	

## Contact Us

**For general queries contact:** [info@literacyireland.com](mailto:info@literacyireland.com)

**To enquire about upcoming conferences:** [conference@literacyireland.com](mailto:conference@literacyireland.com)

**For membership queries:** [membership@literacyireland.com](mailto:membership@literacyireland.com)

**Website:** [www.literacyireland.com](http://www.literacyireland.com)

**Twitter/X:** @LiteracyIRL

**Instagram:** literacyireland

Ba mhaith linn buíochas a ghabháil le hInstitiúid Oideachais Marino as an tacaíocht atá tugtha do Chomhdháil Chumann Litearthachta na hÉireann i mbliana.

The Literacy Association of Ireland gratefully acknowledges the support of the Marino Institute of Education in hosting our conference this year.



## MISSION STATEMENT

### Literacy Association of Ireland

The Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI) aims to support and inform those concerned with the development of literacy nationally and internationally (teachers and educators at all levels and in a variety of formal and informal settings), encourage them in reflection and dialogue, challenge them in their practice and give public voice to their concerns through organising bilingual events such as conferences, seminars, workshops, courses, and webinars.

The International Reading Association, now International Literacy Association (ILA) was set up in 1956 in the USA to promote literacy worldwide. The Reading Association of Ireland (RAI) was established in 1975 by a group of educators interested in the broad area of reading. It became a national affiliate of the International Reading Association in 1978.

That original group comprised teachers, teacher educators, researchers, librarians and inspectors from the Department of Education. About 20 people attended this inaugural meeting and formed a committee to drive the work of this new association. Initially, the RAI was focused on developing an interest in reading, supporting reading and encouraging research in the area of reading.

In April 2015, the RAI was re-launched as the Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI), affiliated now to the International Literacy Association following approval of its membership. The LAI aims to support and inform all those concerned with the development of literacy (including teachers, lecturers, researchers, educators and parents) encourage them in reflection and dialogue, challenge them in their practice and give public voice to their concerns.

The aims of the Association are to:

- i) provide a coherent voice on the acquisition, teaching and learning of all aspects of literacy in English and Gaeilge;
- ii) encourage the development of literacy at all educational levels from early childhood through adolescence to adult level;
- iii) foster an interest in and love of reading in all its forms;
- iv) promote an interest in children's literacy at national and international levels;
- v) stimulate, promote and conduct research on literacy at national and local levels;
- vi) study the various factors that influence progress in literacy;
- vii) publish, where possible, the results of pertinent and significant investigations and practices in relation to literacy;
- viii) to assist or advise on the development of literacy-related module in teacher education programmes;
- ix) act as a clearing house for information related to literacy;
- x) disseminate knowledge helpful in the solution of problems related to literacy.

In our Mission Statement, literacy is defined as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create and communicate, using visual, audible, print and digital texts associated with varying contexts. The association's membership includes teachers, students, teacher educators, librarians and parents, but any person interested in literacy or language development is welcome to join the association as the Association seeks to expand its membership.



## JOINING THE LITERACY ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND



**Become a member of the  
Literacy Association of Ireland today!**

### *Membership includes:*

Reduced rate at  
conferences, seminars,  
webinars and  
workshops.

Priority booking at  
conference.

Access to our  
exclusive '**Members  
Only**' portal on our  
website.

Copies of 'Literacy  
News' - our biannual  
magazine.

Invitation to literacy  
related events  
organised by LAI.

**For more information about the LAI please visit our website**

[www.literacyireland.com](http://www.literacyireland.com)

For membership queries: [membership@literacyireland.com](mailto:membership@literacyireland.com)





## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF LAI

### Clara Maria Fiorentini

*Fáilte romhaibh!* I am absolutely delighted to welcome you to the 48th Annual Conference of the Literacy Association of Ireland. It is wonderful to be hosting the LAI conference in the beautiful surroundings of Marino Institute of Education once again.

Much discourse surrounds literacy at present, and what literacy success truly resembles. Our conference theme, **Leading Literacy: Laying Foundations for Future Success**, presents the opportunity to unpack many of the layers within literacy learning and literary research that support the design of equitable, evidence-based and enjoyable literacy experiences across all stages of learning.



In Ireland we continue to be blessed with a preponderance of educators who possess a great commitment to professional learning and development of practice; key elements of building foundations for future literacy success. It is an interesting time to reflect on and consider literacy practice; particularly at national level, as we progress through a phase of significant curriculum redevelopment across educational sectors in Ireland. This weekend, our posters, papers, workshops and symposia will demonstrate a wealth of examples of Leading Literacy and will explore many of the possibilities and practices required nationally and internationally to ensure that we collectively appreciate the immense responsibility of establishing firm foundations for future success in literacy.

The Literacy Association of Ireland has always celebrated and recognised the value of high-quality children's literature. I am thrilled to welcome three incredible ambassadors for Irish children's literature to our fireside chat on Friday evening. Elaina Ryan (CEO, Children's Books Ireland), Dr Becky Long (Educational Outreach Manager, CBI) and renowned Irish Children's Author, Sadhbh Devlin will discuss the invaluable role of reading for pleasure in childhood and beyond.

It is my very great pleasure to welcome Dr Sonia Cabell of Florida State University to deliver a keynote presentation on Integrated Content and Literacy Instruction in support of Language Comprehension - a topic of great relevance to literacy practice in Ireland at present. Dr Cabell is a leading voice in literacy research globally on the prevention of reading difficulties.

The annual LAI conference has long been synonymous with collegiality, collaboration and community. I hope you find the weekend beneficial and that this conference offers you valuable opportunities to learn, to reflect and to connect.

Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh taitneamh as an gcomhdháil!



## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Click on the links below to be brought to the relevant section of the programme.

### Friday 8 November

5:00 – 6:00 pm	<b>REGISTRATION, REFRESHMENTS, POSTER PRESENTATIONS</b>	Maple, Willow and Walnut rooms
6:00 – 7:00 pm	<a href="#"><u>LITERACY TEACHMEET</u></a>	
7:00 – 7.45 pm	<b>LAI BIENNIAL THESIS AWARDS</b>	
7:45 – 8:15 pm	<b>REFRESHMENTS AND POSTERS</b>	
8:15 – 9:00 pm	<b>FIRESIDE CHAT</b>	

### Saturday 9 November

8:30 – 9:00 pm	<b>REGISTRATION</b>	Nagle Rice Foyer
9:00 – 10:00 pm	<a href="#"><u>WELCOME &amp; KEYNOTE</u></a>	Lecture Hall
10:15 – 11:45pm	<a href="#"><u>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 1</u></a>	Various Locations
11:45 – 12:15 pm	<b>BREAK – REFRESHMENTS</b>	Nagle Rice Foyer
12:15 – 1:45 pm	<a href="#"><u>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 2</u></a>	Various Locations
1:45 – 2:30 pm	<b>LUNCH</b> (Light lunch included in conference ticket)	Canteen
2:30 – 4:00 pm	<a href="#"><u>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 3</u></a>	Various Locations
4:00 pm	<b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b>	Lecture Hall



## FULL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

**FRIDAY EVENING, 8 NOVEMBER 2024**

5:00 pm	<b>REGISTRATION AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS</b> (Tea & Coffee)	Maple, Willow, Walnut Rooms
6:00 pm	<b>LITERACY TEACHMEET</b> <i>A rapid-fire smorgasbord of inspiring literacy teaching ideas! See list of <a href="#">TeachMeet presenters and titles</a>. In keeping with the TeachMeet spirit, presenters will be scheduled randomly on the night.</i>	
7:00 pm	<b>LAI BIENNIAL THESIS AWARDS</b> <i>Brief presentations from shortlistees, followed by prize-giving</i>	
7:45 pm	<b>REFRESHMENTS AND POSTERS</b>	
8:15 pm	<b>FIRESIDE CHAT</b> <i>Reading for Pleasure – Community, Culture and Connection</i>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="467 1093 810 1330"> <p><b>Elaina Ryan</b> CEO Children's Books Ireland</p> </div> <div data-bbox="970 1093 1313 1330"> <p><b>Dr Becky Long</b> Education Outreach Manager Children's Books Ireland</p> </div> </div>		
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div data-bbox="467 1471 810 1709"> <p><b>Sadhbh Devlin</b> Children's Book Author</p> </div> <div data-bbox="970 1471 1313 1709"> <p><b>Clara Maria Fiorentini</b> President Literacy Association of Ireland</p> </div> </div>		





## POSTERS

Parental Engagement with Systematic, Synthetic Phonics and Early Reading ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Ellie Crawshaw-Prince**, Learning Federation Partnership of Schools, England

Exploring the Leaders' Experiences of Implementing the 'Reading Strand' of the Primary Language Curriculum. ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Teresa Coffey**, Oide

Fostering Continuity and Progression: Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction through Cross-Sector Collaboration in Early Childhood

Education ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Alison Nulty**, Dublin City University

Exploring arts-based research and a bilingual approach to craft heritage using visual competency and language frameworks ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Eileen Keane and Ruth Nic An Bhreithiúnaigh**, Marino Institute of Education

An investigation into the children's literature choices of primary school students and teachers in a newly established DEIS setting. ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Sarah Quirke**, Mary Immaculate College

'Spreag an óige agus tiocfaidh sí' Cad iad na Straitéisí Teagaisc agus Foghlama is Éifeachtaí chun Inspreagadh Dhaltaí Bunscoile a Mhádú i Leith na Gaeilge? ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Emma Ní Mhaoilstéighe**, Gaelscoil Bhrian Bóroimhe & Insitiúid Oideachais Marino

Advancing Literacy: Harnessing the Power of Interprofessional Collaboration ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Dr Ciara Concannon & Dr Margaret Egan**, Mary Immaculate College

From a tumultuous bilingual past, towards a bright plurilingual future. Teacher's knowledge and beliefs about language learning: Supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language in mainstream multigrade rural Irish schools. ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Kate O'Sullivan**, Mary Immaculate College

How does leadership of literacy education at primary school level inform teacher agency and pupil agency? ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Kay Foley**, Mary Immaculate College

The potential of picture books in developing reading comprehension among primary children, particularly struggling literacy learners ▶ [Abstract](#)

**Roisin McNeill**, St Paul's Primary School



## TEACHMEET PRESENTATIONS

*In keeping with the TeachMeet spirit, presenters will be scheduled randomly on the night. The 2 min/7 min allocations will be strictly followed!*

How many strategies can I squeeze into 7 minutes for supporting EAL learners?  
*Micro presentation (7 mins)*

**Kirsten Barrett**

Leading Literacy by Embracing a Scope and Sequence Perspective in  
Elementary Education/ Elementary Special Education Dual Certification  
Program *Micro presentation (7 mins)*

**Dr Cara McDermott-Fasy, Rhode Island College**

Oral Reading Fluency – Quick Tips *Nano presentation (2 mins)*

**Aisling Cannon, Marino Institute of Education**

Literacy Leadership: Teacher Perceptions and Experiences *Nano presentation (2 mins)*

**Laura Capon, Mary Immaculate College**

Eochair don Litríocht: Morphology as the Key to Irish Literacy Success

*Micro presentation (7 mins)*

**Seán Lineen, Hollypark Boy's National School**

5 Key Considerations when making the transition to Plurilingual  
Approaches: A survey of teacher experience in a linguistically diverse Co  
Meath primary school *Micro presentation (7 mins)*

**Teresa Wilson, European School Bergen**

Can sketchbooks support writers to engage meaningfully with the writing  
process? *Nano presentation (2 mins)*

**Emma Farragher, Dublin City University**

Understanding the complexity of reading in two sentences *Nano presentation (2 mins)*

**Gene Mehigan, Marino Institute of Education**

Ag tógáil clainne go dátheangach le Gaeilge - *Micro presentation (7 mins)*

**Sarah Murray, Marino Institute of Education**



## SATURDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2024

8.30 – 9.00 am

**REGISTRATION & VENDORS**  
Nagle Rice Foyer

**Please visit stands from  
our supporting vendors  
throughout the day!**

*Futa Fata*  
*My Little Uniform*  
*The Babbling Book Club -*  
*An Gúm/Foras na Gaeilge*  
*Cogs The Brain Shop*

9.00 – 10.00 am

**WELCOME**  
Lecture Hall, Nagle Rice Building

**Clara Maria Fiorentini**  
*President, Literacy Association of Ireland*

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**  
*How Integrated Content and Literacy Instruction Improves  
Language Comprehension*

**Dr Sonia Cabell**

Sonia Cabell is an associate professor of Reading Education in the School of Teacher Education and the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University. Before receiving her Ph.D. at the University of Virginia, she worked as a second grade teacher and literacy coach in Oklahoma and Virginia. Dr. Cabell's research focuses on language and literacy instruction in the early grades, with a particular interest in preventing reading difficulties in young children. She has authored over 70 publications, including peer-reviewed articles, books, book chapters, and early childhood language and literacy curricula. She is the lead editor of the Handbook on the Science of Early Literacy from Guilford Press, and she co-authored *Literacy Learning for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers: Key Practices for Educators* from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and *Strive-for-Five Conversations* from Scholastic. Dr. Cabell has served as Principal Investigator or co-Principal Investigator on federally funded research projects totaling approximately \$10 million dollars. She has been an advisor or consultant for a variety of organizations and state departments of education in the U.S. She can be followed on X (formerly Twitter) @soniacabell.





## 10:15 am – 11:45 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS 1A-1F

### CONCURRENT SESSION 1A

Theme: Fluency and Comprehension

Chair: Dr Gene Mehigan

Room: Lecture Hall, Nagle Rice Building

10:15 - 10:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

The role of oral reading fluency across English and Irish in metacognition and comprehension in L1 and L2 settings (English)

**Dr Jacqueline de Brún**, *Dublin City University*

10:45 - 11:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

From Faltering to Flowing: One Primary School's Journey Embedding Oral Reading Fluency in Key Stage 2 (English)

**Dr Geraldine Magennis-Clarke**, *St. Mary's University College*  
**Philip Lavery**, *Mount St. Michael's Primary School*

11:15 – 11:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

The Role of Background Knowledge and Vocabulary in the development of Reading Comprehension (English)

**Dr Gene Mehigan**, *Marino Institute of Education*

### CONCURRENT SESSION 1B

Theme: Decodable Texts

Room: SEB 1

10:15 - 11:15

WORKSHOP ▶ [Abstract](#)

Cracking the Code: The Use of Decodable Texts in Early Reading Instruction (English)

**Dr Jennifer O'Sullivan**, *Marino Institute of Education*

### CONCURRENT SESSION 1C

Theme: Creative Practice

Room: SEB 2

10:15 – 11:15

WORKSHOP ▶ [Abstract](#)

Anaesthetic to aesthetic: Poetry, picturebooks, and the creative practitioner (English)

**Emma Farragher**, *Dublin City University*  
**Amy McLoughlin**, *Ashbourne Community School*  
**Dr Jane O'Hanlon**, *Poetry Ireland*

Continued over ↪



## CONCURRENT SESSION 1D

Theme: Post-primary Literacy

Room: Room 5

10:15 – 11:15

### SYMPOSIUM ▶ [Abstract](#)

Leading Literacy Success at Post-Primary Level: Insights for Teachers and Teacher Education (English)

**Dr Patrick Burke**, *Dublin City University*

**Art Ó Neachtain**, *University of Galway*

**Dr Aideen Cassidy**, *Dublin City University*

**Dr Emily Barnes**, *Trinity College Dublin*

## CONCURRENT SESSION 1E

Theme: Linguistic diversity

Chair: Dr Claire Dunne

Room: Room 7

10:15 - 10:45

### PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Teaching literacy skills in the heritage language at Polish complementary schools in Ireland (English)

**Dr Agnieszka Pedrak**, *Trinity College Dublin*

10:45 - 11:15

### PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Promoting plurilingualism through the teaching of Irish in English-medium primary schools (Bilingual)

**Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney & Dr Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin**,  
*Dublin City University*

11:15 – 11:45

### PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Five Key Principles for Transitioning to Plurilingual Approaches in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms: A Survey of Teacher Experiences in an Urban Co. Meath Primary School (English)

**Teresa Wilson**, *St Mary's University College*

## CONCURRENT SESSION 1F

Theme: Enriching literacy: Multiple angles

Chair: Cillian O'Sullivan

Room: Room 10

10:15 - 10:45

### PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

AdAPptive - an Erasmus+ project for incorporating digital readings apps into literacy programmes at primary school (English)

**Dr Monica Ward & Dr Eamonn McCauley**, *Dublin City University*

10:45 - 11:15

### PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

From Awareness to Action: Enhancing Digital Literacy in Post-Primary Classrooms (English)

**Dr Rachel Lenihan, Dr Carmel Hinchion & Prof. Marie Parker-Jenkins**, *University of Limerick*

11:15 – 11:45

### PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Meaningful Literacy Experiences (English)

**Dr. Michael Rafferty**

*Southern Connecticut State University and Derby Public Schools*





11.45 – 12:15

REFRESHMENTS

Nagle Rice Foyer

12:15 – 1:45

CONCURRENT SESSIONS 2A – 2E

## CONCURRENT SESSION 2A

Theme: Phonemic Awareness &amp; Early Literacy

Chair: Dr Patrick Burke

Room: Lecture Hall, Nagle Rice Building

12:15 – 12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Más maith is mithid. Oideolaíocht taighdebhunaithe ar an bhfeasacht fhóinéimeach i bhforbairt na mbunscileanna luath-litearthachta Gaeilge. Staidéar meastóireachta ar an gclár Litriú Beacht. (Bilingual)  
**Úna Ní Fhlatharta, Mary Immaculate College**

12.45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Word of Mouth: The Role of Articulatory Gestures and Mouth Photographs in Early Literacy Instruction (English)  
**Deirdre O'Toole, Mary Immaculate College**

1:15 – 1:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Insights from Early Literacy Screenings (English)  
**Dr Colm O'Toole & Aima Molati, ALPACA Assessment**

## CONCURRENT SESSION 2B

Theme: Transfer of Skills

Room: SEB 1

12:15 – 1:15

WORKSHOP ▶ [Abstract](#)

Bridging the Research-Practice Gap: Transfer of Skills in Irish Primary Schools (Bilingual)  
**Shane Leonard & Maria Tully, Oide**

## CONCURRENT SESSION 2C

Theme: Structured Literacy

Room: SEB 2

12:15 – 1:15

WORKSHOP ▶ [Abstract](#)

Structured Literacy in the Mainstream Classroom: Practical Strategies for Inclusive, Multicomponent Literacy Teaching (English)  
**Christina Hannify, Dr Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray & Dr Paula Lehane, Dublin City University**

Continued over ➞



## CONCURRENT SESSION 2D

Theme: Curriculum and National Developments  
in Literacy

Chair: Art Ó Neachtain

Room: Room 7

12:15 – 12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

The Primary Language Curriculum: Considering Curriculum Models and Implications for Enactment (English)

**Dr Conall Ó Breacháin**, *Dublin City University*

12.45 – 1:15

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Literacy instruction during a unique moment in educational history: Insights from teachers in Ireland using PIRLS 2021 data (English)

**Sarah McAteer, Dr Emer Delaney, Dr Vasiliki Pitsia**,  
*Educational Research Centre*

## CONCURRENT SESSION 2E

Theme: Perspectives on Post-Primary Literacy

Chair: Dr Máirín Wilson

Room: Room 10

12:15 – 12:45

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Examining The Role of Primary Literacy Education in Post-Primary Educational Trajectories (English)

**Aoife Joy Keogh**, *University College Dublin*

12.45 – 1:15

PÁIPÉAR ▶ [Abstract/Achoimre](#)

Cur chuige roinne agus uile-scoile don teagasc ábharbhunaithe (Gaeilge)

**Breandán Mac Gearailt**, *Ollscoil na Gaillimhe*

1:15 – 1:45

PÁIPÉAR ▶ [Abstract/Achoimre](#)

Measúnú agus Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iar-bhunscoil – Gaeilge (Gaeilge)

**Conall Ó Duibhir & Muireann Bergin**,  
*Foras Taighde ar Oideachas*

1:45 – 2:30

Light lunch – Served in College Canteen (Nagle Rice Building)

2.30 – 4.00

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS 3A – 3E****CONCURRENT SESSION 3A**
**Theme:** Engaging with Language and Literacy:  
 Multiple perspectives
**Chair:** Emma Farragher**Room:** Lecture Hall, Nagle Rice Building

2:30 – 3:00

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Developing a Community of Linguaphiles: Using morphology and etymology to foster word consciousness (English)

**Dr Treasa Bowe, Carrigtwohill Community National School Cork**

3:00 – 3:30

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Introducing an EAL (English as an Additional Language) programme in primary school: leadership, relationship and literacy (English)

**Dr Claire Redmond, Corpus Christi NS**

3:30 – 4:00

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

'Literacy' for whom and by whom?: Bringing Literacy to Life for Diverse Learners (English)

**Ciara Barry, University College Cork**
**CONCURRENT SESSION 3B**
**Theme:** Literacy and Language Development in  
 Irish
**Chair:** Dr Claire Dunne**Room:** SEB I

2:30 – 3:00

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

A Collaborative Approach to Introducing CLIL to Learners and Teachers of Irish at Senior Primary: Teachers' Experiences of and Perspectives on Language Policy &amp; Pedagogy in Practice at Local Level (Bilingual)

**Dr Jane O'Toole, Ciara McGinty & Cillian Gregan,  
 Scoil Chrónáin Senior National School**

3:00 – 3:30

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Irish Language Framework for Children in Irish Medium Settings (Creat Teanga do Pháistí i Suíomhanna Lán-Ghaeilge) (Bilingual)

**Dr Thomas Rogan, Dr Seán Mac Corraidh, Mary Carabine &  
 Helen O'Donnell, CCEA / St Mary's University College**

3:30 – 4:00

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

'Páistí i mbun pinn' - is handwriting still important? (Bilingual)

**Emma Ní Mhaoilstéighe,  
 Gaelscoil Bhrian Bóroimhe & Insitiúid Oideachais Marino**
Continued over 



## CONCURRENT SESSION 3C

Theme: Literacy and Expression

**Chair:** Maureen Colleran

**Room:** SEB 2

2:30 – 3:00	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Drama as a strengths-based , inclusive pedagogy for children with dyslexia (English) <b>Dr Patti Roche, Dublin City University</b></p>
3:00 – 3:30	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> How Literacy Learning benefits from the Self-Efficacy built through Public Speaking Training (English) <b>Dr Siobhán Keenan Fitzgerald, University of Lincoln</b></p>
3:30 – 4:00	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Children asking Beautiful Questions through the Art of Slow Looking (English) <b>Elizabeth O' Brien, St. Anthony's BNS, Cork</b></p>

## CONCURRENT SESSION 3D

Theme : Literacy in the Early Years

**Chair:** Dr Jennifer O'Sullivan

**Room:** Room 7

2.30 – 3.00	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Happy Ever After: A systematic review of book programmes fostering socioemotional development through literacy in early childhood settings (English) <b>Gabriela Portillo Menéndez, Mary Immaculate College</b></p>
3.00 – 4.30	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Literacy, Language and Voice in the updated Aistear (English) <b>Dr Sharon Skehill &amp; Donna Carolan, NCCA</b></p>
3:30 – 4:00	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Laying the Foundations for Literacy: Supporting Language Development in Young Children with a Language Delay (English) <b>Dr Suzanne Egan, Dr Mary Moloney, Dr Jennifer Pope, Dr Deirdre Breatnach, Mai Burke-Hayes, Mary Immaculate College</b></p>

Continued over ↗



## CONCURRENT SESSION 3E

Theme : Engaging with Literature

**Chair:** Dr Róisín Ní Mhulláin

**Room:** Room 10

2.30 – 3.00	<p><b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Creating Lifelong Readers through Reading for Pleasure – a conversation (English) <b>Kirsten Barrett</b></p>
3.00 – 4.30	<p><b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Language Enrichment in the Classroom through Stories and Narrative Engagement (English) <b>Dr Becky Long</b>, <i>Children's Books Ireland</i></p>
3:30 – 4:00	<p><b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Hug Your Book - a Family Literacy Programme (English) <b>Lána McCarthy</b>, <i>South East Technological University</i></p>
4:00 pm	<p><b>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b>      <b>Room:</b> Lecture Hall</p>

**CLOSE OF CONFERENCE**





## POSTER ABSTRACTS

### Parental Engagement with Systematic, Synthetic Phonics and Early Reading **Ellie Crawshaw-Prince, Learning Federation Partnership of Schools, England**

We all know that the role of the parent and family in supporting early reading is both critical and vital in supporting children with learning to read – but how can we engage grown-ups with phonics and fostering a culture of reading for pleasure at home?

Systematic, Synthetic Phonics might not be a term your parents are familiar with. It may not be how they learned to read at school. Memories of their own educational experience may not encourage them to engage with their child's setting. Hearing unfamiliar terminology such as 'digraph', 'phoneme' and 'the science of reading' may worry parents about coming into school, or cause parents to become fearful of 'teaching it wrong at home!'

This paper explores how we use Pip and Pap Phonics to engage and educate parents in Early Reading, in a fun, accessible and engaging way – which can be applied to any synthetic phonics scheme used in schools. It considers oracy skills and reading 'talk', vocabulary acquisition and the different areas of reading comprehension, explore fluency and expression, and as well as have some fun with arts and crafts too!

**Ellie Crawshaw-Prince FCCT** is the architect behind Pip and Pap Phonics, a systematic, synthetic phonics programme designed for early years and infant pupils. Based in England, Ellie is employed as Lead Practitioner for Early Literacy at the Learning Federation Partnership of Schools, in Southampton and the New Forest.

### Exploring the Leaders' Experiences of Implementing the 'Reading Strand' of the Primary Language Curriculum. **Teresa Coffey, Oide**

The primary language curriculum is a recently implemented, reformed language curriculum in the Irish primary education system (Department of Education (DE), 2019). All other subjects at primary school level will soon be updated and changed (DE, 2023). Leading curricular change and reform has been largely understudied in Ireland (Murphy, 2019). This study aims to explore and gain insight into the leaders' experiences of implementing the 'reading strand' of the PLC. It seeks to examine the lived experiences of leaders as they implement change, explore the factors that influence these experiences, investigate their preparation for reform, and identify the lessons they learned from the process. A phenomenological research design was employed to capture the perspectives of six educational leaders involved in the implementation of the PLC. Two principals, two literacy coordinators and two professional learning leaders in literacy partook in this study. Thematic analysis of the data collected from the interviews and researcher's reflective diary identified three main themes; conceptualizing leadership during reform, perceptions of leading reading instruction, and challenges and opportunities in leading the 'reading strand' of the PLC. The findings of this study highlight the importance of providing adequate time and professional development for leaders involved in curricular reform, ensuring clear communication of curricular changes, and establishing consistent evaluation methods for leaders to support successful curriculum implementation. These insights are expected to have significant implications for the policy and practice of future curricular reforms.

**Teresa Coffey** is a primary school teacher. She received a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and Management from Mary Immaculate College in 2024. She has held several roles in education, including visiting teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing and professional learning leader in literacy. She is interested in school leadership, literacy and languages, curricular reform, professional learning, communities of practice, and coaching and mentoring for primary teachers.

### Fostering Continuity and Progression: Enhancing Vocabulary Instruction through Cross-Sector Collaboration in Early Childhood Education **Alison Nulty, Dublin City University**

Early vocabulary knowledge provides an important foundation for literacy development (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). High-quality, explicit vocabulary instruction is important in both pre-primary and early primary education. However, ensuring continuity and progression in vocabulary instruction—through



consistent pedagogical approaches, building on children's prior learning, and fostering shared understanding and expectations across both settings—is essential to prevent disruptions during the transition between these stages.

Cross-sector collaboration between pre-primary and primary educators offers a promising approach to addressing this challenge. Research suggests that such collaboration can foster a shared vision for a coherent pathway in early literacy, align practices, and enable smoother transitions with sustained progress in learning (McCormick et al., 2019; Garner et al., 2021). Based on the initial stages of a PhD literature review, this presentation explores how cross-sector collaboration may enhance continuity and progression in vocabulary instruction.

Recent Irish policy strategies (Gol, 2024) and curriculum developments (NCCA, 2023) emphasise the importance of aligning educational practices. However, no national transition strategy or concrete plans currently exist to ensure continuity and progression from pre-primary to primary education (DCEDIY, 2023). International examples, particularly from New Zealand and the USA, demonstrate how cross-sector collaboration can promote consistent practices and improve early learning outcomes during transitions.

This presentation proposes a sustained cross-sector Professional Learning Community (PLC) to address gaps in practice and promote continuity and progression in vocabulary instruction. Over time, stronger policy support and practical initiatives may be necessary to bring about transformative change in transition practices, fostering continuity and progression in early literacy development.

**Alison Nulty** is pursuing her PhD at DCU Institute of Education in the School of Language, Literacy and, Early Childhood Education. She has extensive experience in pre-primary and early primary education, including teaching infants in primary school and working as a Teaching Fellow in Early Childhood Education at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick.

### Exploring arts-based research and a bilingual approach to craft heritage using visual competency and language frameworks

**Eileen Keane and Ruth Nic An Bhreithiúnaigh**, Marino Institute of Education

This research paper explores contemporary European frameworks that offer new opportunities to interrogate arts, literacy and heritage craft practices in the Irish context. The research study applies two European frameworks- The Common European Framework for Visual Competencies (Kárpáti & Schönau, 2022) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001; 2020), to uncover new pathways for both language and arts practice in the area of Irish heritage craft practice.

The research focuses on the practice and partnership between two teacher educators and methodologically is underpinned by an arts-based research approach. It employs bilingual oral interaction, dialogic practice and visual data including visual journaling to generate data.

This paper presents the data and preliminary analysis of the ongoing research project.

#### **Biographies to follow**

### An investigation into the children's literature choices of primary school students and teachers in a newly established DEIS setting.

**Sarah Quirke**, Mary Immaculate College

Situated in the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher investigated the children's literature preferences of students and teachers in a school which recently gained DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) status. The researcher engaged in case study research to identify the children's literature preferences of students and teachers in Cherry Blossom School, noting similarities and differences of both participant groups. The researcher generated data using questionnaires, focus groups, and a draw and tell activity. Questionnaires were distributed to 290 participants, five focus groups were formed, with five participants in each, and fifteen draw and tell activities were completed and analysed.

As a newly established DEIS school, literacy is an area of focus in DEIS planning. It is a requirement of DEIS schools to have a DEIS literacy plan in addition to a whole school literacy plan. One target within the DEIS



literacy plan for Cherry Blossom School was the promotion of Reading for Pleasure (RfP). This aim inspired the research for this study to gain insights into both student and teacher preferences on children's literature. While international studies discuss students' children's literature preferences, there is a need for contemporary research of student and teacher preferences in the Irish context.

The findings of this exploratory study reveal that fictional texts are favoured by students and teachers, motivation to read should come from intrinsic influences, incorporating child voice into book choices in classroom instruction is desirable, and building upon the existing children's literature collection is a priority to include a diverse range of book genres and texts.

This research can assist in supporting schools and researchers to reflect on the reading practices of students in their schools, determine literature preferences of students and teachers, analyse the availability of diverse texts and genres available in their schools and enhance the reading experiences of students.

***Sarah Quirke** graduated from the Bachelor of Education programme in Mary Immaculate College in 2016. Since graduating, she has worked in a variety of educational settings, and has been a mainstream class teacher in her current school since 2019. She completed the Master of Education in Literacy Education in Mary Immaculate College from 2022 to 2024. Sarah has a keen interest in literacy in her personal and professional life.*

### 'Spreag an óige agus tiocfaidh sí' Cad iad na Straitéisí Teagaisc agus Foghlama is Éifeachtaí chun Inspreagadh Dhaltaí Bunscoile a Mhádú i Leith na Gaeilge?

**Emma Ní Mhaoilstéighe, Gaelscoil Bhrian Bóroimhe & Insitiúid Oideachais Marino**

Cuireadh straitéisí teagaisc agus foghlama i bhfeidhm sa taighde seo le hiniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na straitéisí ab éifeachtaí chun inspreagadh dhaltaí Rang 6 a mhádú i leith na Gaeilge. Baineadh úsáid as straitéisí atá molta ag Dörnyei agus Csizér (1998) mar mhúnla taighde chun foghlaimoirí teanga a spreagadh thar thréimhse cheithre seachtaine. Baineadh úsáid as ceistneoir taighde chun inspreagadh na ndaltaí a mheas roimh thabhairt faoi na straitéisí agus arís, tar éis tabhairt faoi na straitéisí. Cuireadh na torthaí ón dá cheistneoir taighde i gcomparáid lena chéile chun treochothaí a aithint. Fuarthas tuiscint níos doimhne ar na treochothaí seo trí ghrúpaí fócais agus trí bhreathnóireacht an mhúinteora. Sa chaoi seo, bailíodh eolas cáilíochtúil agus cainníochtúil chun léargas a fháil ar rath na straitéisí teagaisc agus foghlama. Sonraíonn torthaí an taighde go dtacaíonn inspreagadh uirliseach le hinspreagadh comhtháite i gcás na Gaeilge agus go mbíonn an dá chineál inspreagadh ag obair i dteannta a chéile. Táthair ag súil go mbeidh moltaí an taighde ina gcabhair do oideachasóirí, do lucht deartha curaclaim agus do phlé ar an ábhar amach anseo chun múineadh éifeachtach teanga a chur i bhfeidhm.

*Is múinteoir bunscoile í **Emma Ní Mhaoilstéighe** le post mar Phríomhoide Cúnta I. Tá taithí aici ag múineadh réimse ranganna. Tá máistreacht bainte amach aici san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta. Is léachtóir páirt-aimseartha í in Insitiúid Oideachais Marino (B.Oid). Tá taithí aici mar léachtóir páirt-aimseartha in Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath (B.Ed) agus i gColáiste Mhuire Gan Smál, Luimneach (M.Oid) chomh maith. Tá suim ar leith aici i gcúrsaí inspreagtha agus sa luathoideachas.*

### Advancing Literacy: Harnessing the Power of Interprofessional Collaboration

**Dr Ciara Concannon & Dr Margaret Egan, Mary Immaculate College**

The number of students presenting with Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties (SLCD) represents a significant cohort of the student population nationally and internationally. These students require specialised in-school support from school staff as well as support from external professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs). This research set out to investigate the nature and extent of collaborative practice in Irish primary schools to identify and meet the needs of students with SLCD.

A social constructivist paradigm was adopted for the investigation to ensure that the various perspectives and multiple realities of key stakeholders were identified and validated. The study adopted a qualitative approach and the researcher employed semi-structured interviews as her primary data collection method. The research was conducted in four main cluster groups in the greater Dublin area, which enabled the researcher to examine the lived experiences of principals, class teachers, SETs and SLTs. The researcher utilised the theoretical framework of Lave and Wenger's Community of Practice (CoP) (1991), as a lens for analysis.



Many interesting findings emerged with implications for policy and practice. This paper will primarily focus on the value of collaboration and the development of Communities of Practice (CoP) to effectively meet the needs of students with SLCD. It will highlight the importance of interprofessional collaboration to enhance student learning opportunities and outcomes, and the need for effective partnerships to be established among key stakeholders.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to the field internationally and to the dearth of research in the Irish context in relation to interprofessional collaboration, laying the foundations for future success in education for all.

**Dr Ciara Concannon** is an Assistant Professor in Early Childhood Education in Mary Immaculate College and previously worked as an Assistant Professor in the Language & Literacy Department. Ciara's research interests are in Inclusion; Language and Literacy for students with SLCD; Interprofessional Collaboration and Professional Development.

From a tumultuous bilingual past, towards a bright plurilingual future. Teacher's knowledge and beliefs about language learning: Supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language in mainstream multigrade rural Irish schools.

**Kate O'Sullivan**, Mary Immaculate College

Supporting pupils with English as an Additional Language [EAL] is no longer specific to schools located in urban settings. An increasing number of pupils with EAL have relocated to rural locations in recent years (Department of Education and Skills, 2023). The 2025 publication of the Primary Language Curriculum with a Modern Foreign Language also brings with it a focus on language awareness and the fostering of plurilingual classrooms throughout Ireland. These changes have, and will, create many linguistic opportunities and challenges for teachers. This research project, using a Case Study approach, will set out to explore teachers' knowledge of language awareness, additional language acquisition and the transfer of skills. Furthermore, it will look at teachers' perceptions and experience of utilizing home languages within multi grade rural school settings. Research details how linguistically supportive teaching approaches can support language development for all children (Liu et al. 2017; Little and Kirwan 2019). Studies in Ireland e.g Moriarty (2017), and internationally e.g Wallen and Holmes (2017), have found that when home languages are utilized in the classroom, pupils become more curious about languages. Multi grade setting is seen to place increasing demands on teachers (Quail and Smyth 2014). This research will set out to identify whether linguistic diversity has created further challenges for teachers, and whether language and literacy instruction has benefited from increased linguistic diversity within their classrooms. It is envisaged that research findings will detail recommendations for professional development required by teachers. This will support teachers in creating learning opportunities and classroom environments in which language awareness and language acquisition is valued and fostered. It will also aim to inform both policy and practice in the area of literacy instruction, as the coming years will see a changing linguistic landscape in all schools, with the new Primary Language Curriculum with Modern Foreign Languages being implemented across all primary schools.

**Kate O'Sullivan** is a primary school teacher in a small two teacher rural school. She has previously worked as an EAL support teacher in various schools, both urban and rural, which has ignited her interest in the area of additional language acquisition, and how best we can value, support and promote language diversity in all schools. She is currently seconded to Oide, working as part of the Primary Literacy team.

How does leadership of literacy education at primary school level inform teacher agency and pupil agency?

**Kay Foley**, Mary Immaculate College

The working title for my PhD is 'How does leadership of literacy education at primary school level inform teacher agency and pupil agency?' As part of research the factors that inform provision for literacy education in primary schools will be addressed. Included is the selection of criteria, the range of literacy provision and who takes decisions within a school. The intention is an investigation of instructional literacy leadership at school level.

This encompasses the area of teacher agency, its definition, and its impact on teaching, learning and assessment. It questions how teacher agency may be facilitated and developed. Of interest is how a teacher's self-efficacy supports and fosters their sense of agency. The role played by Initial Teacher Education and professional learning play is significant, in how it addresses the potential for teacher



autonomy. The role of pupil agency, how or even if it is pupil agency facilitated, and the impact of pupil agency opportunities on the development literacy and language are unclear.

The provision for education of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) challenges literacy leadership in schools. How does the school define EAL and accommodate home languages, cultural and linguistic diversity. The recent National Strategy for Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy is to be implemented and will inform the quality of provision for Reading for pleasure.

My Conceptual Framework comprises the following: Leadership of literacy education, Learning-centred leadership, Teacher agency, Teacher self-efficacy, Pupil agency, Provision for literacy education, selection process and assessment of literacy interventions, EAL, including accommodation of Home languages, and provision for Reading for Pleasure. Cremin & Scholes (2024) recent work on a framework to approach this area is of interest in terms of contrast with the Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood and 5-year implementation plan.

**Kay Foley** has worked in the following roles; mainstream and special class teacher, teaching principal, facilitator, mentor, associate and advisor with OIDE (formerly NIPT and PDST). She works with the Inspectorate at primary level.

### The potential of picture books in developing reading comprehension among primary children, particularly struggling literacy learners

**Roisin McNeill, St Paul's Primary School**

Motivation and engagement, higher order thinking and language development all work together in contributing to the bigger picture of reading comprehension. In today's graphically bombarded world, education is being challenged to keep up and as a result, one-dimensional teaching methods need to expand to incorporate much more innovative and multi-modal approaches, giving children the opportunity to interpret texts critically in order to operate successfully in society. A prescriptive approach to the teaching of reading is setting children, especially those with special educational needs, up to fail. However, all children can become critically literate when there is a shift in pedagogical practice. By exploring the potential to be found in the world of picture books, we take the first step away from the normal conventions of reading comprehension.

**Roisin McNeill** is currently in her 14th year of primary teaching, and in her 7th year as Literacy Leader. She has a Masters in Education, specialising in Special Education. She has always had a passion and love for children's books, and enjoys using books as a medium for learning and teaching across the curriculum.





## CONCURRENT SESSION I - ABSTRACTS

The role of oral reading fluency across English and Irish in metacognition and comprehension in L1 and L2 settings (English)

**Dr Jacqueline de Brún**, Dublin City University

Pupils in Ireland learn to read in English and Irish, in an Irish-medium or in an English-medium school. A focus on fluency as a foundational skill across both languages has the potential to raise metacognition as well as improve comprehension skills in both languages. It is understood that fluency in reading is a bridge between word recognition and comprehension, and promoting fluency in reading aloud provides a foundation for fluent silent reading. Fluency is also known to transfer across texts and research suggests that reading fluency is significantly related across languages, but there is little analysis of specific aspects of transfer. Underlying proficiencies across languages is a major aspect of learning to read in two or more languages. Transfer is a two-way process which implies that spending instructional time in one language should benefit all other known languages. This paper describes fluency rates and prosody of immersion pupils in their reading in Irish in 6 classes (n=186) across the two jurisdictions in Ireland. It examines possibilities for improvement in fluency as a foundational skill in Irish for both immersion settings and reading in Irish in an English-medium school and suggests implications this may have on reading in English or other languages.

*Dr Jacqueline de Brún is a lecturer in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education in Dublin City University. She has a PhD in the teaching and learning of reading in Irish in immersion schools.*

From Faltering to Flowing: One Primary School's Journey Embedding Oral Reading Fluency in Key Stage 2 (English)

**Dr Geraldine Magennis-Clarke**, St. Mary's University College  
**Philip Lavery**, Mount St. Michael's Primary School

The Department of Education in Northern Ireland's (DE) seminal policy document published in 2016, entitled 'Learning Leaders', stipulates that every educator is expected to lead change and innovation in their own contexts. Although a welcome opportunity to engage in professional development, it is not without its challenges. Helpfully, Cordingly et al. (2015) provides guidance on the hallmarks of robust, effective modes of teacher professional learning. These include, context-specific approaches based on pupils' learning outcomes, grounded in evidence-based curricular and pedagogical knowledge, allowing for experimentation with new ideas, under the guidance of an external expert to facilitate the process of change management. Consequently, this research project was designed to explore the experience of one upper primary school as they journey through the embedding of Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). ORF was chosen as the focus since it has been found to help combine the code-based and language comprehension strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) together which is essential for the acquisition of skilled reading comprehension (Mehigan, 2013). Over a two-and-a-half-year period, a deliberate emphasis was placed on giving the pupils (n=205) multiple opportunities each week to read for different purposes, audiences and across an increasing variety of genres. Quantitative and qualitative rubrics were used to capture data as a means of tracking potential progress in accurate, automatic, and suitably phrased reading. Alongside this, further data was garnered through the conduct of focus group interviews with a stratified sample (n=18) across the Key Stage 2 cohort. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the parent/guardian of each of the children who took part in the focus group along with the Key Stage 2 teachers and the vice-principal. Findings revealed that some positive impact occurred regarding ORF scores, pupil attitudes to reading, as well as fruitful reshaping of the wider literacy curriculum and pedagogy.

*Dr Geraldine Magennis-Clarke teaches literacy at undergraduate and post-graduate level at St Mary's UC, Belfast. She works closely with schools in NI to strengthen the current literacy research-practice base that is ever-evolving. She curates the Science of Reading, Northern Ireland (SoRNI) Facebook page for educators.*

*Philip Lavery is the Vice-Principal of Mount St. Michael's Primary School in Randalstown, Co. Antrim. He is also the school's literacy co-ordinator. He is very active in his local Moving Forward Together (MFT) educator network.*

The Role of Background Knowledge and Vocabulary in the development of Reading Comprehension (English)

**Dr Gene Mehigan**, Marino Institute of Education

The ultimate purpose of reading is to extract and construct meaning from text (Snow, 2002). Reading comprehension is core to academic progress, because it underpins content-area learning in all subjects.



Research in reading over the last four decades has emphasised the importance of background knowledge as a significant contributor to the ability of students to comprehend text (Stahl & Jacobson, 1986; Rumelhart, 2017; Shanahan, 2018; Cervetti & Wright, 2020). Research on the effects of vocabulary instruction on reading comprehension have also indicated that knowledge on vocabulary is also one of the best predictors of reading ability and the capability to obtain new details from texts (Cervetti et al., 2015; Wright & Cervetti, 2017; Hiebert, 2019).

This paper looks at the role played by background knowledge and vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension for primary school children, and the implications this has for instruction.

**Dr Gene Mehigan** is Vice President for Education and Strategic Development at Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. He has been a primary school teacher, a literacy specialist, an educational consultant, and a teacher educator over the past four decades. His research interests are in early literacy development, teacher education, and struggling readers, particularly among children living in disadvantaged settings. Gene is a member of a wide range of academic, professional and administrative committees at a regional and national level. He has worked in The Gambia as a Government advisor to the Department of State for Education on the development of a sector wide approach for the reform of literacy education and serves as a board member and consultant for several education and policy organisations. He is past President of both the Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI) the Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA) and is a former chair of the Standing Committee of Heads of Education and Teacher Unions.

### Cracking the Code: The Use of Decodable Texts in Early Reading Instruction (English) **Dr Jennifer O'Sullivan, Marino Institute of Education**

Decodable texts play an important role in early reading instruction, providing young children with the opportunity to practice and develop foundational reading skills. These texts are designed to align with phonics instruction, ensuring that words can be decoded using the letter-sound correspondences children have learned. This alignment facilitates the development of decoding skills, essential for fluent reading and comprehension (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). Decodable texts have also been shown to boost confidence and motivation in young readers. Successfully decoding words gives children a sense of accomplishment, increasing their self-efficacy and fostering a positive attitude toward reading (Stuart, 1999). This confidence-building is particularly important in the early stages of reading development. However, there are also limitations associated with the use of decodable texts due to their textual simplicity and lack of complexity in relation to language development (Adams, 2009).

This workshop will provide an in-depth exploration of decodable texts, examining their definition and the research supporting their use in the classroom. We will discuss decodable texts as part of a continuum and identify the necessary skills children need to read continuous text featured in these books. The workshop will present a comprehensive framework for incorporating decodable texts into classroom instruction while also emphasising the importance of including more sophisticated texts to enhance children's language development. This interactive workshop will feature hands-on, practical activities designed to support early readers in developing essential reading skills, thereby laying a solid foundation for future reading success.

**Dr Jen O'Sullivan** is a lecturer in literacy education in Marino Institute of Education. She is the author of *A Sound Beginning for Reading* and co-author of the *Sounds Like Phonics* programme. She is an executive committee member and past-president of The Literacy Association of Ireland. She is a research fellow in the TCD School of Education and, in 2022, was the recipient of a Fulbright Scholarship Award.

### Anaesthetic to aesthetic: Poetry, picturebooks, and the creative practitioner (English)

**Emma Farragher, Dublin City University**  
**Amy McLoughlin, Ashbourne Community School**  
**Dr Jane O'Hanlon, Poetry Ireland**

Rooted in aesthetic learning theory, this workshop is inspired by our masters' research projects, which sought to ascertain the modality and effectiveness of arts-based literacy approaches. This workshop seeks to equip participants with research proven pedagogies that have emerged in our classrooms at primary, secondary and third level since conducting our research. We will demonstrate how the synergistic relationship between poetry and picture books can contribute to the oral language, and writing development of our students (Stevens, 2002; Ruanlebutr, 2016), whilst placing a particular emphasis on the opportunity for 'profound' learning to occur (Dewey, 1934; Uhrmacher, 2009). A clear overlap in our findings supports our view that learner motivation and engagement are fundamental to laying the foundation for future literacy success.



Reflective of the changes in the new Primary Curriculum, as well as Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033 (DOE, 2024), we believe that the future of literacy success lies in placing greater emphasis on the bridges between primary, post-primary, and third level education. We aim to emphasise that the use of picturebooks and poetry is not about isolated curriculum activities, rather, a new culture of schooling (Eisner, 2004). We will showcase how each of the classroom activities we reference can be adapted for students in all educational settings. We will demonstrate how our arts-based approaches to utilising poetry and picturebooks in the classroom naturally align with the curricula of these contexts, and how Dewey's 'Art as Experience' is as relevant, if not more so, today, in developing empathetic, critical thinkers for the future.

**Emma Farragher** is a primary teacher and graduate of the Masters in Literacy Professional Practice (MEdLPP) programme at DCU Institute of Education where she currently works as a teacher fellow. Emma is particularly interested in creative literacy practices and picturebook pedagogy.

**Amy McLoughlin** has taught post-primary English, SPHE and Religion for the past nine years. She graduated with a Masters in Literacy Professional Practice with Dublin City University in 2022, which inspired her advocacy for arts-based learning.

**Dr Jane O'Hanlon** is the Head of Education with Poetry Ireland/Éigse Éireann. In her work Jane has always sought to create opportunities for access and participation, in and to, education and culture, for young people, children and adults.

### Leading Literacy Success at Post-Primary Level: Insights for Teachers and Teacher Education (English)

**Dr Patrick Burke**, Dublin City University

**Dr Emily Barnes**, Trinity College Dublin

**Art Ó Neachtain**, University of Galway

**Dr Aileen Cassidy**, Dublin City University

This symposium will examine post-primary literacy from a number of perspectives.

Dr Patrick Burke will examine qualitative (n=30) and quantitative (n=455) data from a cross-sectoral study of primary and post-primary teachers on the literacy perceptions, policy and practice. It will highlight perceived disjunctures in the transition from primary to post-primary school, as well as teachers' disciplinary literacy practices (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Key implications for the enactment of the successor Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2024) will be explored.

Dr Emily Barnes will discuss the MDLI-G post-primary literacy screener, developed by NEPS in collaboration with Irish literacy researchers and currently being standardised by the ERC. The paper explores the potential use of MDLI-G data to guide targeted planning for literacy support, based on the specific needs of the school. It also examines alignment with Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033 and An Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta 2017-2022.

Dr Aileen Cassidy will examine the impact of culturally responsive classrooms to motivate reluctant readers and improving literacy levels in a case study school within a broader study of improving adolescent literacy in DEIS schools. Pierre Bourdieu's work seeks to make public the processes that consolidate divisions in society. Those pupils with habitus which most resembles schools, and hence values through which the school seeks to work, gain the most (Bourdieu, 1973). Reading performance, according to PISA 2022, in DEIS schools is still a serious matter of concern. This paper explores a whole school approach to literacy improvement at second level.

Art Ó Neachtain, will explore post-primary literacy in Ireland within the context of the newly published Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Literacy Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2024). The paper will reflect on the successes and challenges of the previous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2011), while looking to the next decade and examining the role the new strategy will play in the effective development of literacy at post primary level. Implications for pre-service and in-service teachers in the context of the new strategy will also be explored.

**Dr Patrick Burke** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education at Dublin City University Institute of Education. He is the incoming president of the Literacy Association of Ireland. Patrick also serves as chairperson of the NCCA Primary Language Development Group. His teaching and scholarly work has been recognised by several organisations including the American Educational Research Association and the International Literacy Association.

**Dr Emily Barnes** is Assistant Professor in Language Education in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. She is the co-ordinator of the M.Oid. in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Education and a member of LUMIERE Research Group.

**Dr Aideen Cassidy** is Assistant Professor in the Institute of Education DCU in the school of Policy and Practice and director of professional placement. She is a co-investigator of the SCIREARLY Ireland team as a member of DCU EQI, into successful measures that reduce early school leaving and underachievement. Her research interests are primarily within the area of educational disadvantage, interventions to improve early school leaving and improve the life chances of those impacted by poverty, teacher training and literacy. She was national co-ordinator of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), a programme to support the curriculum delivery to students at risk of early school leaving and working with over 200 DEIS schools nationwide. She was a member of the national PISA committee and chaired the Department of Education and Skills National DEIS Committee from 2000 to 2011. She was principal of a DEIS school for eleven years before joining DCU.

**Art Ó Neachtain** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Education at the University of Galway. He lectures in literacy and numeracy education on undergraduate and postgraduate post-primary teacher training programmes. He also teaches on the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL). His research interests are in the areas of reading instruction, teacher education and educational leadership. He was a primary school teacher for over ten years in Galway before joining the PDST Literacy team, where he was seconded for a number of years. He joined the University of Galway in 2021.

### Teaching literacy skills in the heritage language at Polish complementary schools in Ireland (English)

**Dr Agnieszka Pedrak, Trinity College Dublin**

Since thousands of Polish families settled in Ireland after opening the job market in 2004, many of them have encountered difficulty sustaining and enhancing their children's oral and literacy skills in the Polish language, with little to no support outside the home environment (Connaughton-Crean & Ó Duibhir, 2017; Pedrak, 2024). In response to this challenge, numerous Polish complementary schools, also known as 'Saturday schools' or 'supplementary schools', have been established in Ireland since 2005 as grassroots initiatives. These schools provide children from a Polish migrant background with the opportunity to develop literacy in their heritage language (HL) across all educational levels, from preschool to secondary school, and to prepare for taking Polish as their Leaving Cert subject in Ireland (Pedrak, 2024). Although research on complementary schools in Ireland is limited, recent studies suggest that reinforcing children's literacy skills in the HL remains one of the main reasons to enrol migrant children in complementary education (Connaughton-Crean & Ó Duibhir, 2017; Pedrak, 2024).

This paper takes an ecological approach (Schwartz, 2024) to look at the pedagogical methods of teachers at Polish supplementary schools in Ireland who go beyond the mere delivery of the curriculum. It draws on data collected in 2021 through an online questionnaire from 10 principals of Polish schools and 34 semi-structured interviews with Polish migrant students, parents, and teachers involved in Polish complementary education in Ireland. The findings show how teachers at Polish schools adapt their teaching strategies to help Polish migrant children in Ireland develop their literacy skills in the HL while often striving to cater to the varying literacy levels among migrant pupils of the same age group.

**Dr Agnieszka Pedrak** recently completed a PhD project at the School of Linguistic, Speech, and Communication Sciences at Trinity College Dublin. This research examined the influence of Polish complementary schooling on heritage language maintenance and identity negotiation in Polish migrant children in Ireland.

### Promoting plurilingualism through the teaching of Irish in English-medium primary schools (Bilingual)

**Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney & Dr Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin,**  
 Dublin City University

This paper will report on a research project conducted by SEALBÚ Research Centre in Dublin City University (funded by COGG) in the 2023-24 school year. The project focused on the explicit inductive





approach to the teaching of Irish grammar in English-medium primary school in 4-6th class where the majority of pupils were EAL learners (N=5). This approach enables pupils to discover Irish grammar rules and to compare them to language structures in other languages. While a plurilingual approach to language learning is emphasised in the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019), there is a dearth of practical research in this area. This project sought to investigate both teachers and pupils' experiences of the approach. The teachers participated in professional development coaching in cluster groups in their schools and taught Irish grammar lessons using the approach over a period of six-weeks. This presentation will focus on the children's experiences of the approach that was gathered in post-intervention focus groups as part of the study.

**Dr Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin** is a former Irish-medium primary teacher and she has a wide range of experience of teaching Irish to various age groups. She is interested in all aspects of teaching Irish and teaching through Irish. She is currently an Associate Professor at Dublin City University.

**Dr Tara Concannon-Gibney** lectures in the area of literacy. A former primary school teacher, she has worked with pre-service and in-service teachers in Ireland and in New York for two decades. Tara is interested in the language and literacy education of pupils who speak English as an additional language. She is currently an Assistant Professor at Dublin City University.

### Five Key Principles for Transitioning to Plurilingual Approaches in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms: A Survey of Teacher Experiences in an Urban Co. Meath Primary School (English)

**Teresa Wilson**, St Mary's University College,

This project focused on teachers' experience of the transition to plurilingual approaches in a linguistically diverse primary school in Co. Meath. The views and experience of the participant teachers is noteworthy as plurilingualism plays a key feature in the Primary Language Curriculum- including Modern Foreign Languages draft (Department of Education, 2024). As part of a plurilingual approach, children are encouraged to use their entire linguistic repertoire (Council of Europe, 2022). This can include the use of children's home languages alongside English and Irish. Five key principles for making the transition to plurilingual approaches arose from a review of the literature.

The data collection process had three main components. Firstly, a baseline survey gathered teachers' initial perceptions and understanding of plurilingualism (n=26). Secondly, participant teachers engaged in an intervention entitled 'A Plurilingual Approach to Picture Talk'. Thirdly, a post-intervention survey (n=16) and focus group (n=6) established teachers' experience of the transition to plurilingual approaches. Advantages and obstacles of the transition were key features of both the post-intervention survey and focus group. Advice for colleagues considering the transition and implications for future practice were central to the discussion of the focus group session.

**Teresa Wilson** is a primary school teacher, currently seconded to the European School of Bergen in the Netherlands. She recently concluded her M.Ed studies at St Mary's University College, Belfast. Her research interests include language learning in linguistically diverse classrooms and using picture books for critical thinking.

### AdAPptive - an Erasmus+ project for incorporating digital readings apps into literacy programmes at primary school (English)

**Dr Monica Ward & Dr Eamonn McCauley**, Dublin City University

AdAPptive is a DCU-led Erasmus+ funded Cooperation Partnership operating across 16 schools in four EU countries (Ireland, Belgium, Czechia, Netherlands, 2002-2025). Its emphasis is on implementation and practice and focuses on exploring how Communities of Practice (CoP) can be used to help teachers incorporate digital reading apps effectively into the literacy programmes of primary school learners who struggle to acquire basic reading skills.

A key project objective is to explore how schools try to incorporate a digital reading app into its literacy instruction programmes, and how it is supported in this task by its membership of a CoP. It hopes to shed light on how teachers upskilled themselves, how learners improved their engagement and competence in reading (if at all), how teachers' attitudes and experience of teaching reading develop during the life of the project, and what learning can be carried forward into app development and teachers preparation and continuing development.



Emerging themes include the fact that teachers find the CoP helpful and engaging, they are under severe time pressure, they are struggling with the effects of the current teacher shortage/other workload issues, they want to learn more from each other, and they are willing to put extra effort into support their students.

Our research suggests that digital apps lead to greater motivation with increased levels of excitement, application and attention. Also, learners appreciate being given greater autonomy around reading using digitally mediated reading tasks.

The paper will allow presenters to give an overview of the AdAPptive project, its emergent findings and open up a discussion with stakeholders on how best to support and affect the effective and sustained incorporation of digital reading apps into the reading instruction. Participants will be invited to share their experiences, thoughts and suggestions.

**Dr Monica Ward** is based in the School of Computing, Dublin City University and is an expert on Computer Assisted Language Learning, including at primary level.

**Dr Eamonn McCauley** is based in the School of Inclusive and Special Education, Institute of Education, Dublin City University. His interests include theory, policy, practices and experiences of Inclusive Education and Inclusive Teaching and Learning. He is also interested in using ICT to support and include diverse learners (with specific emphasis on learners assessed with Dyslexia).

### From Awareness to Action: Enhancing Digital Literacy in Post-Primary Classrooms (English)

**Dr Rachel Lenihan, Dr Carmel Hinchion & Prof. Marie Parker-Jenkins,**  
University of Limerick

The recently published 'Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood-Implementation Plan to 2028' (Government of Ireland, 2024) has brought a renewed and welcome focus on digital literacy. It emphasises how all educators need to take actions that 'empower' students to 'access, explore, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, create, and disseminate information safely and appropriately through digital technologies' (Government of Ireland 2024, p. 14). However, Digital Literacy as a concept is complex and contested, often regarded as 'too broad and confused' (Pangrazio et al. 2020).

This paper presents some findings from a wider doctoral research study which explored post-primary teachers' understandings of literacy as a concept, as a practice and as a policy. It was conducted with post-primary teachers across four schools (n=26) during the implementation stage of the previous national literacy policy, 'Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life' (DES 2011). While most participants expressed an awareness of the centrality of digital technologies in students' lives, the study reveals diverse, sometimes divergent, conceptualisations of (digital) literacy among participants, and how prevailing traditional understandings of literacy can position technology as a competing influence or indeed, as an obstacle, to literacy development.

Consequently, this paper raises some questions; To what extent are post-primary teachers equipped to address the digital literacy needs of their students? How can we embed digital practices in the school lives of young people? This paper argues that, as with the successful implementation of any policy, there may need to be significant time invested in revisiting and reflecting on teachers' beliefs about digital literacy at a conceptual level, as well as equipping teachers with the skills needed, before there can be any meaningful change in the learning experiences of our young people regarding digital literacy development.

**Dr Rachel Lenihan** is a former post-primary teacher of English and history, and worked as an English Advisor and Associate with Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) before joining the School of Education at University of Limerick as Assistant Professor in Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Her doctoral study, completed in 2019, examines teachers' understandings of literacy in the post-primary setting. Other areas of interest include education policy, English pedagogy, assessment, Global Citizenship Education and reflective practice.

### Meaningful Literacy Experiences (English)

**Dr Michael Rafferty,** Southern Connecticut State University and Derby Public Schools





Whether you're delving into the complexities of artificial intelligence or exploring the wonders of zoology, this workshop will equip you with the tools and techniques to foster meaningful literacy learning in every subject because everything is a text. This paper will address:

**Dynamic Vocabulary Development:** Discover innovative methods to introduce and reinforce key, powerful vocabulary in a way that captivates and retains students' interest. Learn how to create word-rich environments that promote curiosity and deepen understanding across all subjects.

**Comprehension Mastery:** Unlock the secrets to enhancing students' reading comprehension with strategies that go beyond the basics.

**Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** Equip your students with essential critical thinking skills through engaging activities designed to challenge their minds. Explore techniques to stimulate inquiry, encourage debate, and foster a classroom culture of thoughtful exploration.

**Interactive Engagement Techniques:** Transform your teaching with cutting-edge interactive tools and methods. Learn how to seamlessly integrate technology, hands-on activities, and collaborative projects that make learning an immersive and dynamic experience.

Empower your students to become confident, competent, and curious learners who can tackle any subject with a solid foundation in literacy.

**Dr Michael Rafferty** is the Director of Teaching and Learning in Derby, Connecticut. He is the author of *30 Big Ideas in Small Groups* by Corwin as well as the *City Mice* series by Pioneer Valley Books. He has worked as a classroom teacher, a reading teacher, a reading consultant, and a curriculum leader for language arts. He is also a Graduate Instructor at Southern Connecticut State University, leading courses in reading assessment, intervention and literacy leadership.



## CONCURRENT SESSION 2 - ABSTRACTS

Más maith is mithid. Oideolaíocht taighdebhunaithe ar an bhfeasacht fhóinéimeach i bhforbairt na mbunscileanna luath-litearthachta Gaeilge. Staidéar meastóireachta ar an gclár Litriú Beacht. / Research-based pedagogy on the effects of phonemic awareness in boosting early foundational Irish literacy skills. An evaluative study of the program Litriú Beacht. (Bilingual)

**Úna Ní Fhlatharta, Mary Immaculate College**

Léiríonn taighde an coibhneas cúisíoch idir feasacht fhóinéimeach (FF) agus forbairt na litearthachta (Cunningham, 1990; National Reading and National Institute of Child Health and Human, 2000; Moats, 2010; Adams et al., 1998; Ehri, 2005) ina mbíonn tionchar dearfach ag FF ar rath na litearthachta. Thairis sin, is áis iontaofa í an FF chun cumas léitheoireachta a thuar (Cunningham, 1990; Lane et al., 2009).

Léiríonn taighde in Éirinn (Stenson & Hickey 2014; Ní Chiaruain 2007; Parsons & Liddy 2009) nach bhfuil múinteoirí ag freastail ar scileanna díchódaithe na Gaeilge a mhúineadh i nGaelscoileanna nó i scoileanna a mhúineann trí Bhéarla agus go bhfuil múinteoirí ag brath ar mhodh na bhfocal iomlán i sealbhú litearthacht na Gaeilge.

Tá an litríocht lom sa ghort ar chur chuige a bhaineann feidhm as an FF trí Ghaeilge. Cé go bhfuil tuairim ann (Harris & Ó Duibhir, 2011) gur féidir scileanna litearthacht an Bhéarla a thraschur go Gaeilge, ceistíonn Barnes, Ní Chiaráin agus Casaide (2024), ar a dtaighde ar FF dátheangach in Éirinn, éifeachtúlacht traschur scile na FF agus molann siad gur cheart go mbeadh an t-oideachas FF dírithe ar na contráthachtaí fóinéime atá mar bhunús ar thuiscint ar ortagrafaíocht na teanga.

Mar chuid den taighde seo, cuireadh idirghabháil sé seachtaine ar siúl sna luathbhlianta i SLG agus SMB, a dhírigh ar an FF agus fónaic a mhúineadh go comhuaineach mar mhaide droma na bun luath-litearthachta. Bailíodh sonraí ó cheistneoirí, ó dhialainn mhacnaimh, ó hagallaimh leath-struchtúrtha agus ó leagan Gaeilge den mheasúnú Dibels 8, a tugadh roimh agus tar éis na hidirghabhála. Léirigh torthaí an taighde go raibh méadú suntasach i dtomhais éifeachtacha FF, léimh agus litrithe formhór na bpáistí. In ainneoin seo, mura n-aithníonn pobal tras-earnála na bunscoile go bhfuil gá go bhforbrófar na bunscileanna luath-litearthachta Gaeilge, is beag tairbhe a bheidh le baint as.

*Is múinteoir Gaelscoile í Úna Ní Fhlatharta le ceithre bliana déag anuas agus taithi aici mar mhúinteoir Oideachas Speisialta agus mar mhúinteoir ranga. Tá an taighde seo á chomhlíonadh aici mar chuid den Máistreacht san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta, i gColáiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach.*

**Word of Mouth: The Role of Articulatory Gestures and Mouth Photographs in Early Literacy Instruction (English)**

**Deirdre O'Toole, Mary Immaculate College**

Children do not come to school with a conscious awareness of the internal structure of words; in fact, research has shown that it is particularly difficult for them to segment words into phonemes or individual speech sounds (Liberman et al. 1989; Hart Paulson 2004). Phonemic awareness is necessary to understand the alphabetic principle and become a skilled reader and writer (Seidenberg 2017).

In the 1960s, Charles and Patricia Lindamood found that there was a correlation between poor auditory perception and reading difficulties in children. They created an intervention that focused instruction on the internal structure of words, articulatory gestures and pictures of mouths producing phonemes (Lindamood and Lindamood 1970; Lindamood and Lindamood 1975). Since the 1970s, dozens of studies have examined the effectiveness of articulatory training and the use of mouth photographs in phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, however, results have been mixed.

This paper will present important findings and insights from a systematic review of the literature. Drawing on the findings, the presentation will highlight practical and policy considerations for the use of articulatory training and mouth photographs in phonemic awareness and phonics instruction in primary classroom and special education settings.



**Deirdre O'Toole** is a primary teacher currently studying for a PhD in Literacy Education at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. She has a keen interest in literacy acquisition and is passionate about professional development for teachers.

### Insights from Early Literacy Screenings (English)

#### **Dr Colm O'Toole & Aima Molati, ALPACA Assessment**

In May 2024, ALPACA conducted a comprehensive early literacy screening, assessing phonemic awareness and letter knowledge among 20% of Ireland's Junior Infants population. This initiative aimed to gather substantial data on early literacy skills, providing a comparative analysis across various demographics and educational settings. Our study encompassed a diverse range of schools, including those classified under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) program and non-DEIS institutions, offering a nuanced perspective on the state of early literacy in Ireland.

The screening revealed significant insights into the disparities and commonalities in literacy skills among Junior Infants. In-class comparisons highlighted variations in phonemic awareness and letter knowledge proficiency, indicating the influence of classroom dynamics and instructional approaches. Additionally, inter-county comparisons provided a broader view of regional differences, uncovering patterns that suggest varying levels of early literacy support and resources across counties.

A focal point of our study was the comparison between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. The data indicated notable differences in early literacy outcomes, reflecting the impact of socio-economic factors on literacy development. Our findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions and resource allocation to bridge the literacy gap between these educational settings.

Furthermore, we piloted a dyslexia screener in a select number of schools, offering preliminary insights into the prevalence and identification of dyslexia at an early age. This small-scale study provided valuable data on early indicators of dyslexia, highlighting the need for early detection and support mechanisms to address learning difficulties effectively.

The results of our screenings will be presented, offering a comprehensive overview of early literacy skills among Irish Junior Infants. We will discuss the implications of our findings for educational policy, early intervention strategies, and future research directions. Our presentation aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on enhancing early literacy development and ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all children in Ireland.

**Dr Colm Fallon** is the Chief Science Officer at ALPACA, dedicated to leveraging robust scientific methodologies and data insights to enhance early literacy development.

**Aima Molati** is a self-motivated PhD student specialising in the psychology of education, holding a BSc degree in Psychology with a minor in Law. Her research at ALPACA focuses on early literacy, aiming to understand and address educational disparities through evidence-based approaches.

### Bridging the Research-Practice Gap: Transfer of Skills in Irish Primary Schools (Bilingual)

#### **Shane Leonard & Maria Tully, Oide**

This bilingual workshop explores the Transfer of Skills in primary classrooms (NCCA, 2019), focusing on bridging the gap between educational research and classroom practice. Despite substantial research advocating for Transfer of Skills to support second language learning and language learning more generally (Cummins, 2021), the introduction of this as part of the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile represents a shift in pedagogical practice for Irish Primary School Teachers. As a result, there are potentially misconceptions around how this may be enacted to support meaningful language learning. In this workshop, participants will briefly explore the empirical literature to support the use of Transfer of Skills as well as the effective conditions necessary for supporting this pedagogical approach (Baker, 2011; Dressler & Kamil, 2006). Participants will engage in practical strategies to create the conducive conditions for this to take place particularly in relation to the strands of Reading/Léitheoireacht and Writing/Scribhneoireacht. The workshop aims to deepen delegates understanding of the integrated nature of language learning, emphasising how skill transfer across languages, can be an effective way of supporting language learning (O'Duibhir & Cummins, 2012). Benefits of this include activating children's awareness of languages, develop their understanding of how languages work, heighten children's sensitivity to how they learn languages as well as fostering curiosity about all languages (NCCA, 2019). Through collaborative discussions, delegates will identify barriers to this pedagogy and develop actionable solutions. Following this workshop, participants will be better equipped to create a cohesive and dynamic learning environment that



bridges this research-practice gap. This workshop is ideal for primary educators, curriculum developers, and educational researchers dedicated to advancing pedagogical effectiveness through the practical application of research findings.

**Shane Leonard** is a primary school teacher, currently seconded to Oide, the support service for teachers. He is the Senior Leader for the Primary Language Curriculum Team. He has a strong interest in Language and Literacy with a strong interest in language and literacy and is currently a 3rd year PhD student in DCU.

**Maria Tully** is a Deputy Principal of Scoil Phádraig N.S in Clane, Co. Kildare. She is currently on secondment to Oide, working with schools to implement and enact the Primary Language Curriculum. She has a strong research interest and has completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and is currently pursuing a Masters in Educational Leadership at Maynooth University.

### Structured Literacy in the Mainstream Classroom: Practical Strategies for Inclusive, Multicomponent Literacy Teaching (English)

**Christina Hannify, Dr Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray & Dr Paula Lehane,**  
Dublin City University

Over the past five decades, interdisciplinary research associated with the science of reading has provided a wealth of evidence informing how we can most effectively assess and teach reading and writing for all students, including those with reading difficulties (The Reading League, 2022). Furthermore, there is a growing consensus that a “structured literacy” approach, commonly advocated for dyslexic learners, is actually beneficial for all learners (International Dyslexia Association, 2024). However, the effective implementation of this systematic, cumulative, explicit and diagnostic approach to literacy teaching in mainstream classroom contexts can be challenging, particularly when other components of effective reading instruction (e.g. developing background knowledge) must also be considered. This workshop will illustrate how to apply a structured approach to literacy teaching in a mainstream primary classroom for learners in a senior class (3rd-6th class). Using a class novel as a stimulus, the presenters will demonstrate how to develop a unit of work that addresses all learners’ literacy needs in accordance with the different elements of a structured approach to literacy e.g. syntax, vocabulary. The workshop will align with outcomes from the Primary Language Curriculum (2019), providing practical strategies for classroom assessment and effective differentiation. Participants will leave with practical recommendations for teaching as well as suggested resources to enhance literacy instruction for all students.

**Christina Hannify** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Inclusive and Special Education, Dublin City University, St. Patrick’s Campus. She previously worked as a primary school teacher, and, thereafter as an advisor for the National Council for Special Education. Her research interests include literacy intervention, inclusive education and teacher professional learning, with a particular focus on developing effective, engaging and inclusive practices to support students experiencing reading difficulties.

**Dr Sylwia Kazmierczak-Murray** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Inclusive and Special Education in the Institute of Education at Dublin City University. Sylwia is a CORU registered Speech and Language Therapist. Her teaching and research expertise is in the area of language acquisition and pedagogy, linguistic foundations of reading, dyslexia, interdisciplinarity and knowledge translation.

**Dr Paula Lehane** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Inclusive and Special Education in the Institute of Education at Dublin City University (DCU). She previously worked as a primary school teacher and was the Special Educational Needs (SEN) coordinator of a large urban primary school. She is currently the programme chair of the M.Ed in Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) in DCU and lectures on issues relating to dyslexia, assessment, inclusion and research methods.

### The Primary Language Curriculum: Considering Curriculum Models and Implications for Enactment (English)

**Dr Conall Ó Breacháin,** Dublin City University

The Primary Language Curriculum was first published in 2015, heralded by its architects as ‘a significant landmark in the ongoing development of the curriculum for primary schools’ (DES, 2019b). The PLC marks a departure for Irish teachers in terms of curricular construction. The articulation of children’s learning in terms of ‘outcomes’ is a first for Irish education, as are the accompanying ‘progression continua’ which outline what ‘learning and development look like as [the children] move along the continuum towards achieving the learning outcomes’ (DES, 2015b). This new curricular concern with ‘output-regulation’



(Wilmaid Kuiper et al., 2013; Nienke Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012) deviates somewhat from the blue-print of its predecessor, the learning in which was conceptualised in terms of a multitude of aims and objectives.

The curriculum's introduction suffered significant teething problems. The extent of the discontent and challenge experienced by teachers in the face of the reform resulted in a veritable redraft and relaunch of the curriculum in September of 2019, nearly 4 years after the original publication of the curriculum document. Despite the magnitude of the reform effort since its initial development in 2015, there has been little attempt to explore early enactment of the curriculum, or indeed to analyse the policy document from a 'curriculum-theory' perspective. The latter will mark this paper's primary contribution. Using Kelly's (2009) seminal work in analysing curriculum planning models, this paper will engage in a critique of the policy document, addressing the fundamental question, what type of curriculum is the Primary Language Curriculum? After locating the new curriculum using Kelly's (ibid.) conceptual framework, the paper will consider implications for meso (whole-school) and micro (classroom) level policy actors. The paper will pose a number of questions for reflection directed at stakeholders across the policy-practice spectrum.

**Dr Conall Ó Breacháin** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education. He currently lectures in the area of literacy. Prior to joining DCU in early 2019, Conall was the Deputy National Director of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST, now Oide). He has spent over 15 years working in teacher professional development with a particular focus on supporting teachers and school leaders in the areas of language, literacy and assessment. Conall completed his PhD under the tutelage of Professor Ciarán Sugrue (UCD), exploring the phenomenon of teacher agency for language curriculum enactment. Conall began his teaching career in 2002, in a primary school in north county Dublin.

**Literacy instruction during a unique moment in educational history: Insights from teachers in Ireland using PIRLS 2021 data (English)**

**Sarah McAteer, Dr Emer Delaney, Dr Vasiliki Pitsia, Educational Research Centre**

Ireland has consistently maintained its status as one of the top-performing countries in reading literacy across international large-scale assessments. Among other initiatives, the introduction of the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in 2011, followed by its interim review in 2017, likely influenced classroom practices and contributed to pupils' literacy development. However, the embedding of the new Primary Language Curriculum, introduced for all grade levels in 2019, was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated nationwide school closures and a shift to remote learning for much of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 school years. This study examines how teachers ensured continued literacy development as pupils returned to in-person learning and the classroom environment following these prolonged disruptions.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) provides a unique, nationally representative snapshot of Fifth Class pupils in Ireland in autumn 2021, offering insights into the period of readjustment experienced by both teachers and pupils following school closures. Data from the PIRLS Teacher Questionnaires, completed by both Fourth and Fifth Class teachers, were analysed, focusing on the implementation of specific teaching strategies, activities, and tasks during reading lessons in the classroom. The analysis indicated that classroom practices remained relatively consistent with previous PIRLS cycles, suggesting stability in instructional approaches despite the disruptive circumstances. Some notable changes were observed in how teachers encouraged pupils to discuss their readings and tailored lesson materials to pupils' interests. The presentation will include a discussion of the findings and their potential implications for educational policy and practice in Ireland.

**Sarah McAteer** is Research Associate at the Educational Research Centre. Sarah works as Data Manager for the PIRLS 2026 assessment. This is an international study that assesses the reading achievement of pupils in Fourth grade and is conducted in Ireland every five years.

**Dr Emer Delaney** is a Research Fellow at the Educational Research Centre with responsibility for PIRLS 2021, is a member of the Reading Development Group for PIRLS 2026, and oversees a number of aspects of the ERC's test development programme. Emer is also involved in the New Drumcondra Primary Reading Tests (2018) and the ERC's Drumcondra Online Testing System (DOTS) and is an associate editor of the Irish Journal of Education.

**Dr Vasiliki Pitsia** is a Research Associate at the ERC, specialising in quantitative research methodology and statistical analysis techniques. She is involved in national and international large-scale assessments, including the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER). Additionally, she is an





Associate Editor of the *Irish Journal of Education* and contributes to the international FLIP+ IRT and Psychometrics working group.

## Examining The Role of Primary Literacy Education in Post-Primary Educational Trajectories (English)

**Aoife Joy Keogh, University College Dublin**

This paper examines the role played by students' experiences and attainment in the area of literacy education in primary school within post-primary academic achievement, as has been presented in the research conducted in this area. Research indicates that primary literacy education is a strong determinant of students' academic success in post-primary school (Johnson et al., 2021; Smyth, 2017). The acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills in primary school provides the foundation for students' later engagement with the post-primary school curriculum (Smyth, 2017), and both school-level and student-level demographic characteristics contribute to this (Johnson et al., 2021; Allensworth, 2014; Balfanz, 2009; Balfanz et al., 2007).

This study consists of a scoping narrative review which builds on a systematic review previously conducted by the author (Keogh & McGillicuddy, 2024) to include a broader range of secondary data sources which offer insight into students' educational trajectories throughout primary and post-primary level in relation to literacy. Four key themes emerged within the findings of the study: (i) literacy skill development as a multistage process, (ii) transitions and school structures, (iii) role of school factors in shaping educational trajectories, and (iv) role of external factors in shaping educational trajectories.

The paper discusses the potential influence of students' primary literacy education on their progression to higher education. The paper highlights the significance of the findings in the Irish context, emphasising the importance of policy development focusing on the education system as a whole and supporting young people with their transition between sectors. The findings suggest that researching and adopting strategies to strengthen transitions throughout the entire education system will support the objectives of national policy relating to education across the continuum and equity of access policies to be effectively monitored, achieved, and reviewed.

**Aoife Joy Keogh** is a PhD candidate in UCD School of Education, whose research is funded by an Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Scholarship. Her research interests include literacy education, educational disadvantage and policy, and access to higher education. Her professional experience spans a wide variety of contexts, including social care, community-based work, and teaching primary and post-primary school students in urban communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Aoife is actively involved in the work of the Finglas Community Lifelong Learning Hub, established by DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre with the Dublin Northwest Partnership to promote diversity within the teaching profession.

## Cur chuige roinne agus uile-scoile don teagasc ábharbhunaithe (Gaeilge)

**Breandán Mac Gearailt, Ollscoil na Gaillimhe**

Aithnítear sa litríocht go hidirnáisiúnta nach n-éiríonn le daltaí an tumoideachais inniúlacht ard a bhaint amach sa sprioctheanga. Glactear leis feasta go bhfuil dúshlán ar leith ann don mhúinteoir ábhar, an teagasc teanga (agus litearthachta) a nascadh le teagasc an ábhair. Mar chuid de thionscnamh taighde reatha tá uirlis oideolaíoch deartha don rang ábharbhunaithe iar-bhunscoile. Cumasaíonn an uirlis múinteoirí tumoideachais iar-bhunscoile le múineadh ábhair agus múineadh teanga/litearthachta a chomhtháthú. Diríonn an uirlis ar chleachtas agus straitéisí a bhaineann le Scaffáil, Ionchur Teanga, Aiscur Teanga agus Aiseolas (SIOF an Bhéarla). Déanann SIOF iarracht an teoiric agus an taighde a nascadh leis an gcleachtas óir óir go bhfuil sé préamhaithe i sa litríocht ach forbartha is cóirithe bunaithe ar eispéiris múinteoirí atá ag obair i ngort an tumoideachais in Éirinn. Pléifidh an páipéar gnéithe den uirlis a éascóidh pleanáil is comobriú idir múinteoirí ag leibhéal na ranna ábhar agus ag leibhéal na scoile uile. Cuireann an uirlis seo le bonn eolais na múinteoirí agus forbróidh sí a gcumas pleanála mar aon le comhráití próifisiúnta agus athmhachnamh a spreagadh.

Is Léachtóir le hOideachas in Ollscoil na Gaillimhe é **Breandán Mac Gearailt**. Chaith sé 16 bliain mar mhúinteoir tumoideachais roimhe sin. Tá sé ag tabhairt faoi dhochtúireacht sa tumoideachas.

## Measúnú agus Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iar-bhunscoil – Gaeilge (Gaeilge)

**Conall Ó Duibhir & Muireann Bergin, Foras Taighde ar Oideachas**

Is triail scagthástála litearthachta Gaeilge é Measúnú Diagnóisic Litearthachta d'Iarbhunscoileanna - Gaeilge (MDLI-G) atá á forbairt agus á caighdeánú i gcomhar leis an tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais (NEPS) agus an bhForas Taighde Oideachais (ERC). Measúnú litearthachta atá sa triail MDLI-G a dhéanann measúnú ar chúig réimse; litriú, léamhthuiscint, mearléitheoireacht, scríobh agus léamh focal. Léiríonn anailís





ar shonraí ó staidéar píolótach a cuireadh i gcrích sa bhliain 2023 ar scoláirí (n=609) in iar-bhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge go dtagann méadú suntasacha ar an meánghnóthachtáil trasna na réimsí trialach idir tús na Chéad Bhliana agus tús an Dara Bhliain. Léitítear éagsúlacht níos lú i ngnóthachtáil na rannpháirtithe de réir inscne agus athróga déimeagrafacha eile. Soláthraíonn an páipéar seo achoimre ar na príomhthorthaí gnóthachtála ón gclár píolótach, agus scrúdaítear na ceachtanna a foghlaimíodh ag gluaiseacht i dtreo chaighdeánú MDLI-G.

Measúnú Diagnóisic Litearthachta d'Iarbhunscoileanna - Gaeilge (MDLI-G) is an Irish-language literacy screening test being developed and standardised in a collaboration between the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and the Educational Research Centre (ERC). An assessment of literacy, MDLI-G assess five domains; spelling, reading comprehension, speed reading, writing and word reading. Analysis of data from a pilot study carried out in 2023 of students (n=609) in Irish-medium post-primary schools indicates significant increases in mean achievement across the test domains between the beginning of First Year and the beginning of Second Year. Gender and other demographic variables account for smaller variation in achievement among participants. This paper presents a summary of the key achievement findings from the pilot, while examining the lessons learned towards the standardisation of MDLI-G.

*Is comhlach taighde é **Conall Ó Duibhir** sa bhForas Taighde ar Oideachas (FTO). Tá sé mar bhainisteoir thionscadail do chaighdeánú Measúnú agus Diagnóisic Litearthachta don Iar-bhunscoil –Gaeilge (MDLI-G). Tá céimeanna máistir aige sna Daonachtaí Digiteacha (Linnaeus University) agus san Eolaíocht Inbhuanaitheacht (Stockholm Resilience Centre). D'oibrigh Conall ar PISA san FTO idir 2019 agus 2023.*

*Is cúntóir taighde í **Muireann Bergin** leis an bhForas Taighde ar Oideachas a oibríonn sa roinn Forbairt Trialach ar thrialacha luathlitearthachta agus luathuimhearthachta. Tá cúlra aici sa tSean- agus Mheán-Ghaeilge.*



## CONCURRENT SESSION 3 - ABSTRACTS

Developing a Community of Linguaphiles: Using morphology and etymology to foster word consciousness (English)

**Dr Treasa Bowe**, Carrigtwohill Community National School Cork

Word consciousness, one of the four key components of vocabulary instruction, can be effectively promoted through an intentional and systematic approach to morphology and etymology. Such an integrated and inclusive approach fosters student interest in the structure and origins of words, not just in English and Irish, but in other languages spoken within the community. Deepening student knowledge of the complex orthography of English, and its relationship to other languages and language systems is all the more pertinent with the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages in primary schools. This paper will explore how the history of English can be used as a framework to structure students' understanding of words, their morphological structure, spellings and meanings, and indeed as a stimulus to explore synonyms, thereby deepening understanding of vocabulary. Possibilities for student-led exploration of cognates and making comparisons between languages will be discussed, as will the opportunities for meaningful integration in other curricular areas. A gradual release of responsibility model will be outlined which enables active and engaged word exploration driven by student curiosity and knowledge.

*Dr Treasa Bowe is a primary teacher in Carrigtwohill Community National School, Co. Cork. Her interests lie in effective literacy instruction for senior classes meeting the needs of all learners.*

Introducing an EAL (English as an Additional Language) programme in primary school: leadership, relationship and literacy (English)

**Dr Claire Redmond**, Corpus Christi NS

Critical awareness of EAL and literacy research offers rich potential for children's literacy learning. This paper will present significant findings and insights from a systematic review of EAL literature, carried out to support an initial introduction of an EAL programme in a primary school. It will explore approaches to EAL in the context of the redeveloped primary school curriculum and the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019).

In Ireland, English language support in primary education seeks to empower students from many different communities to access the same educational opportunities as their English-speaking peers. It is envisaged that linguistic diversity and cultural heritage is valued while enabling students to become fully integrated members of the school and wider community (NCCA, 2019).

Internationally, research on EAL has documented multiple benefits for all learners and how learning English as an additional language goes beyond linguistic skills and fosters cultural competence. The studies also highlight potential barriers for enactment, including teacher knowledge and availability of appropriate professional learning and instructional resources. The level of fluency in English is relevant to educational achievement, but so potentially are gender, attendance patterns at school in the country of origin and parental education and literacy (Dongilla 2023, Brooks et al., 2023, Gonzalez, 2020).

Drawing on these findings, this paper will explore how a systematic and holistic approach to EAL in whole school planning improves the educational achievement and social integration of students through improved literacy and establishes a secure foundation for inclusion, effective learning outcomes and future success for the student in their learning.

*Dr Claire Redmond is a researcher and teacher of EAL and is very interested in leadership, whole-school planning and teaching of EAL in primary schools. She has previously worked with student teachers and pedagogical approaches that support EAL learners in accessing the curriculum. This paper is based on her research and involvement in the design and implementation of an initial EAL programme in a primary school.*

'Literacy' for whom and by whom?: Bringing Literacy to Life for Diverse Learners (English)

**Ciara Barry**, University College Cork

While working in a primary school in Ireland for the past decade that serves a marginalised population, the quest to improve literacy outcomes for pupils seemed like the impossible task. However, rather than viewing pupils who live in an area characterised by social and economic disadvantage through a deficit lens,



capitalising on their lived experiences and interests can serve as a catalyst for motivating and stimulating literacy instruction. Working with six target pupils in 5th class, aged between 10 and 11 years old, this paper will explore how implementing a 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al. 1992) and 'funds of identity' (Esteban-Guitart and Moll 2014) approach to literacy instruction can be transformative, as pupils begin to share deeply personal artefacts with the researcher who is afforded the privileged opportunity of peeping into the world of the child and exploring their lived experiences and authentic identities. Utilising these individually chosen artefacts to design literacy lessons is documented in this paper, along with the pedagogical challenges and implications for future practice.

**Ciara Barry** is the Deputy Principal of an Urban DEIS Band 1 Primary School in Cork City. She holds a B.Ed in Education and Psychology, an M.Ed in Educational Leadership & Management and a Postgraduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs. She is currently undertaking a PhD at University College Cork which focusses literacy attainment and practices to engage marginalised children in literacy instruction through a socio-cultural lens.

**A Collaborative Approach to Introducing CLIL to Learners and Teachers of Irish at Senior Primary: Teachers' Experiences of and Perspectives on Language Policy & Pedagogy in Practice at Local Level (Bilingual)**

**Dr Jane O'Toole, Ciara McGinty & Cillian Gregan,**  
*Scoil Chrónáin Senior National School*

The teaching and learning of Irish in English-medium primary schools presents as an ongoing concern in terms of learner proficiency, teacher proficiency, learner engagement and teaching approaches employed (Inspectorate, 2022). CLIL has been recommended as an approach to further engage learners of Irish at primary over recent decades (Department of Education, 2019; Harris & Ó Duibhir, 2012; Harris & Murtagh, 1999; ) and has more recently been identified as a key approach for the teaching and learning of all languages at secondary level (Department of Education, 2017; Department of Education, 2024).

Having initially launched a CLIL pilot in 2019, the Department of Education has continued to encourage primary schools to engage with CLIL through the provision of specific resources for schools to pilot at various class levels (Department of Education 2023; 2024). This presentation explores the journey of one senior school participating in the national CLIL pilot from the perspective of the team of participating volunteer teachers leading the project.

Spanning over the latter part of 2023-24 school year and early stages of the 2024-25 school year, the presentation traces two cycles of CLIL engagement which include insights into collaborative teacher preparation and team teaching, critical friendship, and resource and programme evaluation at teacher level. Reviewed in the context of the school's broader literacy and language remit, the potential of CLIL as an impetus for greater student engagement with Irish is also explored. Finally the collaborative, child-centred and reflective approach enacted by the teaching team is discussed in relation to potential capacity building and expansion of CLIL at school level.

**Dr. Jane O'Toole** is a teacher at St. Cronan's Senior National School with a special interest in language education at primary level. Jane coordinates Language and Literacy at Scoil Chrónáin including the school's engagement in the Say Yes to Languages (SYTL) initiative. Jane is also a coordinating member of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) and a member of the NCCA Primary Language Development Group. You can find more of Jane's research at <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jane-Otoole-3>

**Ciara McGinty** is a teacher at St. Cronan's Senior National School with a special interest in Gaeilge and supporting children with additional needs at primary level. Ciara specialised in Gaeilge at St. Mary's Belfast and recently completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Inclusive & Special Education. Ciara is a member of the school Literacy and Language Team, and a also a member of the newly-established school Gaelbhrtach committee.

**Cillian Gregan** is a teacher at Scoil Chrónáin Senior National School with a specialism in school leadership and leading learning. Cillian recently completed a Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership is currently undertaking his Master's in School Leadership at Maynooth University. Cillian had led various school initiatives such as GAA Hurling and the Amber Flag, and is a member of the newly established school Gaelbhrtach committee.



## Irish Language Framework for Children in Irish Medium Settings (Creat Teanga do Pháistí i Suíomhanna Lán-Ghaeilge) (Bilingual)

**Dr Thomas Rogan, St Mary's University College**

**Dr Seán Mac Corraidh, St Mary's University College**

**Mary Carabine, CCEA**

**Helen O'Donnell, St Mary's University College**

A structured framework in the form of a Continuum for Irish is urgently needed in the Irish-medium primary education sector. This research project aimed to identify linguistic standards in listening, understanding and talking, reading and writing in IM schools. A major part of the project has involved the collaborative development of a Language Framework with IM practitioners to build on the good practice that already exists in facilitating the teaching of the language and the achievement of targets. The Language Framework will reflect pupils' needs to engage with academic content and socially with one another.

The audience will be informed about the history of the project and the current stage of the research. They will be told what has been done to this point, what is happening currently and what will be done in the near future.

The research has been carried out in two parts. The first stage of the project was desk based and investigated international practices of development in the target language in immersion education settings which would inform the development of the language framework for Irish-medium primary schools. In the second stage, data was collected from literacy coordinators in the Irish-medium education sector who have years of experience on this subject. This was facilitated through conversation and workshops. They made professional observations on the children's current standards in the following language skills; listening, understanding, speaking, reading and writing from Year 1 to Year 7. This information has aided the creation of the language framework.

As part of the project, guidance will also be provided to Irish-medium primary schools to implement the language framework.

*Is léachtóir sinsearach i gColáiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire, Béal Feirste é an **Dr Seán Mac Corraidh** a bhfuil leabhair agus ailt foilsithe aige ar réimsí léann na Gaeilge agus léann an oideachais. Tá sé féin agus a chomhghleacáí Tomás Rogan i mbun taighde, i gcomhar le hoifigeach taighde lánaimseartha Helen O'Donnell agus le cleachtóirí a bhfuil cúraimí orthu i bhforbairt na litearthachta i mbunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge sa tuaisceart. Labhrófar ar an phráinn atá leis an tionscadal seo agus ar an tacaíocht a chuirfear ar fáil do mhúinteoirí nuair a bheas an creat i gceann a chéile mar is ceart.*

*Is oifigeach taighde i gColáiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire Béal Feirste í **Helen O'Donnell** atá ag obair ar thionscadal taighde le Creat Teanga a dhearadh le húsáid i mbunscoileanna Gaeilge i dTuaisceart na hÉireann. Tá cúlra sa dlí aici agus bhain sí céim amach ó Ollscoil Uladh in 2017 i LLB (Onóracha sa Dlí). Tá sí páiseanta faoin Ghaeilge agus faoin oideachas, agus i ndiaidh di bheith ag obair roinnt blianta i suíomhanna Gaelscolaíochta, ghnóthaigh sí MA ó Ollscoil Uladh san Aistriúchán, Ateangaireacht agus Scileanna Proifisiúnta Teanga in 2021. Chuir sí i gcrích a cáilíocht iarchéime sa mhúinteoireacht i gColáiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire in 2022.*

*Is bainisteoir oideachais í **Mary Carabine** ar an fhoireann oideachais taobh istigh den eagraíocht CCEA (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment). Tá taithe na mblianta aici ag forbairt acmhainní foghlama agus teagaisc d'earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta.*

*Is léachtóir sinsearach i gColáiste Ollscoile Naomh Muire, Béal Feirste é an **Dr Thomas Rogan**. Tá suim aige ó thaobh an taighde de sa tumoideachas, san oideachas dátheangach agus i soláthar tacaíochta d'fhoghlaimoirí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise acu.*

**'Páistí i mbun pinn' - is handwriting still important? (Bilingual)**

**Emma Ní Mhaoilistéighe, Gaelscoil Bhrian Bóroimhe & Insitiúid Oideachais Marino**

Aithnítear i gCuraclam Teanga na Bunscoile (2019) go maireann idirghaol idir teanga ó bhéal agus an teanga scríofa agus go bhfuil tionchar ag peannaireacht an pháiste ar a gcumas a gcuid smaointe a chur i láthair go héifeachtach. Cé go bhfuil tionchar ag cúrsaí teicneolaíochta ar an oideachas in Éirinn, tá sé suimiúil gurb é an pheannaireacht an príomh-modh de chumarsáid ghrafach atá ag páistí chun dul i ngleic leis na hábhair curaclaim (DES, 2011). D'fhéadfaí a áiteamh mar sin gur fiú am a chaitheamh ag spreagadh dea-nósanna i leith na peannaireachta sna luathbhlianta ar scoil chun tacú le bunchloch láidir sa litearthacht. Déanann an



páipéar seo machnamh ar chleachtas uile-scoile maidir le peannaireacht cheangailte, scileanna luaile, scileanna oll-luaile chomh maith le teagasc follasach. Chuige sin, scrúdófar tionchar an chláir luaile chéadfach ar an gcaighdeán sa pheannaireacht i ranganna naíonán, cur chuige a thagann le taighde Sinéad McCauley-Lambe (2023).

Is múinteoir bun scoile í **Emma Ní Mhaoilstéighe** le post mar Phríomhoide Cúnta I. Tá taithí aici ag múineadh réimse ranganna. Tá máistreacht aici san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta. Is léachtóir páirt-aimseartha í in Istitiúid Oideachais Marino (B.Oid). Tá taithí aici mar léachtóir páirt-aimseartha in Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath (B.Ed) agus i gColáiste Mhuire Gan Smál, Luimneach (M.Oid) chomh maith. Tá suim ar leith aici i gcúrsaí inspreagtha agus sa luathoideachas.

### Drama as a strengths-based , inclusive pedagogy for children with dyslexia (English)

**Dr Patti Roche, Dublin City University**

This reflective practitioner case study intervention of 14 weeks investigated whether process drama as a creative pedagogy could be a strengths-based one for ten 5th class children with dyslexia. It used a neuro-diverse model of dyslexia which promotes the notion that learning challenges should be viewed in terms of difference rather than disability. The purpose was to find ways in which these children could achieve in an area of reported potential strength regarding creativity, while supporting their greatest challenges in literacy-learning, using process drama. It also sought to document the response of the students to this type of pedagogy in affective spheres such as focus, motivation and overall well-being.

This thesis was supported by a framework of theories of inclusive education, neurodiversity, socio-cultural theory, creativity theory and reflective and dialogic practice. Qualitative sources of data were gathered to answer the research question, including children's writing, interviews and focus groups, as well as researcher field notes, and these were coded and thematically analysed.

Findings indicate that a creative pedagogy using process-drama led to the development of higher-order skills in 5th class children with dyslexia, including exploring and building on ideas, asking and responding to questions, making connections, posing and solving problems and critical and imaginative thinking and expression.

The participants mainly reported that they found this mode of teaching and learning more enjoyable and easier than traditional literacy, due to the collaborative and multi-modal nature of the drama pedagogy, and that it positively affected their self-esteem.

Researcher observations also noted that it led to greater motivation, engagement, and positive demeanour in the children, and a showcasing of their creative abilities. A surprising finding was that the quality of creative and collaborative behaviour also facilitated group cohesion and behaviour regulation.

Recommendations were made for the use of drama as an inclusive pedagogy which facilitates the creative strengths of children with dyslexia, provides motivational and engaging contexts for scaffolded literacy learning and supports individual and group self-regulation.

*Dr Patti Roche has taught and been inspired by children with dyslexia in Catherine McAuley Reading School in Baggot Street for many years. During this time she has used drama as an engaging and creative pedagogy in order to scaffold their literacy learning. She now works on the literacy team in DCU and has recently defended her PhD there on using drama as a strengths-based and inclusive pedagogy for children with dyslexia.*

### How Literacy Learning benefits from the Self-Efficacy built through Public Speaking Training (English)

**Dr Siobhán Keenan Fitzgerald, University of Lincoln**

We know that oral language is a building block of literacy (Cregan, 2010) and public speaking is a feature of the world we live in. Shafer (2010) states that students as young as five years old are often required to speak in public without adequate training noting that in some cases, these students learn to connect public speaking experiences with fear and anxiety. The flip side is that training children in public speaking has the potential to positively impact self-efficacy and contribute to enjoyable literacy experiences across all stages of learning.

Forget about the traditional view of public speaking as a formal activity that only society's most "privileged" and "powerful" engage in. The definition of public speaking preferred by my doctoral study participants is "the art of effective communication with an audience" (Merriam Webster Dictionary). We can support all of our students to develop their speaking voice, communication skills and confidence really effectively and relatively easily, in the safe, supportive environment of our classrooms by providing explicit training in the



skills with regular opportunities for practise and constructive feedback. Public speaking skills can be developed in a fun and interactive way while empowering children with a valuable life skill.

This is not something new. In our classrooms we already provide opportunities for students to speak in front of their peers. This paper will support teachers to ensure that all children are equitably prepared to avail of and benefit from these opportunities. In this paper, I will: highlight explore the importance of training in these skills for all children; detail how public speaking training connects with Bandura's 'Theory of Self-Efficacy' (Bandura, 1997); explain how public speaking positively impacts vocabulary acquisition using content learned across the curriculum; comment on practical examples of what public speaking training can look like across primary school.

*Teaching Principal and TEDx speaker, Dr Siobhán Keenan Fitzgerald is currently on secondment to NCCA as an Education Officer for Primary Developments. She has been teaching since 1992 with 8 of those years spent teaching in Japan, Switzerland, France and Saudi Arabia. She recently completed her doctoral thesis on the topic of 'Public Speaking in Primary Schools'.*

### Children asking Beautiful Questions through the Art of Slow Looking (English)

**Elizabeth O' Brien, St. Anthony's BNS, Cork**

This paper synthesizes my experiences as a teacher and Professional Learning Leader with Oide for the Primary Language Curriculum (2019), along with findings from my 2023 master's research study, 'Picture Perfect: Creative Explorations of Picturebooks'.

The paper looks at the concept of "Slow Looking" through an exploration of Francesca Sanna's picturebook, "The Journey" illustrating how this practice nurtures observation and visual literacy in young children. Drawing inspiration from Shaun Tan's idea that a good story resembles a 'Beautiful Question'—unsettling and without a simple answer (2015)—the study explores how 'Slow Looking' encourages children to carefully observe and appreciate the intricate details of illustrations (Pantaleo, 2020). This approach sparks children's innate curiosity and prompts them to pose thought-provoking questions.

Picturebooks serve as creative artefacts that facilitate discussions on complex themes accessible to young readers (Arizpe, 2021; Sipe, 2012). By engaging deeply with the illustrations and contemplating the narrative, children engage in meaningful dialogue, immersing themselves in the story to develop empathy and understanding towards the characters' diverse experiences and dilemmas.

Encouraging children to formulate and answer their own questions about picturebooks enriches their reading experience, making it more dynamic, interactive, and impactful.

Integrating the practice of asking beautiful questions through slow looking at picturebooks creates a vibrant, inclusive, and interactive learning environment. It supports the development of critical thinking, empathy, and literacy skills, aligning with the learning outcomes and key competencies outlined in the PLC 2019 and PCF 2023.

Through this process, children enhance their communication and creativity, their visual and critical literacy and empathy, as they explore emotions and challenges portrayed in the illustrations. They cultivate keen observational skills and a love for reading and storytelling.

By dedicating time to deliberate observation, dialogue and reflective questioning, children connect more deeply with the story and its illustrations, enriching their overall learning experience.

*Elizabeth O'Brien is a primary school teacher, returning to the classroom in September after a 5 year secondment to Oide. During her time with Oide, she worked as a Professional Learning Leader on the Primary Languages Team. This year, she submitted my master's thesis to the School of Education at UCC, titled "Picture Perfect: Creative Explorations with Picturebooks." Last November, she presented a writing workshop at the LAI conference and the enthusiastic response I received has inspired me to continue sharing my work.*

### Happy Ever After: A systematic review of book programmes fostering socioemotional development through literacy in early childhood settings (English)

**Gabriela Portillo Menéndez, Mary Immaculate College**

Literacy engagement has many positive associations with development (Hoyne & Egan, 2019). Researchers posit that early reading experiences can help foster socioemotional development in areas such as emotional literacy (Kumschick et al., 2014) and prosocial behaviour (Beaudoin & Evare, 2016). However, there is not enough information about the efficacy of book programmes in developing the socioemotional skills of



preschool children. Therefore, a systematic review of book-based interventions that aim to foster socioemotional development is conducted. The articles are searched in APA PsycINFO, PsycArticles and other specialised databases using keywords related to early literacy and socioemotional development. The inclusion criteria are that studies must target an early childhood sample (0-5 years old) and include at least one book-related variable and one socioemotional outcome. The publication scope is international, but only results written in English or Spanish were considered. The results were classified according to the study variables. In total, 25 studies or intervention programmes fell under the criteria. The book-related variables featured book gifting schemes, storybook sessions, parent skill training and the home literacy environment. The socioemotional outcomes included emotional literacy, emotion regulation, social relationships and empathy, among other theory of mind competencies. Most of the programmes were set at the family home (48%) or in early childhood educational settings (36%). It is concluded that there is an ongoing intention of using books to promote socioemotional development in young children. However, there is a lack of sufficient evaluation of the outcomes. More research is needed to understand the short and long-term impacts of book interventions on socioemotional development.

**Gabriela Portillo** is a PhD candidate at Mary Immaculate College's Department of Psychology. She holds an Erasmus Mundus master's degree in Children's literature, media, and culture from a consortium of universities, including the University of Glasgow, Aarhus University (Denmark), and Tilburg University (Netherlands), and a research master's in Behavioural Science. Her research explores the influence of early literacy experiences on emotional development.

### Literacy, Language and Voice in the updated Aistear (English)

**Dr Sharon Skehill & Donna Carolan, NCCA**

This paper describes the key messages underpinning the updated Aistear curriculum framework to support language learning and the development of early literacy skills for babies, toddlers and young children.

Framed through a child-rights lens, this presentation will describe the Principles of learning and development in Aistear that inform a responsive and flexible Framework to promote language and literacy skills in early childhood. In recognition of the multimodality of child voice in the early years, there is an emphasis on listening to, responding and facilitating the voice of babies, toddlers and young children within an inclusive environment. By embracing slow relational pedagogy in practice, Aistear provides opportunities to support learning about language and communication through broad and flexible interpretation of the Principles and Themes. Using examples from practice, this presentation will illustrate how babies, toddlers and young children are supported to develop early literacy and language skills through playful and engaging approaches in the daily routines. This includes consideration of how babies, toddlers and young children can be supported to learn about the power and meaning of symbols; to comprehend and use a wide vocabulary; to use both verbal and nonverbal communication to express feelings, thoughts and ideas. The presentation illustrates how a print rich environment can support emergent literacy and nurture a love of reading and writing. It also describes the reflective cycle of planning and assessing to support educators to notice, nurture, respond and reflect on the learning and development of babies, toddlers and young children and the role of the agentic educator in guiding this process.

**Dr Sharon Skehill** is an Education Officer with NCCA and also has extensive experience working with babies, toddlers and young children as an early years educator and also as a lecturer and researcher.

**Donna Carolan** is an Acting Director on the Early Childhood and Primary Team in the NCCA and has worked as a Primary teacher and lecturer. Both Donna and Sharon have been involved with updating Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework.

### Laying the Foundations for Literacy: Supporting Language Development in Young Children with a Language Delay (English)

**Dr Suzanne Egan, Dr Mary Moloney, Dr Jennifer Pope, Dr Deirdre Breatnach, Mai Burke-Hayes, Mary Immaculate College**

The development of receptive and expressive oral language skills in early childhood provide the foundation that literacy skills are built upon. Without developmentally appropriate language skills, young children may experience difficulties with the development of literacy skills also. The aim of this study was to explore the efficacy of a storytime book based language intervention programme in improving language skills of 3-4 year old children (n=179) with a language delay. The Early Talkboost programme was developed by Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) and was delivered over 9 weeks in early years settings by early years educators and SLTs. Various aspects of the children's language skills were measured before and after the programme.

(e.g., attention and listening skills, understanding words and sentences, speech, and personal, social and emotional communication skills). The pre and post intervention data were analysed and the findings indicated statistically significant improvements in all aspects of language skills measured, with large effect sizes. There was a substantial increase in the number of children working at their age expectations for the various language skills after the programme, compared with before the programme. Children's views on the programme were also gathered through a mosaic approach of drawings and interviews. These findings highlighted the language capabilities of the children, as well as their enjoyment of the programme. The findings are discussed and the implications are considered from an ecological systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), both for language and for literacy development.

**Dr. Suzanne Egan** is a researcher and lecturer in the Department of Psychology, Mary Immaculate College (MIC). Her research examines the processes involved in imagination, thinking and reasoning, and the factors that support development in young children. She is currently co-chair of the Children's Research Network of Ireland and Northern Ireland ([www.childrensresearchnetwork.com](http://www.childrensresearchnetwork.com)).

### Creating Lifelong Readers through Reading for Pleasure – a conversation (English)

#### **Kirsten Barrett**

Reading for Pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's future success' (OECD, 2002). This interactive talk will

- challenge you to reflect on your own practice
- encourage you to consider your knowledge of books
- enrich your current pedagogy
- enable you to start building a reading community
- support you in nurturing lifelong readers
- signpost resources to support educators

Research shows that a varied knowledge of contemporary children's literature and other texts helps nurture reading for pleasure (Cremin et al., 2022). This paper will provide opportunities for discussion about why we should plan Reading for Pleasure opportunities and the importance of ensuring we do it with diverse, contemporary texts that tempt us to read more.

This paper will be a starting point for anyone who wants to foster learners' RfP through research-informed knowledge and practice.

**Kirsten Barrett** was an EAL teacher in Scotland before returning home to Cork, Ireland. She is also an Open University Teacher Reading Group Leader for 'Reading for Pleasure' and is excited to now be co-leading a group in Ireland.

### Language Enrichment in the Classroom through Stories and Narrative Engagement (English)

#### **Dr Becky Long, Children's Books Ireland**

Ireland's new Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy, 2024-2033 recognises that any definition of literacy must encompass the learner's capacity and determination to interact and engage with a wide variety of texts, and, crucially, to enjoy them. One of the Strategy's key markers for success is an increase in the time learners in primary and post-primary schools spend reading and writing for enjoyment. This implicitly recognises the educational, cognitive, and emotional benefits of reading for joy but also raises a significant question; how can teachers be supported to create cultures of reading for joy in their classrooms, and how can time prioritised for and spent reading for joy also benefit language attainment and literacy across the curriculum?

Narrative fiction in all its forms, including picture books, graphic novels, verse novels, can offer learners endless opportunities for literacy experiences that are both content-rich in terms of language, and satisfying in terms of emotional wellbeing and empathy development. Children's literature offers readers access points into what Peter Hollindale has called a multiplicity of childhoods (Signs of Childness in Children's Books, 1997), through complex emotional and narrative language. Narrative language itself, the creative act of storytelling, is how children learn to evaluate their experience and to present themselves to the world (Janet Maybin, Children's Voices: Talk, Knowledge, and Identity, 2005).

This paper will explore how teachers can be supported to bring storytelling and narrative learning/empathy into the classroom in a sustainable and consistent way, using representative and inclusive texts.



**Dr Becky Long** holds a BA in English Studies, an MPhil in Children's Literature, and a Doctorate in Children's Literature from Trinity College Dublin. She has worked with Children's Books Ireland in various capacities, including as a Book Doctor, since 2016, and has a background in youth facilitation and outreach work. She also lectures in children's literature in Trinity College Dublin.

### Hug Your Book - a Family Literacy Programme (English)

**Lána McCarthy**, South East Technological University

Literacy is a key component for children in unlocking their potential as lifelong learners. It opens doorways to participation both in the community and wider society. Literacy skills inform life choices and life potential. Without them, life opportunities and choices can be seriously hindered. Family literacy programmes can bridge the gap in parents' knowledge and know-how, open doorways to new learning and transform perspectives for both parents and children. Family literacy programmes have a range of additional benefits to the family, including improved social and cultural capital, and improved self-confidence (Swain & Cara, 2019). Family literacy is the use of literacy and numeracy across families and communities (NALA, 2010). The Hug your Book programme is a family literacy programme, developed by Lána McCarthy and delivered in multiple schools and ETBs across Ireland. This workshop is an introduction to the Hug Your Book Programme and will assist practitioners to gain an understanding on how to support parents to bring books to life for their children and instil a love of reading, writing and talking. It can be delivered by Home School Community Liaison teachers, Adult Literacy Tutors, Speech and language Therapists, early years practitioners, anyone with an understanding of children's language and literacy development and a passion for working with parents. This programme can be used as an introductory course to family literacy programmes for parents or as a stand-alone four-week programme. Throughout the programme parents are encouraged to develop a range of skills to support their children's reading writing and talking that make reading fun and an enjoyable activity that parents and children engage in together, supporting parents to encourage their children to have a positive attitude to learning, develop their children's imagination, reading and writing skills, language skills and a love of learning and to reflect on home learning opportunities.

**Lána McCarthy** is an Irish Research council scholar currently completing a PhD with Trinity College Dublin. She has over twenty five years experience as a literacy teacher and has developed many successful family literacy programmes. Lána is currently lecturing in the Literacy Development Centre in South East Technological University.



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