



Literacy Association of Ireland  
Cumann Litearthachta na hÉireann

Updated  
Programme  
9/11/23

## 47th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Marino Institute of Education

## 47ú COMHDHÁIL BHLIANTÚIL

Institiúid Oideachais Marino

Celebrating  
Languages and Literacies  
Unpacking Practices and  
Exploring Possibilities



## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME CLÁR NA COMHDHÁLA

Teangacha agus  
Litearthachtaí a Cheiliúradh  
Cleachtais agus  
Féidearthachtaí a Iniúchadh



10 & 11 November, 2023

10 & 11 Samhain, 2023

#LAICon2023



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## NAVIGATING THE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



The programme is presented in **digital format** for this year's conference. Use the hyperlinks in the Table of Contents below and throughout this PDF to learn about the many sessions taking place over Friday 10 and Saturday 11 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 **123 bus** stops outside Marino Institute of Education and there is also a **bicycle rack** available on campus.

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




### WiFi Details

Network: MIE\_Wifi  
Password: Marino190523

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## LAI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2022-2023

### OFFICERS

<b>President:</b>	Claire Dunne
<b>President Elect:</b>	Clara Fiorentini
<b>Past President:</b>	Regina Dunne
<b>Secretary:</b>	Sylvaine Ní Aogáin
<b>Membership Secretary:</b>	Patrick Burke
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Sinéad Mc Cauley Lambe

### MEMBERS

Adrian Lohan	Miriam Colum	Tara Concannon-Gibney (FELA rep)
Shane Casey	Jennifer O'Sullivan	Eithne Kennedy
Gerry Shiel	Máirín Wilson	Gene Mehigan

## 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.



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## MISSION STATEMENT

**Literacy Association of Ireland**  
**Cumann Litearthachta na hÉireann**

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.



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## 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)



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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF LAI

**Dr Claire Dunne**



Fáilte romhaibh! You are all very welcome to the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Literacy Association of Ireland, and to Marino Institute of Education.

Over time the concept of literacy itself has evolved and while reading, reading skills and reading have always remained a key focus for LAI the emphasis has broadened to encompass a variety of literacy skills to include language, written expression and a whole range of new literacies. The conference theme *Celebrating Languages and Literacies: Unpacking Practices and Exploring Possibilities. Teangacha agus Litearthachtaí a Cheiliúradh. Cleachtas agus Féidearthachtaí a Iníúchadh* is particularly timely, taking account not only of the full linguistic repertoire of each individual, but also the myriad media we use to communicate and understand the world. Earlier this year saw the launch of the Primary Curriculum Framework by Minister Norma Foley. This sets out a vision for expanding language provision in primary schools, to include a greater focus on language awareness, plurilingualism and additional languages in the senior classes. This year's LAI conference is an apt moment to pause and reflect on what it means to 'celebrate' the multitude of languages spoken in Irish classrooms every day.

Tá an-áthas orainn fáilte a chur roimh Laureate na nÓg, Patricia Forde. Patricia writes for children and young people in both English and Irish, and also supports young writers in using their languages creatively. Our keynote speaker, Professor Jim Cummins continues to be a distinctive voice in the area of literacy and multilingual education.

We are delighted to welcome so many practitioners, researchers and others from the literacy community. The range and breadth of papers and posters reveal an interest in exploring current literacy practices in a variety of languages and contexts, and also to look to possibilities for languages and literacies into the future.

Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh go léir taitneamh agus tairbhe as an gcomhdháil.

**Beatha Teanga í Labhairt**

**Buanú Teanga í a Scríobh**

**Bláthú Teanga í a Léamh**



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## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

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


### Friday 10 November

5:30 – 6:00 pm	<a href="#"><u>REGISTRATION AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS</u></a>	Outside Edmund Hall
6:00 – 6:15 pm	<a href="#"><u>CONFERENCE OPENING</u></a>	Edmund Hall
6:15 – 7:00 pm	<a href="#"><u>BIENNIAL LAI BOOK AWARDS</u></a>	
7:00 – 8:00 pm	<a href="#"><u>FIRESIDE CHAT – PATRICIA FORDE</u></a>	
8:00 pm	<a href="#"><u>RECEPTION AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS</u></a>	

### Saturday 11 November


8:30 – 9:00 am	<b>REGISTRATION</b>	Outside Edmund Hall
9:00 – 10:00 am	<a href="#"><u>OFFICIAL OPENING &amp; KEYNOTE</u></a>	Edmund Hall
10:00 – 11:00 am	<a href="#"><u>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 1A-1E</u></a>	St. Mary's Building
11:00 – 11:30 am	<b>BREAK – TEA AND COFFEE</b>	M8
11.30 – 1:30 pm	<a href="#"><u>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 2A-2E</u></a>	St. Mary's Building
1:30 – 2:30 pm	<b>LUNCH</b>	Botanic Corridor
2:30 – 4:30 pm	<a href="#"><u>CONCURRENT SESSIONS 3A-3E</u></a>	St. Mary's Building
4:30 – 5:00 pm	<b>LAI ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING</b>	Edmund Hall



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## FULL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

FRIDAY EVENING, 10 NOVEMBER 2023

5:30 pm	<b>REGISTRATION AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS</b> (Tea & Coffee served in M8)	Outside Edmund Hall
6:00 pm	<b>OPENING OF CONFERENCE</b> <b>Claire Dunne</b> <i>President Literacy Association of Ireland</i>	Edmund Hall
6:15 pm	<b>LAI BIENNIAL BOOK AWARDS</b> <i>To view the shortlisted authors/illustrators, <a href="#">please click here.</a></i>	Edmund Hall
7.00 pm	<b>FIRESIDE CHAT</b> <i>Samhlaigh! Samhlaigh! Making it up as we go along</i>	Edmund Hall
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: #4a5568; color: white; padding: 10px; writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-size: 0.9em;">Irish Sign Language Interpretation Available</div> <div style="margin-left: 20px;">  <p><b>Patricia Forde</b></p> <p>Patricia Forde is the seventh <i>Laureate na nÓg</i>. Patricia writes for all ages in Irish and in English. She has published over 20 titles, including her award-winning first novel, 'The Wordsmith'. A former primary school teacher, Patricia is also a former Director of the Galway Arts Festival. She co-founded the Baboró International Arts Festival for Children in Galway in the mid-1990s; a world-class festival, based on the child's right to culture. She is the former Chair of Children's Books Ireland.</p> <p><b>Chair:</b> Claire Dunne</p> </div> </div>		





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8.00 pm

## RECEPTION AND RESEARCH POSTERS

Leading Literacy from the Middle: The importance of developing leadership capacity and collaborative practice for effective literacy school improvement.

**Laura Capon**, *Mary Immaculate College* ▶ [Abstract](#)

An Implementation of Guided Reading in Elementary Schools.

**Lisa J. Polk**, *Sam Houston State University* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Arts-based Teaching in the Junior Cycle English Classroom.

**Amy McLoughlin**, *DCU Institute of Education* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Reflections on arts-based pedagogy: Perspectives, practice and progression.

**Emma Farragher**, *DCU Institute of Education* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Irish Orthography: Dual Language Word Study for English-Medium Schools.

**Chiara Sheahan, Cillian O'Sullivan & Kevin Flanigan**, *West Chester University of Pennsylvania* ▶ [Abstract](#)

"We ask the children to, think-pair-share and talk together in groups and then we're not doing the same" - Using co-teaching practices to examine CLIL in the infant classroom.

**Jennifer Coogan**, *Marino Institute of Education* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Straitéisí bunaithe ar scéalta a úsáid chun tacú le teagasc na teanga ó bhéal sa Ghaeilge de réir Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile.

**Jennifer Lehane**, *Independent Researcher* ▶ [Abstract](#)

The range and use of children's literature: A qualitative case study in an Irish primary school setting.

**Ciara Dowling**, *Hartland International School Dubai* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Exploring the contribution that a Parent Expert Group in a DEIS school make to developing workshops to promote family literacy practices, home school relationships and parental confidence.

**Maria Kennedy**, *Trinity College Dublin* ▶ [Abstract](#)


Empowering young readers: The effect of mobile learning technologies on reading literacy skills in primary education.

**Konstantina Dervení**, *DCU Institute of Education/ Charles University, Prague* ▶ [Abstract](#)

Posters will be displayed outside Edmund Hall

Refreshments will be served in M8



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## SATURDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2023

8.30 – 9.00 am

**REGISTRATION**  
Outside Edmund Hall

9.00 – 10.00 am

**OFFICIAL OPENING**  
Edmund Hall

**Professor Teresa O’Doherty**  
*President, Marino Institute of Education*

*Irish Sign Language  
Interpretation  
Available*

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**  
***Entering an Age of Educational Opportunity: Towards  
Language- and Literacy-Friendly Schools***

**Dr Jim Cummins**

Jim Cummins, Ph.D., is a Professor Emeritus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. His research focuses on literacy development in educational contexts characterized by linguistic diversity. In numerous articles and books, he has explored the nature of language proficiency and its relationship to literacy development with particular emphasis on the intersections of societal power relations, teacher-student identity negotiation, and literacy attainment. He has been awarded four honorary doctorates from universities in Greece, Norway, and the United States.



**Chair:** Claire Dunne



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## 10.00 am – 11:00 am CONCURRENT SESSIONS 1A – 1E

### CONCURRENT SESSION 1A

Theme: Disciplinary Literacy and Integrating Literacies

Chair: Jennifer O'Sullivan

Room: Edmund Hall

10:00 - 10:30

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Literacy and curriculum integration: Nice, necessary or nuanced?  
**Patrick Burke & Paula Lehane**, *DCU Institute of Education*

10:30 - 11:00

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Using picturebooks for disciplinary literacy in the primary classroom.  
**Lorraine Lawrance**, *Mary Immaculate College*

### CONCURRENT SESSION 1B

Theme: Evidence-based Literacy Practices

Chair: Regina Dunne

Room: M7

10:00 - 11:00

WORKSHOP ▶ [Abstract](#)

What works, when and for whom in our school? Supporting the development of evidence-based literacy practices.  
**Sinéad Harmey & Sue Bodman**, *UCL Institute of Education*  
**Anne Marie Hayes, Angela Healy, Mary Heaslip, Deirdre MacCauley, Fiona Murphy**, *Oide*

### CONCURRENT SESSION 1C

Theme: Supporting EAL Learners

Chair: Miriam Colum

Room: M118

10:00 - 10:30

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

A Morphological Analysis Intervention for 4th Class EAL Learners with Language and Reading Difficulties.  
**Christina Hannify**, *DCU Institute of Education*

10:30 - 11:00

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Pedagogical strategies, approaches and methodologies to support the literacy development of pupils for whom English is an Additional Language.  
**Tara Concannon-Gibney**, *DCU Institute of Education*

Continued over ↗





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CONCURRENT SESSION 1D		Theme: Interactive Literacies I
Chair: Eithne Kennedy		Room: M10
10:00 - 10:30	<b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Exploring the Possibilities of the Reader's Theatre Approach within a Community of Practice. <b>Tara Concannon-Gibney, DCU Institute of Education</b>	
10:30 - 11:00	<b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Communities of Student Teachers as Readers (CoSTaR) Project. <b>Clara Fiorentini, Marino Institute of Education</b> <b>Geraldine Magennis-Clarke, St. Mary's University College, Belfast</b>	

CONCURRENT SESSION 1E		Theme: Literacy and Accessing the Curriculum
Chair: Gerry Shiel		Room: M12
10:00 - 10:30	<b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Integration of Content and Language in an Immersion Setting <b>Deirdre Ní Fhearghail, Primary School Teacher</b>	
10:30 - 11:00	<b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Mirrors, Windows and Doors <b>Kirsten Barrett, Glasgow City Council</b>	

11.00 – 11.30

BREAK (Tea & Coffee)

M8



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11.30 – 1.30

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS 2A – 2E

### CONCURRENT SESSION 2A

Theme: Early Years' Literacy

Chair: Claire Dunne

Room: Edmund Hall

11.30 – 12.00

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

A Study on the Link Between Phonological Awareness and The Pre-Literacy Curriculum in the Montessori Classroom.

**Joanne Finnegan**, *Independent Researcher*

12.00 – 12.30

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

A Proactive and Preventive Approach to Early Reading Difficulties.

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

12.30 – 1.00

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Boosting Young Children's Language and Literacy: Exploring the Impact of an Early Years Language Intervention Programme within Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC) Settings in Ireland.

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

1.00 – 1.30

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Aistear & Your Local Library.

**Clara Fiorentini**, *Marino Institute of Education*

**Ciara O'Brien**, *DLR Libraries*

### CONCURRENT SESSION 2B

Theme: Literacy Beyond the Classroom

Chair: Patrick Burke

Room: M7

11.30 – 12.00

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Home-school partnership with migrant families: Supporting language and literacy practices.

**Barbara O'Toole & Richeal Ní Thiarnaigh**, *Marino Institute of Education*

**Barbara Skinner**, *Ulster University*

**Maria Stewart**, *St Mary's University College Belfast*

**Anne-Sophie Cocault**, *Full-Service Community Network*

12.00 – 12.30

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

'It's not enough for the family to do all the work': Joint role of home, school, and society in celebrating and promoting linguistic diversity among migrant families.

**Lorraine Crean**, *Froebel Department Maynooth University*


12.30 – 1.00

PAPER ▶ [Abstract](#)

Communication skills beyond the Infant classroom: using fairy tales, emojis and the wider community to playfully teach key vocabulary in English, Irish and Lámh.

**Tina McLaughlin & Melanie Ní Dhuinn**, *Marino Institute of Education*




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<b>CONCURRENT SESSION 2C</b>		<b>Theme: Celebrating Literacies and Languages</b>
<b>Chair:</b> Gerry Shiel		<b>Room:</b> M118
<b>11.30 – 12.30</b>	<b>WORKSHOP</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Exploiting pupils' linguistic potential: Say Yes to Languages <b>Salvo Cacciato</b> , <i>Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI)</i>	
<b>12.30 – 1.00</b>	<b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Say Yes to Languages (SYTL) Programme Participation at Senior Primary: Informing MFL and Literacy Teaching and Learning (T&L), and Whole-School Practices at St. Cronan's Senior National School <b>Jane O'Toole, Charlene Small &amp; Suzanne Doyle</b> , <i>St. Cronan's Senior National School</i>	
<b>1.00 – 1.30</b>	<b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Supporting pupils' plurilingual repertoires: benefits for all learners. <b>Déirdre Kirwan</b> , <i>Independent Researcher</i>	

<b>CONCURRENT SESSION 2D</b>		<b>Theme: Literacy and Empowerment</b>
<b>Chair:</b> Sinéad Mc Cauley Lambe		<b>Room:</b> M10
<b>11.30 – 12.00</b>	<b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Examining Student Agency in Literacy Across Elementary School Sites in Ireland and the United States. <b>Margaret Vaughn</b> , <i>Washington State University</i> <b>Eithne Kennedy</b> , <i>DCU Institute of Education</i>	
<b>12.00 – 12.30</b>	<b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> In Pursuit of Critical Literacy: Understanding the Experiences of Teachers in Northern Ireland. <b>Donna Hazzard &amp; Geraldine Magennis-Clarke</b> , <i>St Mary's University College, Belfast</i> <b>Eithne Kennedy</b> , <i>DCU institute of Education</i>	
<b>12.30 – 1.00</b>	<b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> Reading for pleasure and social justice – what might the PIRLS 2021 results mean for Ireland? <b>Niamh Savage</b> , <i>Mary Immaculate College</i>	
<b>1.00 – 1.30</b>	<b>PAPER</b> ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a> The Primary Language Curriculum/ Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile - Supporting Children's Entire Linguistic Repertoire. <b>Gillian O'Connor &amp; Deirdre Ní Fhearghail</b> , <i>National Council for Curriculum and Assessment</i>	

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## CONCURRENT SESSION 2E

**Theme:**  
Literacy in Irish-medium Settings

**Chair:** Sylvaine Ní Aogáin

**Room:** M12

11.30 – 12.00	<p><b>PÁIPÉAR (Delivered through Irish) ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b>  Traschur Léitheoireachta ó Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile go Sonraíochtaí na Sraithe Sóisearaí.  <b>Róisín Ní Mhulláin</b>, <i>An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)</i></p>
12.00 – 12.30	<p><b>PÁIPÉAR (Delivered through Irish) ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b>  Forbairt foclóra thar dhá theanga.  <b>Jacqueline de Brún</b>, <i>Institiúid Oideachais OCBÁC</i></p>
12.30 – 1.00	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b>  "Why wouldn't it be possible?" Deaf children in Gaelscoileanna.  <b>Elizabeth Mathews</b>, <i>DCU Institute of Education</i></p>
1.00 – 1.30	<p><b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b>  The linguistic profiles of readers with low literacy attainment in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools.  <b>Emily Barnes</b>, <i>Coláiste na Tríonóide</i></p>

1.30 – 2.30

**LUNCH** – *Collect your lunch bag on Botanic Corridor*



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2.30 – 4.30

## CONCURRENT SESSIONS 3A – 3E

### CONCURRENT SESSION 3A

Theme: Assessing Literacy

Chair: Regina Dunne

Room: Edmund Hall

2.30 – 3.00

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Standardised Testing: Perspectives of Polish- and Lithuanian- speaking Children and their Parents in Irish Primary Schools.

**Paula Fitzsimmons**, *Holy Family JNS & Trinity College Dublin*

3.00 – 4.30

**SYMPOSIUM** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Large-scale assessments: What have we learned from NAMER and PIRLS 2021?

**Emer Delaney, Joanne Kiniry, Alice Duggan, Sarah McAteer, Lorraine Gilleece & Sharon M. Nelis**, *Educational Research Centre*

### CONCURRENT SESSION 3B

Theme: Raising Literacy Levels

Chair: Gerry Shiel

Room: M7

2.30 – 3.00

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Ten Steps to Reading Success in Second level DEIS schools.

**Aideen Cassidy**, *DCU Institute of Education*

3.00 – 4.30

**SYMPOSIUM** ▶ [Abstract](#)


Effective Research-based Pedagogies to Raise Literacy Levels in Early Childhood and Primary Settings.

**Geraldine French & Eithne Kennedy**, *DCU Institute of Education*  
**Gerry Shiel**, *Educational Research Centre*

Continued over ➞






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<b>CONCURRENT SESSION 3C</b>		<b>Theme: Reading Achievement</b>
<b>Chair:</b> Gene Mehigan		<b>Room:</b> M118
<b>2:30 – 3.00</b>	<b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Oral Reading Fluency in Action. <b>Gene Mehigan</b> , <i>Marino Institute of Education</i> <b>Aisling Cannon</b> , <i>Glasnevin ETNS</i>	
<b>3.00 – 4.30</b>	<b>SYMPOSIUM ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Reading Achievement in Ireland: What's going well and what still needs attention. <b>Jennifer O'Sullivan &amp; Clara Fiorentini</b> , <i>Marino Institute of Education</i> <b>Treasa Bowe</b> , <i>Carrigtwohill Community National School</i> <b>Deirdre O'Toole</b> , <i>St Seachnall's National School</i>	

<b>CONCURRENT SESSION 3D</b>		<b>Theme : Inclusive Literacies and Supporting Literacy Development in Traveller and Roma Communities</b>
<b>Chair:</b> Miriam Colum		<b>Room:</b> M10
<b>2.30 – 3.00</b>	<b>PAPER ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Looking at the Primary Language Curriculum through the lens of UDL. <b>Caroline McGarry</b> , <i>Primary School Teacher/Teacher Educator</i>	
<b>3.00 – 4.30</b>	<b>SYMPOSIUM ▶ <a href="#">Abstract</a></b> Action research in Irish schools to improve the literacy standards and school experience of children and young people from Traveller and Roma communities. <b>Caitríona Martyn, Aoife O'Connor &amp; Fiona Clancy</b> , <i>National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)</i>	

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## CONCURRENT SESSION 3E

Theme : Motivating and Supporting Young  
Readers and Writers

**Chair:** Claire Dunne

**Room:** M12

**2:30 – 3:30**

**WORKSHOP** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Fostering a culture of writing in the classroom/Cultúr scríbhneoireachta a chothú i do Sheomra Ranga.

**Caoimhe Doyle, Liz O'Brien & Maire O'Dea, Oide**

**3:30 – 4:00**

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Motivating Readers and Maximizing Learning with Engaging Reading Approaches.

**Lisa J. Polk, Sam Houston State University**

**4:00 – 4:30**

**PAPER** ▶ [Abstract](#)

Unravelling Academic Language: A Nuanced Approach to the teaching Academic Language Development in Primary Schools.

**Shane Leonard, DCU Institute of Education**


**4.30 pm**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

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## RESEARCH POSTER ABSTRACTS

**Leading Literacy from the Middle: The importance of developing leadership capacity and collaborative practice for effective literacy school improvement.**

**Laura Capon, Mary Immaculate College**

In the midst of ongoing reform agenda in Irish education, the increased recognition of middle leadership in primary schools is especially crucial. Today, middle leadership is a central policy priority within the Irish education context with heightened focus on its role in school improvement (CSL, 2023; Forde et al, 2019, Lárusóttir & Connor, 2017;). Undoubtedly, the updating of key curriculum documents in Irish schools places increased focus on those leading literacy from the middle; however, this process of leadership, and the relationship between leadership and school improvement, is not clear in the policy constructs (DES 2018/19; LAOS 2022). Effective literacy leaders require authentic professional learning which nurtures a culture of collaboration (Bean & Dagen, 2020; Fountas & Pinnell, 2022). International research indicates that middle leaders' responsibilities lack clarity, often leading to management rather than leadership (De Nobile, 2017; Fullan, 2008; Javadi et al 2017). Given this perspective, it is important to ensure that middle literacy leaders have a deep understanding of their role, responsibilities and the leadership competencies required to lead literacy at whole-school level (Meyer, 2022). With such evolution, the importance of establishing and maintaining a supportive network of professionals cannot be overlooked. This paper will review the literature to shed light on the following research question: What professional learning opportunities are fostered by literacy leaders to develop supportive networks of collaborative practice for effective literacy school improvement? Firstly, a critical review of international literature relevant to middle literacy leadership development will be presented and findings synthesised to ascertain what is known from extant studies. What is yet to be known will also be delineated. Thereafter, proposed guidelines to literacy leadership development for middle leaders in Ireland will be presented. In conclusion, implications for a supportive school culture to aid middle literacy leaders in successfully negotiating their leadership role will be considered.

***Laura Capon** is a primary teacher with an assistant principal II post. She is currently a PhD candidate at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick researching in the field of middle literacy leadership. She received a first class honours in her Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management with Maynooth University in 2020. She was also awarded her Graduate Diploma in Primary Education in 2013 and her Bachelor of Arts Degree in 2011. She has held various leadership positions during her time teaching in the United Kingdom including; music lead, science lead, SPHE curriculum development team, head of year, literacy lead and being a member of the senior leadership team. She has also held position of teacher trainee coach and newly qualified teacher mentor. She is interested in school leadership, literacy, professional learning, communities of practice and coaching and mentoring for primary teachers.*


**An Implementation of Guided Reading in Elementary Schools.**

**Lisa J. Polk, Sam Houston State University**

New implementations can provide opportunities of growth for all learners and when supported and monitored, can guide the improvement of literacy instructional practices. The implementation of guided reading as a new instructional approach in elementary schools was evaluated for the monitoring of progress and fidelity. Results from a survey including questions to investigate the perceptions of teachers in the implementation of guided reading and areas in need of future training and support were analyzed to inform a program evaluation. A convergent parallel mixed methods design allowed for the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from a multiple lens approach and provided a more comprehensive in-depth view of literacy instructional components common to the guided reading approach. Findings including teachers' perspectives of benefits and challenges of the new implementation of guided reading will be shared along with information including the process, support, and monitoring of implementing guided reading to support all learners.

***Lisa J. Polk, Ed.D.** is a lifetime learner and educator. Her background includes over thirty years in education predominately serving post-primary level students as well as integrated reading and writing methods courses in adult/higher education. She also served as a special education department head for several years and as a multi-*



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level reading curriculum specialist for the past six years. Lisa enjoys working with students and educators to implement engaging learning experiences for all learners.

### Arts-based Teaching in the Junior Cycle English Classroom. **Amy McLoughlin**, DCU Institute of Education

This research explored the effect of arts-based teaching on the literacy development and engagement of students from a first year Junior Cycle English class. Historically, the arts have always been a central component of education in Ireland, however, in recent years, the relationship appears to have become more fragmented. This paper identifies how the overlap between arts-based approaches, and the Junior Cycle Key Skills, offers an exciting opportunity for Irish post-primary teachers to incorporate more arts-based teaching. This study took the form of an arts-based teaching intervention. Interviews, writing samples and observational data were gathered before and after the intervention to assess whether arts-based teaching led to an improvement in students' oral language, writing and engagement. Following the intervention, improvement was evident in all three areas. Additionally, this research sought to provide teachers with a practical guide to incorporating arts-based approaches in the hope that they may be useful and replicable across all subjects at Junior Cycle and beyond. As such, following a critical analysis of the literature and the research findings, five guidelines were constructed, which may help to support Irish post-primary teachers who wish to incorporate arts-based approaches. The insights gained in this research suggest that the relationship between literacy and arts-based learning is an area which could be explored in much greater depth.

**Amy McLoughlin** has taught post-primary English, SPHE and Religion for the past eight years. She has recently completed her Masters in Literacy Professional Practice with Dublin City University, since which she has become an advocate for arts-based learning.

### Reflections on arts-based pedagogy: Perspectives, practice and progression. **Emma Farragher**, DCU Institute of Education


Positioned against a backdrop of imminent curricular change, 'Reflections on arts-based pedagogy: perspectives, practice and progression' considers the potential role of the arts-based pedagogies to support literacy teaching and learning in a curriculum that will recognise 'being creative' as a core competency (NCCA, 2023). The researcher, a sixth-class teacher, whose pedagogical approaches are largely rooted in integrated arts-based practices, took an interpretivist, phenomenological stance by examining her own practice through self-study research over a period of six weeks. The resulting data were analysed using 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis'. The findings emphasised the particular modality of the arts to support both oral language and writing practices. The findings similarly recognise the arts' capability to support the development of positive learning dispositions and transferable skills across the wider curriculum. Recommendations for further research, along with suggestions as to how teachers can circumvent the potential challenges to implementing arts-based learning are also advised.

**Emma Farragher** is a primary teacher and newly appointed teacher fellow at DCU Institute of Education in the school of Arts Education and Movement. Having recently completed a Masters in Literacy Professional Practice at DCU, Emma's self-study research focused on the modality of arts-based pedagogies to support literacy teaching and learning.

### Irish Orthography: Dual Language Word Study for English-Medium Schools. **Chiara Sheahan, Cillian O'Sullivan & Kevin Flanigan** West Chester University of Pennsylvania

The Irish Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019) advocates for literacy proficiency in both English and Irish, and promotes cross-lingual transfer between both languages. In L2 schools, the Irish learning outcomes parallel the English learning outcomes, including reading LO4, LO5 and writing LO4. However, there are currently few resources that support Irish orthographic development within English-medium schools. This exploratory study considers the utility of using dual-language word study instructional resources to build Irish orthographic knowledge (e.g. phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition,



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spelling and vocabulary), using the student's English orthographic knowledge as a foundation. Building upon the seminal work of Hickey and Stenson (2019), the authors of this study developed a scope and sequence for the instruction of Irish orthography in English-medium schools, underpinned by a strengths-based philosophy. To accompany this, they designed integrated, dual-language word sorts to support student's spelling development from 1st-6th Class. This methodology is research-based and aims to foster positive attitudes towards Irish language learning. The authors are currently piloting the use of these resources in primary classrooms, to assess the impact of these resources on student's reading achievement in Irish.

**Chiara Sheahan** is a primary school teacher and recent graduate of the M.Ed. in Literacy Education programme from West Chester University of Pennsylvania, and B.Ed. programme from MIC Limerick, where she specialised in literacy education. She is a proud recipient of the WCU Graduate Association Award for Academic Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity, and Certificate of Specialism in Language and Literacy Education, having received first place in the specialism. She has previously presented at conferences both nationally and internationally.

**Cillian O'Sullivan** is a primary school teacher and recent graduate of the M.Ed. in Literacy Education programme from West Chester University of Pennsylvania, and B.Ed. in Education & Psychology programme from MIC Limerick. He is a proud recipient of the WCU Graduate Association Award for Academic Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity, MIC Gold Medal, Vere Foster Medal, Carlisle and Blake Prize, and Kieran Burke Fellowship. He has previously presented at conferences both nationally and internationally.

**Dr Kevin Flanigan** is a graduate of the University of Virginia and has taught as both a classroom teacher in the upper elementary/middle grades and as a reading specialist/literacy coach working with kindergartners through middle-grades students. His research, publications, and presentations centre on developmental word knowledge, comprehension and vocabulary development and instruction, and interventions for struggling readers. He has authored or co-authored articles in *The Reading Teacher*, *The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, and the *Journal of Literacy Research* and has presented frequently at regional, national, and international conferences.

**"We ask the children to, think-pair-share and talk together in groups and then we're not doing the same" - Using co-teaching practices to examine CLIL in the infant classroom.**  
**Jennifer Coogan, Marino Institute of Education**

A study of five teachers, their opinions and experiences of teaching Irish in an urban school with a high percentage of EAL learners, their understanding of the Aistear framework, the primary language curriculum, the potential for integrated language learning and language aware activities in the infant classroom and their experiences of collaborative continuous professional development.


The experiences and opinions of the participants as they engaged in co-planning activities, to construct understanding and meaning of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) in the infant classes were found to be largely positive. Focus groups gained in-depth insights into participant's opinions and experiences of teaching Irish in a school with a high percentage of EAL learners and shone a light on the existing practices already in use by the participants.

The potential and success of implementing integrated language learning and language aware activities in the infant classroom was exposed. How CLIL afforded opportunities for children to engage with the language more often and to develop more positive attitudes and laid the foundation for including other languages was evident. While participants displayed high levels of self-efficacy and valued the language learning of the children in their classroom, the collaborative nature of the action research benefitted the participants professionally and they would participate in similar forms of CPD in the future.

When teachers are aware of opportunities for skill transfer, they can introduce these specific skills and help children to generalise what they know in other languages. This use of partial Irish immersion should strengthen the use of Irish by offering opportunity for skill transfer and exposing children to real and authentic communication.

**Jenny Coogan**, an experienced educator with a diverse teaching background encompassing time spent as a mainstream class teacher, special educational teacher, EAL teacher and an Early Start teacher. Their varied experience includes many years in an urban DEIS school with a high level of second language learners, a rural school on the edge of the Gaeltacht and a variety of leadership roles in language summer programs for young learners.



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Jenny holds a B.A degree in Music and Geography, a Higher Diploma in Education and a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education. Through her Masters study she has delved into CLIL practices in the infant classes through collaborative CPD. Jenny is eager to share opinions and experiences with fellow teachers on creating inclusive learning environments.

Straitéisí bunaithe ar scéalta a úsáid chun tacú le teagasc na teanga ó bhéal sa Ghaeilge de réir Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile.

**Jennifer Lehane, Independent Researcher**

Dhírigh ábhar an tráchtais ar thuairimí múinteoirí Gaelscoile faoin úsáid a bhaintear as straitéisí bunaithe ar scéalta chun tacú le teagasc na teanga ó bhéal sa Ghaeilge, de réir Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile, 2019. Fiosraíodh eolas ar leith ó na rannpháirtithe faoi na ranganna bunscoile ina n-úsáidtear scéalta mar straitéis teagaisc, cé chomh minic a bhaintear úsáid astu, foinsí na scéalta cuí, na torthaí foghlama a bhaintear amach dá bharr agus na modhanna measúnaithe a úsáidtear chun foghlaim na ndaltaí a mheasúnú. Fiosraíodh na straitéisí bunaithe ar scéalta a úsáidtear is minice agus ceistíodh an dtacaítear le teagasc na Gaeilge mar dhara teanga i nGaelscoileanna de bharr úsáid straitéisí bunaithe ar scéalta. Baineadh feidhm as modhanna measctha chun sonraí an taighde a bhailiú, bailíodh ceistneoirí ó mhúinteoirí (n=21) agus chuaigh beirt mhúinteoirí faoi agallamh leis an taighdeoir (n=2). Le linn an tráchtais, tháinig sé chun cinn go raibh easpa foilsithe go hacadúil faoi thairbhí a bhaineann le scéalta a úsáid mar straitéis teagaisc le daltaí bunscoile níos sine, go háirithe daltaí sna hardranganna, agus faoi Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile, go ginearálta, chomh maith. Shonraigh torthaí an taighde go n-úsáidtear straitéisí teagaisc bunaithe ar scéalta go rialta i gach rang Gaelscoile, ó rang na naíonáin go dtí na hardranganna agus go n-úsáidtear réimse leathan straitéisí bunaithe ar scéalta; comhráite, scéalaíocht agus straitéisí drámaíochta san áireamh. Sonraíodh go bhfoinsítear na scéalta ó réimse leathan d'fhoinsí agus go n-úsáidtear úrscéalta, leabhair ficsean agus síscéalta is minice, cé go n-úsáidtear scéalta ó foinsí dhigiteacha go minic freisin. Sonraítear ó thorthaí an taighde go dtacaítear le teagasc teanga ó bhéal na Gaeilge agus an Ghaeilge mar dhara teanga de bharr an úsáid a bhaintear as straitéisí bunaithe ar scéalta.


*Rugadh agus tógadh Jennifer Lehane sa Rinn, i nGaeltacht na nDéise agus bhain sí a hoideachas réamhscoláíochta, bunscoile agus meánoideachas amach trí mheán na Gaeilge. I ndiaidh na hardteistiméireachta, bhain sí céim amach sa dlí sibhialta ó Choláiste na hOllscoile, Corcaigh. I ndiaidh tréimhse a chaitheamh mar dhlíodóir faoi oiliúint, cáilíodh mar dhlíodóir i agus d'oibrigh sí mar dhlíodóir ar feadh seacht mbliana. Thosaigh sí an Mháistreacht Ghairmiúil san Oideachas (Bunoideachas) le Coláiste Hibernia sa bhliain 2021 agus bhain sí toradh de chéadonóracha amach le déanaí. Le linn na Máistreachta, bhain sí a socrúcháin scoile uile amach i nGaelscoileanna agus scríobh sí a tráchtas trí mheán na Gaeilge. I ndiaidh na Máistreachta d'oibrigh sí mar mhúinteoir ionadaíochta i scoileanna áitiúla; Gaelscoil agus Scoil sa Ghaeltacht san áireamh. Chaith sí tréimhse mar mhúinteoir i gcoláiste samhraidh le déanaí, ag múineadh na Gaeilge do dhaltáí ag freastal ar chúrsa coicise sa Ghaeltacht. Tá post bliana mar mhúinteoir ranga i nGaelscoil faighte aici don bhliain seo chugainn. Tá sí ina cónaí sa Rinn lena fear céile agus a beirt pháistí agus baineann sí taitneamh as a bheith ag léamh, ag snámh san fharraige, gníomhaíochtaí faoin aer agus am a chaitheamh lena clann.*

The range and use of children's literature: A qualitative case study in an Irish primary school setting.

**Ciara Dowling, Hartland International School Dubai**

Situated within the interpretivist paradigm, this qualitative case study examines the range and use of children's literature in one Irish primary school. Through the use of visual methods and documentary analysis, an in-depth study of eight primary school teachers' class book corners, children's literature displays, and Literacy plans for the academic year 2018/2019 was conducted. The Irish classroom is a microcosm of the diverse and dynamic nature of contemporary Irish society where many children come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The purpose of the study was to gain an insight into children's literature to determine if its range and use is reflective of the diverse student population in modern Ireland. The findings indicate that teachers use children's literature in multiple ways. However, children have access to a limited range of children's literature and there is limited diversity within this range. The study concludes that there is a need for a greater representation of diversity within children's literature; children need access to a variety of texts across fiction, non-fiction and poetry genres; and children need to have opportunities to critically reflect on the texts they have read. The findings can assist in guiding other teachers to consider their children's literature collection and the use of children's literature in the classroom.



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**Ciara Dowling** has been a Foundation Stage 1 Teacher at Hartland International School Dubai since August 2022. Prior to this she taught early years in Ireland for six years. She has a keen interest in children's literature, which saw her return to college to pursue a Masters of Education in Literacy Education in Mary Immaculate College. Since then, she is passionate about diversity in children's literature and using literature to support and empower children to become critical thinkers. She has delivered workshops at the British Schools of the Middle East conference and collaborated with Mary Immaculate College to deliver workshops on the topic of diversity in children's literature to Masters students.

Exploring the contribution that a Parent Expert Group in a DEIS school make to developing workshops to promote family literacy practices, home school relationships and parental confidence.

**Maria Kennedy**, Trinity College Dublin

This participatory action research took place in the DEIS school in which I work as HSCL and is collaborative in nature, whereby the contributions of the parents play a central role. The Parent Expert Group (a group of first class parents) were co-designers of a programme of 4 family literacy workshops for parents of children in Early Start and Junior Infants. The recognition of and collaboration with the PEG addressed misrepresentation of this group and created a tailor made family literacy programme, taking a non-deficit stance. Data analysis of interviews with parents pre and post workshops shows that this research has fostered already strong home school links, developed family literacy practises, enriched the emergent literacy development of the 28 children and families who attended, increased parental confidence and raised awareness in parents of their ability to support their children's education. This research acknowledges sociological factors which may be at play within the home and the context of this educationally disadvantaged school.

**Maria Kennedy** works as a Home School Community Liaison in a DEIS primary school in inner city Dublin. She is in the final stages of her Doctorate in Education in Trinity College Dublin. Her research focuses on the areas of family literacy and parental engagement and partnerships in education.


Empowering young readers: The effect of mobile learning technologies on reading literacy skills in primary education.

**Konstantina Derveni**, DCU Institute of Education

Literacy is a central focus of primary education and a fundamental requirement for engagement in the wider educational context. Since current society is being impacted by technologies, more efficient teaching methods are required for such significant subjects. Mobile learning (m-learning) appears to be a rapidly expanding area for education, however, it has not yet reached its full potential. For that reason, the aim of the proposed study is to explore the effect of mobile technologies on early reading literacy skills improvement and motivation increase in primary education. More specifically, the study seeks to examine in particular the students' progress over long-term observation periods using portable devices at school. This research is still in its early stages, and initial findings are drawn from a thorough review of relevant studies. The data analysis suggests that mobile devices have the potential to enhance students' reading fluency and comprehension, creating an enriching learning environment to be actively engaged and interested in the educational process.

**Konstantina Derveni** is a PhD student at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, currently working as a researcher on reading literacy development through mobile and online learning technologies in primary education. An ambitious, hard-working and highly organized individual, able to accomplish high-volume work and provide high-quality projects. Passionate to deepen and broaden her knowledge for academic and professional career progression.



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## CONCURRENT SESSION I - ABSTRACTS

Literacy and curriculum integration: Nice, necessary or nuanced?

**Patrick Burke & Paula Lehane**, DCU Institute of Education

Converging lines of evidence, theory, practice and policy suggest that curriculum integration offers rich potential for children's literacy learning. In Ireland, the Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023) signals a move towards a more integrated curriculum structure. Internationally, research on content-literacy integration has documented multiple benefits for disciplinary learning, reading/writing development and motivation (Hwang et al., 2021; Guthrie et al., 2004). This paper will present important findings and insights from a systematic review of the literature on curriculum integration carried out to support the NCCA's ongoing redevelopment of the primary curriculum. Overall findings from 211 studies indicate that curriculum integration can be conceptualised and carried in many different ways. The sub-set of studies that specifically examined literacy (n=55) illustrate different approaches for its integration, including project-based learning (Duke et al., 2021) and disciplinary literacy (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Wright & Gotwals, 2017). The studies also highlight potential tensions and barriers for enactment, including teacher knowledge and the availability of appropriate professional learning and instructional resources. Drawing on these findings, this paper will highlight practical and policy considerations for the teaching of literacy in the context of the newly redeveloped primary school curriculum and the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019).

**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 assessment, inclusion and research methods. She is a Co-Principal Investigator for a review of the literature on curriculum integration, pedagogy and assessment funded by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

**Dr Patrick Burke** is an Assistant Professor in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education in the Institute of Education at Dublin City University (DCU). Prior to joining the faculty at DCU, he worked as a primary school teacher, advisor with the Professional Development Service for Teachers and lecturer in language and literacy education at MIC Limerick. He lectures on a number of areas relating to literacy education across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. He is a Co-Principal Investigator for a review of the literature on curriculum integration, pedagogy and assessment funded by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and is also the current chairperson of NCCA Primary Language Development Group.

Using picturebooks for disciplinary literacy in the primary classroom.


**Lorraine Lawrance**, Mary Immaculate College

This paper explores the burgeoning concept of disciplinary literacy in the primary classroom, through the lens of picturebooks. An examination of the language associated with disciplinary literacy and the point of connection with picturebooks is detailed. Against the backdrop of curricular reform in Ireland, with the embedding of the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019) and the introduction of the Primary Curriculum framework (NCCA, 2023); the place for disciplinary literacy and picturebooks within a learning outcomes based curricula is thoroughly explored. An evaluation of Government of Ireland's, Preparation for Teaching and Learning - Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools (2021) further serves to situate this research. Using a case-study method, the paper outlines current research being undertaken with practitioners, key educational stakeholders, librarians and school leaders to decipher how the concept of disciplinary literacy and indeed the use of picturebooks in the primary classroom transfers or may transpire from policy to actual classroom practice.

**Lorraine Lawrance** is a primary school teacher with 15 years experience and a current PhD candidate at Mary Immaculate College. She holds a Bachelor of Education (MIC) and Master of Education (MIC). She has contributed to a range of literacy research initiatives and projects, such as the Building Bridges of Understanding research team. She has also contributed to several literacy programmes including Word Wizard, Over the Moon and Cosán na Gealaí. She is a trained Reading Recovery teacher and dyslexia tutor (DAI).





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What works, when and for whom in our school? Supporting the development of evidence-based literacy practices.

**Sinéad Harmey & Sue Bodman**, *UCL Institute of Education*

**Anne Marie Hayes, Angela Healy, Mary Heaslip, Deirdre MacCauley, Fiona Murphy**, *Oide*

The field of literacy education is awash with terms like ‘what works’ and ‘evidence-based practices’ but, as Biesta (2007) argued – the field of education (in contrast to the field of medicine) is nuanced and effective implementation of intervention is dependent on context. This can restrict educator decision making and participation in deciding what is best for the context in which they work. Another perspective is to pay close attention to the processes of translation of research or evidence-to-practice. Harmey, Moss, and Munoz-Chereau (2017) identified that to ensure successful translation of research to practice educators need (1) Time to collaborate and reflect, (2) Be able to identify fit to context, (3) Accessible research, (4) phased implementation that assesses feasibility and scope for adaptation, (5) use of local data, (6) development of professional expertise and, (7) organisational leadership. Using this framework as a guide for this workshop, the team will support participants to reflect on how they can develop a plan for their school to (a) identify literacy practices that are needed in their school and (b) assess their feasibility and fit, and (c) develop a plan for implementation and evaluation. The workshop will include input from the team with facilitated activities and discussion.

**Sinead Harmey** is an Associate Professor of Literacy Education and **Sue Bodman** is National Lead for Reading Recovery, both are based at the International Literacy Centre in the Institute of Education, University College London.

**Anne Marie Hayes, Angela Healy, Mary Heaslip, Deirdre MacCauley** and **Fiona Murphy** are Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders, Oide, Ireland.


A Morphological Analysis Intervention for 4th Class EAL Learners with Language and Reading Difficulties.

**Christina Hannify**, *DCU Institute of Education*

Morphological awareness is strongly correlated with success across various dimensions of literacy (Deacon, Benere & Pasquarella, 2013; Levesque, Kieffer, & Deacon, 2017). Extensive research from other jurisdictions has shown morphological instruction to be an effective approach in improving literacy outcomes for pupils with reading, learning, and speech and language disabilities, English language learners and struggling readers (Bratlie, Brinchmann, Melby-Lervåg & Torkildsen, 2022; Goodwin & Ahn, 2013; Reed, 2008). This research investigated the impact of a morphological analysis intervention (MAI) on pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL). A mixed-method approach was combined with action research to address the central research questions. MAI was implemented within guided reading lessons for a sample of 4th class EAL pupils with low attainment in language and reading, as measured on norm-referenced assessments. Participants included twelve pupils who were randomly assigned to either the intervention (n=8) or comparison condition (n=4). Participants of the intervention group received MAI within guided reading lessons over a six-week period, while participants of the comparison group received typical instruction. Performance gains on measures of language and literacy were compared between intervention and comparison groups to evaluate the impact of MAI. Further data was generated from semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and field notes. Analysis of qualitative data suggested that MAI had a positive impact on pupil engagement and their motivation towards reading. Although academic gains were not found to be statistically significant on standardised measures, intervention participants performed better overall on standardised and researcher-designed tests of vocabulary, word-level reading accuracy, reading comprehension and spelling than comparison group participants. Findings also indicated that developing EAL pupils’ morphological awareness can increase their recognition of, and ability to draw on, similar structures in their first language(s). This research demonstrates that multiple linguistic and literacy skills can be effectively integrated within reading lessons, without assuming additional instructional time. Given the dearth of research investigating morphological instruction in the Irish context, this research provides preliminary implications for Irish primary teachers to develop practice in literacy instruction and oral language development.

**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



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teacher professional learning, with a particular focus on developing effective, engaging and inclusive practices to support students experiencing reading difficulties.

### Pedagogical strategies, approaches and methodologies to support the literacy development of pupils for whom English is an Additional Language.

**Tara Concannon-Gibney, DCU Institute of Education**

The recent report Pedagogical Strategies, Approaches and Methodologies to Support Literacy and Digital Literacy Development for Gaeilge and EAL (Concannon-Gibney et al., 2022) identified the literacy development of pupils for whom English is an additional language as a key aspect to be considered in developing educational policy at all levels of education from pre-school through to post-primary. In this presentation, we will explore some of the findings of this systematic review and consider some of the pedagogical strategies, approaches and methodologies that support the literacy development of pupils for whom English is an additional language that is recommended by the most recent research in this area. This session will focus on strategies for EAL pupils in primary school and will be of interest to those working in diverse school settings (mainstream and SET) at this level of compulsory schooling.

### Exploring the Possibilities of the Reader's Theatre Approach within a Community of Practice.

**Tara Concannon-Gibney, DCU Institute of Education**

Reader's Theatre has long been regarded as a powerful tool for developing oral reading fluency, but it also presents many learning opportunities that go beyond fluency. This paper will examine the learning journey taken by a group of primary school teachers that formed a community of practice that was developed to explore the possibilities of the Reader's Theatre approach as an instructional methodology in the primary school classroom. Over the course of a school year, the community of practice investigated how Reader's Theatre could enhance fluency, comprehension, and word study in their classrooms. They also examined how play scripts were a rich forum for oral language and writing development. In this presentation, we will also discuss the role of motivation and engagement in reading instruction and the challenges of differentiation. The project was funded by the Teaching Council as part of their Researcher in Residence (RiRS) programme.

*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 almost twenty years. She is past president of the Literacy Association of Ireland and the current Irish representative for FELA (Federation of European Literacy Association). She is author of 'Teaching Essential Literacy Skills in the Early Years Classroom' (Routledge).*


### Communities of Student Teachers as Readers (CoSTaR) Project.

**Clara Fiorentini, Marino Institute of Education**

**Geraldine Magennis-Clarke, St. Mary's University College, Belfast**

Reading is a complex and dynamic process that involves a depth of knowledge and a myriad of sophisticated skills which teachers need to master themselves, as well as teach to others. To the untrained eye, the read-aloud may appear easy, thus leading to misconceptions regarding its potency and the specific professional acumen required to execute such an approach skilfully (Trelease, 2019). The CoSTaR Project was an innovative, year-long, cross-border initiative between two Initial Teacher Education (ITE) institutions on the island of Ireland. A self-selected sample of students garnered from the entire first year student teacher cohorts in both jurisdictions took part in the study. The project's fundamental goal was to support, coach, and guide student teachers from the beginning of their careers, in designing and utilising purposeful and effective read aloud methodologies in the primary setting. It was anticipated that a community of practice could be built, wherein students' individual and collective reading teacher identities could be shaped and nurtured. A series of on-line, dialogic workshops, student-led, drop-in clinics, and collaborative, planning sessions were designed to this end. Practice was then embedded within school placements. Data was collected via pre- and post-project questionnaires, as well as journal and creative responses to the overall project. The researchers engaged in practices of self-study (Schuck & Russell, 2005) through the keeping of reflective journals. Results revealed that participants' conceptual understanding of the read-aloud



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methodology expanded to encompass a much more complex and dynamic interplay between teacher and pupils. Their read-aloud identities began to shift from being merely deliverers of stories to knowledgeable and skilled artisans. This transition necessitates wide and detailed 'book' knowledge that allows for intentional planning and artful teaching using the read-aloud approach.

**Clara Maria Fiorentini** is a lecturer in Initial Teacher Education at Marino Institute of Education, specialising in Literacy and Early Childhood Education. Clara provides CPD for primary teachers and early childhood educators in the areas of literacy, children's literature, play based learning and school transitions. Clara is currently completing her doctoral research in early literacy development and transitions to formal literacy learning at Trinity College Dublin. Clara is currently an executive committee member of the Literacy Association of Ireland.

**Geraldine Magennis-Clarke** is a senior lecturer in initial teacher preparation in St Mary's University College, Belfast. She specialises in primary literacy and early years education. Geraldine's research interests centre around the Science of Reading (SoR) in particular. She is the curator of the Science of Reading, Northern Ireland (SoRNI) Facebook page, while also serving on the Literacy Advisory Group which is a cross-departmental, multi-organisational body.

## Integration of Content and Language in an Immersion Setting

**Deirdre Ní Fhearghail**, Primary School Teacher

This mixed-methods action research study was carried out with a cohort of children in 1st class in an immersion setting (Gaelscoil). Despite the success of immersion programmes in developing speaking proficiency in a 2nd language (L2), researchers have noted that this proficiency will not reach desired levels unless language-learning objectives are undertaken with deliberate, systematic planning and co-ordination of the language and content curricula (Snow, Met and Genesee, 1989). The researcher sought to design and implement an integrated unit of work comprising of 6 Irish language lessons and 6 Physical Education (PE) lessons. The Irish language lessons focused on the correct use of specific grammatical forms and on academic language related to gymnastics. While the PE lessons focused on developing children's fundamental movement skills within gymnastics, they also provided authentic opportunities for children to use and practise the language they were learning in the Irish language lessons. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to assess the impact of the intervention on children's learning and progress in Irish and in PE. Qualitative data in the form of a researcher diary were also collected and analysed to examine the 'how' of planning an integrated unit of work. The results suggest that the integration of content and language is an effective approach to develop children's language and content learning. The results also show that planning an integrated unit of work is complex - achieving a balance between content and language in the subject-based lessons and ensuring a strong link between the grammatical content of the language lessons and the content of the subject-based lessons were noted as particularly challenging.


**Deirdre Ní Fhearghail** has worked as a mainstream and special education teacher for a number of years in both Irish-medium and English-medium schools. After her initial teacher training in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino, Deirdre completed a BSc in Psychology with the Open University as well as an MEd in Literacy Professional Practice with Dublin City University.

## Mirrors, Windows and Doors

**Kirsten Barrett**, Glasgow City Council

Reading for Pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's future success' (OECD, 2002). What does this look like in a multilingual classroom? In Glasgow, Scotland we have been welcoming asylum seekers, refugees and migrants for many years, and currently, approximately 23% of pupils in schools speak English as an additional language (EAL). "When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part." (Bishop, 1990). Research shows that a varied knowledge of contemporary children's literature and other texts can help nurture reading for pleasure (Cremin et al., 2022). It is vital that the books we share in our schools reflect the rich diversity of the society we live in. How do we ensure that our texts are diverse and that they encourage positive reading identities for all children? Books build belonging and help us to see and understand each other. Books should be mirrors, windows and doors (Bishop, 1990). How can we recommend and inspire learners if we don't know what books are available? Together, we will explore my research journey of discovering contemporary authors and texts, looking at the impact they have had, drawing upon my experiences of




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supporting learners with various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This research-informed session will:

- be interactive, exploring our knowledge of authors and texts
- share book recommendations that celebrate linguistic diversity
- signpost resources and suggest adaptable, practical activities
- provide a platform for professional dialogue, engaging with current research
- challenge attendees to unpack their own practices and explore possibilities for change

**Kirsten Barrett** is a Scottish Primary school teacher based in Glasgow. For the last 11 years she has specialised in supporting bilingual children as an EAL teacher. She is the current Chair of SATEAL and Conference Organiser. Kirsten is also an Open University Teacher Reading Group Leader for 'Reading for Pleasure'.



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## CONCURRENT SESSION 2 - ABSTRACTS

**A Study on the Link Between Phonological Awareness and The Pre-Literacy Curriculum in the Montessori Classroom.**

**Joanne Finnegan**, *Independent Researcher*

The central idea of this research dissertation is based on the provision of an early year's curriculum within the Irish context in the academic year 2022/23. This completed paper aims to investigate the link between phonological awareness and the pre-literacy curriculum within the Montessori classroom. Focus will be directed towards the understanding of language development, the role of the educator and strategies facilitating phonological awareness in the early year's environment. According to Walsh (2009), phonemic awareness refers to the conscious awareness that what we say, is made up of smaller speech sounds. This attentiveness to speech is important for later reading ability as it acts as a bridge or connection between the spoken word and written language. With the understanding that phonological awareness held less value back when Dr Montessori created the Montessori method of education where the child is encouraged to work at their own pace with Froebel inspired materials and hands on experiences, the link between the Montessori language curriculum and phonological awareness can now be examined and studied in order to inform further best practice. The findings of this research highlighted a number of elements which can be applied to future practice within the early year environment. With the methodologies and socio-economic impacts on language highlighted in the findings, beneficial methods of communication and expression were also emphasised. The value of the teacher's role in modelling language was noted with free time for talk benefitting the ability to assess and observe language in action. In relation to the Early Learning & Care training modules, the amount of phonological awareness content being covered on the ELC modules was also questioned with scope to be investigated further.

*Joanne Finnegan completed this paper as part of her dissertation while studying her honours degree in Early Childhood Education with The University of East London. Having taught in both the ELC sector and primary special education sector for the past twenty years in Ireland, Joanne transitioned into the Further Education Sector. Following the completion of a Professional Diploma in Further Education in NUIG, Joanne now delivers QQI modules in the area of Special Education & Inclusive Practice. Joanne lists the highlights of her career as, her time spend on the LINC programme in Mary Immaculate College, being one of the first ECCE practitioners to introduce the CLIL/ FCAT pilot programme into an Early Years setting and having the opportunity to share her research with a wider audience.*


**A Proactive and Preventive Approach to Early Reading Difficulties.**

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

Assessing the development of children's early reading skills is crucial if teachers are to identify and reach children potentially 'at risk' for later reading difficulties (Catts & Hogan, 2021). Early identification allows for the introduction of evidence-based interventions as early as possible to help prevent future difficulties. However, a 'wait to fail' approach is often adopted (Ozernov-Palichik and Gaab, 2016), with children having to display a difficulty with reading before they are supported by the interventions they so badly need. Research demonstrates that it can take up to four times longer to intervene with an 8-year-old child than it does with a 4-year-old child (Lyon & Fletcher, 2001). Consequently, early identification is vital. This presentation will unpack the current remediation model of support for reading difficulties in Ireland and explore a proactive, preventative approach which allows for the early identification of and support for children who may be struggling to acquire foundational reading skills.

*Dr Jen O'Sullivan is a lecturer in literacy education in Marino Institute of Education. She is a past president and current member of the LAI executive committee. Her specific area of interest focuses on the development of young children's early literacy skills. She is the creator of ALPACA, the early reading screener, and, in 2022, was awarded a Fulbright Scholar award where she spent three months visiting the world-renowned Florida Center for Reading Research.*



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## Boosting Young Children's Language and Literacy: Exploring the Impact of an Early Years Language Intervention Programme within Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC) Settings in Ireland.

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

Early Talk Boost, is an early years language intervention programme. Developed by Speech and Language UK ( a UK-based Community Charity), it is a targeted intervention for children aged between 3 and 4 years old, delivered by educators in early childhood settings. The programme aims to boost young children's language and communication skills, helping to narrow the gap between them and their peers. It has been delivered across a number of ECEC centres in Ireland recently. The chosen ECEC settings have been mainly located in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Educators identify children as having delayed language for participation in the programme. This may include children with English as an additional language. Children do not have to have an identified special need in order to participate. ETB sessions are fun and interactive. They consist of practical activities, games, song, rhymes and a series of eight story books, specifically designed for Early Talk Boost. This paper, which draws from an evaluation of the ETB intervention in Ireland, highlights the benefits of the programme for young children, including improved listening and comprehension skills, as well as improved expressive language and vocabulary skills. Benefits of the programme were also identified for early years educators (e.g., increased language knowledge, and ability to identify children in need of support with communication and language in the early years). In addition, from the perspective of speech and language therapists, increased educator knowledge may lead to a reduced caseload. In discussing the findings, we consider the interplay of influential factors associated with the impact of this Early Talk Boost intervention.

*Dr Suzanne Egan is a researcher and lecturer in the Department of Psychology, Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick. Her research examines the processes involved in imagination, thinking and reasoning, and the factors that support development in young children. Suzanne is currently co-chair of the Children's Research Network, an organisation which brings together researchers and professionals with an interest in research and evidence-based policy and practice for children and young people on the island of Ireland.*

## Aistear & Your Local Library.

**Clara Fiorentini, Marino Institute of Education**

**Ciara O'Brien, DLR Libraries**

When creating shared reading opportunities in the early years "how and what you read is of the utmost importance" (Moynihan, 2012). 'Aistear and Your Local Library' is a pilot project designed and facilitated by Clara Maria Fiorentini (Marino Institute of Education) and Ciara O'Brien (DLR Libraries) in collaboration with Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Libraries, DLR County Council and Creative Ireland. This research project aimed to explore and create increased opportunities for early childhood educators to engage with their local library in support of their application of Aistear: The Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education (2009) to support early literacy practices in early childhood education settings. Throughout the project, ECE educators attended professional learning workshops - each focusing on the application of the themes and principles of the Aistear Curriculum Framework in promoting:

- (1) the use of shared reading and playful book use in the early childhood setting
- (2) the role of the local library in developing early childhood educators' shared reading practices and playful book use.

This paper shares an insight into the development and delivery of the project to date, emerging findings from the project and an exploration of the bespoke resources designed as part of the project.

*Clara Fiorentini is a lecturer in literacy and early childhood education at Marino Institute of Education and an executive committee member of the LAI. Her research interests include effective literacy instruction and professional development for teachers and early childhood educators.*

*Ciara O'Brien is a Senior Librarian at Dalkey Library, Co. Dublin.*



Home-school partnership with migrant families: Supporting language and literacy practices.

**Barbara O'Toole & Richeal Ní Thiarnaigh**, *Marino Institute of Education*

**Barbara Skinner**, *Ulster University*

**Maria Stewart**, *St Mary's University College Belfast*

**Anne-Sophie Cocault**, *Full-Service Community Network*

Home-school partnership is often referenced as a key contributor in raising educational attainment (Epstein, 2018). However, the level of partnership experienced by parents who come to this island from other countries, and who use English as an Additional Language (EAL), can be constrained (Stewart, Skinner et al; under review). This paper examines preliminary findings from a SCoTENS-funded project that piloted a Partnership Framework between primary schools and migrant parents in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The project addressed the following questions:

1. What do parents/teachers understand by home-school partnership with migrant families?
2. What are the crucial elements of such a partnership?
3. How and to what extent does the Framework support home-school partnership with migrant families?


The project involved participants in two primary schools, Dublin, and Belfast, with three distinct phases. Stage 1 comprised a meeting between parents and teachers in each school, with focus groups to ascertain views on home-school links. A workshop introduced two activities to be trialled in school over following weeks: 'Show and Tell' (an item meaningful to a parent; linked to their culture/language/experiences) and Multilingual Storytelling, giving families the opportunity to read books and share stories in home languages Home (ulster.ac.uk). The project highlighted the 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) of migrant families by including their perspectives, languages, cultural knowledges and literacies in school life. It showcased home languages and it recognised linguistic and cultural diversity. In Stage 2 the activities were piloted in school over a 4-6-week period. Stage 3 involved a meeting of all participants together, with focus groups to ascertain the impact of the Framework and ideas for how to enhance it. This paper presents preliminary findings from the project.

**Barbara O'Toole** is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Marino Institute of Education (MIE) in Dublin, where she teaches intercultural education and global citizenship education on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. She was the founder of the Master in Education Studies (Intercultural Education) at MIE. Barbara was co-editor of the 2020 publication: *Challenging perceptions of Africa in schools – critical approaches to global justice education* (Routledge). Her research interests are in the fields of critical interculturalism, decolonial studies, linguistic diversity, and global citizenship education.

**Richeal Ní Thiarnaigh** is an assistant lecturer in Marino Institute of Education, working in the areas of Equality Studies, Professional Studies and Gaeilge on the Bachelor of Education through the Medium of Irish course (B.Oid.). She is a former primary school teacher, having worked in Irish-medium schools since qualifying. Her areas of interest include intercultural education in the context of Irish-medium schools, home-school partnership, Irish-medium education, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). She is currently engaged in SCoTENS-funded research which is piloting a home-school partnership framework between schools and migrant/minority parents.

**Barbara Skinner** is a Professor in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Education in the School of Education at Ulster University in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. Barbara teaches on a range of teacher education courses including Multicultural Education at undergraduate programmes and Language and Acquisition at postgraduate level. She is involved with doctoral supervision and examination. In addition to her role as a researcher and teacher educator she is a council member of the British Educational Research Association (BERA); a member of the Editorial Board of the BERA Blog, a BERA Publications Committee member and convenor of BERA's Language and Literacy special interest group. Barbara has established an international reputation with overseas clients, such as China, Japan, United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka through a series of tailor-made, short courses. She has been Principal Investigator on research projects funded by external sources such as the British Council, ERASMUS and UKCISA. Recently, her research interests have explored the challenges of minority language pupils and their parents - their educational attainment, home-school partnership between schools and migrant parents, language acquisition and socio-emotional wellbeing of refugee children as well as translanguaging in schools. Her passion for supporting learners from overseas to do their best during their studies in UK education contexts is an important part of her work.



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**Dr Maria Stewart** is an SEN Link Officer with the Education Authority Northern Ireland. Maria was a former Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies at Stranmillis University College Belfast and an Associate Lecturer in Pedagogy at St Mary's University College Belfast. Her PhD study focused on Home-school partnership for translingual pupils and she has developed a framework for home-school partnership for migrant families which is currently being piloted via a SCoTENS funded project. Her research interests include special educational needs, teacher well-being and learners with English as an Additional Language.

**Sophie Cocault** is an EAL/Multilingualism Project Worker with the Full-Service Community Network with over 15 years' experience teaching and training in Ireland and abroad. She supports multilingual learners in primary and secondary schools, and trains educators in the fields of EAL, literacy and the role of home languages. In her free time, she collects children's books in different languages and will read stories to whoever will listen.

**'It's not enough for the family to do all the work': Joint role of home, school, and society in celebrating and promoting linguistic diversity among migrant families.**


**Lorraine Crean**, Froebel Department Maynooth University

Ireland is a suitable context for emerging language policy discourse and research due to its changing linguistic landscape, as the number of children who speak a language other than English or Irish at home continues to increase in Irish schools (DES, 2019, 2022). Recent curriculum developments in Ireland, include the advent of the Primary Language Curriculum (NCCA, 2019) which aims to support teachers to embrace children's uniqueness by nurturing their appreciation of their home language and their understanding of language and diversity. The recently published Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023) acknowledges and harnesses the diversity of languages used in Irish primary schools, and supports the introduction of modern foreign languages in the senior primary school classes. Various publications provide practical suggestions for promoting plurilingual education and recognising home and foreign languages in the primary curriculum (DES, 2017; Little & Kirwan, 2021). The introduction of specified heritage languages in the post-primary curriculum has been a direct response to Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 (DES, 2017) which aims to improve standards of competence in languages in the Irish education system. However, such national-level language policy developments do not always transfer to micro-level school practices (Connaughton-Crean & Ó Duibhir, 2017; Mc Daid, 2011). The findings presented in this paper are part of a larger ethnographic PhD study investigating the family language policy (FLP) of five Polish families living in Ireland. Through a combination of data collection methods, insight was gained into children's experiences of language learning as well as the recognition and non-recognition of their home language, Polish, in primary and post-primary school settings. Findings from the study highlight the fact that it is crucial that the enacted curriculum in classroom contexts reflects the key messages surrounding linguistic diversity and plurilingual education as espoused in the curriculum and policy documents. Furthermore, it is suggested that an openness to plurilingual education within the education system can positively impact on societal attitudes to heritage languages, which in turn can benefit families' FLP as a result of a greater recognition of languages present in Irish society.

**Lorraine Crean** is a lecturer in Language and Literacy at the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. Her PhD research examined the family language policy of Polish families in Ireland and a particular focus of the research was on children's agentic capabilities regarding their language practices. She continues to carry out research with multilingual children in various settings, including the home and school.





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## Communication skills beyond the Infant classroom: using fairy tales, emojis and the wider community to playfully teach key vocabulary in English, Irish and Lámh.

**Tina McLaughlin & Melanie Ní Dhuinn**, *Marino Institute of Education*

The Irish language depends on the education system for survival (Harris, 2008). Within the education system the infant classroom has experienced significant change with the introduction of Aistear in 2009 and the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) (DES, 2019) from 2016-2019. In an infant education context the PLC supports the teaching of English and Irish to young children through playful, social interactions. Children with additional and/or specific communication needs are taught Lámh, a version of Irish Sign Language (ISL). Opportunities to maximise modern learning opportunities therefore exist in the form of an enhanced awareness of playful pedagogy, pupil voice and digital literacy. This paper presents findings from an action research study which integrated the teaching of English, Irish and Lámh concomitantly in a mixed-needs infant classroom, using fairy tales and emojis as stimuli for a six-week intervention, with a view to extending the learning beyond the classroom. A researcher-designed oral language intervention was implemented in a Junior/Senior Infant class in a DEIS rural, English-medium school situated on the periphery of the Gaeltacht. Data was generated using semi-structured interviews (n=3), parental questionnaires (n=12) and focus group interviews (n=23) with pupils, using convenience sampling. The researcher triangulated data from a reflective journal and data from semi-structured interviews, parental questionnaires and focus groups. Three major themes were identified including motivation and attitude, support and inclusion. Findings from the research included a positive attitude towards playful pedagogies and second language acquisition. Playful opportunities for SLA were explored in the classroom and opportunities for meaningful social interactions in the community were identified. The participants provided practical ideas for inclusive, daily use of Irish and Lámh within school and community. Additional support is however required at policy level and requires commitment, time and effort. The paper offers a practitioner perspective of creative implementation of the PLC.

*Tina McLaughlin is a primary school teacher and Master of Education Studies in Early Childhood Education graduate of Marino Institute of Education. Her research interests include language teaching and learning, language acquisition in young children and pupil voice. This study draws on research from her Master's thesis.*

## Exploiting pupils' linguistic potential: Say Yes to Languages

**Salvo Cacciato**, *Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI)*

This workshop introduces Say Yes to Languages (a language sampler module for pupils from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class in primary schools) and involves participants in activities and reflection. The wider context in which the module was launched is provided by *Languages Connect – Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026* published by the Department of Education and the redeveloped Primary Curriculum Framework, prepared by the NCCA and launched by the minister for Education in March 2023. The Strategy promotes a plurilingual and intercultural dimension across the curriculum at primary level, and the redeveloped Framework includes the introduction of modern foreign languages from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class.


The first part of the workshop will present quantitative data, describing the growth of Say Yes to Languages, which in its third school year of implementation is being facilitated in over 1200 schools.

The second part will focus on the resources that accompany the module, designed for raising awareness about the importance of embracing the diverse and rich cultural and linguistic background of pupils in our communities, and develop an acceptance of diversity and social inclusion. Teaching resources and methodologies will also be explored, with the participants actively engaged in activities.

The practical experience, together with qualitative data arising from research among the various agents involved in Say Yes to Languages, from teachers to parents and pupils, will generate a discussion on the role that foreign language education can play to support literacy in general, including in English and Irish.

*Salvo Cacciato joined Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) as an education officer in 2021. He is currently working as project leader in the context of the Say Yes to Languages sampler module for primary schools. He is a secondary school teacher of French and Italian, on secondment to PPLI after working for three years as an Advisor for Modern Foreign Languages with JCT. He has a passion for exploring the role of digital technologies in language learning and is an advocate for plurilingual education and early language learning. He is also the Chairperson of the Association of Teachers of Italian in Ireland (ATI) and a former member of the Board of Directors at Mother Tongues.*



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## Say Yes to Languages (SYTL) Programme Participation at Senior Primary: Informing MFL and Literacy Teaching and Learning (T&L), and Whole-School Practices at St. Cronan's Senior National School

**Jane O'Toole, Charlene Small & Suzanne Doyle, St. Cronan's Senior National School**

This paper presents the reflections of a school team at St. Cronan's Senior National School in relation to participation in Say Yes to Languages (SYTL) programme in Autumn 2023. The collective reflections seek to inform language and literacy T&L and whole-school practice both at local school level which in turn may provide insights for fellow practitioners at primary level. Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) T&L re-engagement at school level are articulated with reference to current language education policy and practice. The exploration of local practice in relation to emerging national policy serves to identify and inform how language policy 'plays out' at local level, and how professional school engagement can inform and enhance school language practice as an iterative process.

Firstly, the context of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) at primary level is briefly outlined prior to an overview SYTL framework in the context of current education (NCCA, 2023) and language policy (NCCA, 2019) and practice (Inspectorate, 2022). The school context is then introduced detailing (MFL) language teaching and learning practice to date. Teachers' reflections on engaging with the SYTL programme in Autumn 2023 are explored and discussed. These reflections include teacher preconceptions at the outset, interim reflections throughout the module, and concluding reflections on how the programme may potentially impact student language and literacy development, teacher engagement with language education, collaborative professionalism and other whole-school practices. It is intended that school-level reflections can potentially identify elements of optimum MFL and collaborative practice in order to develop and enhance the teaching of MFL across primary school contexts as part of schools' broader language and literacy remit and mission.

*Jane O'Toole is a teacher at St. Cronan's Senior National School with a special interest in language education at primary level. Jane is currently teaching Japanese at 5<sup>th</sup> Class level as part of the SYTL Programme. She is a member of the NCCA Primary Language Development Group and a member of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) Coordinating Group ([www.carn.org.uk](http://www.carn.org.uk))*

*Charlene Small is a teacher at St. Cronan's Senior National School with a special interest in MFL at primary level. Charlene is currently teaching French at 5<sup>th</sup> Class level as part of the SYLL Programme. A French speaker and enthusiastic Francophile, she has taught French as an extra-curricular activity for many years.*

*Suzanne Doyle is Deputy Principal and SENCO at St. Cronan's Senior National School for many years. Her areas of interest are literacy, inclusion, well-being and collaborative practices. Having recently coordinated a school library revitalisation project, Suzanne supports the development of literacy and language teaching and learning across whole-school practices.*

## Supporting pupils' plurilingual repertoires: benefits for all learners.


**Déirdre Kirwan, Independent Researcher**

Describing the integrated, plurilingual approach to language learning developed in a primary school in Dublin, where 80% of pupils came from more than fifty linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, this presentation will show how multilingual classrooms can provide a valuable source of linguistic knowledge that enriches curriculum content and consolidates curriculum learning. If schools value the linguistic repertoires of all pupils and include them in the life of the classroom, learners of English as an Additional Language (EAL) are helped to gain maximum benefit from their primary schooling.

An essential feature of the approach is the inclusion of EAL learners' home languages in classroom communication in ways that benefit all pupils. In such an environment, dialogic teaching and learning facilitates interaction between curriculum content and pupils' existing knowledge and experience. Through active participation in the learning dialogue, pupil agency is fully engaged. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of oral proficiency but also of literacy, as the skills of reading and writing support listening and speaking in many different ways.

Typical outcomes are an unusual degree of language awareness, a readiness to undertake ambitious language



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learning activities on their own initiative, and the development of high levels of age-appropriate literacy in English, Irish, French (in the last two years of primary school) and EAL pupils' home languages (included without instruction in school but with parental support at home). This approach also fosters pupils' wellbeing and promotes social cohesion.

***Déirdre Kirwan** was principal of a primary school where 80% of pupils came from more than fifty linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. With the school community, she led an integrated, plurilingual approach to education that supported the use of pupils' home languages. In 2008, Déirdre was awarded European Ambassador for Languages (Léargas). In 2009, she was conferred with a PhD from Trinity College Dublin for her research in the area of language education. She is a contributor to the NCCA in the area of language education and to the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) on the topic of plurilingual skills in early years' language learning.*

### Examining Student Agency in Literacy Across Elementary School Sites in Ireland and the United States.

**Margaret Vaughn**, Washington State University  
**Eithne Kennedy**, DCU Institute of Education

Educational research suggests that supporting student agency can significantly increase student engagement (Mameli et al., 2022; Reeve, 2012) and improve student learning outcomes (Vaughn et al., 2022; Zeiser et al., 2018). In school, agency is defined as, "a student's ability to have ideas, intentions, and to exert influence and take actions to expand the learning context" (Vaughn, 2020, p. 115). Opportunities to support student agency in school has drawn widespread attention internationally. In Ireland, school, teacher, and child agency feature prominently in the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2020), which positions educators as agentic professionals and children as unique, caring and capable agentic learners. Agency is also implicit in the learning outcomes related to motivation and engagement in the Primary Language Curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 2019). In the US, educational reform efforts suggest policy reform focused on supporting student agency particularly in the field of literacy (e.g., National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, CCSS) is critical in developing readers and writers. In the current study, elementary students in grades 3-5 (n = 320) across contexts (Ireland and the US) completed the Student Agency Profile (StAP) (Vaughn, 2019) to assess their agency in relation to literacy in the classroom. In this paper presentation, the discussion focuses on students' responses to questions about their agency as well as overall portrait comparisons between students across various schools and contexts. Discussion highlights the importance of cross-cultural explorations of agency to shed light on how students have a voice in their decision-making when it comes to literacy. Policy implications are shared respective of individual contexts as well as a proposal across the field to engage in further exploration of student agency.

***Dr Margaret Vaughn** is professor of education at Washington State University. Her research focuses on supporting student agency in schools and explores strategies to advance equitable and adaptive educational practices.*


***Dr Eithne Kennedy** is associate professor and programme chair of the Master of Education in Literacy Professional Practice at Dublin City University. She is the director of the Write to Read longitudinal research project.*

### In Pursuit of Critical Literacy: Understanding the Experiences of Teachers in Northern Ireland.

**Donna Hazzard & Geraldine Magennis-Clarke**, St Mary's University College, Belfast  
**Eithne Kennedy**, DCU institute of Education

This presentation will reflect on the impact of a successful and award winning critical literacy project, conceived and designed by Dr Donna Hazzard. The project has been carried out in Northern Ireland primary and post-primary schools annually, from 2017 to present. In the academic year 2021 - 2022, approximately 120 schools and over 9,000 pupils participated. The study adopted a qualitative research design. Research methods included questionnaires to participating teachers supported by several semi-structured interviews. Data was analysed and coded thematically. The impact of the Young News Readers Critical Literacy project is reflected in its ongoing success. Since its conception in 2017, this Northern Irish project has been taken up annually by approximately 120 primary and post-primary schools, involving 9,000



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Key Stage Two and Three children and young people. Though data shows varying levels of knowledge and understanding of critical literacy, this innovative critical literacy project is having a positive impact on teachers' engagement with the nebulous and complex concept that is critical literacy.

The data signals a philosophical assertion and commitment among some participants to transform pedagogy to empower children and young people by equipping them with the knowledge, behaviour and skills needed to recognise power relations in their everyday lives. Participants communicated the need for a curriculum and classroom practice that is grounded in the lives of students, critical in its approach to the world, hopeful, joyful, kind, academically engaging and rigorous. All of which are key attributes of having a critical literacy perspective. As a transformative pedagogy, critical literacy has potential to develop tendencies and sensibilities that will help create active, critically conscious citizens. Our goal is to develop and extend engagement with critical literacy across schools in Ireland and beyond.

**Dr Donna Hazzard** is a principal lecturer at St Mary's University College, Belfast, where she has taught for twenty-six years. Donna's professional roles include Literacy Course Team Leader and Programme Director for the MEd. Her research interests focus mainly on critical literacy and the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Donna has been the Northern Ireland representative on the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) from 2005.

**Dr Geraldine Magennis-Clarke** is a senior lecturer in Literacy and Education at St. Mary's University College, Belfast. Her research interests focus particularly on the teaching of reading in the early years and children's literature. More broadly, she is interested in comparative approaches to education, including those systems within the UK/ROI and the United States of America. Most recently (2017-2019), she fulfilled a Visiting Professorship role, teaching Elementary Literacy in the Education Department at Valparaiso University in Indiana, USA. She is a member of the Literacy Advisory Group in the north of Ireland and founder of the Science of Reading, Northern Ireland (SoRNI) online group. She is also a member of the Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI).

**Dr Eithne Kennedy** is associate professor (Literacy Studies) and Programme Chair of the Master of Education in Literacy Professional Practice (MEdLPP) in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education. As the director of the Write to Read research initiative a longitudinal University and School literacy project she also works collaboratively with schools and communities to create powerful literacy environments that motivate and engage children as readers, writers and thinkers. She is the recipient of the International Literacy Association's Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award (2010) and DCU President's Award for Public Engagement (2014). She is a past president of the Literacy Association of Ireland and a current executive committee member.


## Reading for pleasure and social justice – what might the PIRLS 2021 results mean for Ireland?

**Niamh Savage, Mary Immaculate College**

"The headlines had it: 'Irish primary children excel in international reading test' (Irish times 16/5/23) 'Ireland's 10-11 year olds among top in world for reading, new study reveals' (Irish Independent 16/5/23). Placing second of 57 countries in PIRLS 2021 was a huge achievement and widely celebrated in the media. Given the coverage it received, you might conclude that there are no clouds in Irish reading skies. However, the data indicates that reading enjoyment levels have decreased; 23% did not like reading compared to 15% in 2016. Could this be the beginning of a descending spiral in reading for pleasure (RfP) akin to that revealed by PISA 2009-2018? Children choose to read outside school because they like it (Cremin et al. 2022). It is a simple habit with significant implications. The social and cultural benefits of RfP are recognised in Article 17 of the UNCRC. Volitional readers enjoy academic and personal affordances (Sullivan & Brown 2013; Torrrpa et al. 2020; Kidd & Castano 2019; Oatley 2016). The will to RfP positively influences reading skills (OECD 2002). It can mediate social disadvantage (Ibid. 2010). Downward trends identified in recent comparative studies impact the most vulnerable children disproportionately (Gross 2021), making RfP a social justice issue. Teachers' choice of pedagogy impacts student reading engagement (OECD 2021). However, mention of RfP pedagogy in Ireland is scant and as a result it is a poorly understood term. Given that the PLC (2019) supports RfP and there is a large and growing body of research available to us, we just need to interact with it and make the findings visible. This paper explores the myriad ways Irish teachers can utilise and promote RfP pedagogy so that students can harness the power and pleasure of reading in all its forms.

**Niamh Savage** is a SPd in Literacy Education candidate in Mary Immaculate College under the supervision of Dr Josephine Brady. She is literacy lead, SET and acting Deputy Principal in Realt na Mara NS, Dunmore East, Co. Waterford. Reading for pleasure is her personal and professional passion.



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## The Primary Language Curriculum/ Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile - Supporting Children's Entire Linguistic Repertoire.

**Gillian O'Connor & Deirdre Ní Fhearghail**, *National Council for Curriculum and Assessment*

The Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) (Department of Education, 2019) was introduced for all primary and special schools in 2019 and was developed, in part, in response to the changing linguistic and cultural landscape of Irish classrooms. Underpinning the PLC is the recognition that every child has their own unique linguistic repertoire which is shaped by their experiences since birth. As such the PLC seeks to support all children on their language-learning journeys, in English, Irish, and other languages.

Reference to 'other languages' in the PLC enables teachers to draw on and support the linguistic abilities of all children and to provide opportunities for them to explore, examine and compare languages, including home languages and languages of their communities. To promote this approach to language teaching and learning, the PLC outlines some big ideas to support teachers in their practice, such as language awareness and the transfer of skills. Underpinning these ideas is the notion that when children develop skills in one language, they are not just learning the skills of that language, but developing a common underlying proficiency which enables them to transfer language skills and learning strategies to other languages.

Building on this existing recognition of the benefits of harnessing children's home languages as a resource in the classroom, and, aiming to further develop the linguistic repertoires of all children, the Primary Curriculum Framework (Department of Education, 2023) proposes the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) for stages 3 and 4 of primary school. The introduction of an MFL curriculum for stages 3 and 4 will further support an approach to language learning where children are encouraged to draw on the full depth and breadth of their knowledge and experience of language.

**Gillian O'Connor** is an Education Officer at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Prior to joining NCCA Gillian worked as a primary school teacher and a special education teacher in a variety of school contexts including multi-grade, single grade, and special school settings. Having completed postgraduate studies in special education at the University of Galway and an MSc in Psychology of Education at the University of Bristol Gillian joined the NCCA to contribute to the work on curriculum and assessment developments across early childhood and primary education.

**Deirdre Ní Fhearghail** is the Education Officer for Gaeilge (Primary) at the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and her work focuses primarily on curriculum and assessment developments within Language. Before taking up this role, Deirdre worked as a mainstream and special education teacher for a number of years in both English and Irish-medium schools. During this time, Deirdre completed a BSc in Psychology with the Open University as well as an MEd in Literacy Professional Practice with Dublin City University.


## Traschur Léitheoireachta ó Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile go Sonraíochtaí na Sraithe Sóisearaí.

**Róisín Ní Mhulláin**, *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)*

Sa pháipéar seo tabharfar cur síos ar ról na litríochta Gaeilge sna ranganna sinsireacha sa bhunscoil agus sa chéad bhliain san iar-bhunscoil mar atá sonraithe i gCuraclam Teanga na Bunscoile agus i Sonraíocht na Sraithe Sóisearaí. I gCuraclam Teanga na Bunscoile leagtar an-bhéim ar chur chuige comhtháite, ar aistriú scileanna agus coincheapa áirithe ón gcéad teanga go dtí an dara teanga agus tógtar ar an gcur chuige seo i Sonraíocht na Sraithe Sóisearaí. Pléifear ról na bhfíor-leabhar Gaeilge i múineadh na léitheoireachta agus na cleachtais mholta bunscoile agus iar-bhunscoile le litríocht a chur i láthair, a phlé agus forbairt litearthachta agus cumas léitheoireachta. Breathnófar ar aistear litríochta agus léitheoireachta an pháiste/ an scoláire i Rang 5/6 agus Bliain 1, ag aistriú ón mbunscoil go dtí an iar-bhunscoil agus tabharfar spléachadh ar na dúshláin agus deiseanna atá ann do pháistí/ scoláirí agus do mhúinteoirí ag an dá leibheál dul i ngleic leis seo.

Tá an-spéis ag **Dr Róisín Ní Mhulláin** i mbealai le léitheoireacht agus litríocht Ghaeilge na n-óg a spreagadh agus a chur chun cinn. Tá sí ag obair leis An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta.



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Forbairt foclóra thar dhá theanga.

**Jacqueline de Brún**, *Institiúid Oideachais OCBÁC*

Aithnítear an nasc idir eolas ar fhoclóir agus tuiscint na léitheoireachta. I scoileanna tumoideachais in Éirinn is T2 í an Ghaeilge ag formhór na ndaltaí. Fágann sé sin go mbíonn ar mhúinteoirí dul i ngleic le forbairt foclóra mar chuid lárnach de theagasc na litearthachta. Bíonn focail ar eolas ó bhéal, i bhfoirm scríofa, ag leibhéal gabhálach agus ag leibhéal táirgiúlach, agus is féidir réimse eolais a bheith ag duine ar fhocail. Pléitear trí leibhéal foclóra (Beck et al., 1997) sa Bhéarla leis an eolas a bhriseadh síos d'oideachasóirí ach níl a leithéid de threoir ann don Ghaeilge. Sa chur i láthair seo beidh cur síos ar fhorbairtí ar thógáil foclóra a tharlaíonn le daltaí bunscoile aois 9-12 i scoileanna tumoideachais in Éirinn. Déanfar iniúchadh ar na cleachtas ranga a bhíonn ann sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla agus na himpleachtaí a bhaineann leis na cleachtas sin. Pléifear na féidearthachtaí atá ann le cur le foclóir sa T1 agus sa T2 agus an traschur a tharlaíonn le húsáid straitéisí. Molfar straitéisí a bhaineann le feachtas teanga, idir eolas fónéimeach agus eolas moirféimeach, agus an nasc idir an léitheoireacht agus cur le foclóir sna hardranganna bunscoile. I measc straitéisí molta, pléifear eolas ar fhocail, fiosrú focal, straitéisí le dul i ngleic le focail nua agus straitéisí le cur le foclóir nua. Fiosrófar fosta na féidearthachtaí atá ann eolas ar fhoclóir a mheas go múnlaiteach le treoir a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí agus oideachasóirí ó thaobh planála de.

*Is léachtóir í An Dr Jacqueline de Brún in Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath. I ndiaidh di bheith ina múinteoir i ngaelscoileanna chaith sí seal mar Chomhairleoir Oideachais san Áisaonad i gColáiste Ollscoile Naomh Mhuire agus seal mar Oifigeach Oideachais leis an Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta. Tá dhá úrscéal do pháistí scríofa aici chomh maith le scrípteanna do chlár theilifíse do pháistí. Tá MA aici san aistriúchán agus PhD aici ar léitheoireacht na Gaeilge sa chóras tumoideachais.*


"Why wouldn't it be possible?" Deaf children in Gaelscoileanna.

**Elizabeth Mathews**, *DCU Institute of Education*

In spite of the growth in pupil-enrolment in Gaelscoileanna (Irish medium schools) in the last decade (Department of Education and Skills, 2016), research on Gaelscoileanna is sparse and practically none of that limited research addresses the issue of inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN). Kavanagh and Hickey (2013) note that there are often assumptions made that Gaelscoileanna pupil-profiles are relatively homogenous. Indeed, having a special educational need is sometimes the cause of transition from a Gaelscoil to an English-medium school (Rose et al, 2015). Furthermore, many children with SEN enrolled in English-medium schools can apply for an exemption from Irish which is otherwise compulsory (Department of Education and Science, 2009), and Irish is not delivered at all in many special schools catering for children with SEN. Given this, it is somewhat surprising that we have recently seen the emergence of children who are deaf being enrolled in Gaelscoileanna. Given the difficulties usually associated with first language acquisition for this cohort, heritage language immersion programmes are not ordinarily considered a suitable placement. This paper presents findings from an exploratory, qualitative study examining the emerging phenomenon of deaf children enrolling in Gaelscoileanna, contextualising it in the literature on deaf children and heritage language education, as well as the relevant policies governing education in the Republic of Ireland.

*Dr Elizabeth Mathews is an Associate Professor with the School of Inclusive and Special Education at DCU St. Patrick's Campus, where she specialises in the area of deaf education. She completed her MA in Deaf Education at Gallaudet University, Washington DC (2005) and her PhD with Maynooth University (2011). Previously, she was the coordinator of the Deaf Education Centre in Cabra, Dublin, sat on the Board of Management of Holy Family School for the Deaf in Cabra and is currently the co-chair of the Education Partnership Group. She is the project lead for the Irish Sign Language STEM Glossary Project along with a number of other research projects. She has also designed and delivered a pathway into primary teaching for Deaf ISL-users. Her recent research publications include work on power in the deaf education system, literacy and deafness, socio-emotional development of deaf children, life skills development in vulnerable deaf adults, and teacher self-efficacy.*



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The linguistic profiles of readers with low literacy attainment in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools.

**Emily Barnes**, *Coláiste na Tríonóide*

This paper will provide insight into the linguistic profiles of young readers in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools who have low literacy attainment, with a view to fostering a discussion on how to provide individualised support. This paper will draw on data pertaining to 240 Irish-medium and Gaeltacht students in Senior Infants and First Class. Of this full sample, 16 Senior Infant students had scores at or below the 10th percentile in Irish word reading, and 16 First Class students had scores at or below the 10th percentile in either Irish or English word reading. The profiles of these students on assessments of phonemic awareness, short-term verbal memory and speed of processing will be analysed. At the group level, the results will illustrate that there is a diversity of linguistic profiles among those who have low literacy attainment. At the individual level, however, results show that learners have similar profiles in Irish and English. This is in keeping with the predictions of the Common Underlying Proficiency model. Vignettes will be used to illustrate ways to link information from learner profiles to specific supports for their literacy development in both Irish and English.

**Dr Emily Barnes** is an Assistant Professor in Language Education in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. She is interested in early literacy in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht pupils as well as developing resources for students who are neurodiverse.



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## CONCURRENT SESSION 3 - ABSTRACTS

**Standardised Testing: Perspectives of Polish- and Lithuanian- speaking Children and their Parents in Irish Primary Schools.**

**Paula Fitzsimmons, Holy Family JNS & Trinity College Dublin**

Education policy documents over recent years have enhanced the standing and profile of standardised tests in Irish primary schools. The Department of Education (DE) requires schools to administer standardised tests in English reading and mathematics to practically all pupils at the end of 2nd, 4th and 6th classes. Furthermore, schools are required to report the results to their Boards of Management and the DE, and to share results with parents via report cards. Such testing occurs in a context of increasing linguistic diversity in the pupil cohort in Irish primary schools and amidst strong concerns about the implications of monolingual testing of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Issues of equity in assessment are well established in the literature (Creagh, 2015). Inequities are compounded when results are widely shared and used for purposes beyond internal school planning as the associated sense of accountability drives 'pressure to perform' among pupils, parents and teachers. The study upon which this paper is based used narrative inquiry to examine the experiences of 18 Polish- and Lithuanian-speaking children and their parents with standardised testing in four primary schools in the Fingal Area of North County Dublin in 2022. The study is informed by critical theory, critical intercultural education and radical theories of equality in education (Cummins, 2015; Baker & Lynch, 2005). Analysis to date indicate the power of standardised testing in reinforcing monolingual norms and a testing regime that risks plurilingual children being positioned as deficient rather than competent across complex linguistic repertoires. Implications for policy and practice include the critical need for professional development in the area of culturally responsive assessment and in the interpretation and communication of standardised test results to pupils and parents.

*Paula Fitzsimons is a primary school teacher. She has spent most of her career teaching in junior primary schools in North County Dublin where she has had the opportunity to work as a mainstream class teacher, a support teacher and an EAL teacher. She holds a B.Ed and Post Graduate Diploma in Learning Support from St. Patrick's College (DCU), a MES in Intercultural Education from Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and she is currently working towards a PhD with the School of Education in Trinity College Dublin (TCD).*

**Large-scale assessments: What have we learned from NAMER and PIRLS 2021?**


**Emer Delaney, Joanne Kiniry, Alice Duggan, Sarah McAteer, Lorraine Gilleece & Sharon M. Nelis, Educational Research Centre**

Irish primary school pupils participated in two large-scale literacy assessments in 2021: the National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER; Second class) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS; Fifth class). The studies are complementary: NAMER is based on the Irish curriculum; PIRLS allows for international comparisons. In an accessible way, this symposium summarises key findings about reading achievement from the two studies. It includes a specific focus on achievement in Urban DEIS schools. In NAMER 2021, the average reading performance of Second class pupils was similar to that of their counterparts in 2014; a small reduction in scale scores between 2014 and 2021 is not statistically significant. This indicates stability in reading performance at Second class, despite COVID-19 disruption to schooling. Results are discussed in relation to National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy targets. In PIRLS, pupils in Ireland demonstrated strong reading achievement relative to counterparts internationally. Many countries saw performance decline between 2016 and 2021, but in Ireland the average reading level remained stable. Results are described using the PIRLS benchmarks, which outline the comprehension skills of pupils at various proficiency levels. In NAMER and PIRLS, average reading scores were significantly lower in Urban DEIS schools than in non-DEIS schools. In both studies, the gap between the average reading score of pupils in Urban Band 1 and (Urban) Non-DEIS schools was large with a smaller gap evident between average scores in Urban Band 2 schools and (Urban) Non-DEIS schools. The national target to reduce percentages of low reading achievers in Urban Band 1 schools was not met but the target for high reading achievers was met. In summary, findings show no evidence of a decline in average reading achievement in recent years but an ongoing need to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to reduce socio-economic inequalities.

*Joanne Kiniry is a Research Associate at the Educational Research Centre (ERC), specialising in Reading Literacy and Assessment Development. Joanne was project manager for the 2021 National Assessments of Mathematics and*





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English Reading. Her principal research interests lie in the area of reading comprehension and assessment construction.

**Alice Duggan** is a Research Assistant at the ERC. She has worked on a variety of projects, the most recent being the National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading 2021. She has a particular interest in educational inequalities and qualitative research.

**Dr Emer Delaney** is a Research Fellow at the ERC. She was the national coordinator for the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021 and sits on the international Reading Development Group for PIRLS 2026. She also oversees the ERC's test development programme, with a particular interest in assessment of literacy.

**Sarah McAteer** is a Research Assistant at the ERC. She was part of the team responsible for PIRLS 2021 and has previously worked on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). She is particularly interested in how factors associated with the home environment are associated with learners' outcomes.

**Dr Lorraine Gilleece** is a Research Fellow at the ERC. She currently oversees work on educational disadvantage at the Centre, in particular work on the evaluation of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme. She has recently led the ERC's work on the development of an evaluation framework for teachers' professional learning. Her research interests centre on using large-scale assessment data to explore equity in education.

**Dr Sharon M. Nelis** is a Research Associate at the ERC and is working on the evaluation of DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools). She has recently worked on secondary analyses of PISA 2018 and the National Assessments 2021 looking at achievement gaps between pupils in DEIS and Non-DEIS schools.

## Ten Steps to Reading Success in Second level DEIS schools.


**Dr Aideen Cassidy, DCU Institute of Education**

Ten Steps to Reading Success in Second Level DEIS schools in Ireland.

The purpose of the research was to explore what strategies are appropriate and effective in improving literacy at second level in schools that cater for large numbers of educationally disadvantaged schools in Ireland. 35 schools implemented the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) Literacy Medley as part of the JCSP literacy Strategy which involved implementing at least three reading initiatives over one academic year and setting up a reading space. Over one thousand students were involved in the study and over one hundred and fifty teachers. A reading survey of 3,653 students, took place to gather perspectives on reading while teachers' and librarians' feedback was gathered through interviews and focus groups. Standardised test information was also gathered from 700 students to establish reading progress which supplemented teacher observations. Ten steps to success have emerged from this study. These include implementing a range of motivational reading interventions supported by CPD, time to read and access to books in attractive reading spaces. All participating teachers and librarians agreed that the sustained focus on literacy not only improved the literacy scores and the students' attitude and motivation to read, but also created a reading culture in schools.

**Dr Aideen Cassidy** is an Assistant Professor of Education and Director of School Placement on the Bachelor of Religious Education and English / History / Music (BREHM) programme at the School of Policy and Practice, DCU Institute of Education. Aideen started her teaching career in Finglas before teaching in Jobstown in Tallaght. After thirteen years she was appointed national coordinator of the Junior Certificate School Programme, a programme to support the curriculum delivery to students at risk of early school leaving and worked in the Curriculum Development Unit for fifteen years. She, with a team, designed and delivered a national CPD programme for all of the junior cycle subjects along with full school staff CPD in teaching and learning, assessment and literacy / numeracy across the curriculum. Over this period the JCSP Literacy and Numeracy strategy was put in place under the National literacy and numeracy strategy as well as the JCSP Library project where state of the art libraries were built in 30 disadvantaged schools and are run by a team of librarians who received bespoke training in literacy and curriculum at second level. The impact of the literacy and numeracy interventions, along with the library programme, were researched by Aideen and the team of researchers. Her research has focused on adolescent learning in the context of educational disadvantage. Before joining the academic staff of DCU she was principal of an all boys second level school in Finglas for twelve years.



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## Effective Research-based Pedagogies to Raise Literacy Levels in Early Childhood and Primary Settings.

**Geraldine French & Eithne Kennedy**, *DCU Institute of Education*  
**Gerry Shiel**, *Educational Research Centre*

This symposium is based on three papers that form part of a set of systematic literature reviews commissioned by the Department of Education, as part of a review and updating of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Following a brief overview of the research strategy, the three papers are presented, with reference to key research findings, implications for policy and recommendations for classroom practice.

The first paper focuses literacy development in early childhood. It addresses the key pedagogical strategies of play, shared storybook reading, opportunities to communicate through mark making and emergent writing and a mix of child and adult-initiated interactive activities to support young children's language and emergent literacy.

The second paper describes research that supports the development of phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and writing, with a particular focus on writing, its connections to oral language and reading and the orchestration of strategies across these areas.

The third paper addresses effective approaches to the formative assessment of reading and writing, including sources of feedback (including peer- and self-assessment), quality of feedback, use of learning trajectories or pathways to assess pupils' progress, the impact of tasks that reveal pupils' thinking, and the pedagogical content knowledge that teachers require to implement different approaches to formative assessment of literacy.

Time will be set aside for participants to engage in dialogue about the findings and their implications for raising literacy levels.

**Dr Geraldine French** is an Associate Professor, the Head of School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education, the Programme Chair of the Master of Education in Early Childhood Education, and Senior Fellow of Advance HE. Recent publications include the Literature Review to Support the Updating of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, and the Literature Review to Update the Literacy/Digital Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

**Dr Eithne Kennedy** is Associate Professor (Literacy Studies) and Programme Chair of the Master of Education in Literacy Professional Practice (MEdLPP) in the School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education. As the director of the Write to Read research initiative a longitudinal University and School literacy project she also works collaboratively with schools and communities to create powerful literacy environments that motivate and engage children as readers, writers and thinkers. She is the recipient of the International Literacy Association's Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award (2010) and DCU President's Award for Public Engagement (2014). She is a past president of the Literacy Association of Ireland and a current executive committee member.


**Dr Gerry Shiel** has been a Research Fellow at the ERC since 1993 and has made significant contributions to standardised testing and large-scale national and international assessments. Currently, he is working on the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme evaluation study. He holds a B. Ed. (NUI St Patrick's College), an M. S. Ed. in Reading (Western Illinois University), and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction/Literacy (University of Texas at Austin).

## Oral Reading Fluency in Action.

**Gene Mehigan**, *Marino Institute of Education*  
**Aisling Cannon**, *Glasnevin ETNS*

Songs, poems, stories, jokes, tongue twisters and trips to an imaginary café... what have they got to do with Oral Reading Fluency? Oral Reading Fluency has often been misunderstood to mean fast reading but latest research informs us that there are key features of fluent reading. These features are accuracy, automaticity and oral reading prosody which, when taken together, facilitate the reader's construction of meaning.



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This presentation is designed to unpack the key components of Oral Reading Fluency and equip teachers with hands on, practical ways to support their pupils to develop fluent reading. The latest research in the field will be explored along with examples of how it can be practically implemented. The intention is to share ways in which we can bring back the joy to reading lessons whilst having a positive impact upon pupils' fluency skills. Examples shared will be most relevant to those working with children in First or Second Class or within a support setting. The presentation may also be of interest to those who wish to begin using research to inform their own practice more broadly.

**Dr Gene Mehigan** is Vice President for Education & Strategic Development at MIE. Gene has been a primary school teacher, a literacy specialist, an educational consultant, and a teacher educator over the past thirty years. He completed his Master's in Education at St Patrick's College, Dublin and was awarded his PhD in Education from University College Cork. His research interests are in teacher education, early literacy development 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 a number of education and policy organisations. He is past President of both the Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI) the Irish Learning Support Association and a former chair of the Standing Committee of Heads of Education and Teacher Unions.

**Aisling Cannon** is a primary school teacher with teaching and leadership experience in the UK and Ireland. She completed both her initial teacher education and Master's in Education Studies at Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. Her research interests are in early years education and her Master's research focussed on developing oral reading fluency with pupils in First Class.

Reading Achievement in Ireland: What's going well and what still needs attention.

**Jennifer O'Sullivan & Clara Fiorentini**, Marino Institute of Education

**Treasa Bowe**, Carrigtwohill Community National School

**Deirdre O'Toole**, St Seachnall's National School

In 2016 and 2021, PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) results highlighted the reading achievement of 10-year-old children in Ireland as being significantly higher than most participating countries. While this is an achievement worth celebrating, it is also an opportune time to take stock and evaluate why substantial proportions of pupils in Ireland are achieving High (67%) and Advanced (27%) Benchmarks in reading. This symposium will explore and consider factors that may be contributing to Ireland's high rankings in recent PIRLS assessments. Factors such as the quality and retention of teachers, initial teacher education, literacy-related national policies, and classroom instruction will be explored in an attempt to determine the factors contributing to Ireland's high achievement in reading. Areas for improvement will also be highlighted, in particular, the gap in reading achievement between pupils with the lowest and highest SES which continue to be very pronounced.

**Dr Jen O'Sullivan** is a lecturer in literacy education in Marino Institute of Education and is a member of the LAI executive committee. Her specific area of interest focuses on the development of young children's early literacy skills.

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

**Dr Treasa Bowe** is a primary teacher in Carrigtwohill Community National School, Co. Cork. Her interests lie in effective literacy instruction for senior primary students.


**Clara Fiorentini** is a lecturer in literacy and early childhood education at Marino Institute of Education and an executive committee member of the LAI. Her research interests include effective literacy instruction and professional development for teachers and early childhood educators.

Looking at the Primary Language Curriculum through the lens of UDL.

**Caroline McGarry**, Primary School Teacher/Teacher Educator

This paper will examine the Primary Language Curriculum through the lens of the Universal Design for Learning. The Primary Language Curriculum supports an inclusive approach to language learning by



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recognising that language learning is a developmental process and that all children "progress at differing rates along a continuum of learning and development". Learning outcomes provide teachers with the autonomy to make decisions based on the priority learning needs of their students and choose the approach, pace and sequence best suited to their individual learners. This paper will examine how an appropriate understanding and use of learning outcomes can align with the principles of UDL and will provide examples as to how learning outcomes can support multiple means of engagement, representation and expression. It will argue that learning outcomes have the potential to provide equal opportunities for all learners in line with the overall aim of UDL.

**Dr Caroline McGarry** has taught in a DEIS 1 school for 18 years. As part of her Masters in Education, she has conducted research into the field of educational disadvantage. Her PhD in Education "In Between the Lines of the Primary Language Curriculum" examined the process of curriculum change as well as the importance of continuous professional development during curriculum dissemination. Caroline has been seconded to the PDST for four years as a Literacy Advisor. She recently completed her Facilitator's Badge in the Universal Design for Learning.

Action research in Irish schools to improve the literacy standards and school experience of children and young people from Traveller and Roma communities.

**Caitríona Martyn, Aoife O'Connor & Fiona Clancy,**  
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

In 2017, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS; 2017-2024) was launched as a whole-of-Government approach to improving the lives of Travellers and Roma in Ireland. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) within the Department of Education was tasked with supporting teachers in the pilot project schools in the implementation of action research projects which aim to improve the literacy standards and learning experience of children and young people from Traveller and Roma communities. This symposium will feature presentations from three of the pilot sites. Dr Caitríona Martyn who will present on the findings of two action research projects (a 12 week and a 9 month literacy intervention) in a DEIS Urban Band 1 primary school in Galway. Dr Aoife O'Connor who will present on the findings of two 12 week action research projects in targeted primary and post-primary schools in the Wexford pilot site. Fiona Clancy who will present on the findings of a 12 week action research project in targeted DEIS Urban Band 1 primary and post-primary schools in the North Dublin pilot site. Following the presentations, implications of the findings will be discussed in terms of bridging the research-practice gap in our schools, giving equal access to quality and evidence-based literacy interventions, and improving literacy outcomes and educational experiences to influence future Department of Education policy on how best to support Traveller and Roma children and young people.

**Caitríona Martyn, Aoife O'Connor and Fiona Clancy** are members of the Literacy Working Group in the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). This group is actively engaged in action research projects which aim to support the literacy skills of all children in our primary and post-primary schools. The group is also involved in supporting teacher professional learning and the promotion of collaborative and evidence-based practice in schools.

Fostering a culture of writing in the classroom/Cultúr scríbhneoireacht a chothú i do Sheomra Ranga.


**Caoimhe Doyle, Liz O'Brien & Maire O'Dea, Oide**

This engaging and hands-on workshop offers valuable support to participants as they delve into the PDST resource manual titled "Fostering a culture of writing in the classroom/Cultúr Scríbhneoireachta a chothú i do Sheomra Ranga." The workshop encourages participants to examine the essential classroom conditions necessary for nurturing confident and motivated writers in both English and Gaeilge.

Participants will explore a range of techniques that enable students to write for diverse audiences and purposes across various genres. The workshop will provide insights into strategic writing instruction, emphasizing the significance of using picture books as mentor texts to highlight the craft involved in writing.

Furthermore, the workshop will showcase how the approaches demonstrated and explored align with the Learning Outcomes of the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC). Participants will gain a comprehensive



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understanding of how these strategies and learning experiences can effectively support students' writing development while aligning with the PLC.

**Caoimhe Doyle** is a primary school teacher with over ten years' experience teaching all class levels. She is currently seconded to the Oide Primary Language Curriculum team. She is passionate about the teaching of literacy and has been luckily enough to have spent the last four years supporting teachers through workshops, seminars and Sustained Support. She also completed her post graduate in leadership and management with Maynooth university last year.

**Liz O'Brien** is a primary school teacher with over 25 years' experience both in the mainstream classroom and special education. She is currently on secondment to the Oide PLC team. She has a strong interest in all areas of language and literacy learning, teaching and assessment, including EAL, Assessment for Learning and the promotion of Dialogic Classroom Practices. She will complete a Masters in Education with UCC in 2024.

**Máire O'Dea** is a primary school teacher, currently seconded to the Oide Literacy Team where she provides in-school sustained support on all areas of the Primary Language Curriculum. She is interested in the area of Oral Language and has recently completed a Masters in Education.

### Motivating Readers and Maximizing Learning with Engaging Reading Approaches.

**Lisa J. Polk, Sam Houston State University**

Motivating and engaging readers by integrating interactive literacy approaches can provide opportunities to maximize learning for all students. Emphasizing the facets of social, motivational, and conceptual learning, Engagement Theory (Guthrie, 2004) and Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) promote learning in contexts of interactions and meaningful conversations centered on content or texts. Information in this session shares how engaging reading approaches such as learning quests and escape room activities provide opportunities for all students to grow in reading skills, content knowledge, translanguaging, and digital literacy as they collaborate within a game-based learning context. A variety of texts integrated into these game-based activities and designed around specific content in synergistic fashion, provide an increase of interaction with students and the text as well as enjoyable encounters with content that could otherwise be challenging for students to manage independently. Situated in collaborative learning environments, teachers can actively facilitate groups of students and provide scaffolds as needed throughout the learning process which is supported in Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, students' successful reading experiences increase motivation, engagement, and achievement (Guthrie et al., 2012).

**Lisa J. Polk, Ed.D.** is a lifetime learner and educator. Her background includes over thirty years in education predominately serving post-primary level students as well as integrated reading and writing methods courses in adult/higher education. She also served as a special education department head for several years and as a multi-level reading curriculum specialist for the past six years. Lisa enjoys working with students and educators to implement engaging learning experiences for all learners.

### Unravelling Academic Language: A Nuanced Approach to the teaching Academic Language Development in Primary Schools.

**Shane Leonard, DCU Institute of Education**

Over the past three decades, numerous researchers have made efforts to define Academic Language. Initially, it was believed that Academic Language was more intricate and cognitively demanding compared to the language children use outside the school environment (Cummins, 1980). However, as research in this field has progressed, it has become evident that characterising Academic Language as superior to everyday language is an oversimplification as it fails to recognise the complexities involved in acquiring everyday language, which serves children well both before and after they enter formal schooling. As children transition from primary school, their academic success becomes reliant on their proficiency in using Academic Language. Academic Language refers to the language used by pupils to explain complex ideas, abstract concepts, and demonstrate critical thinking (Zweirs, 2014). Many people mistakenly assume that Academic Language is limited to a lengthy list of specialised vocabulary words like photosynthesis, onomatopoeia, or electrolyte. While vocabulary indeed plays a crucial role, it is important to shed light on other dimensions of Academic Language. This paper aims to present a more nuanced perspective on AL, viewing language usage as a continuum that incorporates both conversational and academic styles depending



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on the purpose and audience. To effectively target AL in classrooms, it is necessary to focus instruction on aspects such as morphology, pragmatics, vocabulary, and semantics. Once this foundation is established, the paper will explore how AL fits within the Primary Language Curriculum, with a specific emphasis on the learning outcomes from the Oral Language strand. Following this theoretical discussion, practical ideas will be provided to foster and develop AL in primary schools with a particular emphasis on pupils from 3rd-6th class. These suggestions will enable teachers to create an environment that encourages pupils to engage with Academic Language effectively, thereby enhancing their overall academic proficiency.

**Shane Leonard** is Team Leader for the Primary Language Curriculum, overseeing the nationwide implementation of this curriculum in schools. In 2017, he earned his M.Ed, delving into the application of a functional grammar approach to enhance the oral narratives of first-class students. Presently, he is pursuing a PhD at the DCU Institute of Education. His doctoral research focuses on developing an intervention for oral academic language. Specifically, he aims to design an intervention that supports teachers in cultivating and explicitly teaching academic language across various content areas of the curriculum, with a particular emphasis on 3rd-4th class.



Literacy Association of Ireland  
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