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University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

BRIDGING · THE · GAP



BRIDGING THE GAP

EVALUATION REPORT 2006



BRIDGING THE GAP

EVALUATION REPORT 2006

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Bridging the Gap Project
Education Department
University College Cork

February 2007





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Message from the President of UCC

Prof Michael Murphy

I am very pleased to welcome the publication of the *Bridging the Gap* Evaluation Report 2006. Since *Bridging the Gap* began in 2001, UCC has formed a successful partnership with schools which has improved the educational opportunities and achievements of thousands of pupils in Cork city. *Bridging the Gap* is one of UCC's flagship projects, which has had an impact not only in Cork but also on national education policy. The project shows what can be achieved when public and private investment is targeted towards specific community-based initiatives, and when the university offers its expert resources to support schools in achieving their goals.

To date, *Bridging the Gap* has produced many positive outcomes in all of its strands of activity. There are many success stories in this report that show how the project has helped to improve motivation and expectations among children, families and teachers. There have been measurable gains in literacy and language development, mathematics, information technology and science. A number of pupils who were considered "at risk" of dropping out of school have achieved very creditable Junior Certificate results and have stayed on to complete the Leaving Certificate.

A particular strength of *Bridging the Gap* is the enhanced opportunity it provides for pupils to participate in arts and cultural activities. Pupils in the project schools have developed high levels of skill in music, drama and the performing arts, the visual arts and writing. This has resulted in raising self-esteem which in turn has produced great benefits for learning across the whole school curriculum.

The school-based projects have helped schools and the university to enhance the links with their communities. Parents are actively engaged in their children's learning, and they support the work of the project in the schools.

These results are extraordinary by any standards. They are all the more remarkable when we consider how little progress has been made in many high-profile national initiatives for educational inclusion, according to recent reports. What has made the difference in *Bridging the Gap*? In my view, it is a combination of an idealistic but realistic vision and a pragmatic approach to achieving the vision. This successful combination has been masterminded from the beginning by Professor Áine Hyland, working with an excellent project team and with a committed and talented group of principals and teachers. UCC is fortunate to have people of this calibre involved in the project.

I wish the *Bridging the Gap* project continued success in the future and I look forward to building on its success in developing the community aspect of the university's mission.







Foreword

Prof Áine Hyland, Project Director

The *Bridging the Gap* project has now come to the end of its fifth year, and it has gone from strength to strength since it began in 2001, working in partnership with more than forty schools in Cork city to improve the educational opportunities and achievements of their pupils. The project has been evaluated at the end of each year and it has been shown to produce real "wins" for everyone involved - pupils, their families, their teachers, the university and the communities. The schools in the project have set themselves challenging targets, and there is clear evidence in this report that they have met and exceeded these targets. In the process, they have greatly enhanced the educational experiences of their pupils. UCC is proud to be part of the *Bridging the Gap* project, which is a very important element of the university's commitment to the community.

The *Bridging the Gap* project reflects best practice in social and educational inclusion measures, as identified nationally and internationally. The goals of the project are mirrored in the Department's DEIS programme and are also supported by the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in his June 2006 *Value for Money Examination of Educational Disadvantage Initiatives in the Primary Sector.* The report states that "there is need for greater co-ordination and joined up approaches among the agencies and personnel involved in addressing educational disadvantage". *Bridging the Gap* provides a vehicle for such co-ordination in the Cork region and this has been commented on in a number of agency and community group reports.

The C&AG also recommends that "evaluation at school level needs to be improved through the provision of expertise and support in planning, target-setting, monitoring and evaluation". Support for planning, target-setting, monitoring and evaluation has been one of the main strands of *Bridging the Gap* since its inception, as can be seen from the evaluation reports during the past four years. This approach has led to measurable improvements in pupil attainment and attendance in many schools, as is evident in this year's report.

In the past year, *Bridging the Gap* has involved more pupils and teachers than ever before. There have been plenty of opportunities to celebrate the success of the project at events in the schools and in the university. The work of *Bridging the Gap* is becoming more widely recognised as an example of good practice in the area of educational inclusion.

The success of the project is a result of the enthusiastic commitment and hard work of all those involved, especially the principals, teachers and everyone who helps with the school activities. Tracey Connolly is an outstanding Project Manager who brings everything together in an efficient and good-humoured way, while Cynthia Deane, the Project Consultant, makes sure that we all keep our eye on the goals. I would also like to thank our sponsors, the Atlantic Philanthropies - especially Tom Costello who has been a great friend to the project - the Department of Education and Science, and an anonymous donor, who between them have contributed almost two million euro towards this five-year initiative. We are confident that *Bridging the Gap* represents excellent value for money and provides significant returns on their very generous and welcome investment.

I would also like to express my thanks to Professor G.T. Wrixon, outgoing President of UCC, to Dr Tom Cavanagh of the governing body and to my colleagues in the university who willingly help with the project. I am pleased to say that the project will continue and that I am happy to remain as Project Director on a voluntary basis after my retirement as Vice-President of UCC in September 2006.





Reflections on the year

Dr Tracey Connolly, Project Manager

This has been another fruitful year for pupils, teachers, schools and communities involved with *Bridging the Gap*. An Irish proverb tells us 'tada gan iarracht', which means 'nothing without effort' and the continued success of *Bridging the Gap* is due to the committed effort of these schools and communities.

During the year, schools set ambitious goals and were successful in achieving them. School projects were identified by school communities through clear goal setting and each school monitored and evaluated the extent to which the goals were met. In this report the school-based projects speak for themselves and it is evident that the projects carried out by schools are of a very high standard.

In fulfilling its community mission through *Bridging the Gap*, UCC has created a solid partnership with the schools and communities in Cork city. Over the past year, numerous staff from the university continued to work with *Bridging the Gap* by providing support to schools and by facilitating visits for pupils to the campus. The staff of Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha provided an exciting day at UCC through the Irish language for the pupils in the *Bridging the Gap* gaelscoileanna. On campus, *Bridging the Gap* hosted the 'Make a Book' exhibition which is organised by the Junior Certificate Schools Programme. Thousands of pupils from all over Munster visited UCC to see the exhibition. The annual *Bridging the Gap* showcasing took place at Devere Hall, UCC where 1,200 pupils entertained the audience with music, drama and art.

Over the year *Bridging the Gap* worked in partnership with Cork Opera House by supporting the 'Cork Opera House History Box'. The partnership between Cork Printmakers, Fota Wildlife Park and *Bridging the Gap* continued this year through the Rhino project. *Bridging the Gap* was proud to sponsor 'The Art of Looking' which is a valuable educational resource pack produced by the Glucksman Gallery, UCC.

In November 2005, *Bridging the Gap* was honoured to have President Mary Mc Aleese launch its publication *Connections: An Anthology of Work by Cork Pupils. Connections* got its title from Matthew O'Callaghan of Deerpark CBS who wrote that 'Life can often be about making little connections. Connections between people and between people and places'. That is also good motto for the *Bridging the Gap* project, because it helps to connect, schools, communities and the university in a dynamic and productive partnership.

The synergy that has been generated within *Bridging the Gap* is the result of commitment from the principals, teachers, pupils and parents involved. It is also a result of the excellent teaching in the schools where expectations are high in promoting achievement for all pupils. There is a Spanish proverb that says

'More grows in the garden than the gardener knows he has sown'.

To me this reflects the rich and positive impact education can have and we in the *Bridging the Gap* project look forward to continuing to enhance education in our schools in the years ahead.

I would like to thank all the schools for the excellent reports of their school-based projects in 2006. The art work in this report was produced by the very talented pupils in the project schools.



Background to the *Bridging the Gap* project and the evaluation report

Bridging the Gap is an innovative project run by University College Cork, which aims to "*bridge the gap*" between the educational opportunities and achievements of pupils in schools in disadvantaged areas of Cork city and those in other areas. *Bridging the Gap* aims to establish Cork City as a centre of excellence for educational inclusion and equality, by working in partnership with schools and their communities to achieve their educational goals. The project is an integral part of the university's community mission, and it is directed by Professor Áine Hyland, Professor of Education and Vice-President of UCC until her retirement in September 2006. It is funded jointly by the Department of Education and Science and by private funding obtained by UCC. More than forty primary and second-level schools and centres in Cork City are participating in the project, which has been running since 2001 (for a list of participating schools, see Appendix). Staff from a number of university departments work with *Bridging the Gap*, and the project manager is Dr Tracey Connolly of the Education Department in UCC.

This is the fifth annual evaluation report of the *Bridging the Gap* project. It describes and evaluates the work of the project in the period from September 2005 to August 2006. The report was compiled by Cynthia Deane, project consultant, from material provided by the project manager and by the participating schools. It includes four main sections. In the first section, there is a brief account of the project highlights for 2005-2006. The second section presents the results of a questionnaire survey completed by schools about their experiences of the project over the past five years. In the third section, the school and community-based projects are outlined briefly, showing the impact of the project against the goals set by the schools. The final section evaluates the outcomes of the project to date and sets out the plan for the next phase.







1

Project highlights 2005-2006







Project goals for 2005-2006

This phase of the *Bridging the Gap* project is mainly about building sustainable capacity in schools, in communities and in the university that will help to achieve educational inclusion. In 2005-2006 the *Bridging the Gap* project focussed in particular on capturing and analysing data to provide quantitative evidence that the project has had a positive impact on the educational experiences of pupils in participating schools over its five-year lifetime. The main questions for the 2005-2006 evaluation were:

- How have schools changed as a result of participating in the project?
- Has the project produced sustainable benefits in schools and communities?

Project highlight 2005

Connections : Anthology of Work by Cork Pupils

Pupils from project schools were invited to submit entries for an anthology of children's work to celebrate Cork's year as European Capital of Culture. The anthology, *Connections,* features over one hundred stories, poems and pictures that were selected from the best work produced by pupils in these schools during the year. On 29 November 2005, *Connections* was launched by President Mary McAleese in St. Vincent's Convent NS, to an audience that included the artists and authors, together with principals, teachers and guests. The launch received publicity in the national media.

Project activities 2005-2006

Since the project began, it has been organised into five main strands: research, networking, dissemination, professional development and school-based projects. As the project has extended its collaboration with other organisations, there is now effectively a further strand that includes curriculum enrichment activities sponsored by *Bridging the Gap* and made available to schools at low cost, to provide extra opportunities for pupils. The highlight achievements in each of the project strands for 2005-2006 are summarised below.



Research

School-based research

The systematic collection and analysis of data has become an everyday part of school life, which helps principals and teachers to see how their targeted actions produce results for their pupils and for the community.

Specific research projects

Bridging the Gap provided support for two doctoral researchers who completed their work in 2006.

Evelyn Grant PhD 2006

"A study of community music in *Bridging the Gap* schools"

Mary Harvey PhD 2006

"A study of the arts as a tool for enhancing learning in disadvantaged schools"
(Research undertaken with the assistance of a Government of Ireland scholarship)

Networks

Links between UCC and schools

Our three gaelscoileanna continued their links with Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha. The Glucksman gallery worked with Bridging the Gap schools to develop gallery education programmes and materials for primary school pupils.

Links with other projects

Bridging the Gap has initiated links with an education programme provided by the Dublin Docklands Social Regeneration Unit. It is hoped that this link will give our teachers an opportunity to share experiences with colleagues in Dublin inner-city schools.



Dissemination

Schools are publicising the work of the project

During 2005-2006, our schools have featured in newspaper and magazine articles, radio and TV interviews. They have produced videos and CDs of project activities.

Spreading the word more widely

The project has achieved a high level of publicity in local and national media. The annual evaluation reports and *Connections* anthology have been highly commended for their quality of design and production.

Impact on national policy

The Project Director Prof Áine Hyland chaired the statutory Educational Disadvantage Committee from 2002-2005. The work of this committee, which drew on the experience of projects such as *Bridging the Gap*, has been incorporated into a new national plan for educational inclusion (DEIS plan, 2005).

Bridging the Gap was cited as a good example of practice in promoting increased access to higher education (HEA report, 2006).

Sponsored Activities

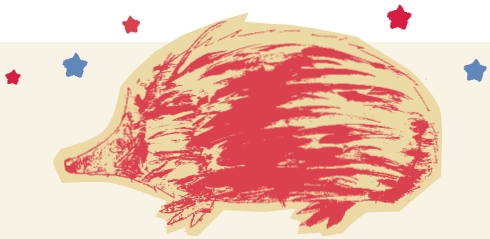
Cork Printmakers and Fota Wildlife Park: Save the Rhino project

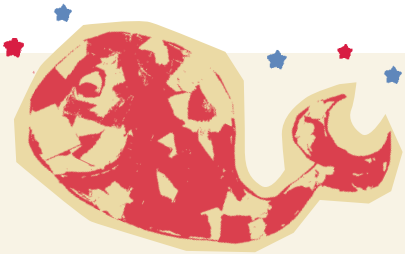
Twelve primary schools took part in the project. Each class visited Fota Wildlife Park and had three printmaking workshops, where they produced colour prints that were later exhibited and sold to raise funds for rhino conservation.

Visits to Cork Opera House

Almost 700 children from twelve Bridging the Gap schools attended Cork Opera House in 2006. They rollicked to tunes such as "Any Dream Will Do" from *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (February 2006). They roared approval of Bosco and friends during Lambert Puppet Theatre Company's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (March 2006). And they were caught up in the often perilous escapades of the three characters from Barnstorm Theatre Company's *The Biggest Adventure in the World* (March). Teacher resource packs were provided for *Joseph* and the Barnstorm production, containing background information, pre- and post-show writing, art, and discussion ideas.

Bridging the Gap is also supporting a multi-dimensional "Cork Opera House History Box" introduced in primary schools in autumn 2006. This activity supports the curricular goal of providing 5th and 6th class pupils with an opportunity to work as "local historians". They are engaging in the process of historical enquiry, using a wide range of primary and secondary sources to learn about the people, events, issues and cultural experiences which helped shape Cork city, all filtered through the prism of the Cork Opera House's 150-year history.





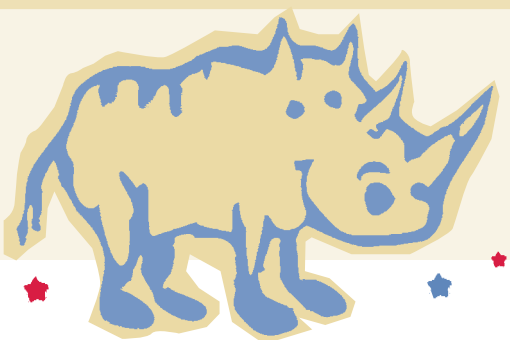
School and community-based projects

This strand of the project empowers schools to take action based on identifying the needs of their pupils. No two schools are the same, so the project allows each school to decide which activities to offer, based on the needs they identify.

Thirty seven schools ran projects : almost five thousand pupils took part. The cost of school-based projects is very modest (approx €3000 per school per year). At the start of the year, each school submits a proposal showing their goals and the cost of planned activities. At the end of the year, they submit a report of the outcomes.

Schools have achieved significant success by setting clear and measurable goals for the project and tracking their results using performance data. The range and quality of data collected has improved this year, and schools have gathered firm evidence that the project is producing positive results for pupils, teachers and the community.

Goals of school projects	Achievements 2005-2006
Develop pupils' skills in specific curriculum areas	Schools have provided evidence of skills developed in many areas of the curriculum, including literacy and language, mathematics, music, science and technology, sport.
Engage pupils' interest and encourage participation in activities	Very high level of participation and positive feedback from pupils, parents and teachers. Schools have measured improvements in pupils' self-esteem and self-discipline. This has had a positive impact on attainment across the curriculum.
Increase pupils' enjoyment of school and their motivation to succeed	Improvements in attendance, quality of homework, retention to senior cycle, uptake of science subjects, aspirations to study in higher education, career ambitions. Excellent Junior Certificate results achieved by pupils who were considered *"at risk"* of dropping out.
Involve parents and community in their children's education	Parents are more actively engaged in children's learning, and they support the work of the project in the school. Schools are promoting community and family involvement in health and environmental improvement projects.
Extend the skill base of the school by being a learning organisation	Teachers work along with specialists and gain new skills; new curriculum approaches introduced successfully in music, reading, language development, maths, movement.







2

Measuring the impact of the project in schools 2005-2006

At the end of the 2005-2006 school year the project team sent out a questionnaire to all *Bridging the Gap* project schools, asking principals and teachers for feedback about their experiences of the project and its impact on their schools. Thirty-five completed questionnaires were returned from twenty-two schools. This represents a "sample" of just over half of the project schools, which would generally be regarded as a good rate of return for this type of survey. Table 1 below shows some of the key statistics from the project as compiled from the survey responses. Tables 2a-2d show the percentage of respondents who indicated their agreement or disagreement with the statements in the questionnaire.



Table 1: *Bridging the Gap* statistics 2001-2006

	2005-2006				2001-2006	
	Number of teachers in project schools	**Number of pupils in project schools**	**Teachers in Bridging the Gap project**	**Pupils in Bridging the Gap project**	**Teachers in Bridging the Gap project**	**Pupils in Bridging the Gap project**
Total for sample 22 schools	417	4864	160	2453	268	7823
Average per school	19	221	7	112	12	355
Estimated total for all project schools	800	9282	300	4704	500	14910

The figures above show that a good proportion of teachers and pupils in the participating schools are directly involved in the project. It is clear from previous evaluation reports that the project has extended its reach each year, and in many schools *Bridging the Gap* is now a whole-school initiative.





Table 2a: Impact of *Bridging the Gap* project on pupils' engagement and learning

	Agree strongly %	Agree %	Disagree %	Disagree strongly %
1. The project has improved our pupils' motivation to stay in school and achieve their full potential	42	55	3	0
2. The project has produced measurable gains in pupils' language and literacy skills	20	63	17	0
3. The project has produced measurable gains in pupils' number skills	8	46	46	0
4. Attendance has improved in our school as a result of the project	30	63	7	0
5. Self-discipline and behaviour have improved in our school as a result of the project	33	57	10	0
6. The project has raised pupils' educational and career aspirations	50	47	3	0
7. The project has made no difference to our pupils	0	0	26	74

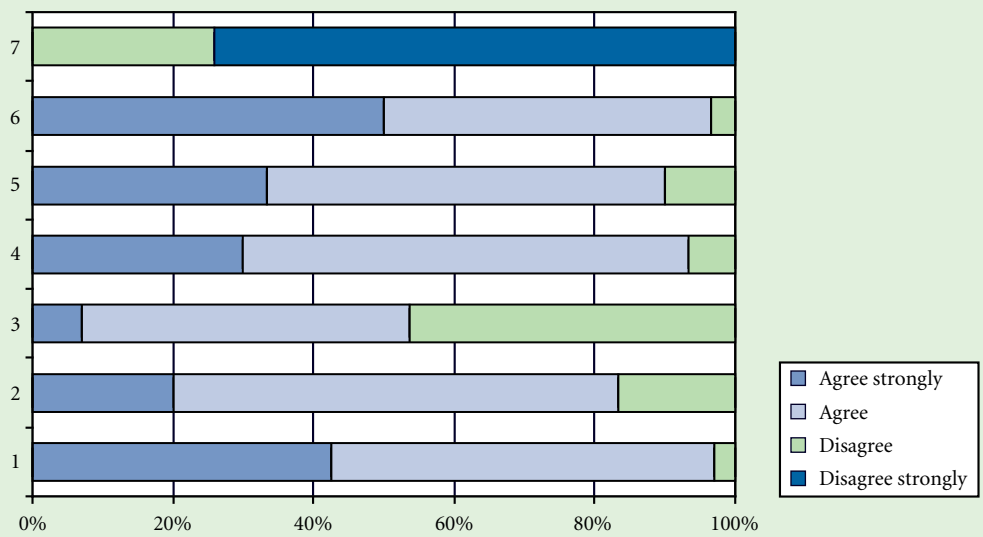




Table 2b: Impact of the *Bridging the Gap* project on teachers

	Agree strongly %	Agree %	Disagree %	Disagree strongly %
1. The project has improved our teachers' expectations of pupils	31	69	0	0
2. The project has improved our teachers' interaction with parents and families	20	53	27	0
3. Teachers in our school have increased their professional skills through the project	28	65	7	0
4. Classroom practices in our school have been improved as a result of participation in the project	31	62	7	0
5. The benefits of the project are confined to a small number of teachers in our school	7	34	24	35

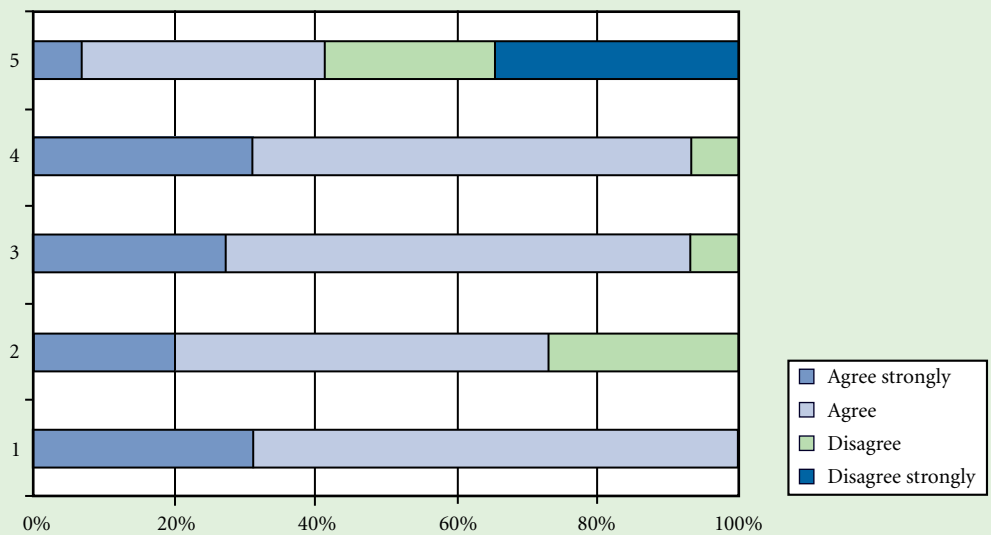




Table 2c: Impact of the project on school leadership, policy and planning

	Agree strongly %	Agree %	Disagree %	Disagree strongly %
1. The project has changed the way we plan teaching and learning in our school	24	45	31	0
2. The project has helped to develop leadership skills that are relevant to the principal and other teachers	25	63	12	0
3. We have applied the skills learned from the project in our school development planning	33	44	23	0
4. The project has helped our school community to achieve important educational goals	38	55	7	0
5. The project has made little or no difference to the way we do things in our school	0	4	39	57
6. We will continue to use data to help us set and monitor goals in our school	25	75	0	0

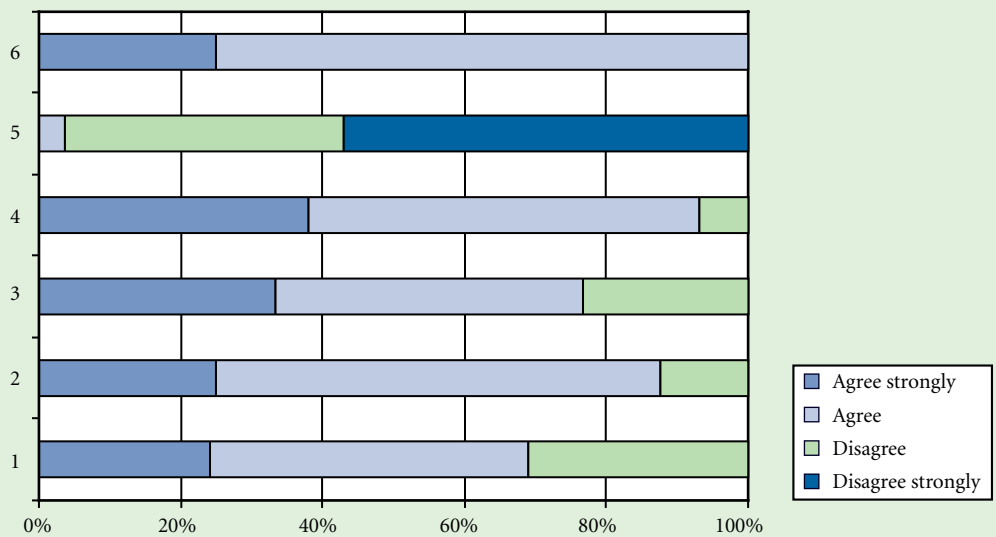
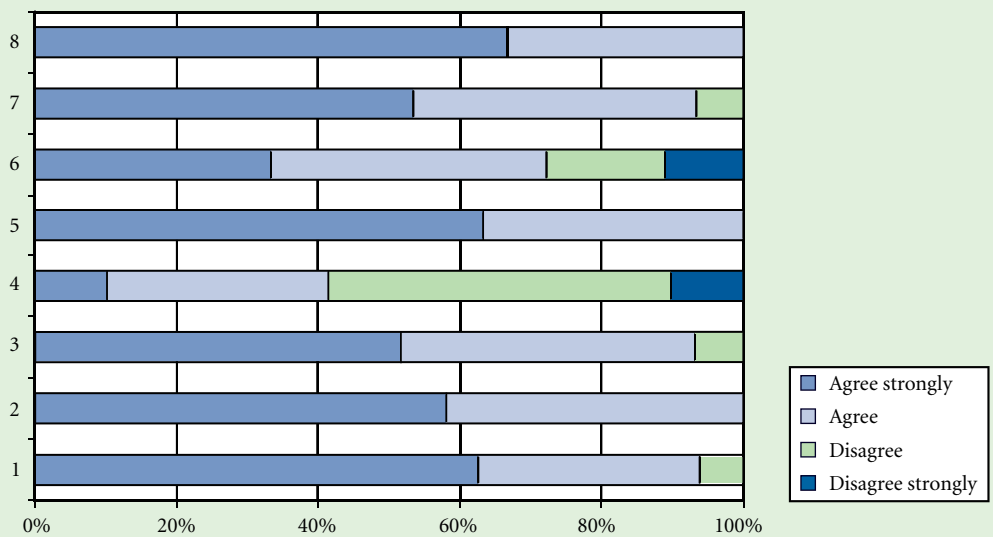




Table 2d: Project management and organisation

	Agree strongly %	Agree %	Disagree %	Disagree strongly %
1. The project was well managed and organised	63	31	6	0
2. The network activities provided by the project were of benefit to me and my school	58	42	0	0
3. The reports and other publications produced by the project were of high quality and were useful	52	41	7	0
4. The reporting requirements of the project were too demanding	10	31	49	10
5. The connection with the University was a positive aspect of the project	63	37	0	0
6. The research carried out within the project has had an influence on practice in our school	33	39	17	11
7. The project has established a high profile in Cork and at national level	53	40	7	0
8. If we have the opportunity, we will continue to be involved in the project	67	33	0	0



Comment on survey results

It is clear from the survey that principals and teachers strongly believe the *Bridging the Gap* project has made a difference to their pupils, especially in raising their educational and career aspirations, and in improving their motivation to stay in school and achieve their full potential. Attendance, self-discipline and behaviour are also reported to have improved in schools as a result of the project. While the project is believed to have produced measurable gains in pupils' language and literacy skills, there is less certainty that it has produced gains in pupils' number skills.

There is unanimous agreement that the project has improved teachers' expectations of pupils. It is also widely agreed that teachers have increased their professional skills and that classroom practices have been improved as a result of participation in the project. In the majority of schools, it is believed that the project has improved teachers' interaction with parents and families. However, in a significant minority (40 per cent) of schools, the benefits of the project are thought to be confined to a small number of teachers.

There is very strong agreement that the project has made a difference to the way schools do things, and that it has helped school communities to achieve important educational goals. It has also helped to develop leadership skills that are relevant to the principal and other teachers, most of whom have applied the skills learned from the project in school development planning. Most schools say that the project has changed the way they plan teaching and learning, and it is particularly significant that all schools say they will continue to use data to help them to set and monitor goals in the future.

Almost all teachers and principals consider the project to be well-managed and organised, and all schools wish to continue to be involved in the project if they have the opportunity to do so. All principals and teachers consider the link with the university as a positive aspect of the project, and they also see the network activities provided by the project as a benefit to themselves and to their schools. The reports and other publications produced by the project are believed to be of high quality and useful, and the project is seen to have established a high profile in Cork and at national level. However, a significant minority (40 per cent) of respondents think that the reporting requirements of the project are too demanding. In addition, the research carried out within the project is considered to have had limited influence on practice in some schools (28 per cent).

In answer to the question "*What was the most important learning point from the project for you or your school?*" The responses included:

- The importance of setting achievable goals, planning and collecting feedback and adapting teaching methodology and of carrying forward the work from year to year
- The benefits for pupils of involvement in art performances; the power of the arts in empowering pupils; the importance of developing and showcasing pupils' talents as a way of increasing their self-esteem; exposure of hidden talents; confidence building
- Everything is possible when resources are available; extra funding can achieve miracles; given the resources, school communities can initiate and maintain creative and effective programmes and strategies
- The project does not have to be an add-on to school activities but can be integrated to become an indispensable part of the curriculum, producing concrete improvements in learning outcomes and examination achievements
- It helped us and the children to see that we can be successful in areas other than academic
- By developing staff enthusiasm we can achieve the full potential of the project
- A new and previously unexplored strand of the curriculum was studied
- There was a noticeable positive change in attitude and behaviour in pupils in the school.

When asked "*Is there anything you would change about the project for the future?*" the suggestions included:

- Provide extra funding for school projects
- Involve more children and increase the involvement of parents in the activities
- Develop the project by having more planning meetings in school and engaging external professional assistance as required for specific aspects
- Increase the level of linkage between the university and school communities
- Focus attention on younger pupils to promote and maintain interest in the project
- Allocate more planning time and focus on a smaller number of students in the school at any one time.





3

Summary of school and community-based projects 2005-2006



This section includes summaries of the reports that schools submitted at the end of the 2005-2006 school year.

The school-based projects in Bridging the Gap aim to

- engage the interest of learners and promote positive attitudes to learning
- help learners to develop new skills and knowledge
- promote the transfer and application of learning from project activities to the everyday classroom setting
- produce positive benefits for the school, families and community, as well as for individual learners.

Schools have translated these aims into specific goals and targets for their own projects, as shown in the summaries below. The main focus of the school-based projects for 2005-2006 was to gather concrete evidence of the results achieved, to show how the project has made a difference in the schools. In doing this, schools have used the process of gathering data to engage teachers, pupils and parents with the project as much as possible. Many schools have been able to show progress or improvement over time, by comparing this year's results with baseline data gathered earlier in the project. Some have included data gathered over a number of years, for example attendance levels, results of class tests or standardised test scores. They have found ways of "*benchmarking*" the outcomes of the project, for example by comparing the performance of pupils before and after the project, or with the performance of pupils who are not participating in the project.

The project has encouraged schools to evaluate the achievement of their project goals by using information that is already available and easily assembled in the school, for example attendance registers, test results, term reports, discipline records, homework records. They have also used standardised tests and assessment instruments if appropriate for the purpose of measuring achievement of the project goals. Principals and teachers have begun to look at this information in new ways, to ask new questions, to probe behind the numbers. To validate the data collected, they have used interviews and focus groups, surveys and questionnaires, rubrics and rating scales to provide as complete a picture as possible of the project's impact.

Primary Schools

Gaelscoil Mhachan, Mahon Homework clubs	1st to 5th classes 27 pupils
Goals **Engagement** • Promote interest in homework • Increase motivation & self-esteem in attempting homework. • Develop structured approach to homework • Enhance expectation of "I can do this" **Learning** • Develop new strategies for spellings & tables • Improve literacy, numeracy, social skills • Improve concentration, classroom behaviour & interaction **Change** • Encourage healthy positive attitude to homework • Increase motivation/self-esteem in attempting homework • Lessen stress on parents **Impact** • Improve home/school/community relationships • Develop understanding by teachers regarding children's attempts at homework • Incorporate new strategies for learning spellings/tables into children's classroom work	**Data collected** Survey on pupils' attitude to homework Individual interviews Informal & formal spelling & table tests Standardised testing results: Micra T, Drumcondra Feedback from teachers & parents Before & after surveys of attitude to homework/parents/pupils Before/after feedback Monitor by self & peers/teachers Standardised testing results Feedback from secondary schools
Results **Pupils** • Confidence in homework much increased • Weekly spelling tests improved • Attendance at clubs increased • Pupils want to attend UCC after visiting there **Parents** • Parents are more likely to be involved in school activities • Parents are more confident in tackling homework • Parents are more likely to see their child having a chance to go to UCC **Teachers** • More likely to avoid potential homework problems • More likely to attempt printing in art • More use of I.T. • Got to know pupils outside their own class • Understood parental difficulty with regard to homework	**School's comment on impact of project** Pupils began to see homework as less of a threat and became more confident at attempting homework. Attendance chart was kept and as a result, attendance improved. Teachers report that pupils are less nervous about homework. Project worked well this year. It was important to constantly monitor attendance and link in with class teacher. Pupils felt comfortable in clubs with a class teacher they already know. The pupils love being involved in art activities and it was great to see them use their Gaeilge outside the school building on trips to UCC.

Gaelscoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa, Ballyphehane Music: specialist teacher works with project	Junior infants to 3rd class All pupils
Goals Educational, social and personal development through musical experience Develop musical facilities of the school Develop listening, vocal, numerical, literary, social, leadership and performance skills through musical experience Project to complement all areas of curriculum	**Data collected** Worksheets and class activities Music folder for each child Assessing solo and group performance Feedback from class teachers
Results Pupils performed at school concerts and special events Teachers participated in music lessons and reinforced the learning in other classroom activities	**School's comment on impact of project** Extremely positive feedback on the project from all involved : pupils, parents, teachers and the wider community.

Scoil Mhuire na nGrás, Greenmount NS
Green St.
Music within the local community

3rd to 6th classes
164 pupils

Goals

1. To enable children of 3rd Class to play 6 simple tunes on the tin whistle by June 2006.
2. To enable children of 4th Class to play 8-10 tunes on the tin whistle by June 2006.
3. To enable children of 5th. Class to be able to play a basic instrument (tin whistle, glockenspiel, percussion, basic keyboard, recorder) by June 2006.
4. To have prepared 34 children for introduction to brass/wind instruments by June 2006.
5. To have 12 children from 5th/6th Class involved in the Barrack Street Band by June 2006.
6. To involve 40 children from 2nd Class upwards in a school choir which will perform in public at various times during the year.
7. To have developed an appropriate class level of appreciation of music by June 2006.

Data collected

Teacher informal assessment and observation: Enjoyment and participation of children

Feedback from parents

Formal assessment

Performance assessment

Achievement has been measured by the children's ability to play songs on the tin whistle - 3 tunes for 3rd and 6 tunes for 4th (minimum)

Formal assessment at the end of the 12 week theory course for all 5th Class pupils.

Results

Enhanced importance of the school in the wider community: improved sense of belonging for children and parents.

Formal links with Barrack Street Band: providing instruments and funding to increase participation
This project has had a major impact on school plan for Ceol. Teachers are much more aware and receptive to the various strands of the new Curriculum.

The School Choir has been a big success and has added a different dimension to music within the community. The Christmas Eve Mass has become an important event in the area

School's comment on impact of project

The project has provided an opportunity for parents and children to experience and appreciate the rich musical heritage of the area. Twelve past pupils are now members of the Barrack Street Band. A school of music is run by the Band in the school on Wednesday afternoons. We now have a school choir, which was just a dream five years ago.

One of our teachers carried out research into speech and language disorders and obtained a doctorate with support from *Bridging the Gap*. Her expertise and understanding has helped the school to make an informed submission to a National Council for Special Education Working Group during the past year.

Maria Assumpta Infant School, Ballyphehane
After school "Fun Club"

Senior infants
29 pupils

Goals
We aimed to improve oracy skills within the groups through exposure to, and use of a rich vocabulary.

We hoped that attendance at Fun Club would positively impact upon school attendance and parental attitudes.

We wished children to have an appreciation of the Arts subjects.

We aimed to improve their oral presentation skills and to demonstrate a greater knowledge of authentic children's literature and poetry.

We aimed to improve social skills, confidence and self-esteem significantly within the groups.

Data collected
Language and social skills rubrics were administered to sample group in October and May

Language rubric tested grammar/language control, poise, fluency, vocabulary, eye contact, body language and message content.

Social skills rubric tested confidence with oral participation/ performing, self-management skills and group performance

Attendance at Fun Club was recorded: 96%

Results
The pupils improved in all the areas measured by the language rubric. By the end of the year, every pupil could report or perform to the large class group with a fair degree of clarity and confidence.

Individual social skills, such as patience, independence, self-confidence and responsibility were fostered.

Pupils were encouraged to be tolerant and appreciative of each other. The pupils who found performing aloud difficult were encouraged by their peers.

Self-management skills such as cleaning-up appropriately, storing equipment, remembering assigned tasks and roles, sharing and turn-taking were also encouraged.

Turn-taking and sharing resulted in a more harmonious classroom environment.

School's comment on impact of project
'Fun Club' is now seen as an established part of the Senior Infant year. Information about 'Fun Club' is now given at the introductory evening for incoming Junior Infants.

The parents greatly approve of the links the school has with UCC and the *Bridging the Gap* organisation. They continue to express their support for Fun Club and remain happy with the progress of their children. The activities/outings funded by *Bridging the Gap* are much appreciated by pupils, parents & teachers. Parents have proved very supportive and cooperative by allowing their daughters to attend classes.

Pupils enjoy the classes and their teachers see their development.

Maria Assumpta Senior School, Ballyphehane
Music: "The Crescendos"

3rd to 6th class
74 pupils

Goals
Develop musical talents and technical skills for creative expression and participation in the arts.

Improve confidence and self-esteem

Develop perseverance and self-discipline

Support implementation of music curriculum through sharing of good practice

Actively involve parents

Enable the children to experience the excitement and satisfaction of musical creativity

Increase musical knowledge and appreciation

Improve home-school-community relationships

Foster critical appreciation of own performance

Provide in-service for teachers and music appreciation in the classroom guided by the overall provision of the project when teaching music in the classroom.

Data collected
Questionnaires to pupils, teachers and parents

Interviews with secondary school teachers

RIAM examinations

Results
We have engaged the interest of our pupils and promoted positive attitudes to learning.

Parents and teachers report improvements in children's
- concentration
- self-esteem
- organisation
- attitudes to school and learning
- listening skills
- self discipline
- problem-solving
- confidence.

These improvements have had a positive effect on pupils' work in other curriculum areas.

School's comment on impact of project
Many pupils have gone on to study music very successfully at secondary school: as a result of the project, *"many pupils are well on the road to achieving great things."*

"Thanks to the B.T.G. programme I have now discovered a hidden talent of mine which I love and enjoy. This talent has got me to the stage where I have just completed my grade two exams in the Royal Academy of Music in Ireland." Miriam Adair

Scoil Réalt na Maidine
Morning Star NS Ballyphehane
Playground Projects: Motto "Let Kids Lead"

All classes from Junior Infants to 6th class
140 pupils

Goals

- Provide structured play in the playground
- Minimise the number of playground incidents
- Involve senior pupils in running the scheme
- Revive traditional games
- Enhance the physical environment of the playground

Pupils

- Increase enjoyment of play in yard
- Increase opportunities to explore, experiment and communicate through different games
- Foster sensitivity towards inclusion of all pupils in yard

Activities

- Promote cooperative learning

Teachers

- Provide safe environment and set up activities for children to play creatively and responsibly

Parents, families and community

- Increase participation of parents within the school
- Improve the environment of the playground
- Strengthen links with the community

Data collected

Monitored behaviour in playground : significant decrease in incidents of indiscipline

Teachers were surveyed to evaluate playground enjoyment, games interest, discipline and cooperative behaviour

Teachers observed improvements in pupils' confidence, social interaction and enthusiasm

Results

Infant classes: improvements in motor skills, coordination, balance, timing and spatial awareness through participation in Playball programme.

Middle classes: learned traditional games skills, including skipping, hoops, hopscotch, marbles.

Senior classes: action games including juggling, hoop throwing, and traditional street games; participated in community-based project

Number of pupils breaking yard code of discipline dropped dramatically

Older pupils took responsibility for running the activities

Children are happier coming to school and enjoy playground games

School's comment on impact of project

The project has been a tremendous success. The school yard has really become a playground. There was no winning or losing, participation was the key to success. The social skills gained through the programme have been invaluable to our school community

Scoil Mhuire Fatima, An Mhainistir Thuaidh North Monastery Road. School band: individual tuition and group practice

4th to 6th classes
21 pupils

Goals

Pupil Related Goals: we hope that

- Pupils will increase their repertoire of traditional tunes including polkas, jigs and airs
- 90% of the pupils would wish to continue in the project for another year
- By the time pupils reach 6th class, 50% would consider purchasing their own instruments
- by June 2006, the children will have the chance to perform publicly at a number of public musical performances including *Bridging The Gap* showcase
- Improve confidence of pupils and raise their expectations of success in other academic and social areas.

Teacher Related Goals: we hope to

- Increase the musical knowledge of the class teachers in traditional music
- Increase the positive interaction between the pupils and the school so that there will be an improvement in overall classroom performance and attitude
- Support teachers in their curricular work

Parent & Community Related Goals: we hope that

- The project will further improve the relationship between the school and the parents
- Parents will identify more both with the work of the school and will encourage their children's efforts and aspirations
- The increased role and profile of music in the school will foster greater community involvement within the school and greater school involvement with community-based musical groups.

Data collected

Informal interviews with children carried out by tutors, principal, project co-ordinator and class teachers

Interviews with parents

Attendance records for music classes and for whole school

Results

Group was successful and enthusiastic

Older cohorts have become more enthusiastic about homework

Increased enthusiasm among parents and a greater willingness to become involved in encouraging their children to practise

Parents have become increasingly active in supporting the work of the group and were more than willing to provide transport to various events

Attendance at music classes was high

Revival of school concert

Several public performances by group, including at launch of Connections by President Mary McAleese

Contact established with School of Music

School's comment on impact of project

The music from the group has brought a great new life to the creative side of our school. Teachers have found a new confidence in trying out new ideas in music and the success of these efforts has encouraged a greater sense of experiment in all the arts; in dance, poetry, and creative writing. With the example of the group as an encouragement, the boys learning guitar and drums have formed their own rock group. Music and performance have become "cool."

The enthusiasm of the boys for their music and their interest in performance has really taken off and has led to a marked improvement in their skills which in turn increased their interest even further.

North Presentation NS Gerald Griffin St. Music and Musical Literacy

All pupils in school from junior infants to 6th class 218 pupils

Goals

To develop the pupils' musical talents and expertise

To develop a pure singing tone in our children

To extend the vocal range of the children

To develop a school choir

To encourage the use of our extensive range of percussion instruments

To enhance the self-esteem of the pupils through their involvement in a positive school experience

To continue to encourage positive participation from the parents

To give the pupils the opportunity to perform

To aid the implementation of the revised music curriculum through sharing good practice

Data collected

Before:

The music coordinator surveyed staff and they asked for help in teaching singing, music literacy and rhythm. Pupils were tested informally in pitch, rhythm and listening and responding to music elements.

After:

Comments from teachers as the project progressed were very positive.

Results

Music is a unifying force in a multi-cultural community: active involvement of African children and parents

Decision to add extra instruments next year, with support of Parents' Association, which has begun to play an active part in school life as a result of the project

School concert in Firkin Crane theatre was well-attended: every class performed.

School's comment on impact of project

Everyone agreed that the children looked forward to and enjoyed their music class. The performance of the band on stage was a major vindication of the programme. One pupil who learned tin whistle is having *"little sessions at home"* with her brother who is learning the mandolin in the North Mon.

"Facilitating children to perform to a very high standard in such a theatre with the benefit of sound and lighting effects and an expert musical accompanist really promotes self-esteem in children and parents alike." (Teacher)

Scoil na Croise Naofa, Mahon Curricular experiences in speech and language to promote inclusivity	Junior infants to 4th class 120 pupils
Goals To enhance pupils' self-esteem, aspirations and motivation To facilitate meaningful learning in a fun and safe atmosphere To significantly improve vocabulary and oral language of target group. To improve concentration To advance listening skills; social skills; taking turns To improve attendance	**Data collected** Teacher feedback and observations Pupil feedback: individual interviews Parent feedback by meeting and questionnaire Principal's observations Attendance records Assessment by teachers: formal and informal testing Parental observation and assessment
Results Raised self-esteem and confidence Improved listening skills and tolerance of other peoples' opinions. Increased oral language and improved vocabulary. Learning to work as a team member. Increased motivation. Increased ability to verbalise problems-reduced angry outbursts of frustration Home-school relations more developed Teachers more professionally developed Pupils' hidden talents exposed and developed Enhanced image of a quality school in the community	**School's comment on impact of project** We were very pleased with the project as it ran in our school this year. We were delighted that the project was extended to include the infant section. The teachers there were happy that the drama tutor concentrated hugely on language development which is vital in schools such as ours. The challenge will be to continue the learning experience of the project and apply the skills acquired by the teachers to incoming classes next year.

Scoil Aiséirí Chríost, Farranree
Music literacy and performance

Whole school
430 pupils and all teachers

Goals
- To introduce '*New Music Box*' programme to all pupils
- To develop skills in recorder & tin whistle playing
- To develop musical literacy and rhythm through work with instruments
- To begin work with a new school band
- To develop listening and responding skills through listening to professional recordings
- To enter pupils in Feis Maitiú tin whistle competition
- To invoke an enthusiastic musical atmosphere within the entire school
- To take the emphasis away from performance in order to promote skills development and appreciation

Family and Community Related Goals
- To involve parents and the community through invitation to various events that the children participated in, for example, Feis Maitiú and Cór Fhéile
- To keep parents updated in project progress through monthly publication of newsletter.

Data collected
We have been constantly monitoring the success and progress of this project through the observation and reflection of all teachers.

All teachers teaching instruments have commented on a growth in skills and performance ability.

There is a growing appreciation and love of music within the school.

Results
Feis Maitiú
- A group of sixth class girls entered the tin-whistle section of Feís Maitiú and won this category.

Cór Fhéile
- Our new school band comprising of sixty 3rd class children achieved huge success at the Cór Fhéile
- Fourth class girls accompanied senior infants on guitars at their Cór Fhéile performance.

The Minister's Visit
- The band performed during a visit from Mary Hanafin, Minister for Education and Science,

Music Programme
- Teachers are monitoring the success of the new music programme.

School's comment on impact of project
The major impact of this project is the increase in numbers of children participating in music education. A few years ago, a few classes participated in isolated lessons and activities. Now the entire school is engaged in a structured programme which is enjoyed by all staff and pupils alike.

Since we began this project in 2003 we have witnessed huge success in most of our goals. It has been a very staged and developmental process. Although it took a lot of time, we feel that now a great precedent is set for future musical activity within the school. We hope to continue development and success in this area for many years ahead.

Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh (B)
Social, Environmental and Scientific Education : Local History

5th class
26 pupils

Goals

The goals of the project which complement the new primary History Curriculum were to:

- Encourage the study of history through raising awareness of local history
- Enable the pupils to locate and identify significant places relevant to the Siege of Cork
- Allow the children to produce reports, graphics and models relating to the Siege of Cork

Goals specific to the pupils-to:

- Help the development of language
- Help develop reporting skills
- Help develop IT skills
- Develop skills of co-operative learning
- Develop organisational skills
- Develop collaborative skills
- Develop skills around the sharing of information
- Develop skills associated with recording information
- Develop skills associated with expression of opinion and observation
- Develop skills at establishing work structures for group activities

Data collected

Before the project, the teacher carried out an assessment of pupils' knowledge of the topic

Informal discussion

Probing questioning

Record of participation

Record of multimedia materials and documents produced by pupils

Assessment of project presentations made by pupils

Results

Pupils acquired skills of observation, recording, research, sharing, analysing, collaborative working and organisational skills.

They had an opportunity to explore an area of the curriculum with social implications.

Less academic pupils also developed and enhanced their skills.

Teacher was able to share personal interest in local history with willing participants.

School's comment on impact of project

The project had a very positive impact on the pupils involved and on the school in general. The pupils acquired many valuable skills for future learning. The project generated a positive atmosphere that transferred to other activities in the classroom and the school. Everybody who was involved had fun.

The school has undertaken projects in collaboration with staff from various faculties in UCC. This involvement and sharing of expertise has been a great advantage for the pupils and we hope to continue this partnership on an annual basis.

Scoil Eoin Aspal, Mayfield Speech and drama activities: specialist tutor working with classroom teachers	Whole school Junior infants to 6th class 280 pupils
Goals To develop children's ability to enter into the fictional drama context and to cooperate with others To create an atmosphere where ideas, feelings and experiences can be expressed, conflict handled positively and life situations explored honestly and openly To develop pupils' confidence, adaptability, spontaneity, verbal and nonverbal skills, imagination and creativity To use drama to explore actively the human aspect of all learning, as a means of curricular integration	**Data collected** Class teacher observation of children's reactions and behaviour Written and oral questionnaires to pupils Monitoring of attendance Record of performances in concert, competitions and festivals Self-evaluation by pupils of their own performances to identify strengths and areas for improvement
Results Improvements in behaviour and attendance Active involvement of parents Increased self-esteem and confidence High level of commitment and pride in successful performance	**School's comment on impact of project** The speech and drama classes contributed greatly to an improvement in the boys' communication skills and self-esteem. Even those who were shy or nervous made the effort to "*do their bit*" in performances on stage and in the classroom. When questioned, they said that they felt better for making the effort to contribute.

Scoil Íosagáin, Farranree
School band

63 second class pupils and 84 from senior classes

Goals
To increase the numbers of children and teachers involved in the project (target: 75% of 2nd class to play in City Hall)

To give children:
- A love of music
- The confidence and the skills to perform
- A sense of self-worth
- Music literacy
- An introduction to different genres of music
- A realisation of their musical talent
- An opportunity to play in an orchestral setting
- The satisfaction of listening to themselves as a group

Data collected
Assessment of performance skills

Parents' survey

Data for achievement of target:

• Played in City Hall	67%
• Played simple tunes	27%
• Played simple tunes with difficulty	6%

Results
From a base of zero in September they have a knowledge of the full scale and some simple pentatonic tunes by November. By Christmas they can play the popular carols. In February/March they have mastered some of the band tunes and are playing with the full school band. Finally by mid April they are ready to play in public e.g. Cór Fhéile. Over 80% of the target group reached this goal this year.

The project has given teaching staff an increased sense of teamwork, pride and inclusion, and has given parents and the wider community enjoyment and a new appreciation of school life.

"This is not a school band - it's an orchestra" (Professional musician)

School's comment on impact of project
The project has opened up a whole new world for the pupils in our area by enabling them reach a level of excellence in musical performance and in a whole range of related areas. It has given them a pride in their dress, their behaviour, their teamwork, and their overall stage presentation.

It has given our pupils a new and friendlier attitude towards UCC in that it offered them a showcase for their work in such august and welcoming surroundings. We repeated the showcase performance in the school.

Parents' comments
"I am delighted with his new confidence"
"He was thrilled to play in the City Hall and UCC"
"It makes him more outgoing and gives him more options"
"Good positive attitude to music"
"Boosts confidence gives him a new interest"
"Gives him a discipline, responsibility, fun and enjoyment"
"Teamwork and a sense of achievement"
"I love to see him all dressed up in the band uniform"

Scoil Mhuire Banríon, Mayfield Music: listening, responding, composing and performing	All pupils from Early Start to 6th class 275 pupils
Goals Develop the ability to concentrate and to respond emotionally and imaginatively to music Develop new skills related to music curriculum Build confidence to perform before peers and parents and community body Enhance ability to focus on task and to transfer that concentration to other areas of work in the classroom Develop understanding of importance of listening before responding	**Data collected** Before we began the drumming, the targeted classes - third to sixth were assessed on the NRIT - Non-Reading Intelligence Test. It was envisaged that the children would be assessed again after the project. However this was not achieved, as there was some difficulty in rating a lot of the children. The test level administered did not have age-appropriate readings. The decision was taken to assess by performance, pictorial evidence, teacher observation, interviews, questionnaires and *"by the way"* outcomes.
Results There was an improvement noted in: concentration, listening skills, syllabic awareness, phonological awareness percussion skills, co-operation and turn-taking. Parents who joined in the classes saw new talents in their children and enjoyed the activity themselves. Children learned about different cultures through music. Younger children gained in confidence and participated more as the sessions continued. The children's sense of rhythm was more developed. Some children have started attending music classes outside of school. A child with special needs overcame her aversion to loud noise and came to not only join in the sessions but also to enjoy them.	**School's comment on impact of project** The impact of performance has been very important. The children's confidence to present their talents publicly has increased. It has brought to the staff's attention the lack of formal music lessons for the children. The drumming and the art sessions have created the opportunities for these children. Parental expectations have increased as they see their children taking part in many projects. Whereas once they would have been surprised now they expect a high standard. We see this as a major benefit of the being part of such a project as *Bridging the Gap.* The lessons learnt in the various projects transferred to other curricular areas and thereby supported these areas - consistent with multiple intelligences theories.

Scoil Padre Pio, Churchfield
After school club

Fifth and sixth classes
Eight children each day, Monday to Thursday

Goals

Engagement

- Promote awareness and interest in the club
- Provide enjoyable experiences for children and adults
- Increase children's motivation, self-esteem and confidence
- Enhance the expectations and ambitions of children, parents and teachers
- Foster appreciation of the school as a service provider

Learning: improve

- Attainment levels of pupils in the quality and frequency of homework assignments
- Literacy, numeracy, social and life skills
- Concentration, behaviour and interaction
- Performance skills

Transfer

- Apply skills acquired to whole school education
- Encourage participation in sports and leisure activities outside of school

Impact

- Improve home, school, community relations
- Develop skills of teachers
- Develop children's appreciation of the work of teachers
- Aid school planning

Data collected

Attendance, behaviour, degree of participation, self-esteem, tolerance and peer friendships
Frequency and quality of homework assignments on both club and non-club days
Interest, enjoyment and performance in curriculum subjects
Attitude to school in general

Data collection methods:

- Daily record sheet
- Supervisors' Observations
- Children's views
- Parental feedback
- Opinions of class teachers
- Board of management assessment

Results

There was progress over time in the areas that were being monitored. Attendance, good behaviour, children working to full potential, a positive attitude, respect for authority, an understanding by teachers of difficulties that children may have had with regard to homework, children and teachers consulting on course content, parental support and assessment for future learning were the key indicators of the success of this scheme.

School's comment on impact of project

The provision of the After - School Club in Scoil Padre Pio for the senior pupils has been a huge success. An analysis of the data collected has shown a significant attainment of the goals of the project throughout its duration. In the first year, the group consisted exclusively of sixth class children. Subsequently, fifth class children became involved and this resulted in the benefits being spread over two years. This factor was one of the key elements in its overall success.

The children gained the most from this project. Despite one or two dropping out for various reasons, there were always other children on stand-by. One surprising feature of the club was the opportunity it presented to some children to forge friendships with peers. Parents were particularly delighted with this development.

Gaelscoil Naomh Thérèse, Bishopstown To improve the quality of arts education in the school	All classes from junior infants to sixth class 30 pupils
Goals Staff identified weaknesses in arts education and teachers took responsibility for specific areas: singing, instrumental music and folk dance. Target was that by the end of the year we would be able deliver the curriculum in each area without outside assistance Pupils would learn choral singing and instrumental music to a high standard These skills would transfer to other areas including pupils' self-esteem and confidence Staff, pupils and parents would all benefit from increased confidence in the school's ability to deliver these elements of the curriculum to a high standard.	**Data collected** Teacher observations of pupils' performance Informal feedback from pupils and parents
Results It was very obvious to teachers that the confidence gained by the pupils carried across to other areas. Their competence in music gave them confidence in areas such as maths and physical education. Pupils also undertook peer teaching in instrumental music very successfully.	**School's comment on impact of project** Participation in the *Bridging the Gap* project has been most beneficial to our school. The principal has been supported and upskilled through the various lectures and workshops. Teachers have been upskilled and assisted with their teaching through workshops and the purchase of teaching materials. Pupils have received a higher quality of education in the arts. The school is a better place in which to teach and learn as a result of our participation in Bridging the Gap.



Scoil Ursula, Blackrock
From Appreciation to Performance : music and dance

All classes from third to sixth class
120 pupils

Goals

Promote an appreciation of and interest in music and ballet

Increase motivation, self-esteem and confidence

Provide the pupils with an enjoyable experience both of playing music and of watching ballet

Enhance the expectations of pupils, parents and teachers

Enhance performance skills of pupils in tin whistle and recorder

Improve other areas of musical performance such as singing

Improve home-school relationships

Develop the skill and confidence of the teachers in regard to the teaching of musical instruments and musical appreciation

Incorporate learning from the project into other areas of school development planning

Data collected

Performance, observation, photographs
Survey of 6th class pupils to determine the number who would continue with recorder and take music as a subject for Junior Cert

Performance: Christmas, St Patrick's Concert, Lifelong Learning Exhibition, Mahon Community Centre, End of Year Display

List of pieces learned, skills acquired compiled by Specialist Music Teacher

A questionnaire on ballet was given to the pupils following a visit to the School by members of Cork City Ballet in the last school year. The same questionnaire was administered prior to the visit of the pupils to the *Introduction to the Dance* performance at the Opera House in November to determine the amount of knowledge and vocabulary which was retained. Again the questionnaire was administered post-performance to assess the level of improvement

Collection of pieces of art and creative writing to determine how exposure to music or dance performance enhanced the art and writing skills of the pupils

Observation: Numbers of parents who attend performances and their comments, willingness of teachers to practise pieces with pupils and to take responsibility for performance

Results

Pupils enjoyed playing the tin whistle and recorder, as well as the ballet performances at the Opera House.

67% of 6th class pupils would like to take music for Junior Cert
12% of the pupils are now learning a third instrument
55% would like to continue with recorder

Progression of performance skills in each class

Art work demonstrated the visual impact of attendance at the ballet. Functional and creative writing pieces show that the pupils both enjoyed the experience and that their related vocabulary was greatly enhanced.

Principal and teachers show great commitment to the project.

School's comment on impact of project

For this project, we have set general and specific aims, planned activities and carried out regular testing to determine if the aims are achieved. This model is central to school development planning in our school. Recently we have become involved in the *Reading Recovery* programme and the *First Steps* programme. Both again involve recognition of a need, setting a specific target, a programme to achieve that target, and testing to ensure that the target has been achieved.

Over the years we have used funding from *Bridging the Gap* to give pupils additional lessons in drama, dance and music and to expose them to performance of the different art forms. In the past few years we have concentrated on music and confined our objectives, realising that more is achieved with confined objectives specifically set, rather than by broad general aims.

The *Bridging the Gap* Project has done much to make life in Scoil Ursula more vibrant for pupils and teachers alike.

St Brendan's Girls' NS, The Glen
Developing skills through drama

All Classes from junior infants to sixth class
100 pupils

Goals

Enable children to communicate well using drama

Develop children's social and interactive skills, self-esteem, motivation and confidence

Foster critical appreciation of performance

Enable children to express opinions on how various sequences and routines worked

Use drama and role-play in other subjects

Give children the opportunity to participate in a whole-school production at the end of the year

Data collected

Questionnaires to elicit reactions from parents, teachers and children

Teacher surveys and evaluation of pupils' confidence, co-operation and enthusiasm

Informal interviews and feedback from children

Teachers and pupils set targets for themselves and measured progress against these targets

Quality of the end of year performance was an important measure of success

Results

Attendance records show that we had almost full attendance on drama day in the past two years

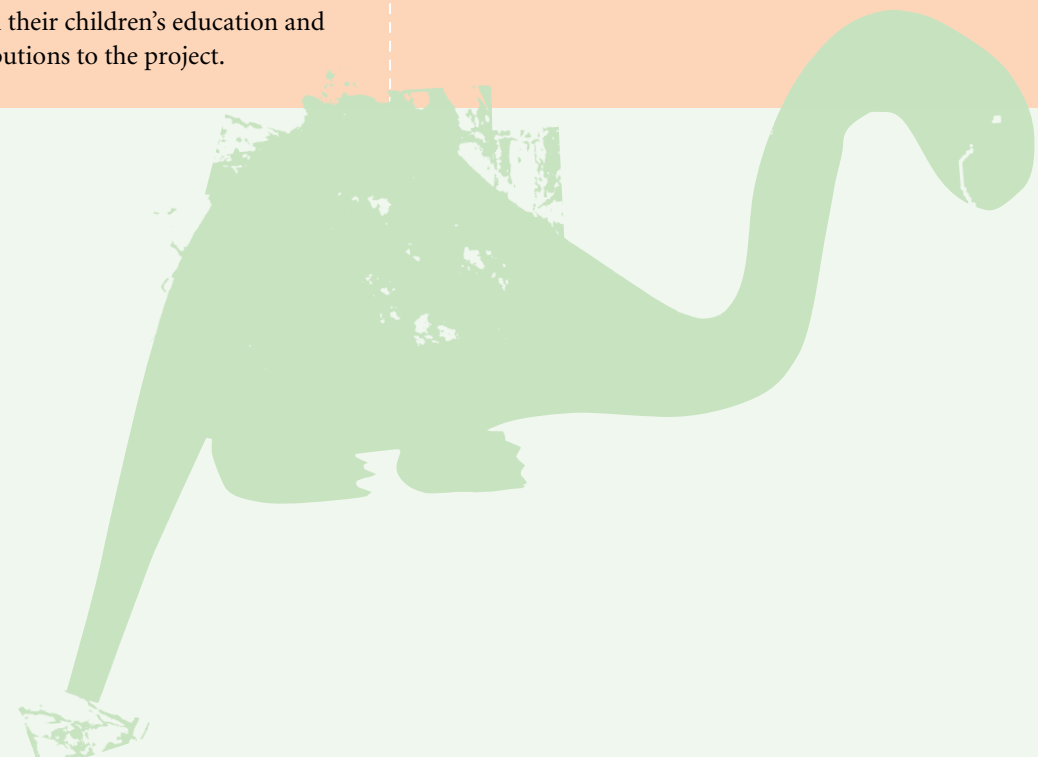
Some children have joined drama and dancing classes outside school

The school maintained and developed its links with families and the community: the reputation of the quality of our drama seems to have spread

Parents were involved in their children's education and made important contributions to the project.

School's comment on impact of project

The school lives of children were enhanced by the whole process. School was full of energy and life on Tuesdays especially in the weeks leading to the performance. Multiple intelligences were explored, and this was of particular benefit to children with special learning needs. The strengths of these children came to the fore through this production. It was a chance for them to explore other talents and to increase their self-esteem.



Scoil Cholmcille CBS, Blarney Street
Music education and performance

All classes from junior infants to sixth class
122 pupils

Goals

Appoint Music Co-ordinator from within the staff

Increase participation in music throughout all the classes

Provide music classes, improve music literacy and develop an interest in music performance

Develop ensemble-playing skills, which will help in the formation of a school band.

Establish the Senior band and Junior band by organising the groups to participate in a variety of music performances both within the school and in the wider community.

Expand the numbers in the Senior band (currently 24 pupils)

Acquire a repertoire in the music classes and create a CD to capture the work of the previous four years

Organise three visits of live music to the school so that the children would appreciate music and be stimulated to want to learn musical instruments.

Develop a community aspect by placing pupils who show aptitude with Butter Exchange Band

Develop links with UCC Music Department.

Data collected

The goals were set as SMART targets where achievement could be easily measured:

Music Co-ordinator was appointed from within the staff. A team of four staff was set up for the production of the CD

Participation in music was shared throughout all the classes. This year the Infant classes performed in the UCC showcase. All classes received specialist music education.

The classes improved music literacy. Children were tested and 100% of them had improved their literacy skills. All classes developed an interest in music performance and got the opportunity to perform

The children developed ensemble-playing skills, which helped in the formation of a school band

The Senior and Junior bands became established in the school by participating in five performances both in the school and in the wider community

The Senior band was expanded from 24 to 36. Next year it will be 41

A repertoire suitable for the creation of a CD was selected and taught as part of the School Development Planning process

A high quality CD was produced

Three visits of live music to the school were organised for the children.

Results

The final two goals were not achieved. Both involve a community aspect and will be prioritised for next year

Develop a community aspect by placing pupils who show aptitude with Butter Exchange Band.

Develop links with UCC Music Department (five-minute walk from Blarney Street).

School's comment on impact of project

The project was very successful. It has been mainstreamed as part of the School Development Planning process and is mentioned as a key strength of the school by teachers and parents and the Board of Management. We ensure that all children are included and participate in the musical events. Our CD 'Blarney Street Beo' is the embodiment of the impact this project has had. We are very proud of our CD which was launched at a reception in UCC in October 2006.
The setting of SMART targets is a process that we have already adopted for other projects.

St Mark's Boys' NS, The Glen
Self-esteem through drama

All classes from junior infants to sixth class
100 pupils

Goals

Engagement:

- Enhance language and communication skills
- Provide opportunities to perform in public
- Develop teamwork skills

Learning

- Enable pupils to be confident; clear and accurate in speech
- Foster positive social interactions
- Improve number skills in junior classes
- Improve music skills

Change

- Apply communication skills across the curriculum
- Use speech/acting in role-playing in Irish, History, SPHE
- Increase self-esteem and confidence in class, school and community

Impact

- Promote positive impact on pupils' skills, character, attitudes; parents' expectations
- Support school as a learning community

Data collected

Teacher observation

Adjudicators' comments

Project work

Test results

Screening

Count positive social experiences on a given day

Problem resolution through talk or written reports

Counting conflict situations, i.e. fights or arguments; yard incidents; class incidents; behaviour/misbehaviour list

Consultation with parents.

Results

The project has:

Enhanced confidence, teamwork, language and communications skills of pupils

Encouraged positive interaction with peers

Enhanced number skills through rhythm exercises in the junior classes.

Developed and positively exploited the musical skills of pupils by incorporating them into drama activities.

Improved the receptive and expressive skills of pupils in all areas of school life

Maintained a high level of teacher expectations

Improved the learning environment of the classroom
Improved teacher communication with parents and vice-versa

Broadened parental support in all areas of school life
Facilitated parents in nurturing the talents of their children.

School's comment on impact of project

The school has made, or will make, the following changes as a result of our involvement in *Bridging the Gap* Project:

Speech therapy classes initiated

'Alternative' education and health interventions

Staff development of teaching skills; teamwork and co-operation

The school will celebrate achievement

Pupils' attitude to their community will continue to be improved

The image and the reputation of the school will continue to be enhanced

The school will nurture the sense of pride amongst pupils, teachers, parents and the community.

St Mary's on the Hill NS, Knocknaheeny
Enhancing self-esteem through involvement in music and the teaching of a musical instrument

All pupils from third to sixth class
173 pupils

Goals

Enable the pupils to enjoy and understand music

Give the pupils an opportunity to play a musical instrument

Give one group the opportunity to continue learning an instrument

Introduce pupils to various percussion instruments

Give pupils the opportunity to perform in public
Build self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance

Pass on methods of good practice to other teachers in the school

Improve levels of participation among reluctant students

Improve concentration skills

Encourage positive interaction with peers.

Data collected

One of our main goals was to improve the levels of participation among the pupils and to enhance self-esteem in pupils by providing them with the opportunity to perform in public.

Levels of participation in performances were as follows:

- Italian Experience 5th Class 94%
- Communion 3rd Class 95%
- 25th Anniversary(Parish) 4th and 5th Classes 94%
- Confirmation 4th and 5th Classes 91%
- Cór Fhéile 3rd Class 88%
- Cór Fhéile 5th Class 87%
- School Performance 92%
- *Bridging The Gap* Performance 92%

Results

The children had great fun during their participation. Children rarely 'opted out' of the class. They were exposed to all strands of the Music Curriculum. There was a great development in their appreciation of music and the different genres of music. A lot of children learned how to play a musical instrument and really enjoyed the experience. Whenever they got the opportunity they played the recorder. They began to read music. All the performances provided great learning opportunities for the pupils. Children with special education needs performed with confidence and competence.

Parents attended a number of the events and were very forthcoming in their praise. To see their children perform publicly was a huge source of pride for parents and pupils.

School's comment on impact of project

The profile of the school was highlighted by the many performances of the children in venues throughout the city - UCC, City Hall, Cork Opera House and the local church. Feedback was very positive from the different audiences, which delighted the children.

We feel that the project has been very successful. The teachers involved in the project were very enthusiastic and delighted with the results of their endeavours. The end result was the performance in UCC for the 'Showcase' when 100 children played the recorder.

During the course of the year there were some important learning points. High expectations must be set at all times to improve the quality of the performance. The lessons must be very structured. Variety in the work is vital. Children learn faster when they are enjoying themselves and when they are motivated.

St Patrick's Girls' and Boys' Schools, Gardiner's Hill
Joint project: Expanding Horizons.

Accelerated Learning for all classes from junior infants to sixth class
Project for high-achieving pupils: 20 boys and 20 girls

Goals

High achievers project

- Provide enjoyable opportunities for high achieving pupils to study subjects beyond the school curriculum
- Promote interest in new areas of study
- Develop and expand knowledge
- Improve presentation skills, oral and written
- Enhance group and teamwork skills
- Apply new learning and skills in classroom subject areas
- Raise awareness of the needs of high achieving pupils
- Improve home-school links
- Develop the skills of teachers

Accelerated learning

- Raise awareness of the importance of water and exercise as aids to learning
- Use brain gym or activity breaks during the school day to aid learning
- Develop teaching skills by focusing on four-part lesson plans, recording, learning styles and multiple intelligences
- Apply new learning and teaching skills to all curriculum areas

Data collected

Individual interviews with pupils, teachers and parents

Observation and assessment by teachers

Feedback from pupils and teachers

Monitoring of classroom performance

Self-evaluation by pupils and teachers

Results

Pupils enjoyed the programme, especially the project work. They contributed more in class discussion and were eager to share new knowledge and skills with classmates. New areas of study broadened pupils' horizons and improved information finding and presentation skills. The project raised awareness among teachers of the needs of high achieving pupils.

It also raised children's aspirations to study at university. Teachers now use four-part lesson plan method and structure lessons according to different learning styles of pupils.

School's comment on impact of project

The programme included projects in science, law and forensic psychology, facilitated by staff and postgraduate students from UCC. Some younger participants found aspects of the law programme difficult to understand. However they really enjoyed the topic on the rights of the child. Teachers felt that there was not enough information available concerning the areas that pupils studied so it was difficult to tie in with class work.

Pupils particularly enjoyed the trip to UCC for the showcase and the visit to the law faculty. They made comments such as *"when I am at UCC I would like to study law/science/psychology."*

St Patrick's Infant School, Gardiner's Hill
Exploring and making drama and learning traditional Irish dance

All junior and senior infants classes
156 pupils

Goals

Engagement

- Provide an enriching integrated arts experience for all pupils through music, dance and drama
- Promote children's interest in drama and dance
- Increase children's self-confidence and self-esteem through dramatic self-expression
- Foster a critical appreciation of the arts for personal fulfilment and enjoyment through dramatic performance and dance

Learning

- Enhance children's performance skills
- Provide a safe context through drama for children
- to explore themes and issues
- Improve children's learning disposition through the arts

Transfer

- Apply new-found confidence and self-esteem to the classroom

Impact

- Involve parents, families and wider community when possible in a collaborative productive way
- Gain confidence through upskilling teachers to deliver drama and a broad arts curriculum

Data collected

Questionnaires to staff and parents

Parent and teacher observations

Results

The project has achieved its goals. The children thoroughly enjoyed the learning experiences and working with specialist drama and dance teachers was a novelty. Children's confidence grew week by week as they lost their inhibitions and became immersed in the dramatic experiences. There were significant changes in some children, who developed the confidence to perform in public. The well-structured and planned drama lessons also helped to improve self-discipline. The children's increased self-esteem has given them more confidence in other learning contexts.

School's comment on impact of project

Teachers have increased their level of skills and confidence in implementing the drama curriculum. Drama is more accessible to children and teachers so that it is now used effectively in a variety of areas across the curriculum. The children are immersed in such a rich and varied arts programme that their self-esteem and confidence are greatly enhanced in an interactive and enjoyable way. They have an opportunity to excel in non-academic areas and to discover new talents and potential.

There has been a visible improvement in home-school-community relationships, which has had a positive impact on school morale.

St Vincent's Convent Primary School, St. Mary's Road Literacy project

1st class: 72 pupils
4th/5th class: 72 pupils (paired reading)
6th class: 25 pupils (digital storytelling)

Goals

To increase parents' confidence and competence in helping their children to read

To increase family/school partnership

To increase the children's interest in books and reading

To enhance the children's oral language ability

To improve the children's scores on standardized reading tests when compared with (i) their own pre-intervention scores and (ii) the average score of the children in the three pre-intervention years

To include the programme in the School Plan as part of our whole-school literacy programme, and ensure its continuation if the collaboration with UCC ends

Data collected

Outcomes were measured both qualitatively, using interviews and parent/teacher assessment of children's work, and quantitatively, using questionnaires and standardised tests

To measure the impact of the project on the children's oral language competency, children were pre- and post-tested using:

- British Picture Vocabulary Scale
- Renfrew Action Picture Test

Two tests were used to measure the impact of the project on the children's reading:

- Young Group Reading Test
- Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (DPRT)
- The latter was also used to compare the project group with a control group.

Results

Significant gains were recorded in children's performance on all tests. The average standard score on the DPRT in June 2006 was 100.25. This compares with an average score of 96.99 for the three years before the project began. This is a significant increase as it means that the average standard score of first class children in St. Vincent's has risen from approximately three points below the national average to a quarter of a point above the national average during the course of the five-year project.

The results are particularly significant in the light of recent reports on reading in schools in areas of socio-economic disadvantage.

School's comment on impact of project

Bridging the Gap has had a strong impact in our school. We have looked closely at the learning experiences of the children in the area of literacy and, building on our own experience, action research spirals of planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and re-planning have become part of our practice, extending into areas other than literacy. Our pedagogical practice has been enriched by our attendance at the *Bridging the Gap* events and by the participation of the Principal at the Project Zero Summer Institute in Harvard. We have been encouraged and uplifted by the regular contact afforded to us by *Bridging the Gap* with our colleagues in other schools. We have been honoured to be part of this innovative, ground-breaking educational endeavour.

Sunday's Well Boys' School Developing language and communication skills through the arts	All classes from junior infants to sixth class 140 pupils
Goals Build on progress made in the project over the previous four years Use drama lessons to enable children express themselves and use language effectively Develop children's confidence in their ability to speak and act in public Increase motivation and self-esteem Promote children's interest in learning Enable at least 70% of pupils to participate in public performance	**Data collected** Teacher observation in the classroom Standardised testing in English is carried out annually
Results Pupils have experienced joy and excitement as they learned how to express themselves 100% participation in Christmas concert Many senior pupils have taken part in productions outside school Improvements in English assessments Improvements in attendance (over 93% average)	**School's comment on impact of project** Since the beginning of the *Bridging the Gap* project, pupils and staff in our school work in a happier environment. Conflict is reduced. There is an improvement in parent-teacher communication. An environment of success and fun enhances the learning experience. This enables children to develop their talents and helps them to become good citizens within the community. The project has been the catalyst that has helped us to tackle what we saw as a need within our school.

Sunday's Well Girls' School Music - a gift for life	All classes from junior infants to sixth class 150 pupils
Goals Enable each child to develop her musical potential and to experience the excitement and satisfaction of being actively engaged in musical creativity Nurture the child's self-esteem and self-confidence through participation in musical performance Enhance the quality of the child's life through aesthetic musical experience Encourage teachers to up-skill and embark on their own musical project Provide support to teachers in the implementation and development of the project To encourage parents and families to take an interest in their children's musical activities.	**Data collected** Teacher assessment of performance Feedback from children: brain-storming session Questionnaire to parents: project was extended to all classes this year because of their positive support
Results We had two glorious productions during the past year. It was a joy to watch the children performing confidently on stage. Their newly acquired skills using percussion instruments and their enjoyment in the performance were clearly evident. The children look forward to their music lesson and attendance is at its best on a Thursday. The project has improved their motivation to stay in school and achieve their full potential. It requires self discipline to play a percussion instrument as part of a sound story or sing a round. The project has provided further pleasurable opportunities for interaction of teachers with parents and families. Teachers have benefited from the project by increasing their professional skills.	**School's comment on impact of project** Our pupils, parents and school community have benefited tremendously from our involvement in the project. If we have the opportunity we would love to continue to be involved. During this last school year the older pupils were involved in experimentation with sound and creating sound stories. The percussion instruments were divided into families and a sound story is created by changing the order of sounds, the tempo of sounds, the volume of sounds etc. This will be further developed into listening to music and music appreciation.

Togher Boys' NS Music tuition: recorder and guitar	Two sixth classes 50 pupils
Goals Establish instrumental tuition in music curriculum Extend playing of recorder to more pupils. Introduce guitar tuition to group of pupils (12) Provide opportunities for pupils to enjoy music performance and to acquire skills in instrumental playing Create awareness among teachers of the possibilities and potential benefits of instrumental performance.	**Data collected** Teacher observation of performance
Results The recorder project is perceived by the school community as successful. The pupils can now present a confident recorder performance; they have acquired a range of playing and performance skills and some knowledge of musical theory The boys eagerly look forward to the classes, which are well managed; time is fruitfully used and the pupils learn ever more quickly Parents are aware and supportive of the recorder project and want it to continue Teachers support project and want to extend the playing of the recorder to other classes	**School's comment on impact of project** The recorder project is most likely to be developed further in the coming year The guitar project will require continuity to allow pupils acquire a meaningful level of skill. They enjoy their lessons and have integrated well in performance with the recorder players. Pupils benefit greatly from even one rehearsal during the period between lessons The pupils benefit also from their disciplined encounters with the visiting tutors and their positive engagement with the adults involved. Good behaviour was practised in a range of settings.

Post-Primary Schools and Centres

St Kevin's School, Infirmary Road The arts and social skills	Three classes (whole school) 23 pupils
Goals The main goal of the project was to increase our student's exposure to music, the arts and theatre and to encourage positive behaviour on social outings. We hoped to improve student self-esteem through their engagement with creative activities.	**Data collected** Staff monitored and recorded the students' engagement with their music and theatre experiences Records of attendance and involvement in project activities Informal observation by class teacher Feedback from students Social skills programme: behaviour noted pre and post training Classroom charts to monitor progress in putting skills into practice. Staff evaluation and comments at regular meetings
Results The production of the music CD had the most obvious impact this year. Student and staff expectations were exceeded. The process and the finished product generated enjoyment and interest among the children. Parents appreciated the 'showcasing' of their children in such a positive way. Students were very proud of their achievement and grew in self confidence. Encouraging positive behaviour was an important goal of our programme. Staff noted improvement in student self-esteem, co-operation and positive involvement during class time. Social skills training has a positive impact on classroom behaviour, break times and on out-of-school trips. Staff have raised their expectations of students, and generally students show the ability to practise their self-management skills.	**School's comment on impact of project** The impact of the project depends greatly on the student and staff engagement with the project activities, which must be student-centered, interesting, entertaining and delivered at an appropriate level. The development of a school committee to explore the issues of a creative curriculum was a very positive outcome of this year's project. It is hoped that such a working group will continue to operate next year. The experiences gained by the students through the project create the atmosphere for positive learning experiences and help students in developing the skills they need to successfully integrate in the wider community.

Deerpark CBS, St Patrick's Road European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)	Transition year 11 pupils
Goals Promote positive engagement with the programme Enable students to achieve ECDL qualification Apply computer skills to work in other subject areas Develop a school web site Build on the success of the project to upgrade the school's computer facilities	**Data collected** Pupil survey: questionnaires issued to students from three Transition year cohorts ECDL assessments
Results All students achieved a full ECDL qualification (all targets met) Full attendance at all class sessions (Friday afternoons) Computer and internet research skills used effectively in other subject areas: construction studies, history Students are aware that they have gained useful work-related skills School website developed Parents are raising funds to provide laptops for all senior students	**School's comment on impact of project** We have focused in our project on enhancing computer applications skills in our senior cohort of students. All transition year students have benefited from the project in recent years. There has been a noticeable improvement in presentation and research of schoolwork. We are in the process of upgrading classrooms to introduce more computer-based learning. There is good cooperation between parents and staff and excellent engagement of students that will sustain the project. The targets set are high and we are dependent on external sponsorship and fundraising but we are determined to make this work.

Mayfield Community School Science Club and Young Scientist Exhibition	First to fifth year 13 pupils

Goals

Promote students' interest in science

Raise the profile of science in the school

Encourage students to develop project ideas and prepare entries for the Young Scientist Exhibition

Enter projects in the Young Scientist Exhibition

Encourage students to consider science as a career choice

Data collected

Quantitative and qualitative metrics:

- Interviews with participating pupils by guidance counsellor before and after project
- Records of student involvement in project, level of preparation, collection of data
- Records of projects prepared, accepted for exhibition, awards and commendations
- Photographic record of project activities and display materials

Results

Two students' projects were commended in 2006

Increased interest in science fostered by participation in Young Scientist Exhibition

Positive effect on public image and morale of school and on self-esteem of pupils

Greater level of awareness of careers in science and aspiration to progress to higher education

Increased uptake of biology in Leaving Certificate

School's comment on impact of project

There is no doubt that the participation of students in the project has created a new dimension to students' outlook in the Sciences and in their ability to represent their school in yet another national forum.

We would like to build on our success by having more time to work with the students on projects, and for the team involved to meet, discuss, organise, evaluate and report back on progress.

We hope to adopt a whole school approach and to expand the project to include the Social and Behavioural Sciences by attracting Geography teachers and students to participate.

North Monastery Secondary School Digital video production	Transition year and fifth year Two classes
Goals Develop students' basic competency in using a digital video camera Develop basic video production skills. Develop basic video editing skills Create a DVD of students' video.	**Data collected** Informal measurement of skills acquired: production of DVD was evidence of achievement of goals Teacher observation and communication with students during the project
Results Self-confidence in use of video equipment and a feeling of 'ownership' of the project Successful production of DVD and photo CD to record events Students learned effectively through guided discovery and collaborative learning Social skills developed through teamwork and achievement of shared goals	**School's comment on impact of project** Mastering the video cameras and the editing software presented a steep learning curve to the students; however it was a resounding success in terms of student engagement and motivation. Control rested with the students themselves and they enjoyed the learning experience. Students felt that what they were doing was practical and worthwhile and a welcome change from the traditional curriculum. The creative nature of the project allowed some hidden talents to emerge.

North Presentation Secondary School, Farranree
Performing arts

First and second year classes
121 pupils

Goals

Pupil related goals

To improve school retention levels by

- enhancing motivation of pupils through the arts: music, art, drama and dance
- engaging pupils in active learning
- enhancing pupils' self-esteem
- using multiple intelligences
- encouraging a positive attitude to school

Teacher related goals

- to improve relationships with pupils
- to become aware of previously unrecognised talents of pupils
- to develop new skills for use in the classroom

Parent/Family related goals

- To help parents encourage their children to participate in the arts
- To help parents recognise talents in their children

Whole School

- To enable students to participate more in the arts and to feel more positive about school

Data collected

Questionnaire survey with students at the end of the year

Informal feedback from parents and teachers

Teacher observation of performances and in classroom settings

Results

Pupils' confidence and enjoyment of school have improved

Mixed-ability grouping facilitates greater interaction among pupils

Parents attended performances and offered their support

Teachers responded positively and noticed new talents in pupils

Teachers and pupils agree that the show benefits the whole school atmosphere

School's comment on impact of project

Changes in the school

The curriculum has been changed and Performing Arts are now included for a double-period each week for 1st and 2nd years, and Dance has been introduced as a Transition Year subject.

A performance is now seen as an integral part of the school year, and pupils and teachers voluntarily spend time after school to rehearse. This leads to better interaction, while students gain more confidence and more recognition among their peers.

Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane
Modified Junior Certificate programme

Second and third year
10 pupils, small group work

Goals

The long-term goal is to retain students in school until the end of senior cycle. Our short-term goals are set in partnership with the students and include:

- Engage students' interest in school by letting them experience success
- Personalise learning and help students to feel part of the system
- Enable students to set personal goals and to evaluate their own performance
- Help students to transfer the learning from the small group into main classroom subjects

Data collected

Monitor and record examination/test results: use as a basis for evaluating performance and setting SMART learning goals with students

Record attendance and completion of homework assignments self-evaluation by students

Junior Certificate results

Follow-up of past students into senior cycle

Results

The project has had a huge, permanent and positive impact on the students themselves, their families, their participation in the main class, their examinations/test results, their retention in the education system and on the whole school.

In the past five years, 48 students have participated and all but one of these passed more than five subjects in the Junior Certificate.

All of the students returned to senior cycle after the Junior Certificate. The programme has raised their expectations and some have progressed to traditional Leaving Certificate.

The programme has become embedded in the school curriculum and is now entitled the Modified Junior Certificate

The programme has a positive profile in school with students now asking to join the group.

School's comment on impact of project

This project has worked tremendously well in the school. Although small, it has made a huge difference to the school attendance, performance and future prospects of the students involved. To some extent, the school has become a victim of this success because we have lost our disadvantaged status.

When the dynamics of the group are right, the students blossom. They feel part of a group. They look out for each other. They encourage and even "teach" each other.

"It has also enriched my own school experience and given me a great sense of achievement, to see the joy on their faces when they realise that they can actually pass an exam." (Teacher)

St Patrick's College, Gardiner's Hill Curriculum enrichment: Physical education, computer studies and the arts	First to sixth year All classes
Goals To provide one full year group (Transition Year) with ECDL training and certification To develop a highly individual and unique arts programme concentrating on the artistic skills of stencilling and graffiti To offer music and singing to all classes with the intention of building up our choir formed as a result of last year's *Bridging the Gap Project*. To help our students understand that physical exercise and creative workshops can be fun as well as health enhancing and beneficial.	**Data collected** Observation and feedback by instructors / facilitators / teachers on students' performance, attitude and progress Monitoring of attendance at PE, ECDL and Arts classes Formal and informal testing, employing a mixture of written, oral, observational and practical assessment depending on the class / module ECDL examinations for accreditation Student self- and peer-assessment in some PE classes Student evaluation of martial arts component for transition year students Student questionnaire to ascertain satisfaction with PE and ECDL programmes Audience assessment of the choir's performance at all public performances and inter active art exhibition
Results Students passed five ECDL modules: will take remaining two next year All year groups had a varied PE programme timetabled weekly Arts group worked successfully on drama and art projects Dance and aerobics classes provided School choir and band experienced further success in public performances Growth in students' confidence, self-esteem and creativity more positive profile of transition year	**School's comment on impact of project** Without doubt this year's project was an unqualified success. While widening its boundaries to include all students may have initially been quite daunting yet the pay-back from the dedication and selflessness of the staff has been immense. It certainly proves that limiting ourselves as we have in other years was a good start, but high achievement generally only follows high expectations. Our expectations were high this year, the scope of our programme was much broader and consequently our successes were many and varied.

Nagle Community College, Mahon Drama performance and appreciation	First to fourth year Groups of pupils from these classes
Goals To enhance our college's drama productions, with a view to performing in local inter-school competitions To provide after-school rehearsals in preparation for productions and competitions To facilitate visiting theatre productions	**Data collected** Teacher observation Informal feedback
Results Having performed various scenes from Shakespeare and Dickens our theatre group achieved notable success in competitions over the last two years winning group and individual awards. It was also clear throughout the rehearsal period and by performing in front of their peers that the concept of drama and theatre was greatly enhanced throughout the school.	**School's comment on impact of project** In any future developments in this area, we would aim to involve a wider cross-section of teaching staff and to discuss well in advance how best the project might be organised.





4

Evaluating outcomes and looking to the future



Achieving educational equality and inclusion

There is a wealth of Irish and international literature on the topics of educational disadvantage, equality and inclusion. However, the outcomes of intervention programmes targeted at addressing educational disadvantage in Ireland have been disappointing so far. The concluding section of this report draws on the work of the *Bridging the Gap* project and on recent national reports to propose a set of good practice guidelines for educational inclusion projects. The guidelines have emerged from the real-life experience of the project and are intended to help schools and policy makers to achieve significant improvements in educational outcomes for all pupils. There is also an action plan for the coming two years that will help to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Evaluating outcomes at school level

The outcomes of the *Bridging the Gap* project at school level have been documented in the previous section. It can be seen from their reports that schools in the *Bridging the Gap* project have set specific goals and targets for their own projects, and they have produced concrete evidence to show how the project has made a difference to their pupils. Many schools have shown improvement over time by comparing results with baseline data gathered earlier in the project. They have used information that is already available and easily assembled in the school, including attendance registers, test results, term reports, discipline records and homework records. Some schools have also used standardised tests and assessment instruments to measure pupils' attainments where appropriate. This systematic approach to setting targets and measuring achievement is the main feature that distinguishes the *Bridging the Gap* project from other interventions that are designed to promote educational inclusion.

Evaluating outcomes at project level

Over the past five years, the *Bridging the Gap* project has promoted and supported good practice throughout the whole group of forty-two participating schools, working in partnership with the network of principals and of teachers. Among the many positive outcomes of the project are specific measured improvements in the following areas :

- literacy and language development
- mathematics
- science (including successful participation in Young Scientist exhibition)
- information technology (ECDL)
- attendance
- quality of homework
- Junior Certificate results and retention to senior cycle
- uptake of science subjects in second level
- aspirations to study in higher education, career ambitions.

In addition, pupils have developed high levels of skill in the performing and visual arts, with consequent improvements in self-esteem and self-discipline. This has had a positive impact on attainment across the curriculum.

The project has helped schools to make more productive links with their communities: parents are more actively engaged in children's learning, and they support the work of the project in the schools.



Evaluating outcomes at national level

Many national initiatives for educational inclusion show disappointing results. In June 2006 the Comptroller and Auditor General published a Value for Money Report which assessed the impact of a number of educational disadvantage initiatives in the primary sector including :

- Disadvantaged Areas Scheme (introduced in 1984)
- Home-school-community links scheme (coordinators appointed from 1990 onwards)
- Breaking the Cycle Initiative (introduced in 1996, subsumed into Giving Children an Even Break in 2001)
- School Completion Programme (clusters introduced in 2002).

(The report can be downloaded from http://www.audgen.gov.ie/documents/vfmreports/53_EducationalDisadvantage.pdf).

The effectiveness of the initiatives was examined mainly in terms of the rate of improvement in literacy and numeracy levels and school attendance. Using these measures, the report presents a bleak picture: relative standards of literacy in designated disadvantaged schools have actually fallen between 1998 and 2004. Numeracy levels in disadvantaged schools are also low relative to schools generally.

The report states that "*Bearing in mind the resources applied through the various disadvantage initiatives and the general increase in recent years in the financial allocations to the primary sector, it is disappointing that reading standards in designated disadvantaged schools have not improved. …In order to evaluate the effectiveness of future programmes to combat educational disadvantage it will be necessary to set targets for literacy, numeracy and attendance at both national and school level and to ensure that proper systems are put in place to collect the relevant data.*" (p. 10)

The report makes a number of recommendations that are relevant to individual schools' efforts to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, school attendance and completion. They are also in line with the practice that has been part of the *Bridging the Gap* model since the outset:

- Schools should set short- to medium-term targets for achievement in the areas of literacy, numeracy and attendance and monitor individual achievement and overall outcomes in the light of those targets.

- Schools should create better links between the results of standardised testing, the teaching methodologies and strategies adopted and the creation of learning goals for specific curricular areas.

- Evaluation at school level needs to be improved through the provision of expertise and support in School Development Planning, target setting and monitoring.





Characteristics of successful approaches to educational inclusion

The *Bridging the Gap* project also displays several other characteristics that have been identified by the statutory Education Disadvantage Committee as being an essential part of a precisely-targeted, comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to addressing disadvantage in a school context. These include

1. Curriculum adaptation with particular reference to literacy and numeracy
2. An emphasis on early intervention and prevention of school failure rather than remediation
3. A high degree of parent involvement in the educational process, both in their own homes and in schools
4. The reform of school organisation to develop a unity of purpose and build on existing strengths of teachers and pupils
5. Adequate financial resources for schools to operate comfortably
6. A high level of involvement of other community agencies.

(Education Disadvantage Committee, *Moving Beyond Educational Disadvantage* : Final report, 2005 http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/edc_moving_beyond_educational_disadvantage.pdf?language=EN).

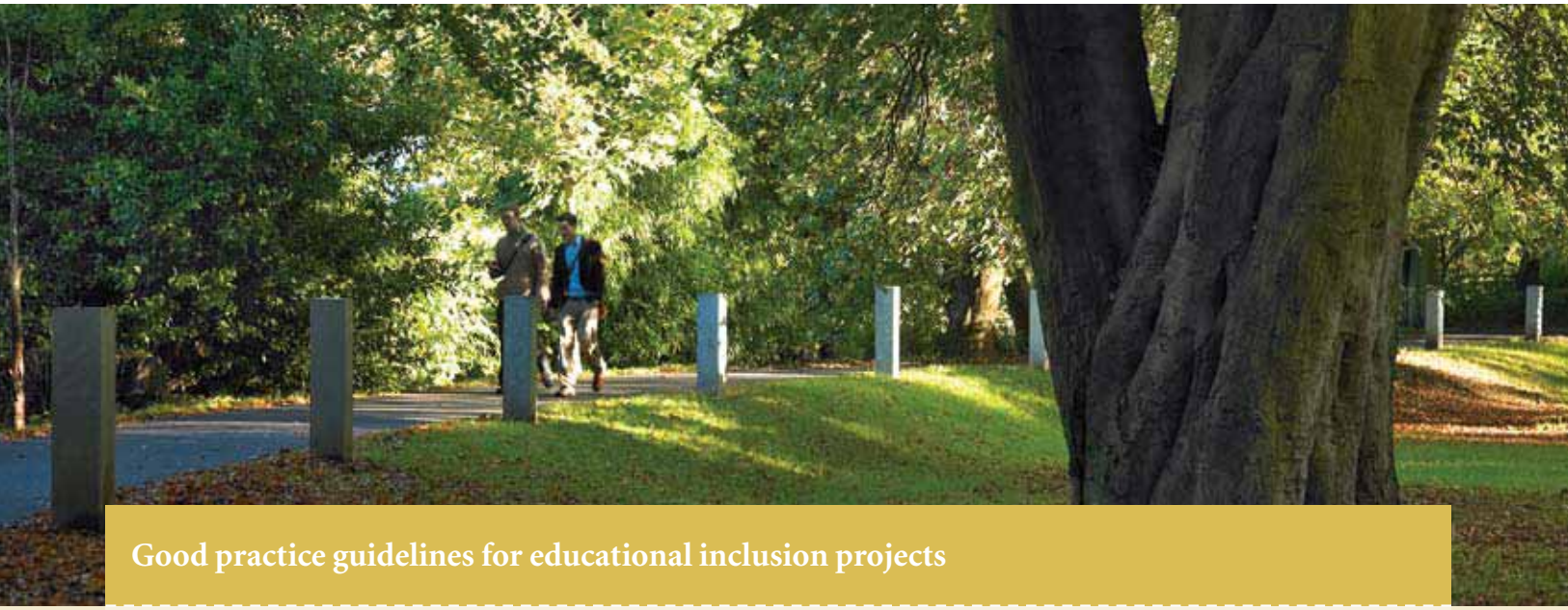
Research carried out on behalf of the Education Disadvantage Committee by Archer and Weir found that many educational intervention projects have shortcomings in three significant areas: they do not give enough attention to developing literacy and numeracy; they do not raise teachers' and parents' expectations sufficiently, and they do not include sufficient and appropriate professional development for teachers. *Bridging the Gap* has focussed specifically on these areas, and the outcomes as shown in the school reports are very positive.

(http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/edc_addressing_disadvantage.pdf?language=EN)

Good practice guidelines for educational inclusion projects: What works?

From the experience of the *Bridging the Gap* project over that past five years and from a review of the recent reports mentioned above, it is possible to propose a set of good practice guidelines for educational inclusion projects in the future. The guidelines can be used by schools and policy makers as indicators or criteria by which the success of various interventions can be measured. In the next phase of the *Bridging the Gap* project, these draft guidelines will be further developed and refined in partnership with the participating schools.





Good practice guidelines for educational inclusion projects

Educational inclusion projects in schools work best when they

1. Recognise that schools make a difference, and adopt a whole-school approach to planning and monitoring interventions that achieve improved educational outcomes for all pupils, in partnership with parents and families
2. Foster a culture of high expectations and success among the whole school community, including pupils, families and teachers
3. Engage all pupils in high quality learning experiences that enable them to develop their full potential across the whole curriculum, with special focus on achieving high standards of literacy and numeracy
4. Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed targets for all learning experiences and special interventions
5. Monitor and measure achievement of the targets set, using formal and informal, quantitative and qualitative approaches to measurement as appropriate
6. Feed back the results of monitoring into the school development planning process to promote continuous quality improvement
7. Celebrate the "wins" and give recognition to all members of the school community who have contributed to successful achievement of the targets
8. Provide professional development opportunities for principal and teachers, and enable them to participate in networks where good practice can be shared
9. Have appropriate personnel, financial and infrastructural resources to achieve their targets and to maintain the improved outcomes
10. Receive support from relevant external agencies that enables them to implement the necessary changes in practice and to achieve successful outcomes.



Looking forward: an action plan for sustainability

The following actions will ensure that the *Bridging the Gap project* is sustainable into the future and that it is disseminated more widely at national level.

1. Continue working to influence national policy on educational inclusion, for example through linking with the Department of Education and Science and the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education in the HEA.
2. Continue to monitor the impact of the project, focussing in particular on helping schools to gather data as evidence of improved outcomes in literacy, numeracy and attendance.
3. Disseminate the *Bridging the Gap* project model to other urban areas in Ireland, with a university or other higher education institution acting as the *"hub"* of local learning partnerships involving schools and community organisations.
4. Ensure that *Bridging the Gap* continues to be closely linked to the university's community mission and is well supported at senior management level. In the future, the project will expand its *"brokerage"* role to encourage the development of further school-university-community partnerships.
5. Encourage schools to extend their participation in other projects where they can use the skills they have developed and build on the success they have achieved through *Bridging the Gap*.
6. Publish further papers and articles on the work of the project in national media and international journals.
7. Make links with other similar educational inclusion projects, for example the projects run by the Dublin Docklands Social Regeneration Unit, to share learning and compare outcomes.
8. Based on the experience of *Bridging the Gap*, help to develop good practice guidelines for educational inclusion programmes at local, regional and national levels.



Appendix

Schools participating in *Bridging the Gap* project

Primary Schools

1. Gaelscoil Mhachan, Mahon
2. Gaelscoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa, Ballyphehane
3. Greenmount NS, Green St.
4. Maria Assumpta Infant School, Ballyphehane
5. Maria Assumpta Senior School, Ballyphehane
6. Morning Star NS, Ballyphehane
7. North Monastery NS, North Monastery Rd.
8. North Presentation NS, Gerald Griffin St.
9. School of the Holy Cross, Mahon
10. Scoil Aiséirí Chríost, Faranree
11. Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh (B), Bishopstown
12. Scoil Eoin Naofa, Mayfield
13. Scoil Íosagáin, Faranree
14. Scoil Mhuire Banríon, Mayfield
15. Scoil Padre Pio, Churchfield
16. Gaelscoil Thérèse, Bishopstown
17. Scoil Ursula, Blackrock
18. St. Brendan's Girls' NS, The Glen
19. St. Columba's CBS, Blarney St.
20. St. Mark's Boys' NS The Glen
21. St. Mary's on the Hill NS, Knocknaheeny
22. St. Patrick's Boys' NS, Gardiner's Hill
23. St. Patrick's Girls' NS, Gardiner's Hill
24. St. Patrick's Infant School, Gardiner's Hill
25. St. Vincent's Convent NS, St. Mary's Rd.
26. Sunday's Well Boys' NS
27. Sunday's Well Girls' NS
28. Togher Boys' NS
29. Togher Girls' NS

Post-Primary Schools and Centres

1. Deerpark CBS, St. Patrick's Rd, Deerpark
2. Mayfield Community School, Old Youghal Rd.
3. Nagle Community College, Mahon
4. North Monastery Secondary School, North Monastery Rd.
5. North Presentation Secondary School, Faranree
6. Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane
7. St. Patrick's Secondary School, Gardiner's Hill
8. St. Vincent's Secondary School, St. Mary's Rd.
9. Terence MacSwiney Community College, Knocknaheeny
10. Ursuline Secondary School, Blackrock
11. Hillgrove Lane Centre, Gerald Griffin St.
12. Sunday's Well Life Centre
13. St. Kevin's School, Infirmary Rd.



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