

ACCS NEWS

ISSUE 5 • 2021/2022



Junk Kouture

IN THIS ISSUE • ACCS Education Conference • “Belong To” Supports for Schools • The ACCS Middle Leadership Training Programme



Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
Cúnam na Scoilanna Pobail agus Cúinnstitheacha

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Cover image: Katie Molloy, Moate Community School.



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Here Comes the Summer...

Dear Colleagues,

As we come to the end of another season of school, we might take some time to pause and smell the fragrance of our favourite flowers. Apparently of the five senses smell has the best memory.

This has been a long spell in the school garden and maybe it's time for estivation which I'm told is the summer version of hibernation. Nothing in the natural world blooms all year long, so we shouldn't expect ourselves to do so either.



Nature has a way of looking after its own. Our house used the excuse of providing forage for the bees so as not to mow the lawn until the end of May. Dandelions took over. While some see them as weeds, we have grown to appreciate them almost celestially, watching their happy faces smile like the sun, their white globes illuminating like the moon and their wish-making seeds shooting as stars.

Apparently, dandelions are good for the lawn, drawing nutrients from below with their deep taproots to nourish all around them. When the eruption of Krakatoa sterilised the island, it was the dandelion that first coloured the volcanic soil. It seems to me that whenever or wherever it falls the dandelion starts again. They are due to flower again in the Autumn.

Maybe we could be like the dandelion and get into the habit of blooming twice a year?

The Amygdala never forgets

We are coloured by our childhood experiences. One reason is because the amygdala, one of the seats of emotion and memory in our brain, records fewer experiences as we get older. The younger we are, the more the brain stores. This might explain why time seems to speed up as we grow older and why we think the summers were always better in the good old days. Sometimes we don't realise the value of a moment until it becomes a memory.

Throughout this edition of ACCS News I am struck by the wealth of talent and imagination in our schools, the educational journeys being taken and cherished



“We are blessed to have so many faithful and devoted leaders, in our school communities who provide inspiration and example for us all.”

memories being made. Our students are revelling on the world stage at boxing, Junk Kouture and Robotics, our budding authors, artists and actors are creating art for the ages, our aspiring engineers, mathematicians, and scientists are predicting what is next by creating it and our champions of climate change are campaigning for our very survival. Our students are our brighter future.

In acknowledging all in our communities who make our schools happen, our students and staff, who learn and teach, work and play, strive and thrive together, we remember that the highest form of appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.

Abraham Lincoln wrote a letter to his son’s Principal in which he requested that he *‘teach him that all men are not just, that all men are not true but for every scoundrel there is a hero, for every selfish politician there is a dedicated leader.’*

We are blessed to have so many faithful and devoted leaders, in our school communities who provide inspiration and example for us all. *Ar aghaidh linn le chéile.*



Be the Sunshine

This summer we bid fond farewell to our ACCS colleagues, Eileen Diver and Susan Cunniffe, who are retiring and will be missed in Oak Drive. Many of you will associate Eileen as the ‘voice’ of ACCS. We might have all at some stage or another over the years phoned head office with an urgent query only to be instantly put at ease by Eileen’s friendly, soothing voice. Always the professional, no request, big or small was ever any trouble. We will miss Eileen’s bubbly personality and infectious laugh.

Susan retired from her role as Office Manager two years ago but with her acumen and wealth of experience in ACCS was the ideal person to take on the challenge of introducing and implementing the new vetting system within our schools. Thankfully Susan agreed to undertake this challenge and in her own inimitable style has ensured its successful implementation. We thank you both for your service and are sure that in the spirit of the ACCS community we will meet again.

To Susan and Eileen, to all our colleagues and students setting out this summer to embark on new challenges we say:

**If you want to view paradise
Simply look around and view it
Anything you want to, do it
Want to change the world?
There’s nothing to it**



It is always Summer Somewhere

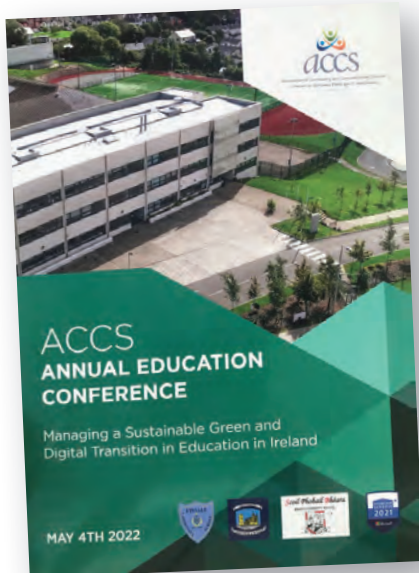
Wishing you all a long gentle summer. We can be our own sunshine.

James Duignan
President ACCS



ACCS Education Conference

Theme: Managing a Sustainable Green and Digital Transition in Education in Ireland



The ACCS Annual Education Conference, “Managing a Sustainable Green and Digital Transition in Education in Ireland” took place on 4th May and was hosted by Kinsale Community School. The Education Conference is a festival of learning and this was a great opportunity to share best practice in a school setting. Old Bawn Community School and Scoil Phobail Bheara also shared their experiences and learnings on the day. The conference focused on the twin transitions, green and digital, which represent the challenges and opportunities for school leadership at the moment and into the future. The conference was an ideal opportunity for stakeholders to gather, learn, and share with one another while benefiting from the wisdom and expertise of highly regarded educationalists.

The agenda for the conference addressed the two most important and pertinent issues for education at the moment, namely the digital and green transitions. These transitions represent the megatrend issues which are of greatest concern for educators throughout Europe. The conference was very lucky to have attracted guest speakers such as Lord David Puttnam and the European Commission Educationalist Deirdre Hodson. Conference delegates included Principals and Board of Management members from the 96 Community and Comprehensive schools as well as delegates from across the European Community from the European Federation of Educational Employers (EFEE).

“This is an international festival of learning and I am delighted that Kinsale Community School was host to this prestigious event. This conference is an opportunity to gather, learn, and share with one another while benefiting from the wisdom and expertise of highly regarded educationalists.”

Fergal McCarthy, Principal, Kinsale Community School

The Digital Transition

The digital module took the delegates through the digital journey which teachers have travelled during the period of emergency remote teaching and learning. It explored how to build on the digital competence which was achieved by both students and teachers. Michael Hallissy from H2Learning guided schools through the opportunities that schools now face and advised on how they can maintain the momentum. Deirdre Hodson from the Education Department of the European Commission was centrally involved in the design of the 'Selfie for Teachers' and 'Selfie for Schools' tools. Deirdre took delegates through the benefits that accrue from the self-evaluative functions which these tools provide to staff and schools. The Selfies provide feedback to direct the digital strategies for schools and this session provided the delegates with guidance in respect of school improvement relating to digital strategy. Both Kinsale Community School and Old Bawn Community School are Microsoft Showcase Schools and they showcased their practices with their students.



The Green Transition

Students across our schools are looking for decision makers and policy makers to focus their attention on issues such as climate change, sustainability, biodiversity, and good global citizenship. Schools are grappling with the challenge of where to start to deal with these complex issues which are giving rise to conditions such as eco-anxiety and eco-depression amongst students. The green module was addressed by acclaimed film maker and highly recognized educationalist, Lord David Puttnam who provided the delegates with his thoughts and guidance on these issues. Valerie Lewis illustrated her work on the Take One programme which has been pioneered through the ETBI. This initiative traces the UN Sustainable Development Goals to the Junior Cycle Statements of Learning. Klaus Harvey is the Sustainability Chaplain at Kinsale Community School and Klaus addressed the delegates on his function within the school community while illustrating the transformative impact that his role has generated. Both Scoil Phobail Bhéara and Kinsale Community School shared their experiences and their 'green' initiatives with the delegates. Student Voice featured again in this module.



The Twin Transitions

The afternoon session took the form of a panel discussion where the delegates had the interactive opportunity to share with, and learn from the panelists how to take the next steps on our green and digital journeys. The discussion centred around how schools can use the digital transition to support the green transition. This session allowed the delegates to crystallise the learning from the day and reflect on how these transitions can be managed in their own school settings. Members of this panel discussion included Lord David Puttnam, Deirdre Hodson, Assistant Secretary at the Dept of Education Tomás O'Rourke and Dr Kevin Marshall from Microsoft.

ACCS and the Education Sub-Committee would like to thank most sincerely all students, speakers, guests and delegates who took the time out of their busy lives to attend and participate in the Education Conference this year. Thank you in particular to Old Bawn Community School and Scoil Phobail Bhéara who contributed to the event and to Fergal McCarthy, Principal, Kinsale Community School for agreeing to host the Conference.





Farewell to our Colleague Eileen Diver

I would like to pay tribute to our wonderful colleague, Eileen Diver who retires from ACCS this year after 10 years. Professional to a tee, Eileen always has smile a for colleagues and a unique way of making all visitors to Head Office feel welcome and at ease. Always in good humour even when under pressure, we have enjoyed many laughs and it has been such a pleasure to work alongside Eileen over the years. She will always be remembered for her hard work but even more so for her sense of humour, infectious laughter and her kind and considerate nature.

Family means everything to Eileen, and now as you face into the next chapter, I hope you take every opportunity to spend time with your children Helen, Ciarán, Shane and Colm and your sister Kitty and your extended family enjoying all the things you may not have had the time to do when you were working full time. I hope you take the time to relax and focus on new hobbies while honing your line-dancing skills. All of your colleagues in ACCS will miss you terribly and hope that you won't be a stranger to Oak Drive in the years to come.

**John Irwin, General Secretary,
Áine, Anne Marie, Debbie,
Hilary, Catherine, Susan,
David, Sarahlynn and Elaine.**

I can still remember interviewing Eileen for her position in ACCS. She came across as a lovely gentle person who had experienced life and education through her own family and previous work and seemed to me to be a great fit for us. Some of us were older, some were younger, but Eileen fitted in well with all of us. She was probably a little bit uncertain about taking on the role when she began but she very quickly gained confidence and learned all she needed to know and established very good working relationships with both ACCS and school personnel.

Like all of us working in ACCS at that time and in succeeding years she had to grapple with an accelerated rate of change and she rose to that challenge in the same way as she approached everything, calmly and carefully. Eileen has a great zest for life and in her ever good humoured way could enjoy the company in ACCS and became a fast friend of all of us. I love the lift in her voice even now when she recognises me on the phone, we both get a lift. Eileen is a very happy and contented person, and those qualities rub off in all her relationships within the organisation both personally and professionally.

I personally don't seem to have quite got the hang of retirement myself yet so I'm probably not the best person to advise Eileen as to what she might do in retirement. However, one thing I would gladly advise is that we meet up sometime and have a nice cup of coffee and a chat, that's something that I believe we would both value and enjoy. Go n-éirí leat, Eileen, have a great retirement and enjoy every minute, be good to yourself, you deserve it.

**Ciarán Flynn,
Former ACCS General Secretary.**



Eileen with her long-standing colleagues Debbie and Susan.

The ACCS Middle Leadership Training Programme

ACCS introduced the Middle Leadership Training Programme in 2019 following requests from its member Boards for specific in-service aimed at embedding distributed leadership culture in Community and Comprehensive schools.

The programme is offered to school teams consisting of one member of the SLT, one API post holder and one APII post holder. It provides for established leaders rather than for those teachers aspiring to leadership posts. However, in this format, post holders at different levels within the current structure grow in their understanding of leadership at all levels.

The content and materials of the programme are based on three pillars; the tenets of leadership as set out in CL003/18, the LAOS 2016 framework and the six step SSE process. The focus on distributed leadership is set in international and national policy and in local practices and drivers established at international and national level are considered and explored during the programme. However, the school's context, the specific factors which influence its culture and understanding how context impacts on those who lead learning within the school community is a crucial aspect to the work completed by the school team.

One of the key learning outcomes of the programme is to promote a deeper understanding that all posts of responsibility are aimed at improving learning and teaching practices in schools. Colleagues

in leadership positions in schools are challenged to support their own colleagues in the classroom and do so, building on current best practice in their school.

The main activity concentrates on participants understanding teaching and learning in their own school context and choosing a priority for the school team to focus on in terms of bringing about change in this area. This is contextualised in the LAOS framework within a single dimension, domain and standard. Unpacking the language in the LAOS framework and deliberating on this language and its significance for learning in schools is a very important part of the programme.

Research based on the work of Fullan, Hattie, Sinek, Ball, and others supports the programme materials and there is a careful balance between theory and practical activities to enhance engagement and enjoyment for all participants.

Since 2019, two separate cohorts of schools have participated in the programme. Cohort Three which is fully booked will commence in Autumn 2022.

(ACCS is planning for Cohort Four which is scheduled for 2023/24. Any Boards of Management interested in availing of this training, please contact Áine at aosullivan@accs.ie for further details.)

“Belong To” Supports for Schools

Belong To is delighted to launch a **new evidence-based LGBTQ+ Quality Mark** designed to support and accredit **LGBTQ+ Safe and Supportive Schools**. The LGBTQ+ Quality Mark is a whole school approach which focuses on the four key areas of wellbeing promotion from an LGBTQ+ perspective:

- **Creating an LGBTQ+ culture and environment**
- **Resourcing an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum**
- **Nurturing LGBTQ+ inclusive relationships and partnerships**
- **Supporting LGBTQ+ inclusive policies and planning**

Belong To will provide supports and training to schools embarking on and engaged in this journey of inclusion and participation in 2022/23 which is strictly limited to 35 schools in 2022. For any enquiries, please contact Stephen Cassidy: stephen@belongto.org / 01 670 6223 and see further information at <https://www.belongto.org/lgbtq-quality-mark/>.



LGBTQ+ Quality Mark



“All changed, changed utterly”

When schools reopened there was a naïve optimism that things would settle down and that some level of normality would be restored. However, the reality is very different. We have yet to speak with someone about their experience of returning to school, post lockdown, without reference being made to the effect it is having on them personally or on school life. People talk about the impact Covid continues to have on mental health, relationships and behaviour. Our students have been destabilised, illustrate fragility in ways we have not experienced before, and are very uncertain of their future. Some of our most vulnerable students have not returned to school after lockdown, others have sporadic attendance, and many are suffering from debilitating anxiety. The expectation on staff members, who themselves have been affected, is to keep the show on the road, to reassure and to support students, colleagues, and parents. What we have in schools now is exhausted school leaders and teachers feeling impotent in the face of the emotional fallout of what we are going through. In this article we would like to share our response to this experience.

By a stroke of good fortune, in the search for a substitute teacher, we came across Frankie Brown. Frankie is a qualified psychotherapist who specialises in adolescents. We immediately realised that her skillset and our needs aligned perfectly. Under the CLASS provision, withdrawal of students for focussed individual and or group, timebound interventions where warranted was allowed. As part of our response to the needs of students in our school and our context, we were fortunate to be able to engage the supports of Frankie. As we are all aware, opportunities to access such supports and therapeutic supports are limited in schools. It was a case of the right person, in the right place, at the right time and we felt like a weight was lifted from our shoulders.

Frankie immediately occupied a different role. She was separate to the school in that she wasn't a teacher, she was free from the constraints of timetables, and she was impartial. Her only agenda was the school's wellbeing. Her training, professional background and experience meant that she was equipped to handle situations that were beyond our level of expertise. Her presence enables us to retain students who were opting out of school due to their serious psychological challenges. We have the confidence now to refer students to her, knowing that they will get the level of care and specific help they deserve.

From the point of view of families, there is no cost involved and there are no access issues. The presence of an in-house psychotherapist counsellor has also removed the stigma from counselling for the whole school community. It has normalised the experience of seeking help and recognising that you are experiencing difficulties.

The model works, having a qualified psychotherapist counsellor on site, working in conjunction with our care team, is the single most effective initiative in wellbeing that we as a school have undertaken. Its sustainability is the issue for us. With the withdrawal of Covid supports on the horizon, we are pained to think that this initiative may not be possible next year. Covid is still here, its effects loom large in our school communities, we need this level of care to continue, our school communities deserve it.

**Karol Sadleir, Bríd Ní Annracháin – Pobalscoil Neasáin
and Frankie Brown, Psychotherapist**

Observations from Frankie Brown



Working in private practice, I have a belief that in order to help young people we have to support the adults raising them and endeavour to include parents in the care of their child, equipping them with skills. However, over the years it has occurred to me that adolescents are also heavily influenced by the education and relationships they receive in school and yet my access to teachers, in private adolescent counselling, is limited to non-existent. Furthermore, I was noticing that many adolescents were experiencing similar difficulties, making sense of their relationships, understanding behaviour, base knowledge of the function of emotions, and communication skills. Indeed, these difficulties are not unique to adolescents and we, as adults, can still struggle with these skills. With my experience in lecturing, I considered that embedding my practice within a school might offer the opportunity to not only support adults in the care of their children but also to equip the students to support themselves.

Entering the school, it was important to recognise that there are a plurality of perspectives and whilst I had heard from senior management the concerns of teachers and themselves, it was important for me to understand the concerns of students. Students voiced that along with Covid difficulties to be resolved, they wanted school to be more supportive with increased communication and engagement and to help with managing stress and motivation. This was echoed in their general concerns about their personal life, and they wanted both one-to-one time, group discussions and an opportunity to explore their feelings.

I also observed a care team and deputies who, in my opinion, were close to experiencing compassion fatigue from the emotional and psychological traumas they were trying to contain. When caring adults have few viable options to protect and support the young people in their care a huge burden of responsibility can be placed at their feet. I noticed senior management were holding back the tide, frantically catching the overspill but had little energy in reserve, and lacked the necessary psychological knowledge, to proactively educate their students and teachers in resourcing themselves.

Whilst Covid and the impact of such was of utmost importance I also promoted that prevention and resilience building would be essential in future-proofing the students. As a result, we agreed I would be available for some one-to-one counselling and help to manage the ever-growing list of those in, or nearing crisis. In addition, I developed four classes for years one-to-three to provide a base-level understanding of behaviour, emotions, feedback and communication, which are designed to start addressing current concerns but also allow future wellbeing development to be rooted in the language of mental health. Students discussed the choices they make to meet a need, which is influenced by how we understand the world as a result of our culture, values, identity and past experiences and how this ultimately impacts their behaviour. Furthermore, they worked together to find synonyms for different feelings to help them identify

their own and other's emotions which can aid them in firstly recognising what they need and secondly communicating this to others.

During these classes, I asked each student to log their emotion using a scaling question, which has enabled me to identify and offer support to the students who consistently indicated their mood was low during the four-week period. Interestingly, when I reached out to students to invite them to talk, I received a variety of responses such as 'I was sad because it was first thing Monday morning, to unearthing grief, relationship difficulties, struggles with learning, body image, low mood, shame and anxiety. Even those who said they did not need to talk often replied with "thank you for checking" and verbalised that it meant a lot to them and that they would reach out in the future if they needed to. This has raised the profile of the available support and builds a bridge into the counselling room should difficulties arise in the future.

With the goal of supporting adults, I had regular communication with parents who commented on the relief it is knowing that their child has support in school. They relish the opportunity to be provided with further articles, links and supports and to have an additional point of contact should they have concerns about their child. I have been able to provide a mental health framework to tease out complex dilemmas for senior management and equip them with theory and language to understand relational processes as well as support them in their work as they come across the trauma the students in their care are facing. Furthermore, since engaging staff in short lectures [topics such as self-care, understanding behaviour, exploring what they can/cannot control] I have also noticed an increase in staff beginning to reach out for support to discuss student welfare, behavioural challenges in class and their own areas of difficulty.

It has been a privilege to be invited into Pobalscoil Neasáin and I am hugely grateful to have had the opportunity to shape a new vision of wellbeing in the school. Going forward I hope to continue to develop classes including topics on transitions, identity and self-worth which often underpins depression, anxiety, relational difficulties and motivation, and support groups for those experiencing grief. I also see a need to offer a mental health perspective in shaping policy and the training and development of teachers particularly in areas of student communication and engagement. Many children are struggling with anxiety, low mood, relationship breakdowns at home, grief, identity, and all whilst living in a world facing a climate crisis, pandemic and wars. Often, we are their last stop before adulthood.

(Frankie Brown is a qualified, accredited therapist working in North Dublin. She is also a lecturer and Student Support Manager at IICP College supporting and encouraging students in their own counselling careers. The college which is based in Dublin offers a range of QQI and IACP validated courses from Certificate to Master's level.)

FURTHER EDUCATION

PLC Level 5 Business Studies in Glenamaddy Community School



I recently completed a Level 5 Award in Business Studies, in Glenamaddy Community School. As the year progressed, I learned many new skills and I can safely say that I thoroughly enjoyed my time and participation in the course.

The course was hugely important to me. It gave me the opportunity to do work at a college level standard and it helped me in my transition from secondary school education to third level. The work experience was an invaluable part of the course. I was able to work as an Assistant Technician in a secondary school. Repairing and resetting many of the devices around the school became a standard part of my daily routine and this experience will be invaluable moving forward in my future learning and employment opportunities.



I gained experience in subjects and modules that will help me if I am to participate in further learning and/or in working environments. Modules such as Communications helped me greatly with my oral and literacy skills. Other modules such as Typing, Word processing, Spreadsheets, Sage Accounts & Payroll, all improved my IT skills greatly.

As the broadband in my own home wasn't great, I was worried it would affect my ability to participate and work but I am grateful that it didn't. I was able to get all the course work done in the school building, and it did not stop me from getting good grades in all the different modules. Additionally, to have another location, rather than home gave me extra options in relation to where I studied and how I went about completing my work experience. There, I was free from distractions, and that coupled with the high-speed internet allowed me to work seamlessly during that time.

I am currently doing another PLC in Galway Technical Institute, in Programming Software, and I can already feel that I am ahead of where I might have already been. I believe this is so, as I have so much of the groundwork completed already because I achieved so much last year. I realise that I may never have received such a foundation, were it not for Glenamaddy Community School providing me with an accessible PLC of this quality.

Scott Dillon

**For information
on Further Education contact:**

Catherine O'Sullivan, Director,
ACCS/JMB Further Education Support Unit
Email: cosullivan@accs.ie Mobile: 083-3551034

Kinsale Community School

VEX Robotics Team compete at the VEX Worlds Competition in Dallas

Kinsale Community School hosted the VEX Worlds Qualifier on March 2nd. Four Kinsale teams competed against other schools for a place at the VEX Worlds Competition in Dallas in May. Our teams competed in coding and driving skills challenges and scores on the day were submitted to the VEX Worlds ranking committee. We were delighted to hear we were successful in securing the place to represent Ireland in Dallas in May and extra proud to be the school who made it happen.

Following on from this on April 7th and 8th Kinsale Community School hosted 2 days of VEX Robotics competitions for primary schools and secondary schools in Munster. This was the first official tournament to be held in Ireland since the outbreak of Covid in 2020. The KCS VEX team oversaw the running of both events as well as competing in their own secondary school's tournament.

Our team of 10 students departed for the World Championships in Dallas on May 3rd. This is the fourth year that Kinsale Community School have represented Ireland in this competition. KCS was proud to win the World Community Award in 2018 and 2019 in Louisville, Kentucky.

I had the privilege of travelling to Dallas, Texas with the VEX Robotics Team this year. This was an outstanding opportunity for our students. VEX competitions foster many skills and capitalise on the motivational effects of these competitions. Robotics helps all students create an identity as a STEM learner. We had a 10 strong team, made up of male & female students. This includes coders, robot builders and drivers along with students who are involved in the production of the engineering notebook. The VEX Robotics Competition prepares students to become future innovators with 95% of participants reporting an increased interest in STEM subject areas and pursuing STEM-related careers.



The event opens with a Parade of Nations and this is nothing short of spectacular. Over 800 teams compete at the World Championships, these teams are divided across 10 divisions. There are over 200 qualifying matches in each division with each team playing a minimum of 10 in alliance with another team. Students are interviewed by judges throughout the week to discuss the engineering notebook presented in advance of the event. The preparation for each match helps develop teamwork skills, collaboration and strategic planning. The VEX competitions are a great way to expose students to valuable soft skills like communication, collaboration and time-management in a fun and authentic way. Our students were in alliance with teams from the USA and Southeast Asia. It was an intense week for our TY students, but they were committed and hardworking throughout. They engaged with teams from all over the world and made lifelong friends and memories. They performed amazingly throughout and deserve great recognition. I would like to congratulate them for this and thank the two teachers Niamh Hay and Eddie Farren for making it all happen. We finished off our trip with a well-deserved visit to the Space Centre in Houston.

Claire Sheehan, Deputy Principal





Moate Community School

students to represent Ireland at first ever Junk Kouture World Final

Congratulations to Moate Community School and students Katie Molloy, Eimear Keenan and Samantha Irwin on qualifying for the first ever Junk Kouture World Final to be held in Abu Dhabi later this year.

The amazing design 'Tale of Two Pods' was created by Katie, Eimear and Samantha under the guidance of their teacher Pamela Keogh and is made from 3,000 coffee pods, a broken umbrella, old heels and an old Debs dress. Katie modelled the unique design at the Junk Kouture Dublin City Final held at the Board Gáis Energy Theatre on 5th May and was chosen from 60 designs along with 8 other finalists to represent Ireland. Katie also appeared on the Late Late Show on Friday 6th May.

We wish Katie the best of luck as she travels to represent Moate Community School and Ireland.

Old Bawn Community School

student Zuzanna 'Ex Static' to reach Junk Kouture Final

Congratulations to Zuzanna Cieslewicz and her teacher, Ms Vita Ryan whose design 'Ex Static' made it to the Junk Kouture final. While Zuzanna unfortunately wasn't selected as one of the nine on the night who will now go to the world final in Abu Dhabi, she's still in with a chance of reaching the world final if her design is selected as a wild card.

Zuzanna created 'Ex Static' using a variety of materials, such as insulation foam, plastic shopping bags which she crocheted into gloves, wire which she used to make a corset, and masking tape and cardboard. Her platform boots were made of 40 layers of insulation foam in each boot to create the platform, sealed with thick electrical tape.



Blast Arts in Education Residency Initiative at **Portumna Community School**

Earlier this year, Portumna Community School was chosen as one of the recipients of the Blast Arts in Education Residency Initiative, developed by the Department of Education and Skills. This innovative programme gives young people the chance to collaborate with a professional artist, provides opportunities to express themselves through the creative process and supports a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

In March, the Art Department at Portumna Community School welcomed local visual artist Thérèse Murphy (a Galway based visual artist who deals with themes of the environment and sustainability) on this unique art project. Transition year students got the opportunity to collaborate with Thérèse in designing and painting the sets for the school musical *Hairspray*. Students were also challenged to design and create props to help set the scene for this 1960's Baltimore based musical hit. The students got a great insight into the work of a professional artist in their involvement during this creative process of set design. A group of fifth year art students also got to work alongside Thérèse, promoting open artistic dialogue in the classroom as well as general art appreciation.

Portumna Community School has an excellent creative tradition over the years which has been enriched by the annual 'Shorelines Art Festival,' a bespoke festival in the Shannon and Midlands region. As part of this festival a temporary gallery and exhibition of invited and local amateur artists is held in the Portumna Irish Workhouse Centre. This provides a wonderful opportunity for students to look at and respond to a diverse range of art literally on their own doorstep. It is hoped that a curated exhibition of Thérèse Murphy's work will be held at Portumna Community School in September to continue the arts conversation among the school community.



Above: Portumna Community School's production of *Hairspray*



Right: Pictured L to R: Kayla Boons, Sheena Claffey, Alexandra Quinn and Thérèse Murphy (Artist in Residence-BLAST)



Clifden Community School

students achieve success in Mary Elmes Prize 2022

We are supremely proud of our TY students, Grace Wolfe and Johanna Schaffer who were successful in the very prestigious Mary Elmes Prize 2022. This prize bears the name of Mary Elmes, an Irish woman who saved scores of children during the Holocaust.

In 2013, Mary was awarded Righteous Among the Nations (posthumously) by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Remembrance Authority in Israel. She is the first Irish person to be so honored.

Grace won first prize in the Art Category with this beautiful digital art piece (pictured left) and Johanna won 2nd prize for her history essay entitled Eugene Lazowski: Fighting without Guns.

**Celebrating
Africa Day in**

Old Bawn Community School

To celebrate Africa Day on 25th May students at Old Bawn Community School were tasked with designing a mural highlighting African Culture. The result was this incredible piece of art celebrating the unity between Ireland and Africa.



St. Aidan's Community School

First-year students get creative with their graphic novel, 'Viral Planet'



First-year students pictured with Alan Nolan children's author and illustrator, St. Aidan's Community School JCSP librarian, Miss Flynn, English teachers Mr. Casey and Ms. O'Reilly.

First-year students St. Camillus and St. Olivers worked on the JCSP Make A Book project this year. The students came together and were tasked with the job of creating a story. We asked them to reflect on the past 2 years and see what they could come up with. They came up with the idea of a humorous positive tale about a "mysterious virus" that strikes the earth.

The first-year students worked with Alan Nolan children's author and illustrator on this project and also St. Aidan's Community School JCSP librarian Ms. Flynn as well as English teachers Mr. Casey and Ms. O'Reilly.

An audio version of the graphic novel will be released next year too with the students recording their own voice overs for the characters using the student voice podcasting system.



Developing Leadership Capacity at

Gort Community School

In the Looking At Our School 2016 document, Domain 4 looks at the whole area of “Developing Leadership Capacity” and encourages schools to “Promote and facilitate the development of student voice, student participation, and student leadership.” In Gort Community School we strive to provide opportunities for our pupils to become leaders in our school.

Tuesday May 10th 2022 was a very important day in Gort Community School for a number of reasons. On one level, it was a historic day because it was when the school organised a first ever U-15 All-Ireland 9-a-side hurling tournament called the ‘GCS Super 9s’. While that is remarkable in its own right, on another level, what’s even more remarkable is that the tournament was entirely organised and ran by Gort Community School transition year students in association with the GAA/PDST Future Leaders Programme and Connacht GAA. The GAA/PDST Future Leaders programme, which is one of the largest transition year programmes in the country, was actually founded by Gort Community School teacher and GAA/PDST Future Leaders National Coordinator, Eoghan Hanley.

Not surprisingly, the school has always been innovative in terms of how it rolls out the Future Leaders programme and the ‘GCS Super 9s’ was a perfect example of that. While it was a huge undertaking, it did not deter the Gort Community School transition year pupils, they already had plenty of experience of student leadership and in taking ownership of largescale projects.

The GAA/PDST Future Leaders Programme is run by Eoghan Hanley and Colm Madden in Gort Community School. They were very confident the pupils would do a great job with the GCS Super 9’s.

“The GCS Super 9’s was a unique event for many reasons. It was organised by TY Future Leaders pupils and is a real manifestation of student leadership and student voice. While the Future Leaders programme is a GAA programme on one level, it’s really a leadership programme.” said Eoghan Hanley.

Colm Madden said that he had really enjoyed working with the schools Future Leaders pupils this year on the modules in the programme and helping them plan their various events.

“It’s really great to see them take on their roles with confidence and take ownership of what they have organised this year. The GCS Super 9’s tournament was no different and it was a great success.

Taking on such responsibility was a fantastic experience according to Caoimhe Clancy, GAA/PDST Future Leaders TY pupil and Gort CS GAA Club Chairperson.

“We had 16 teams playing on the day and it was exciting because it was something totally different for all involved. We all knew our roles for the tournament and what exactly we needed to do. It was busy but enjoyable and it was great having the responsibility and freedom to plan events like this and to see them being a success.” said Caoimhe.

Gort Community School principal, Mr. Brian Crossan, felt that it was real celebration of the sport of hurling, but more importantly student voice and student leadership in action.

“Here in Gort Community School we strive to promote hurling and camogie and to provide as many opportunities for involvement as possible for all our students. They have shown tremendous leadership skills throughout the year. They really have a true understanding of the levels of preparation and organisation that is needed now to successfully complete projects of this size.” said Brian Crossan.

On Tuesday 17th May, Caoimhe Clancy and other members of the Gort CS GAA Club were invited to Croke Park to address the new schools beginning the GAA/PDST Future Leaders Programme in 2022/23. The President of the GAA, Larry McCarthy, was present and it was a fantastic opportunity for the pupils to speak about their work throughout the year and the leadership skills they developed, which will be of massive benefit to the school and to their local communities in the years ahead.



Ballincollig Community School

Focusing on Returning to Normal

This term in Ballincollig Community School there has been a huge focus on the school, its students and its staff returning to normal after the unprecedented challenges we have all faced as a result of the Covid pandemic. A range of physical, social and emotional challenges have always been addressed in schools, however the pandemic has, in a lot of cases exacerbated such issues. This year there has been a whole school approach taken in enhancing student wellbeing and promoting mental health.

Most recently Ballincollig Community School hosted the Ballincollig's Darkness Into Light walk 2022. The DIL Ballincollig Team brought together the entire Ballincollig community on Saturday May 7th to support Pieta House and their vital services. Our staff and students put in an unbelievable amount of work to make it such a huge success, with a massive crowd of almost 2000 people arriving at Ballincollig Community School to participate in the event. The incredible success of the event was largely due to David O'Brien and Ann Marie Whelan, their staff team and transition year team who contributed so generously with their time and talents. Their phenomenal amount of preparation, planning and hard work ensured the success of the event and brought a lovely sense of community solidarity.

This year BCS were delighted to become a member of Jigsaw's One Good School initiative. Our One Good School Team comprises of Students, Parents, Teachers and School Management, as we feel it is important that mental health and wellbeing is supported and promoted by all members of our school community. The One Good Schools Programme provides excellent interactive workshops, webinars, online resources and specific initiatives for our students, teachers and parents/guardians. Next year will see an increased availability of such initiatives for all members of our school community.

Transition Year students worked tirelessly this year to renew our Amber Flag. They formed a committee and completed an audit of practices and services which the school provides to support student mental health. Following, the audit students identified areas which required further attention to improve student wellbeing and mental health in the school. Students recognised the need to make information about mental health services more readily available and accessible for the student body and created a noticeboard for students with all contact details and locations of mental health services locally and in the Cork area. The committee organised a yellow day to fundraise for Pieta, ran a Positive Poster competition and carried out presentations to the student body about positive mental health and the availability of mental health services. Students have also set objectives and goals for next year to maintain awareness about mental health services and promote positive mental health among our student body.



The School Year has also seen the improvement of school facilities thanks to the generosity of the Tomar trust. A refurbished library space, a renovated and modernised gym and numerous outdoor eating areas have been created. All of which have been an immense asset to the school, as they have the capability of improving students social, mental and physical health and wellbeing. The return of extra-curricular activities including Hurling, Football, Camogie, Soccer, Basketball, Ultimate Frisbee, drama and debating (to name a few) has had a notable positive effect on students as well as injecting a sense of excitement, pride and optimism in the school corridors. While the resumption of traditional Transition year activities this year including a school tour to Delphi, fundraising initiatives, day trip activities of zip lining, karting and paint balling have all allowed students to reconnect with each other.

While the academic year of 21/22 has brought its challenges (mainly in the form of covid), so many initiatives driven by teachers and promoted by students have been established to build relationships, promote student wellbeing and encourage positive mental health among our student body.

Tarbert Comprehensive School

Students Fundraise for Darkness into Light

Tarbert Comprehensive Students and staff were proud to be involved with the Darkness into Light 2022 Fundraiser on May 7th last. The students' council, teachers and staff worked closely with the local organising committee in the true spirit of community cooperation to ensure the event was a great success. The school looked amazing in the early hours with some great signage and messages of hope as well as a group of musicians and singers (past and present students) entertained the gathering walkers shortly before the 4:30am start. Refreshments were provided in the school gym before and after the walk in what turned out to be a lovely and poignant gathering of the local and school community.

Congratulations to all involved and a huge thank you to all the staff and students involved in making the event so successful.

Richard Prendiville, Principal



Sustainability in

Ramsgrange Community School



Sustainability and adaptation are among the current buzz words with regard to the environment and climate change but here in Ramsgrange Community School, we aim to turn those words into climate action. To promote and to enhance sustainability within our school community, a number of initiatives are currently under way.

Plant a Planet Campaign

The Plant a Planet campaign which is headed by Ms. Clara Hutchinson and the Sustainability Team, are aiming to have 10% of the school population plant a tree either at home, at school, or in the school community. They are trying to encourage climate action to encourage students to take the steps towards offsetting their carbon footprint. Students have researched the benefits of trees, contacted local organizations, and created poster displays around the school.

Irish Sustainable School Network

They have also joined the ISSN network (Irish Sustainable School Network) which was established by Dr Patrick Kirwin in 2021. The network meets monthly to share students' action projects and to have guest speakers. The group also encourages sustainability in the community by connecting with the school's Parents Committee to teach them about the importance of trees. Students have written to local councillors to encourage them to take more action in promoting sustainable travel. Ms. Hutchinson presented a talk at the ISSN network meeting at the end of March on sustainable teaching supplies to try to encourage teachers to make more ethical choices when creating their lesson plans and buying their office supplies.

Establishing Local Links

The Green School's Committee, comprised of 28 2nd and 3rd years alongside two teachers, Ms. Sarah Gilchrist and Mr. Jonathan Reynolds is also actively working in collaboration with the Sustainability Team. The committee is currently working alongside An Taisce and Wexford County Council on the theme of Travel, Pollution and Sustainability.

Cycle to School

The Green School's Committee has also secured a new "Cycle to School" cycle centre funded by Wexford

County Council, An Taisce and other government agencies. The Committee also links in with 2nd Year CSPE classes in organising litter picks within the school premises as well as in our local village.

Outdoor Restorative Garden

Other sustainability projects that are constantly ongoing include our JCSP and LCA horticulture gardening projects, headed by Ms. Brigid Hearne and Mr. Jonathan Reynolds, who are now working on creating an outdoor restorative garden. They also sow, tend to and harvest their own fruit and vegetables year-round. The produce is then given to members of the school community to consume. At present the restorative garden is taking shape with work being carried out daily by our whole school community. Staff, students and parents have been very busy in developing the outdoor space and our new Ukrainian students are already contributing with great enthusiasm to the project. It has been a fantastic project to help integrate our two communities.

Staff, students and parents have been very busy in developing the outdoor space and our new Ukrainian students are already contributing with great enthusiasm to the project. It has been a fantastic project to help integrate our two communities and we look forward to having this invaluable space which can be enjoyed by the whole school community.

Sustainability is engrained into all aspects of curriculum and school life here in RCS and we hope that all our small actions can help make a big difference!



Promoting Biodiversity in Portumna Community School

Transition Year Biology students, Conor, Andrew, Jamie, Dermot, Senan and Liam preparing and planting a Butterfly Garden to promote Biodiversity. Thank you to Tom Quinn for his guidance and to Mr. Stephen Duane, Portumna for donating and delivering the top soil for this project.



Transition Year Biology students Eibhlin, Shauna and Cora have been busy making and painting birdhouses. Well done and thank you to our students for their creative ideas to enhance our school's Biodiversity.

Huge thanks to Ms. Fiona Kenny for coordinating this project.



St. Tiernan's Community School student wins Prestigious Award

This year was the first time St. Tiernan's Community School took part in the Leinster Junior Schools Debating Competition, jointly hosted by the UCD Law Society and the Literary and Historical Society. A group of third year students entered the competition, having little experience in debating but a passion to improve. The competition had over 100 teams competing from schools throughout the province.

The teams from St. Tiernan's had incredible success, with one of our teams making it all the way to the semi-finals. The competition culminated in the finals on April 7. One of our students, Youssef Hassan spoke on the motion "In a world where superheroes exist, this house supports vigilante justice". Youssef delivered a phenomenal speech in which he highlighted the ability for vigilante superheroes to offer justice and support to communities which historically are not served well by the police. He cited as an example the African-American community in Alabama. This speech proved persuasive to an esteemed judging panel, which was chaired by Aishling Kinsella, a twice world championship semi-finalist debater.

Youssef was awarded the Leinster Junior Schools Championship individual trophy. Staff and students at St. Tiernan's are immensely proud of Youssef; this achievement is reflective of the trojan amount of work he has put in this year. We wish him well and feel confident he will have continued success debating in the future.

Congratulations Youssef.





Gorey Community School

host local Student Council Summit

Pictured below:
Gorey Community
School's Student Council

Gorey Community School's Student Council is made up of fourteen enthusiastic, dedicated students. They meet every week and have had an impactful year, working on a wide variety of ventures including their anti-bullying campaign, Daffodil Day, Christmas Jumper Day and a 5 a side soccer tournament.

One of our most successful undertakings this year was our Student Council Summit which involved spending a morning with student councils from three local primary schools. The inspiration for this summit came from a meeting with one local primary school in early February. That occasion highlighted the value in students from different schools working together and it inspired an idea that perhaps a meeting on a larger scale could be organised.

We reached out to every single primary school in our locality; all town and country schools that were close to our own secondary school. We broached the idea of a Student Council Summit and invited these schools to bring their student councils to our school for a morning of presentations and groupwork. We met some roadblocks when a number of principals declined our invitation because their school's council was not in operation. Covid restrictions made it difficult for some schools to facilitate a student council but these were complimentary of the idea, and they highlighted that they were hopeful of reinstating their councils in September and would be interested in any summits that we might hold in the future. Three primary schools accepted our invitation so we set a date, booked a space in our school oratory and ordered snacks for all that would be attending.

The summit was an enormous success and we are so proud of all that we achieved that morning. Each student council gave a presentation. They focused on how their own council is elected and run, related what they achieved his year and gave an insight into future plans and ideas. We then split all of the students into groups, ensuring that there was a good mixture of schools and ages in each group. We devised a worksheet to be filled out so that the discussion could be a fruitful and organised one. On that worksheet we asked questions including 'why do you think it is



important for students to have a voice in their school?', 'what is the best thing about being on a student council?', 'is there anything difficult about being on a student council?' and 'what have you achieved this year that you are particularly proud of?'

The summit gave our secondary school students the chance to develop real leadership capacity. They were in charge of composing their presentations and steering the discussion groups with the younger children. The event also gave us an opportunity to garner ideas for meaningful student council impact in a school. It was so enlightening to hear the different ventures that had been undertaken by the schools in our locality.

We are hopeful that a local summit like this will help to promote the importance of student voice amongst our own students and amongst younger children that may become students at our secondary school in the coming years. We are planning to arrange another summit next year and we look forward to continuing to bring student councils from different schools together.

Sporting Success at **Clifden Community School**



Molly Boote voted Connaught U18 Ladies Rugby Player of the Year

Clifden Community School proudly acknowledges 5th year student Molly Boote, who was voted Connaught U18 Ladies Rugby Player of the Year at the Connaught Rugby Awards Ceremony in Galway on May 13th. Molly is also part of the Ireland U18's National Women's talent squad for 2022.



Noah Leamy gets call up to Irish Men's National Volleyball Squad

Noah Leamy, a TY student has been called up to the Irish Men's National Volleyball Squad. Noah plays for Galway Volleyball Club and first discovered Volleyball when he went to Irish College in the Gaeltacht one summer. We look forward to seeing Noah in the Irish jersey in the numerous upcoming competitions.

It's a Slam Dunk for **Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra**

Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra, Rathmore, Co Kerry were recently named Boys A Basketball School of the Year. In addition, long serving coach Jim Hughes has been awarded A Boys coach of the year. The Minor and Junior Boys were recently crowned League champions after an impressive campaign which culminated in the Finals taking place in early May 2022. These boys were also members of the U14A & U15A teams that won their respective Cup competitions in February of this year. It was the school's first victory in A Cup finals and to follow this up with both teams winning the League is a testament to the hardwork being done at the school and locally through basketball clubs. The U16A Boys were runners up in their All Ireland Cup competitions making it four wins from five.

"Winning 'School of the Year' is a fantastic achievement and deserving for all the hard work of the players and team management. I would also like to congratulate Jim Hughes on being awarded 'Coach of the Year' - it is richly deserved for our long serving and dedicated coach".

Denis Kerins, Principal

The Minor and Junior Boys Basketball teams with coaches Jim Hughes, John Hughes and Joan O'Mahony.



Recent ACCS Info Bulletins

BULLETIN NO.	DATE	SUMMARY
ACCS/Info Bulletin 13/22	11/05/2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department of Education Update Regarding the Ukraine Crisis. 2. The Summer Programme 2022. 3. Publication of Inspectorate Reports on SSPS and Implementation of Anti-bullying Measures in Schools. 4. "Belong To" Supports for Schools.

Recent Relevant DE Circular Letters

CIRCULAR NO.	SUMMARY
CL 11/22	Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022: Post-primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas participating in the Gaeltacht school recognition scheme: Ongoing implementation of the Scheme (2022 - 2024).
CL 21/22	Special Education Teaching Allocation 2022/23 School Year.
CL 23/22	Staffing arrangements in Community and Comprehensive Schools for the 2022/23 School Year.
CL 27/22	GRANT SCHEME FOR ICT Infrastructure - 2021/2022 School Year.
CL 30/22	Arrangements for Inspectorate Engagement with Post-Primary Schools - April to June 2022.
CL 31/22	Recruitment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) - Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2022/2023 School Year.

Dates for your Diary

Induction of New Principals & Deputy Principals in Community & Comprehensive Schools

Who Should Attend?

All recently appointed Principals and Deputy Principals for an introduction to the sector.

Date

Time

18/08/22 4.00 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.

19/08/22 9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Venue:

Mullingar Park Hotel, Co. Westmeath

Follow-up Webinars

Date

Topic

Time

TBC Teaching & Learning 9.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.

TBC The Care and Management of Students 9.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.