



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

BUNSCOIL PRIMARY

Leading Out - Partners for Change

Thursday, 29 May 2025

Seminar overview

Reflecting on the process of primary curriculum review and redevelopment

From implementation to enactment

Comfort break

Looking at the roadmap ahead

Lunch

Navigating curriculum change

Panel discussion

Introductory remarks

Arlene Forster
CEO, NCCA



Image 1: Children

Agentic, unique, competent, and caring individuals

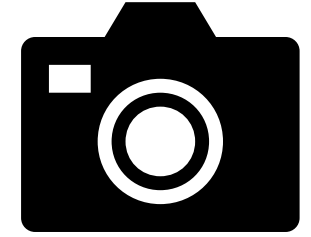


Image 2: Teachers



Committed,
skilful, and
agentic
professionals

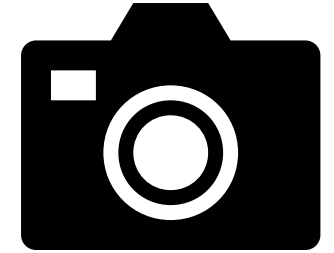
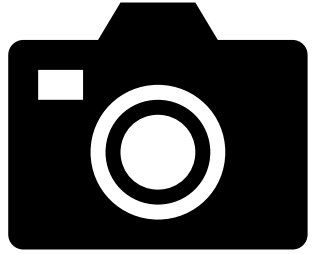
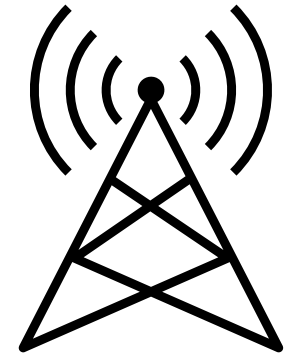
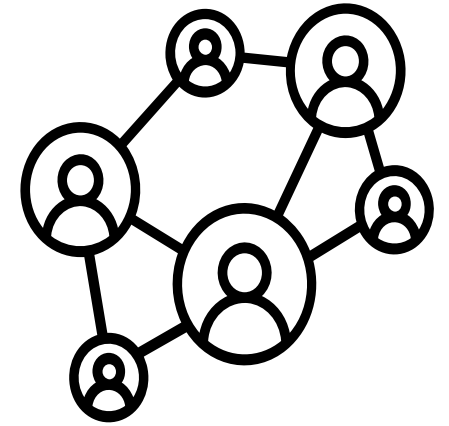


Image 3: Partnership



From development to enactment



Let's continue to partner

When we talk to each other and work together, our ideas get better, and we come up with a better plan.

(Inaugural NEEDS conference, May 27, 2025)



Charting the process of the redeveloped primary curriculum

Dr Thomas Walsh
Maynooth University
Primary Advisory Panel



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curraim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

**The Redeveloped
Primary School
Curriculum in Ireland**
Charting the
Redevelopment Process

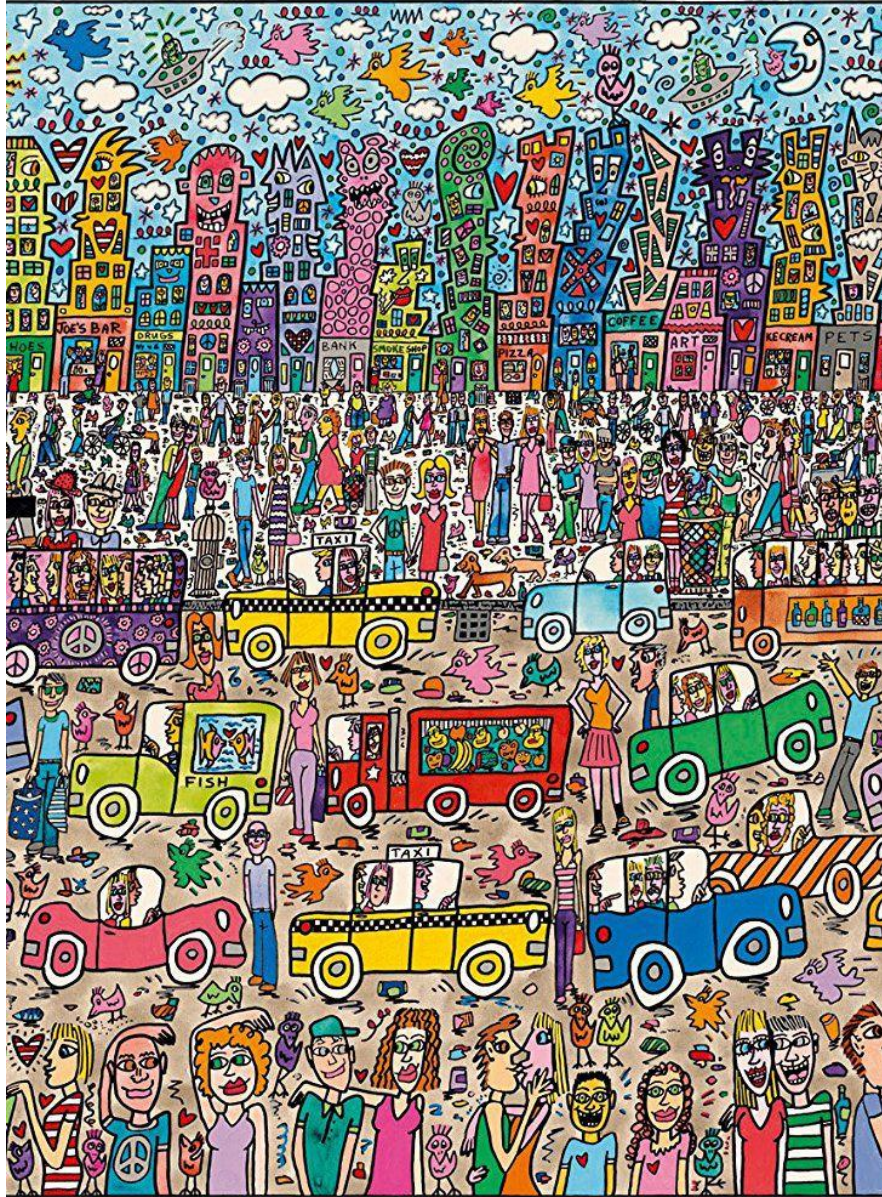
Dr Thomas Walsh
April 2025

How many reports, either authored or commissioned by the NCCA, have been published to inform the redeveloped primary school curriculum?





146



Overview of Presentation

Purpose of the report

Structure and content of the report

- Background and context
- 4 strands:
 1. Research and policy developments
 2. Consultations
 3. Networking
 4. Deliberations
- Conclusion and reflection

Purpose of Report

- Delineate process of primary curriculum redevelopment (2012-2025)
 - National and international audience
 - Transparency
 - Historical record
 - Inform future redevelopment processes

Background and Context for redevelopment

Overview of
historical curriculum
development and
provision in Ireland

- 1922-1999

Contextual factors
prompting current
curriculum
redevelopment

- Societal developments
- Curriculum changes in early childhood and post-primary education

RESEARCH

Research evidence, good practice and international experience informs the advice

DELIBERATIONS

The advice is based on discussion and deliberations by Council and its boards and developmental groups

CONSULTATION

The advice is shaped by feedback from consultations with the public, schools and early childhood settings, education interests and others

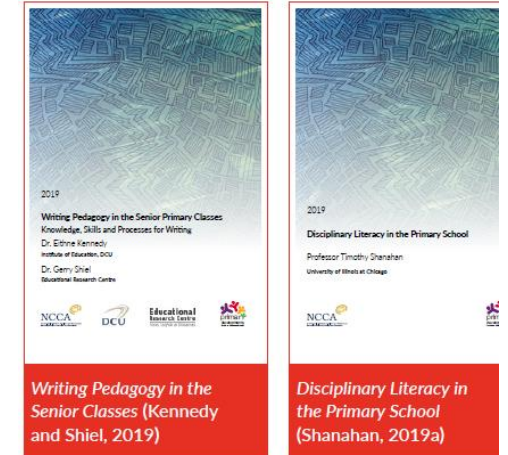
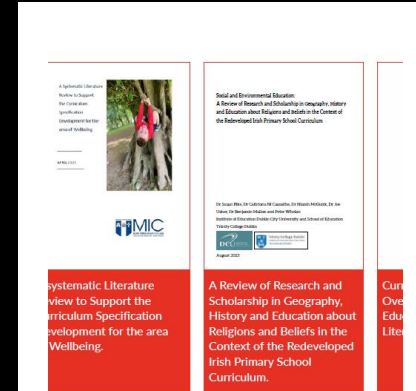
NETWORKS

Networks of schools and early childhood settings provide feedback on ideas and approaches under development, and provide practical examples

4 Strands of Curriculum Redevelopment

Strand 1: Research and Policy Developments

- NCCA generates, commissions, uses and shares various forms of research to inform curriculum and assessment advice
- Overview of research and policy developments informing:
 - Primary Language Curriculum (2011-2020)
 - Primary Mathematics Curriculum (2014-2023)
- Research underpinning wider curriculum redevelopment:
 - 14 research reports (2018-2019)
 - Children's School Lives Study (UCD)



Strand 1 (Research): Approx 90 publications

Strand 2: Consultation

Consultation used to leverage partner knowledge and expertise

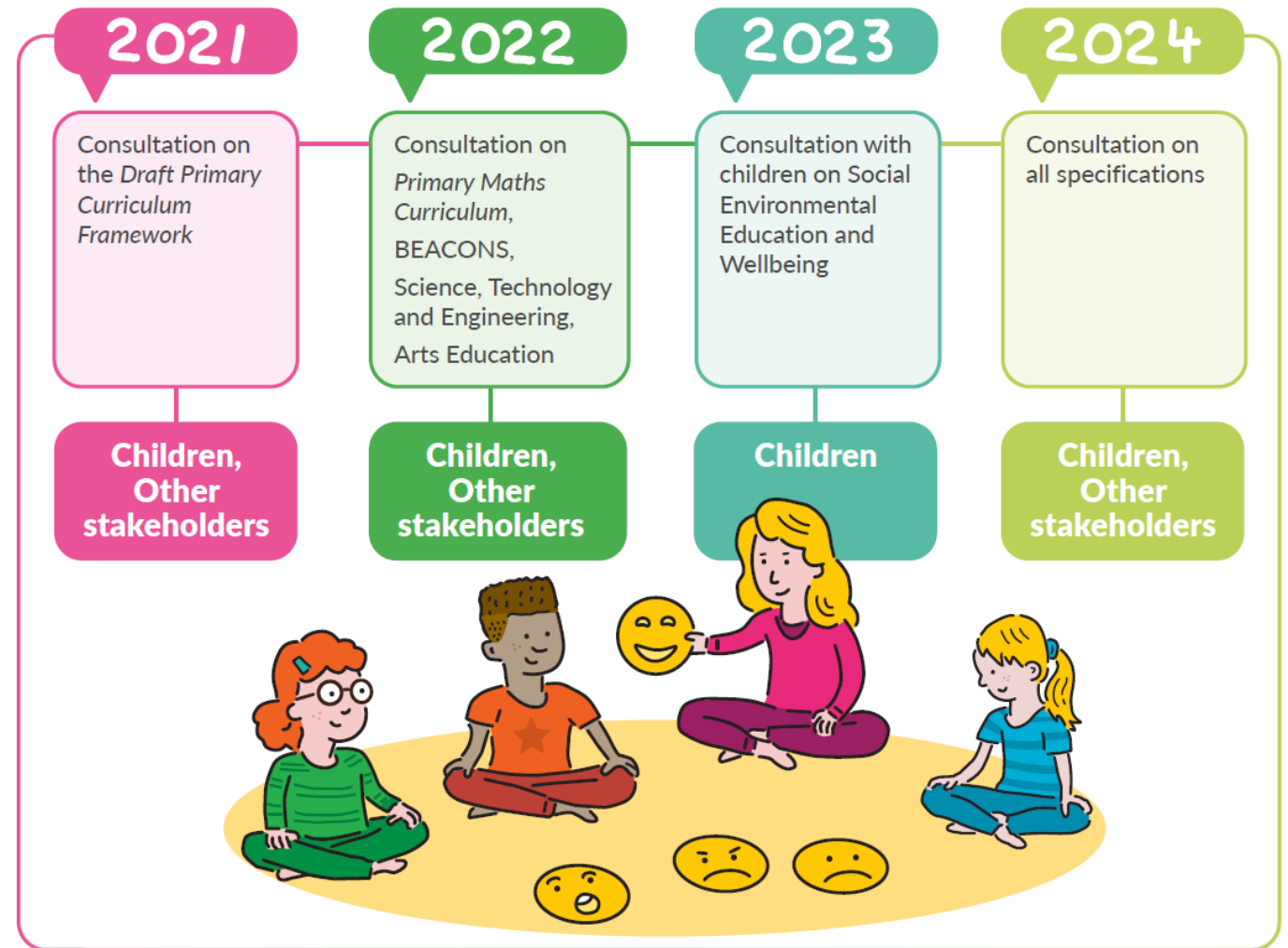
- Online and in-person seminars, webinars, symposia, bilateral meetings, focus groups, online surveys and other fora

Primary Language/ Primary Mathematics consultations

Wider curriculum consultations:

- Priorities for primary education (2011)/ Curriculum time and structure (2016)
- Consultations on *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* (2020-2022)
- Consultation on the draft specifications (2023-2024)
- Consultations with children (2019-2024)

Consultations



Strand 2 (Consultations): Approx 40 publications

Strand 3: Networking

- Interactions and collaborations with stakeholders in reviewing, discussing and shaping curriculum and assessment developments
- Range of public fora:
 - Curriculum seminars (2018-2019)
 - Leading Out seminars (2019-2022)
 - Reimagining Curriculum seminars (2023)
- Schools Forum
- Advisory Panel (Primary)



Curriculum Seminars (2018-2019)

Strand 3 (Networking):
Approx 20 publications

Seminar	Keynote Presentation
Seminar 1 – March 2018 <i>Curriculum Purpose</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Thomas Walsh, Maynooth University – <i>Review of the Introduction to the Primary School Curriculum (1999)</i> (Walsh, 2018) • Dr Jones Irwin, Dublin City University – <i>Priorities and Values of Society</i> (Irwin, 2018)
Seminar 2 – May 2018 <i>Powerful Synergies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Louis Volante, Brock University – <i>Pedagogy and Metapractices</i> (Volante, 2018) • Dr Karin Bacon, Marino Institute of Education – <i>Curriculum Integration</i> (Bacon, 2018) • Professor Emerita Carol McGuinness, Queen's University – <i>21st century Competencies</i> (McGuinness, 2018) • Professor Dominic Wyse, University College London – <i>The Role of Knowledge in Curricula</i> (Wyse and Manyukhina, 2018)
Seminar 3 – October 2018 <i>New Horizons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bernie McNally, DCYA – <i>Context and Policy Developments in Early Years Provision</i> • Dr Harold Hislop, DES – <i>Current Provision and Future Challenges in Early Years Learning Experiences</i> • Prof Emer Smyth, ESRI – <i>Transition to Primary Education</i> (Smyth, 2018) • Dr Alejandra Cortázar, CEPI, Chile – <i>Curriculum Alignment and Progression</i> (Shuey et al., 2019)
Seminar 4 – November 2018: <i>Enhancing Learning Journeys</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Emer Ring, Dr Lisha O'Sullivan, Marie Ryan and Patrick Burke, Mary Immaculate College – <i>Learning Theories</i> (Ring et al., 2018) • NCCA – <i>Parents' Perspectives on a Redeveloped Primary Curriculum</i> (NCCA, 2019a)
Seminar 5 – January 2019 <i>Charting the Journey Forward</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharon O'Donnell – <i>International Primary Curricula</i> (O'Donnell, 2018a; 2018b) • Prof Michael O'Leary and Dr Zita Lysaght, Dublin City University – <i>Aligning Assessment, Learning and Teaching in Curricular Reform and Implementation</i> (Lysaght et al., 2019)

Strand 4: Deliberations

Using evidence from research, consultation and networking to inform ongoing decision making

- Dynamic and recursive process

Deliberative structures and processes

- NCCA Executive Team
- Development Groups
- Board for Early Childhood and Primary
- NCCA Council

Other elements of the report



Conclusion



Reflections of the
Advisory Panel



References



Prof. Jim Spillane

Northwestern University, Chicago



Prof. Dominic Wyse

University College London



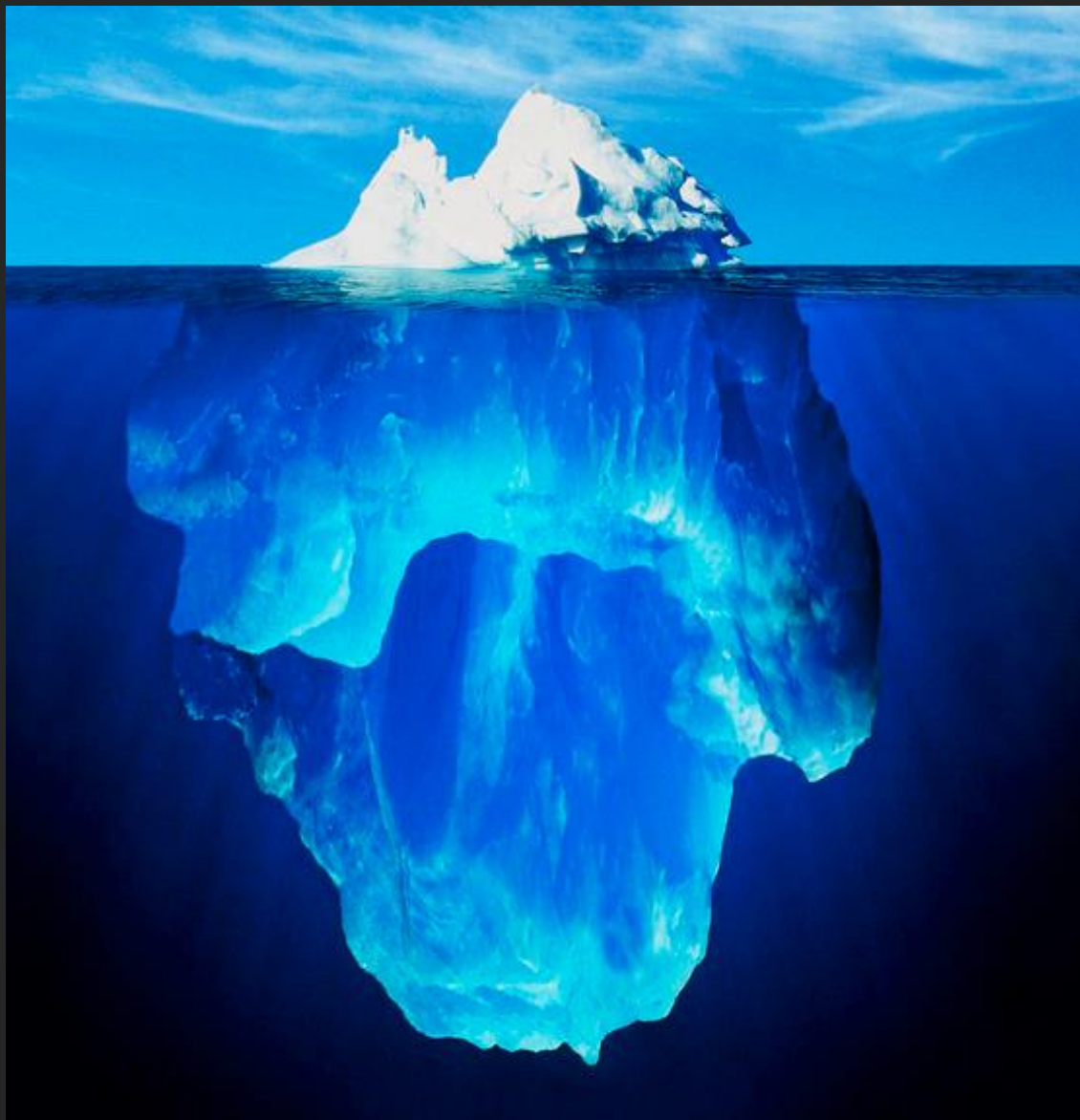
Prof. Louise Hayward

University of Glasgow



Dr Thomas Walsh

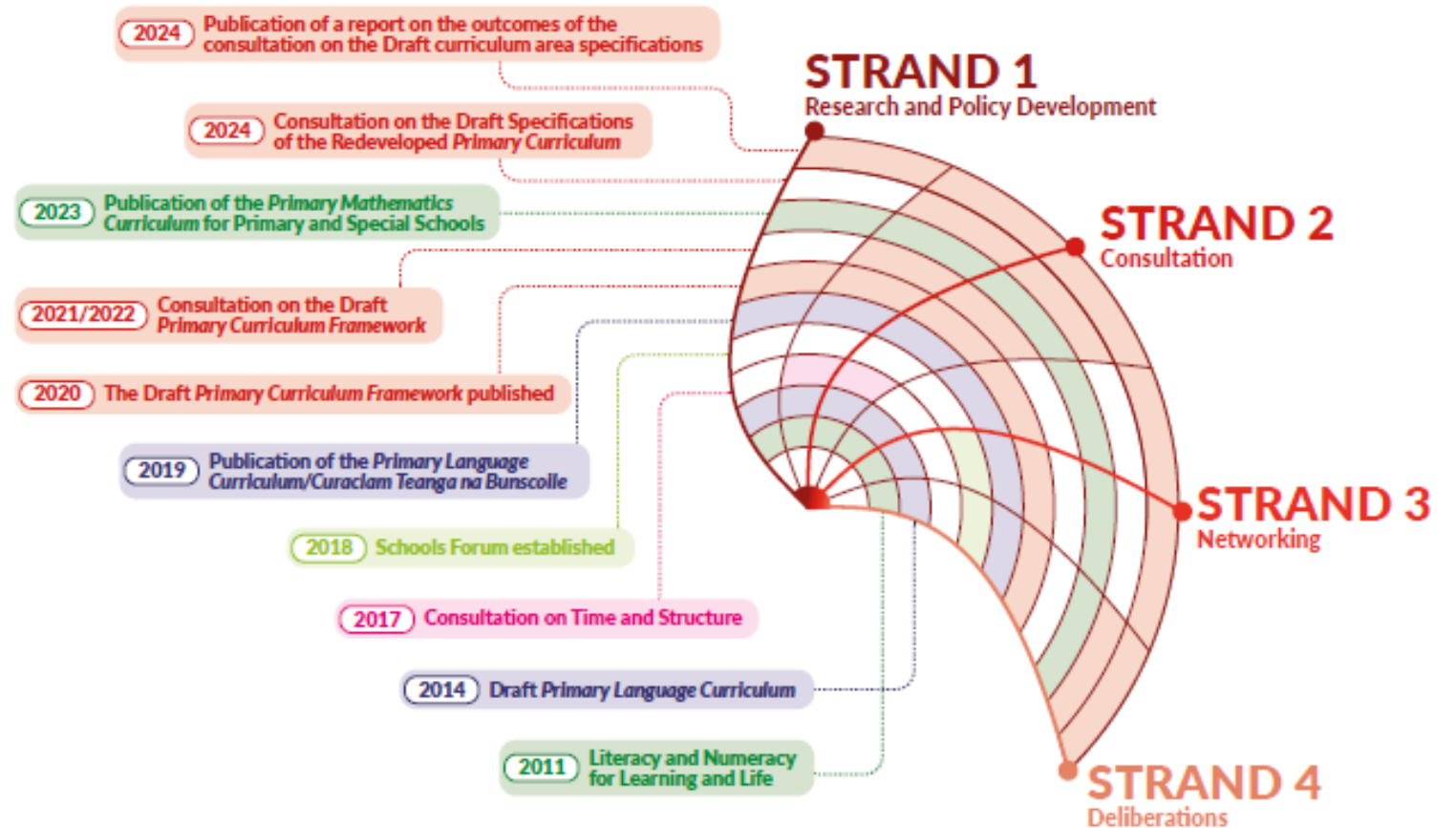
Maynooth University



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Míle buíochas

Thomas.walsh@mu.ie



Reflections

THINK, PAIR, SHARE



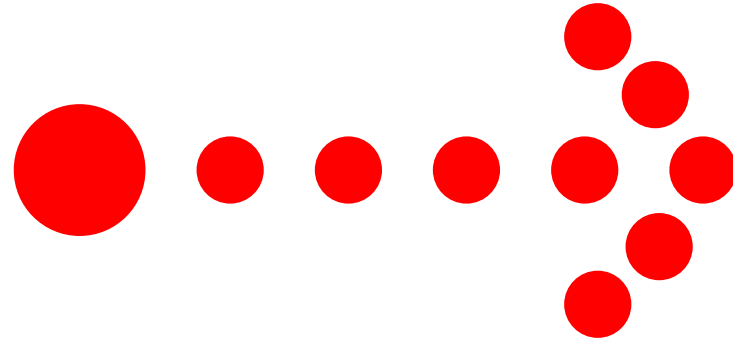
FROM IMPLEMENTATION TO ENACTMENT

Dr Patrick Sullivan
Deputy CEO, NCCA



What if? Vision

Enactment



What if? Vision



Enactment

...children as unique,
competent, and caring
individuals, and teachers as
committed, skilful, and agentic
professionals.

What if? Vision



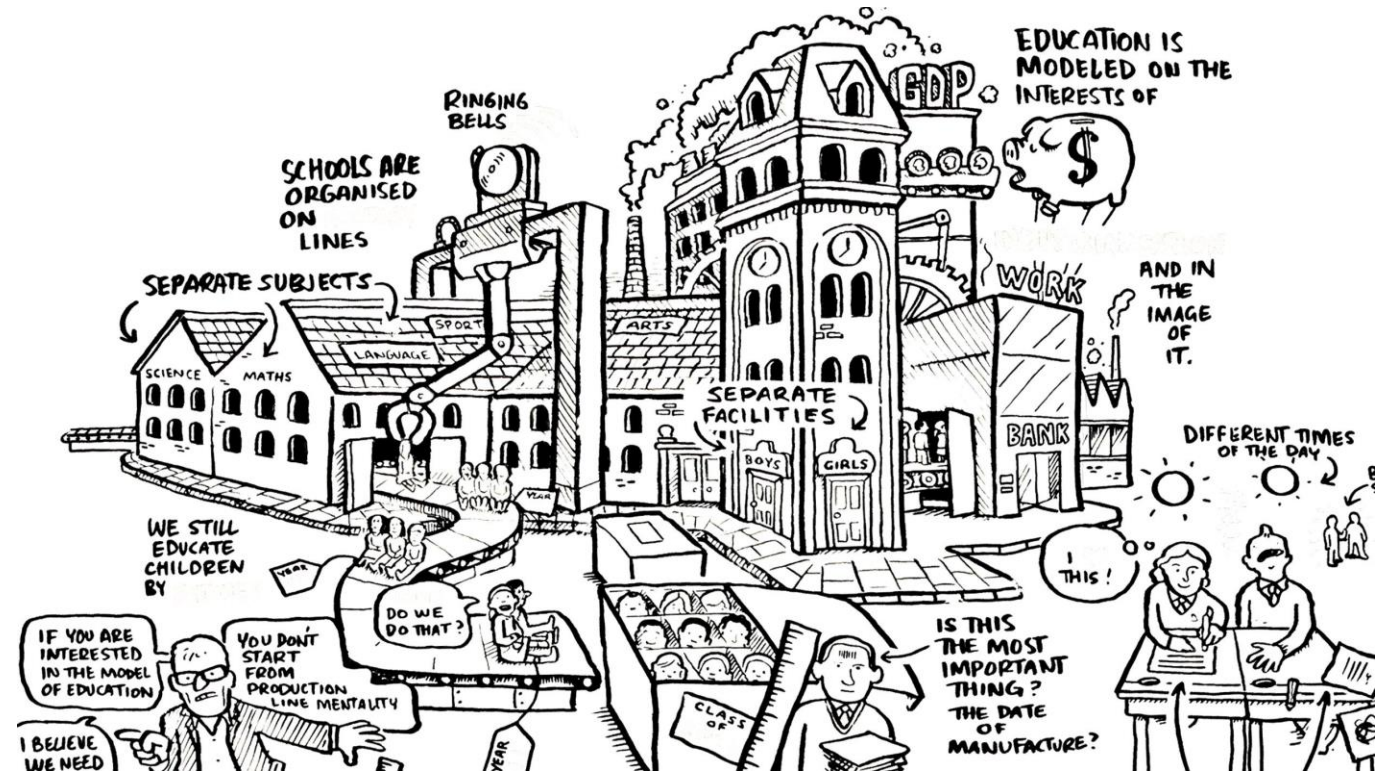
Enactment

The Primary Curriculum Framework reflects our shared understanding of, and **trust in**, the many positive features of education in our primary and special schools.

What if?

Implementation

Top down
Prescriptive
Standardised
Individualistic



What if?



*Policy enactment opens space
for professional agency and
contextual responsiveness.*

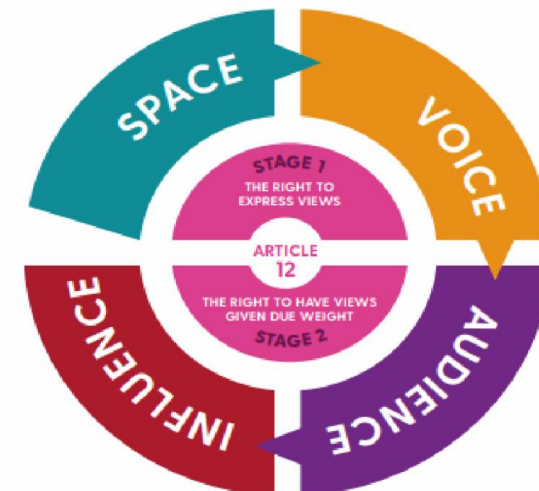
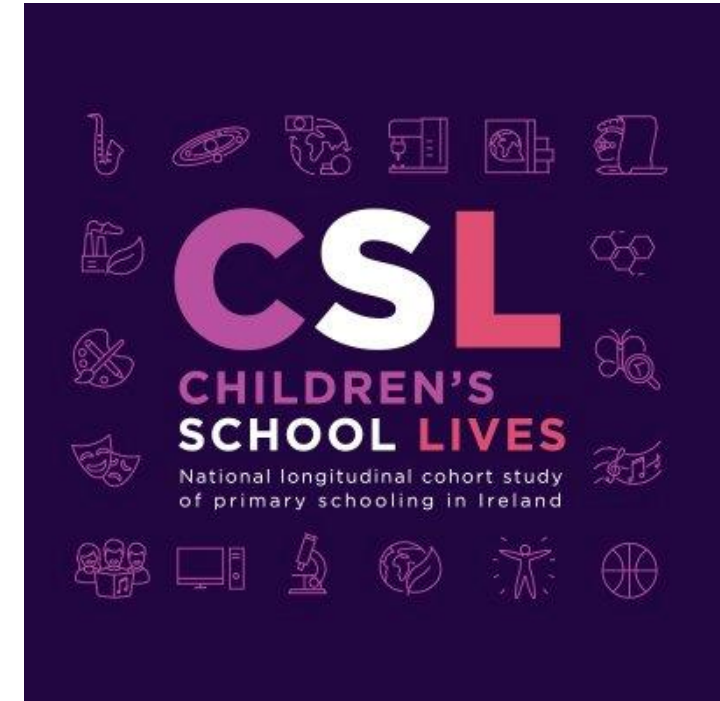
Enactment

Bottom up
Interpretative
Holistic
Collaborative

What if? Child voice.....

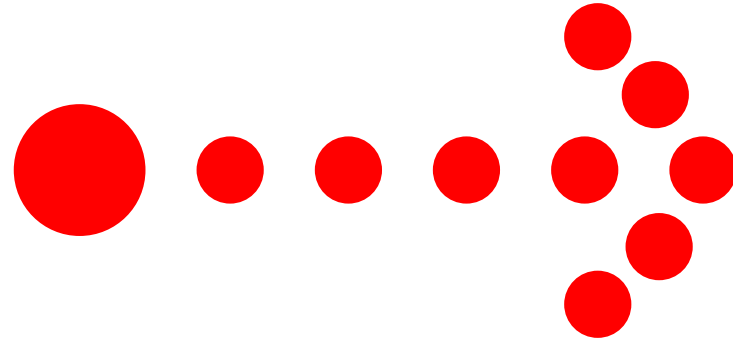
Enactment

Child agency is not an add-on—it is central to meaningful learning.



What if? Pedagogy.....

Enactment

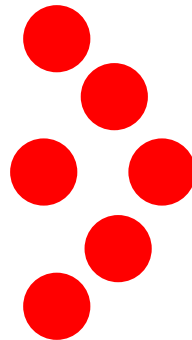
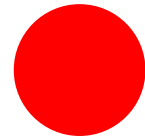


Play is a powerful form of learning.

What if? Curriculum.....



Enactment



*Curriculum is co-owned,
co-constructed, and co-
enacted.*

What if? Alignment.....

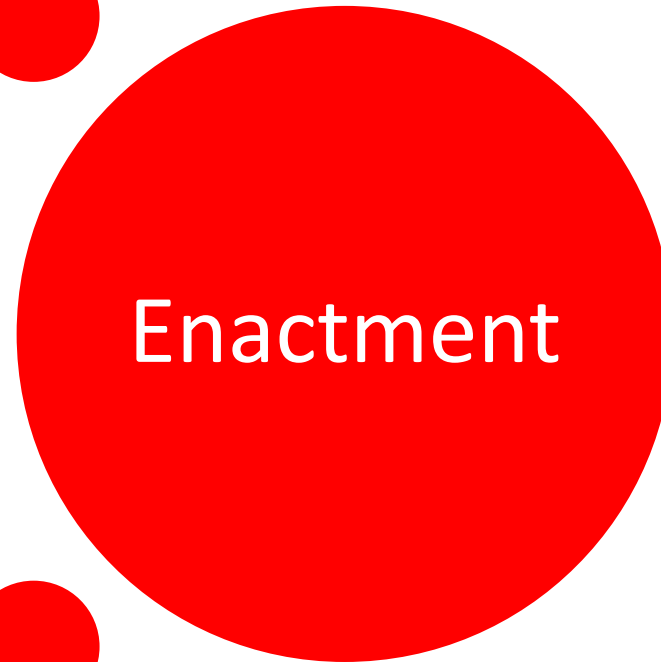
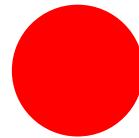
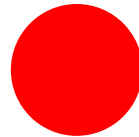
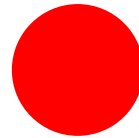
Curriculum/Policy



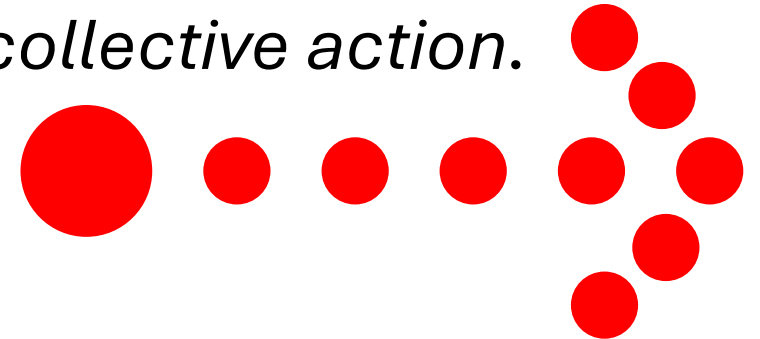
Child and teacher
agency



Pedagogy



*Transformation doesn't
come from isolated
efforts—it comes from
alignment to the vision and
collective action.*



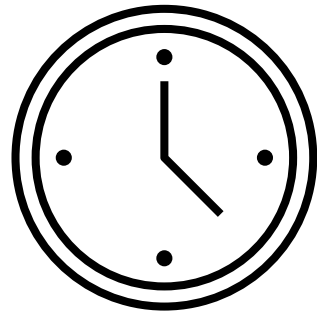
The curriculum implementation gap

Prof. Louise Hayward
Primary Advisory Panel



Roundtable discussion

20 minutes



Round table discussion

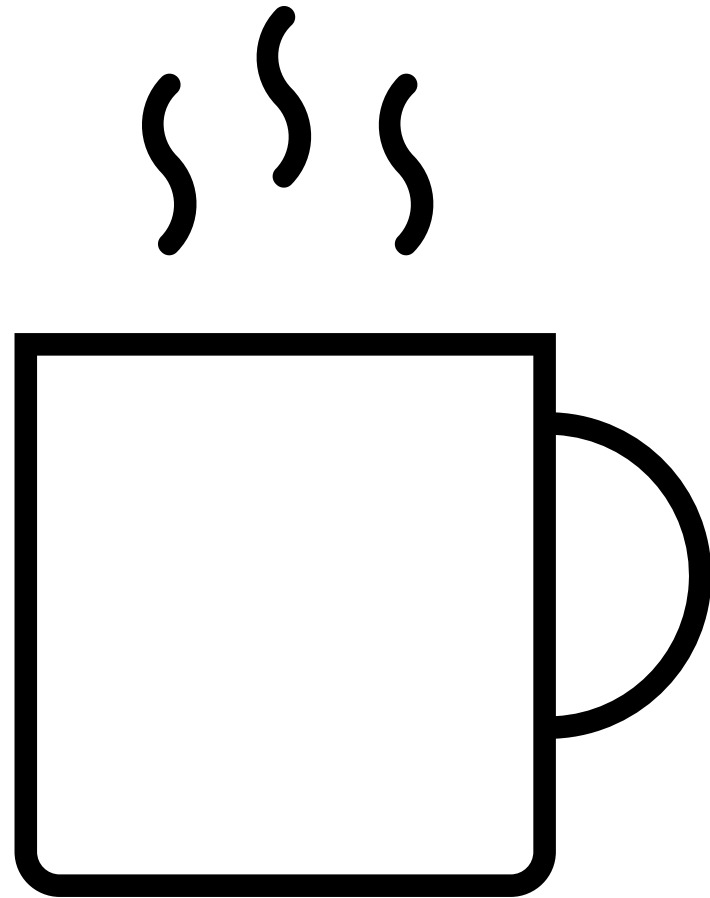
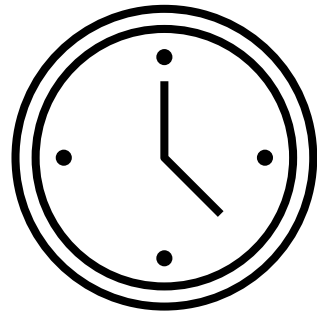
1. How might the shift from curriculum implementation to curriculum enactment serve to benefit all learners?

2. How can stakeholders (your organisation) support others in making this transition and equip them to enact the curriculum in their contexts?

3. What approaches or strategies could contribute to fostering a stronger culture of collaboration and shared ownership among everyone in the next 1-2 years?

Comfort break

5 minutes



Looking at the roadmap ahead

Professor Dominic Wyse
Primary Advisory Panel



Schedule of inputs

Karen Murtagh – Department of Education and Youth

Orla Mc Kiernan and Rory Collins - Oide

Dr Catherine Merrigan – National Council for Special Education

Esther Doyle - Inspectorate



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Primary Curriculum: Reflections and the Path Ahead

- Karen Murtagh
- Department of Education and Youth
- 29 May 2025

Significance of the Primary Curriculum Framework



- A statement of intent.
- A practical guide for schools and teachers.
- Child-centred, balanced and flexible.
- A re-imagining of learning, teaching and assessment
- Lays the foundation for the full redeveloped primary curriculum.



• Redevelopment of the Primary Curriculum

- The 5 curriculum specifications are undergoing final approval within the Department.
- Expected publication: September 2025.
- Recognise that this change is significant.
- Ongoing collaboration with NCCA and support services to:
 - Plan for the launch and publication.
 - Ensure necessary supports are in place for schools.



- **Listening has been at the heart of this entire process.**

- Engaging a wide range of voices.
- Listening to those who are at the centre of education.
- The voice of the child was central throughout.



Grounded in evidence & Irish Identity

- Evidence-informed and grounded in real practice.
- Uniquely Irish – reflects our language, culture, and values.
- Reflects the diversity of modern Ireland.
- Vision for learning that is inclusive, flexible and future-focussed.



• Roadmap to Enactment

- Change will challenge us.

Introductory Year – Starting September 2025

- Deepen understanding of the Framework.
- Explore implications for learning, teaching and assessment.



• Roadmap to Enactment continued

Phased Enactment Follows:

- One curriculum area introduced each year.
- Two years to enact each specification.
- Schools choose the order of introduction.
- Requires whole-school decision-making.

• Collaborative Whole-of-System Approach for Curriculum Success



- Change on this scale needs support.
- Department provides strategic leadership, policy alignment, coordination and resourcing.
- Partners with NCCA, Oide, and NCSE, bringing together curriculum expertise, professional learning, and inclusive practice.
- Key groups: Primary Steering Group and Communications Group, Whole School Planning and Teaching for Preparation and learning.



Supports for Schools

- €9.7 million in funding to schools in December 2024.
- Support will build on what has already been provided for the *Primary Language Curriculum* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum*.
- Modern Foreign Languages.



Reimagining Primary Education Together

- Co-creating the curriculum *with* schools.
- A shared journey.
- Not just implementation, a reimagining of education.



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Go raibh míle maith agaibh



Oide

Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim
Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí
Scoile agus Múinteoirí

Supporting the Professional
Learning of School Leaders
and Teachers

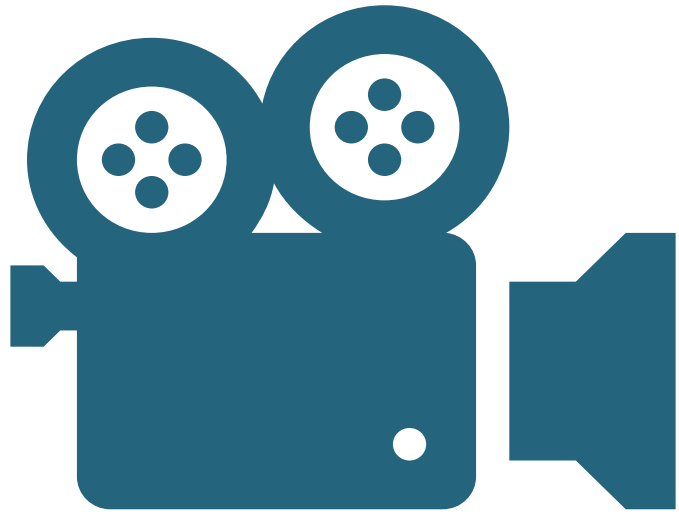
Professional Learning to Support redeveloped Primary School Curriculum

Orla McKiernan,
Divisional Director, Primary 1

Rory Collins,
Divisional Director, Primary 2



Interagency Video



- NCCA
- NCSE
- Oide
- Inspectorate

From September 2025...

2 whole-school full day
PLEs to support the
introduction of the PCF

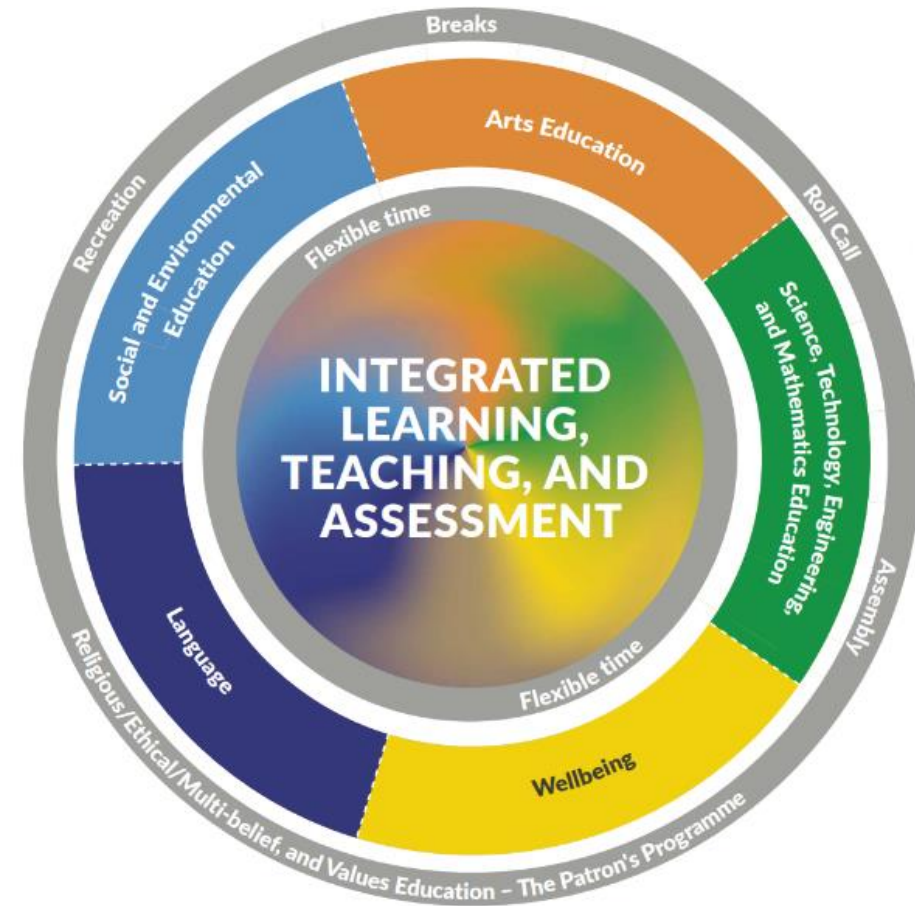
Online PLE
(webinar and drop-in clinics)
for school leaders on the
implementation of the PCF



In-school support for
PMC continues

Curriculum Areas (2026 onwards...)

- School Choice
- In-school support
- Two-year enactment per curriculum area
- Six-year timeframe
- Space for a 'consolidation' year.



From September 2026...

Whole-school full day PLE
on PCF



PLE for school leaders to
support leading and
managing curricular change



Whole-school full day PLE on
Language Awareness for all
staff to support introduction of
MFL



In-school support for
Primary Curriculum and
Leadership



Online PLE (drop-in clinic) for
school leaders on the
enactment of the PCF



Languages including Modern Foreign Languages from 2026 onwards

Leadership of MFL PLE
(3 per school)

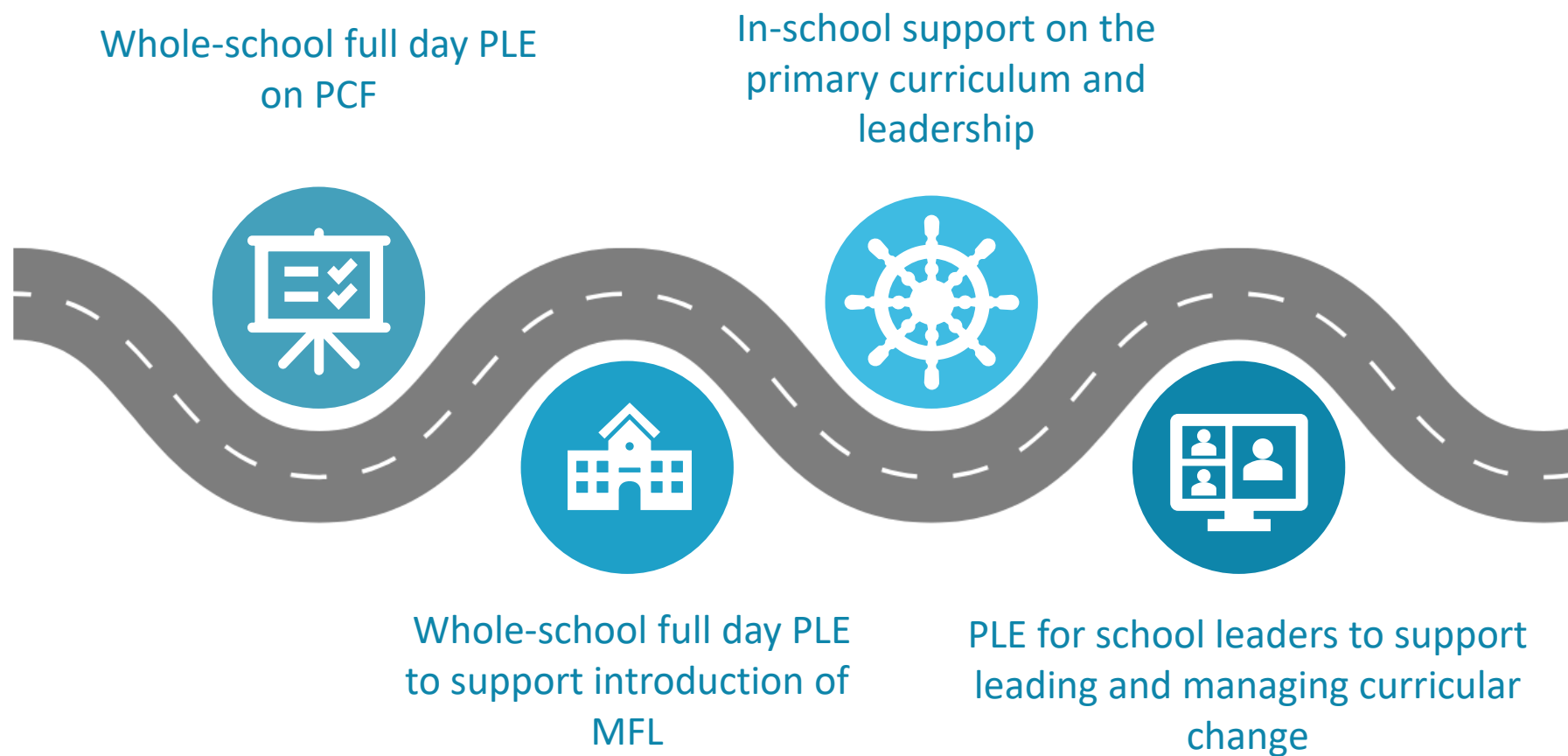
Two whole-staff PLE
days for all teachers
and school leaders



In-school support
for Languages

E-learning module to
support leadership of
MFL

2027 to 2029 and onwards





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Department of Education
and Youth



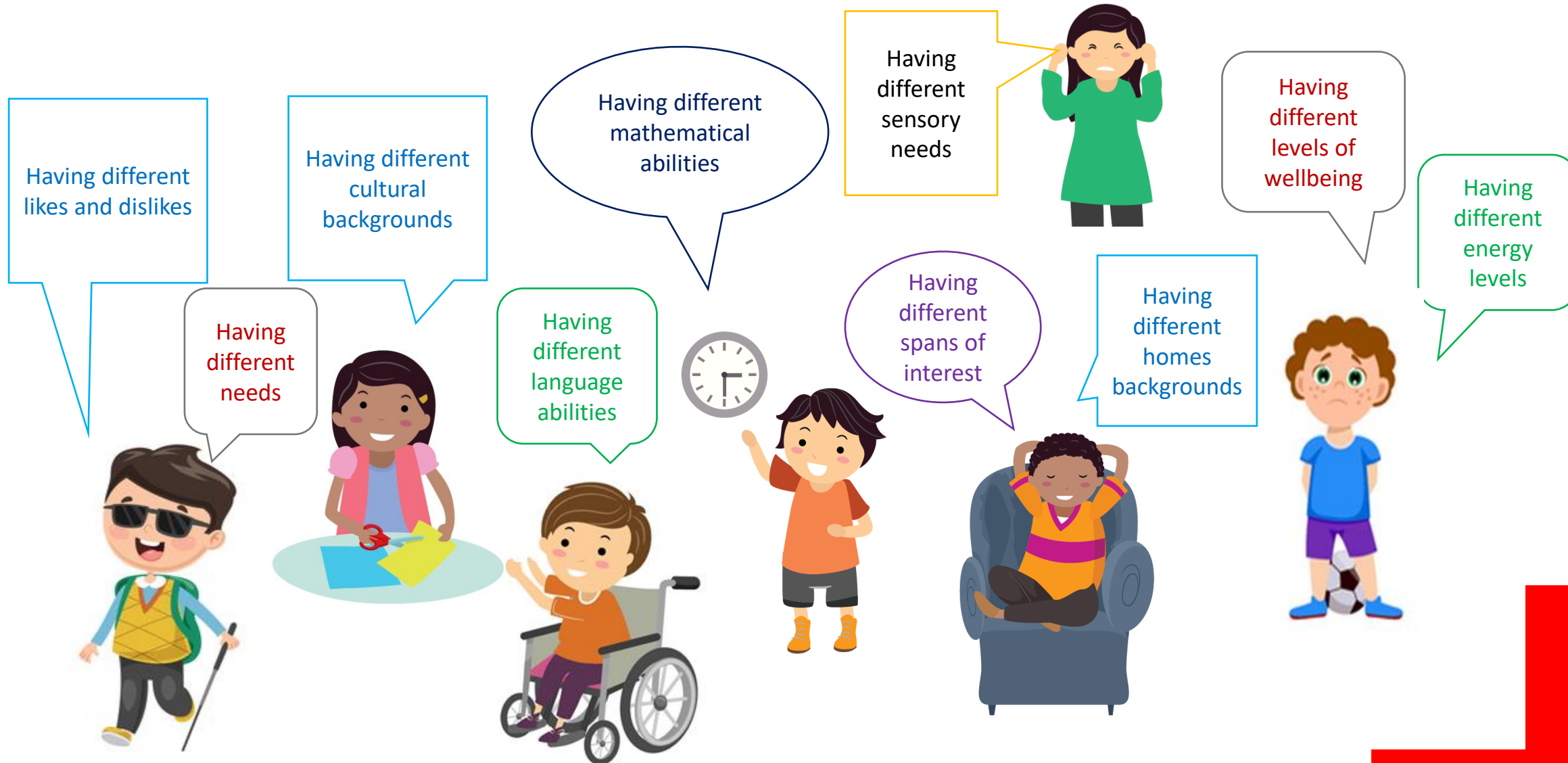
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um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council
for Special Education

NCSE Supporting Curriculum Enactment for All Children

Dr. Catherine Merrigan

National Specialist Lead for Education and Curriculum in Special Schools

Supporting the Vision of the Child



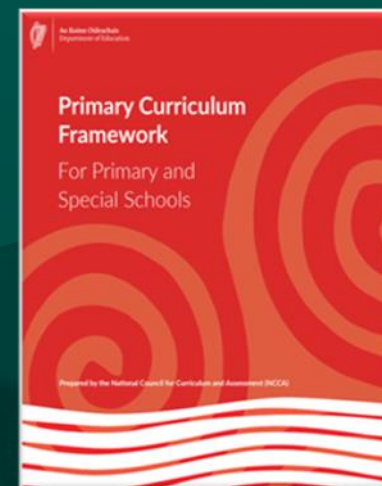
Supporting the Vision of the Teacher



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Department of Education
and Youth



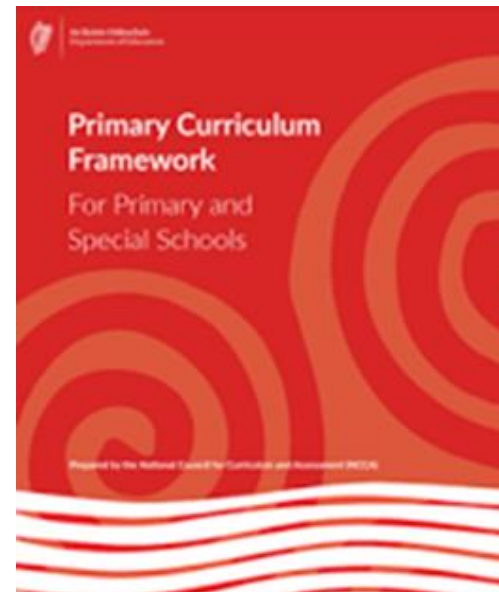
Committed,
Skilful and Agentic
Professionals



Supporting the Principle of Inclusive Education



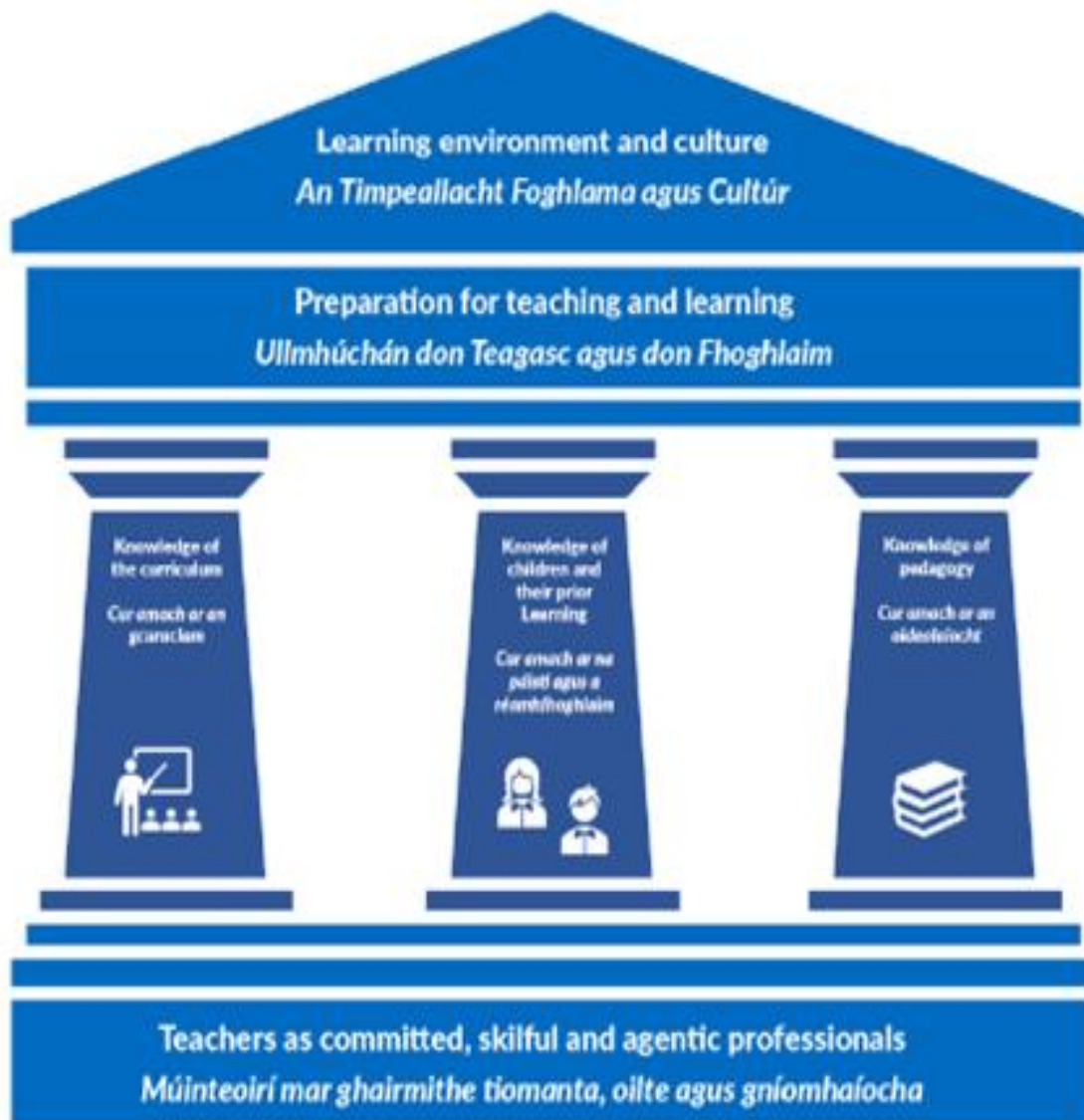
PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & DIVERSITY

Inclusive education provides for equity of opportunity and participation in children's learning. Inclusive education celebrates diversity and responds to the uniqueness of every child.

Developing Knowledge of the Child

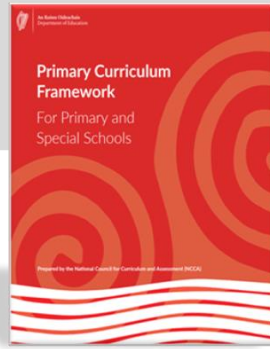


RELATIONSHIPS

Caring relationships within the school community support and impact positively on children's engagement, motivation, and learning.

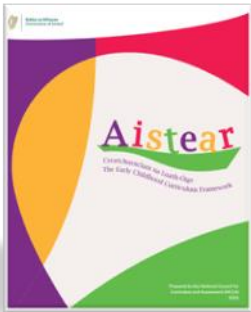
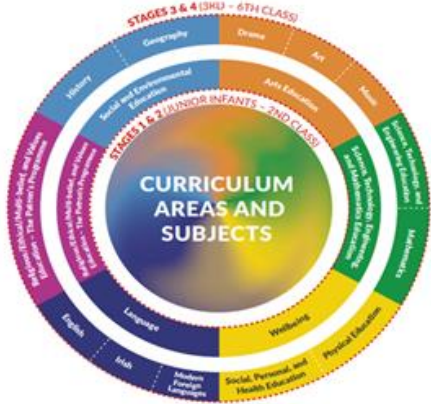
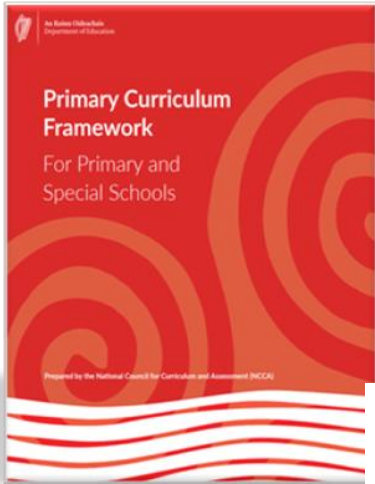
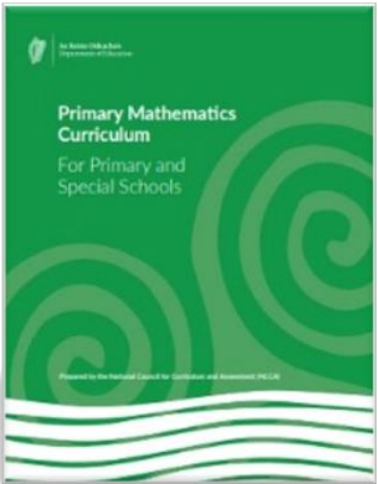
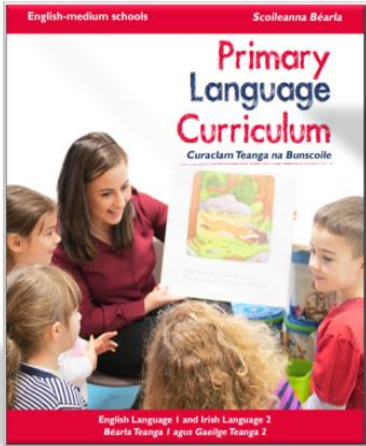


NCSE Curricular Support for Special Schools

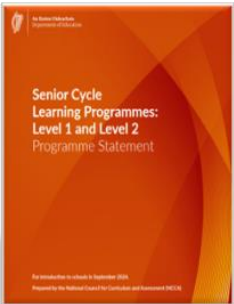


- NCSE Primary Curriculum Team
- Supporting Primary Curriculum Enactment in all Special Schools
 - Primary Language Curriculum, Primary Mathematics Curriculum
 - Redeveloped Primary School Curriculum
- Mirrors the Key Messages, Design and Timeline of Oide Framework
- Creates Bespoke TPL for the Special School Context
- Acknowledges the Complexity of Needs and Changing Pupil Profile
- Understands the Challenges of Unique Special School Contexts
- Builds Teacher Capacity to Support Access to the Curriculum for all Children
- Promotes Interagency Collaboration and Consistency of Message

An Inclusive Curriculum for All ...



Progression





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National Council
for Special Education

NCSE

Supporting Curriculum Enactment for All Children

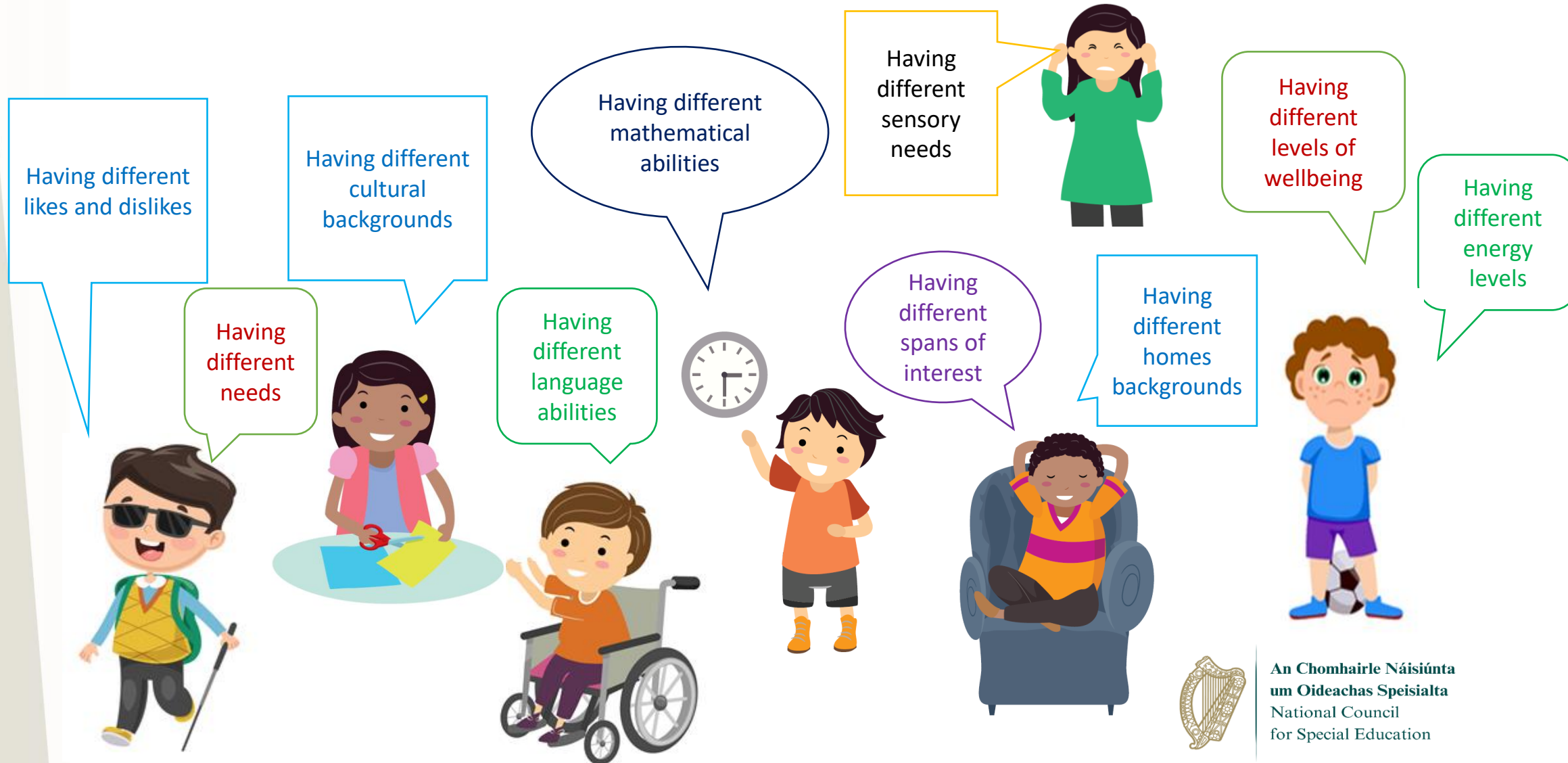
Dr. Catherine Merrigan

National Specialist Lead for Education and Curriculum in Special Schools



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um Oideachas Speisialta**
National Council
for Special Education

Supporting the Vision of the Child



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um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council
for Special Education

Supporting the Vision of the Teacher

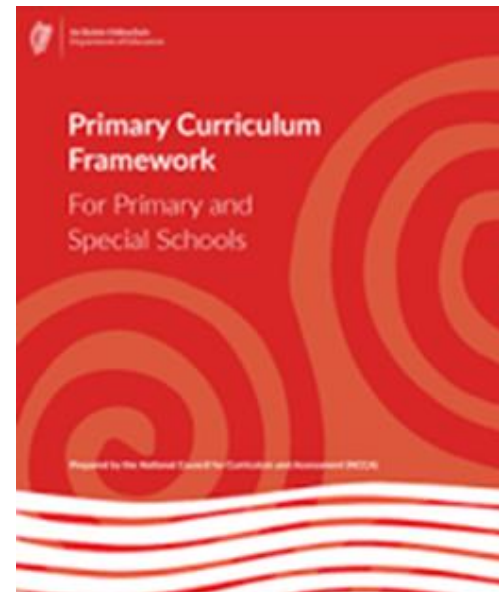


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National Council
for Special Education

Supporting the Principle of Inclusive Education



PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT



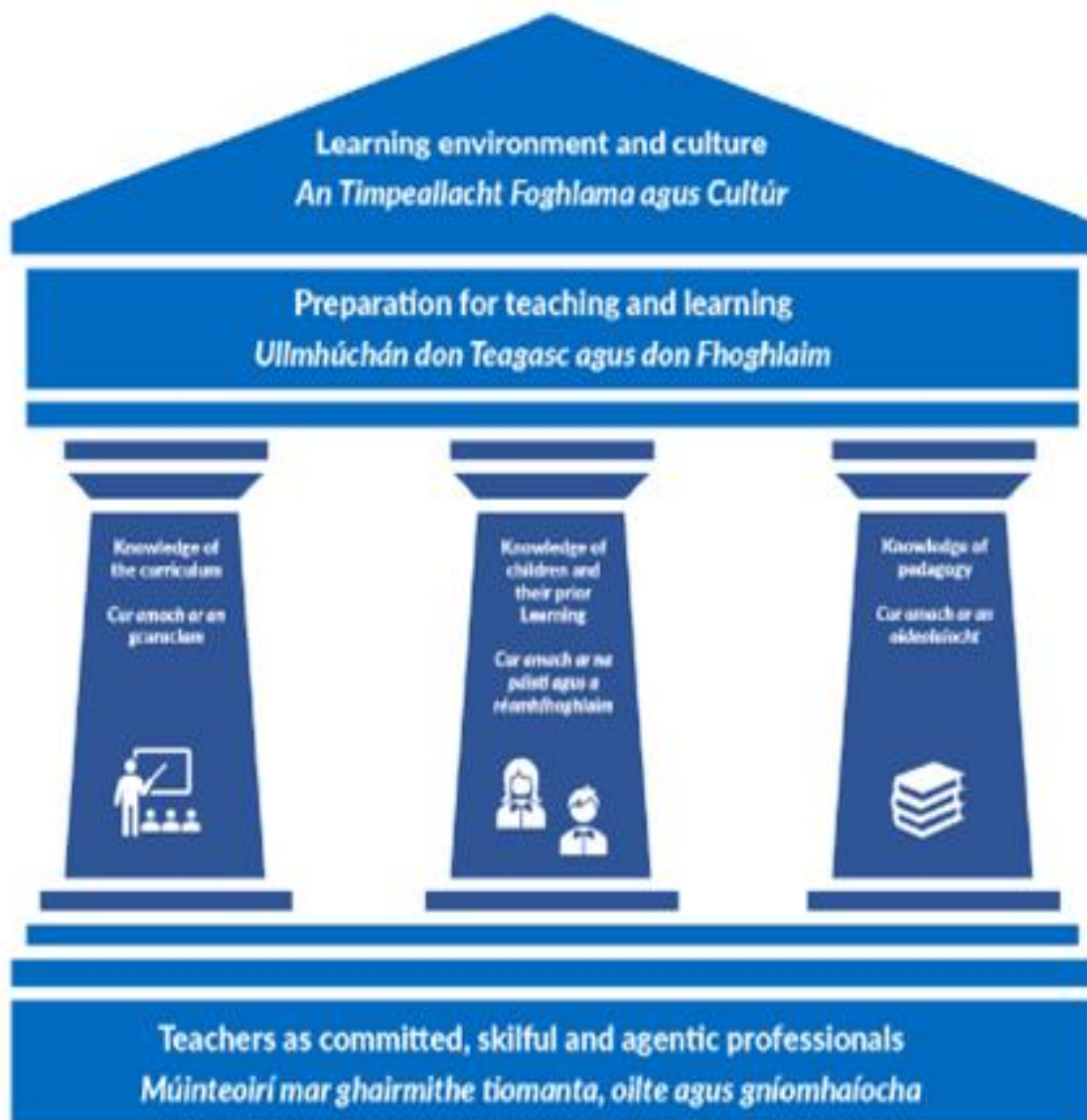
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION & DIVERSITY

Inclusive education provides for equity of opportunity and participation in children's learning. Inclusive education celebrates diversity and responds to the uniqueness of every child.



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Developing Knowledge of the Child



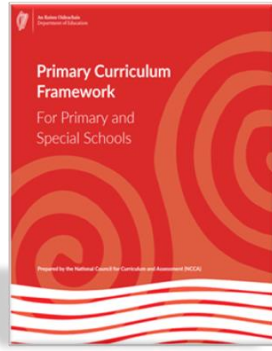
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Caring relationships within the school community support and impact positively on children's engagement, motivation, and learning.



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National Council
for Special Education

NCSE Curricular Support for Special Schools



- NCSE Primary Curriculum Team
- National Rollout of Primary Curriculum in all Special Schools
- Supporting Curriculum Enactment across School Contexts
- Mirror the Key Messages, Design and Timeline of Oide Framework
- Create Bespoke TPL for the Special School Context
- Acknowledge the Complexity of Needs and Changing Pupil Profile
- Understand the Challenges of the Unique School Contexts
- Build Teacher Capacity to Support Access to the Curriculum in all Schools
- Promote Interagency Collaboration and Consistency of Message



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um Oideachas Speisialta
National Council
for Special Education



Partnership and Shared Sense Making

Esther Doyle

Inspectorate

Navigating Curriculum Change

Professor Jim Spillane
Primary Advisory Panel



Next steps for guiding enactment of the redeveloped primary curriculum

What?



So What?



Now What?



Our task



To co-construct and craft
key messages for all
stakeholders to guide
successful enactment of
the redeveloped Primary
School Curriculum

Key messages for guiding the enactment of the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum

- 1. The redeveloped Primary School Curriculum calls for a fresh mindset, a fresh approach to curriculum enactment, and a collective commitment to ensure the best educational experiences for children**
- 2. Curriculum enactment brings us on a journey of learning and change**
- 3. Curriculum enactment embraces agency**
- 4. Curriculum enactment requires that we embrace the value of sense-making and learning together**
- 5. Curriculum enactment will impact change across many levels and so requires a systemic approach to reconsider, re-examine, and re-imagine how we can best communicate, interact and work with each other.**

Panel Discussion

Noel Loftus, Principal St Attracta's NS

Rory Collins, Oide

Karen Murtagh, DEY

Esther Doyle, Inspectorate

Patrick Sullivan, NCCA



Meeting close

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For your diary

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