St. Louis Secondary School
Carrickmacross

School Self-Evaluation Report
Literacy, Numeracy and Improving teaching and learning

This School Self-Evaluation Report is based on the School Self-Evaluation research findings at the end of academic year 2020/21 into continuous *literacy promotion* and *numeracy promotion and improving teaching and learning*.

Introduction:
As per SSE guidelines 2016-2020, Literacy and Numeracy continue to be embedded practices across the curriculum with regular review.
Additionally, for the academic year 2020/21 investigative and tentative approaches continue to be taken towards group work and team teaching.

Strengths identified in the School Self-Evaluation Report:

LITERACY:
- Much good practice continues to exist in promoting literacy and the literacy group, co-ordinated by Ms. P. O'Reilly continues to carry out great work in promoting literacy among the student body and within a classroom context.
- A 1st year book club was established. This was organised by the literacy group and it was well attended by students. This is something that both the literacy group and outgoing 1st year students would like to see continue and it is something that could be extended in the next academic year to include 1st and 2nd year student. This was a huge success and students continued to meet remotely during the school closures.
- They organised the 1st and 2nd year annual spelling Bee
- The school closure did not dampen their enthusiasm and they created reading challenges, book reviews and 'Get caught reading competition' keeping everyone connected and having fun through the medium of social media.
- DEAR week (twice per annum) continues to be a significant event on the academic calendar.
- The senior prefects have been trained in using the library system and continue to offer opening times during lunch break from Monday to Thursday to junior students.
- An improvement target in the area of literacy was to increase student's confidence when reading aloud in class or doing presentations.
- 93% of students surveyed said they had been asked to read aloud or make a presentation in class.
- 57 % of staff felt that student's confidence had increased and 41% answered maybe to this question.

Numeracy

- Establishing a numeracy group at the beginning of each academic year continues to be a vital part of the promotion of numeracy across all areas of school life. This group was coordinated by Ms. E. McCabe as Ms. R. Marron was on Maternity leave. A wide range of activities to promote numeracy throughout the school have been organised over the course of the year.

- Numeracy week has now become a set week on the school calendar. The numeracy group organised activities for everyone during this week.

- Numeracy posters were created for classrooms and a rounding poem was created to help 1st year students recall the rules for rounding. The group also created laminated number lines for all desks in Maths classrooms.

- The numeracy noticeboard was regularly updated throughout the year.

- This year plans were made for the literacy and numeracy group to come together and work on the area of problem solving as this was one of the areas that was set out as a target for improvement. A full week of problem-solving activities were organised for the whole school to take part in. This was based on the television programme 'The Cube'. Unfortunately, these plans had to be put on hold because of the school closure.

- 1st year students sit common exams throughout all 1st year which helps with the banding process from 2nd year on.

- All 1st year students use the consistent approach to calculating percentages and calculate the percentage mark for their tests.

- Our maths entrance test, which tests students on relevant areas of the maths curriculum, provides a statistical breakdown of Maths areas per student. It identifies area/areas that students may be having difficulty with. Teachers will be made aware of the areas of difficulty and can work on these areas across all subjects. (See SIP for targets). Due to the school closure the random sample test for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year could not take place in April 2020. This testing has not happened yet for incoming 1st Years but will in August and results will be shared with staff and the SIP will be updated accordingly.

- There was a positive response to problem solving from staff. Opportunities for problem solving were created and techniques were given to help students problem solve. Staff reported that it is being assessed and a majority have noticed an improvement.

- Using the PSDT Maths test results for incoming 1st years 2020 we were able to identify three areas that students scored lowest in this year; they were problem solving; probability and VAT & percentages. These are areas that will continue to be worked on with this group of students going into 2nd year.

Improving Teaching and learning

- Group work has been a focus since September 2017. It has now become an established teaching methodology in this school.
- As part of our evaluation of this teaching method a survey was conducted with a random sample of junior students and all staff in May 2020.   The results are below:

  Responses from staff
  - ➢ 90% of staff that responded use group work.
  - ➢ 24% daily, 48% weekly and 24% monthly
  - ➢ 57% of staff that responded said that their subject department does have a bank of resources that can be shared for group work
  - ➢ Benefits of group work reported was it helps focus the student, students can learn from each other, weaker students can participate. Students can take control of their own learning.

  134 responses from students
  - ➢ 84% of students said they had been taught how to work with other students in a group
  - ➢ 62% said they had opportunities to work with others in lessons on a regular basis
  - ➢ 65% said they are sometimes assigned specific roles in group work

- Focus groups were established in January 2020 to seek student's views on group work and team teaching. The reason for the establishment of student focus groups was to raise the status of the student voice within the school and to take into account, in so far as is possible, the student's views in relation to improving our teaching and their learning. In relation to group work students gave the following feedback:
  - ➢ We like group work.
  - ➢ Feel it is relevant in RE, Irish and Biology.
  - ➢ Helps us share ideas.
  - ➢ Do have good variety of it in class.
  - ➢ Good in language subjects as you can have conversations in the language with your friends.
  - ➢ Helps with communication skills as we might be in groups with girls that we are not friends with and we have to work together.
  - ➢ Helps with concentration as you get a break from listening to the teacher all the time and you have to engage and think for yourself.
  - ➢ Always have good experience with group work. It is fun and work might not be as hard because you are sharing it.
- Our teaching and learning committee continues to encourage sharing of resources and methodologies. Teachers have discussed and analysed instructional methodologies such as fishbone diagrams and placemats.

- A section on teaching and learning has been on the agenda for all staff meetings and as part of these meetings the instructional leader teachers reported back at one staff meeting and the NAPD teachers reported back at another. This will continue for all future meetings whereby any teacher who has engaged in teaching and learning CPD will brief staff at general staff meetings.
- A teach/meet session took place in September 2020. Members of the teaching and learning committee provided CPD to teachers on methodologies for group work. This was received well by staff and a request for similar CPD was outlined in the staff survey. 38% said they would like more teach meet sessions or CPD on group work and 33% said maybe.
- Team teaching was another target in this area, it was planned to be established on a phased basis over a two-year period. CPD on team teaching was delivered by Ciara Ui Chonduibh to staff on 01/10/19.
- For this academic year we continued to use in-class support as the team-teaching approach for Maths.
- Feedback from the teachers involved has been positive and the students in question benefited on the days the additional teacher was in the room.

    Staff responses on team teaching:
    - 43% of those surveyed said they had participated in team teaching.
    - 52% said they would be willing to participate or continue to participate in team teaching.

    Student responses on team teaching:
    - 57% said they had been taught/aided by more than one teacher in the classroom
    - 46% of those survey said they were clear on the roles if there were two teachers teaching a lesson. 43% answered maybe to this question
    - The majority of students commented that team teaching is positive in that it is helpful for those who might not understand, it gives students more chances to ask questions and if one teacher is busy, there is another one there to help you.

    Home Economics student focus group responses:
    - Good support when doing practical activities like cooking and needle work. Easier to see demonstrations in needlework when the teacher is showing smaller groups.
    - Good to have two teachers as you get more help.
    - You get more work done and you move on quicker.
- All staff have a surface pro and have been using it within the classroom.
- 94 % of staff felt that their use of ICT within the classroom has increased.
- 45% of students surveyed said that the use of ICT in the classroom had increased.
- All students have been given an office 365 account. These accounts are being used by teachers to share class notes and allow students to submit work digitally. Students are also participating in remote classes through Microsoft Teams.

- A class set of laptops have been purchased and are being used by several teachers. There is a sign out book for subject teachers and this is evidence of how useful they are and how often they are being used. A second set of laptops and charging trolley has been purchased and have been set up so that more staff and students have the use of laptops within their lessons.
- The LCA class has their own set of laptops. These are stored in their base classroom
- Inhouse IT CPD was given to all staff by our own digital leaders in November 2021 – This was based on Microsoft office applications such as one note, teams, forms, powerpoint, word streaming and live recording.
- All 1st year students were given training on how to use Teams by Conor Pentony ICT coordinator and Caitriona Rogers in October 2020.

Areas identified in the School Self Evaluation Report Requiring Improvement:

LITERACY:
- A target was set last year to provide Junior Cycle students with workshops which would teach them important tips and techniques for public speaking. Due to timetabling constraints this was unable to happen. It will be prioritised for the next academic year as part of the class tutor programme whereby every junior cycle student has one dedicated class tutor period per week.
- 35% of the students said they did not like reading aloud, they commented that they feel anxious and nervous about this.

NUMERACY:
- The incoming 1st years 2021 were unable to sit the entrance tests in February 2021, these tests will now take place in August 2021 and the information shared with staff and details of the areas that need to be focused on will be updated here.
- Incoming 1st Year Maths Entrance test 2020 outlined the following 3 areas that students had difficulty with: problem solving, probability and VAT & percentages.
- Subject teachers will continue to work on problem solving within their subject area and in subjects where it is applicable work will be done on probability and VAT/percentages
- The numeracy group will continue with their work on creating numeracy posters for classrooms and liaise with those subject teachers who need more resources.

Improving teaching and learning
   Staff responses in relation to group work
- 38% said that their subject department does not have a bank of resources that can be shared for group work

- 29% said that they do need more materials/support to facilitate group work in their subject area and 38% said they maybe need more materials/support.
- Disadvantages of group work reported was that if it is overused, it will lose its effectiveness, time issues and students can get side tracked.

Student responses

- Students were asked to comment on any concerns they had about team teaching, the majority had no concerns. Those that did comment stated that it might be confusing at times and sometimes it is hard to focus when two teachers are in the room and it can be also difficult if they use different styles of teaching**.**
- Students were also asked to suggest how this way of teaching could be enhanced to further help students. They suggested that one teacher be responsible for teaching and the other to go around and give help. They suggested that both teachers be prepared, organised and communicate before class. Sometimes one teacher can be talking over the other and this can be confusing. They also suggested that the class could be split in 2 groups and those that are finding things difficult work with one teacher and those that are ready to move on do with the other teacher.
In relation to ICT, students made the following comments:
- Allow us to do work on computer, essays, assignments etc.,
- get to the computer room at least once a week,
- use ICT for all subjects,
- have more laptops, more ICT classes and some students responded saying that their class has not got the opportunity to use computers yet.

Staff responses to ICT were as follows:
- Apps could be used to assess learning
- ICT should and could be increased. There are not enough laptops to go around, time consuming going to get them and as a result people are often reluctant. If laptops were available in more rooms and easier to access it would be a big help.
- Students should be allowed to have access to their phones as there is limited access to laptops.
- A lot has been learnt about online learning during the course of the school closure.
- We are offering PE as a short course to incoming 1st Years. Part of this programme will involve an emphasis on the use of digital technology. We will need to look at having easy access for students to school devices.
- The portable laptops have been very useful for subject teachers, and it is envisaged that more subject teachers will use them to enhance teaching and learning going forward.
- As a result of the Whole School Inspection the school has been advised to revise the way in which it has been rolling out the L2LP programme. At the time of the

inspection the school was using the blended model whereby students were doing a number of L2LP priority learning units and a number of level 3 Junior Cycle subjects. On advice from the inspectorate, students need to do all 5 PLUs and 2 short courses, staff have began preparing lists of targets and resources for all L2LP priority learning units across all subject areas.

Whole School Initiatives:

Based on the report findings for 2019-2021 we plan to implement the following whole school initiatives for the coming academic year:

Literacy

- Promoting reading for enjoyment among students. Classes will continue to be encouraged to go to the library to read and to borrow books. Students will be encouraged to review books both in writing and orally in class.
- Literacy group will organise a Readathon for 1st and 2nd Years in the weeks leading up to DEAR week. Record sheets will be created for all students and they will be collected during DEAR week and prizes will be awarded to those who have read most books.
- Transition Year Students will continue to be provided with a dedicated library period where they can borrow/renew books and read for pleasure.
- First year students will have a dedicated library class once a week as part of their English curriculum.
- All teachers and students will continue to engage in DEAR week twice yearly.
- The school will seek to improve oral skills through public speaking and debating. Competitions will facilitate this at both junior and senior level.
- The school will seek to encourage creative writing and will publish students work on the school website. The literacy group will run essay writing competitions for first years and encourage a high standard of written work.
- The literacy group will continue to promote literacy skills through displays on the literacy landing and a spelling bee competition for first years.
- The school library has been updated and senior prefects will continue to be trained in using the library system. They will continue to offer opening times during the lunchbreak to junior students.
- From September 2021 there will be a dedicated period for class teachers to meet with all 1st and 3rd year students under our wellbeing programme. The class teacher will focus on improving student's skills and confidence in public skills. A dedicated programme has been devised for class tutors to roll out incorporating some parts of the ''Lets stand programme''.
- Well-being and managing stress/anxiety – It is envisaged that each junior class will have one period each week on a withdrawal basis which will focus on developing strategies to help them cope with stress and anxiety. This will be facilitated by the wellbeing committee. This was not possible to roll out during 2020/2021 due to Covid and will be subject to Covid restrictions in 2021/2022 also.

- Students were asked how they could be supported more to read aloud/make presentations and they made the following comments;
    - Ask who wants to read and not pick randomly,
    - for a presentation allow them to do a voice recording privately and then use this in class,
    - teachers should give compliments and words of encouragement,
    - do presentations in smaller groups and outside the big class,
    - use activities and games to increase confidence,
    - teacher goes through presentation privately before the student does it in class.
    - Some of the comments were made in relation to CBA presentations.

Staff made similar suggestions in relation to improving student's confidence when it comes to reading aloud/making presentations:

- Make public speaking part of all subjects.
- Allow students to speak within smaller group.
- In group work assign roles and rotate the role of the speaker within the group.
- Teacher would assign the amount to be read as they know what the student is capable of.
- Provide feedback.
- Have group work games to build confidence and trust.

- 1st & 4th Years have ICT periods on their timetable.
- The computer rooms will be maintained over the summer months and all repairs carried out.
- CPD opportunities for ICT courses will displayed on the notice board in the staffroom.
- A Junior Book (1st/2nd Years) Club will continue to meet. It is anticipated that they would meet once every 3/4 weeks to decide on a book, read it and come back to the group to discuss it. It would be hoped that they could create a recommended list of books to read for other students in their classes.
- CPD will be organised for all staff who are engaging in delivering well-being sessions. It is hoped that some of these teachers will be registered on the PDST Mind out training programme.

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Numeracy
- The numeracy group will continue to promote numeracy using the numeracy noticeboard and by organising extracurricular activities such as countdown.

- Subject teachers will be supported by the numeracy group who will create visual numeracy posters for their classrooms.
- The numeracy group will work with the literacy group to host the event they had planned for last year, (The Cube). This is a trivial pursuits type tournament which will focus on improving student's ability to problem solve.
- The common approach to calculating percentages will continue to be used and staff will be reminded of this approach and encouraged to use it.
- Maths teachers will display key mathematical terms and explain appropriately and encourage students to pick out terms that could be used in a particular topic.
- Work will continue by Maths teachers on problem solving, probability and VAT/percentages with 3rd years and on problem solving, probability and units of measure with the 2nd years and on problem solving, probability and VAT/percentages with the incoming 1st years based on results of their PDST Maths entrance test results.
- Work by all subject departments on problem solving will continue.

Improving Teaching and Learning
- As a result of the school closure due to Covid 19 there was a greater reliance on the use of technology. Some students were more capable than others at using Teams. Training on the basic applications on Teams could be given to all students and those staff who wish to avail of it. CPD on Microsoft Office applications was delivered to all staff on Tuesday 24th November. All 1st year students were given training on how to use Teams by Conor Pentony, ICT coordinator and Caitriona Rogers in October 2020.
- Group work will continue to be used as a teaching methodology throughout the school year and this will continue to be facilitated and supported by the teaching and learning committee.
- Each Department will be asked to complete their own stocktake on the shared resources they have; this list will be kept in their Department folder on Teams. Subject Departments will also be asked to research and create a wish list of materials/resources that they feel would enhance their teaching and learning through group work. This list will be shared and discussed with Management.
- Over 50% of teachers on the SSE end of year survey indicated that they would be willing to team teach in the next academic year. Team teaching will continue to feature on the timetable; Maths will be the subject in which it will occur this year and the main emphasis will be on supporting students with learning needs.
- A section on teaching and learning will be on the agenda for all staff meetings. Any teacher who has undertaken CPD in this area will feed back some of their learning to the staff as a whole. Additionally, there will be updates on ongoing work from the teaching and learning committee.

- A week, early in the first term and subject to health guidelines, will be dedicated to an open-door initiative whereby teachers on the committee will nominate one or two periods that they would be willing to allow other teachers to come into their classroom and observe. A timetable for the week will be drawn up and other teachers could opt for the periods they wished to observe. It was planned that this would happen after the February mid-term break, it had to be postponed due to Covid 19 school closure. Subsequently it had to be postponed a second time and will be rescheduled for a time when all Government restrictions are lifted.

  The school has secured a deal with Wriggle learning whereby student devices for individual use will be available under an individualised St. Louis store on the Wriggle website. These devices are envisaged as a support for students engaging in remote learning due to Covid 19 restrictions in school. It will be considered at a later stage that these devices may be introduced into the classroom as a teaching and learning tool.

  The staff have received CPD on L2LP from the JCT on 4th May 2021 and also further CPD from the Learning Support Coordinator on same. Subject Departments were given the opportunity to work on creating lists of targets from all PLUs and gathering resources for their subject areas. These have all been uploaded to subject Department folders in Teams. These will be reviewed by subject Departments in August 2021 and sent to the SEN Coordinator when students have been set up on the programme.

- The school has purchased a licence for 'jumpAGrade' software. This is a research-based framework for tailoring student feedback developed with Trinity College Dublin. This is fully supported by Microsoft and integrates into teams within office 365. This framework combines the best practice of teaching and learning with the efficiencies of digital learning to save teachers time and simplify high quality formative feedback. This framework also ensures that the feedback a student receives align their individual learning goals. It is envisaged that this software will be trialled during the academic year 2021 – 2022 by our Teaching and Learning Committee.

Subject Based Initiatives:

Each subject department in the school will continue to devote meeting time to the promotion of literacy and numeracy standards within its own subject. Each subject plan will contain a section on these topics. Among the initiatives undertaken will be the following:

1. Displaying key words and subject specific terms/jargon on wall charts or on the whiteboard in relation to literacy and numeracy.
2. Writing new or difficult words on the whiteboard during a lesson.
3. Encouraging students to pronounce technical terms or complex words correctly.

4. Developing listening and oral skills among students.
5. Differentiating both by task and outcome for varying standards of literacy among students.
6. Each classroom will have a numeracy noticeboard to improve numerical visibility within the classroom

Measurements and Evaluations:

- Due to Covid 19, all testing has had to be put on hold.   We were unable to test a random sample of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Years in the areas of literacy and numeracy in April 2020. We have also had to postpone our entrance tests for incoming 1st years 2021. They will now take place in August 2021.
- Feedback and reports will be provided by the literacy and numeracy groups.
- Surveys will be conducted among staff, students, and parents to identify current strengths and areas for improvement.
- An evaluation will be carried out to assess the school wide initiative on the use of group work and team teaching. Further CPD may be given as deemed necessary.

The School Improvement Plan will be reviewed in May 2022