

Searching for equality: improving reading literacy at second level in disadvantaged schools.

The impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy on reading literacy with a particular focus on the impact of the JCSP Literacy Medley.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
ICT	Information and communications technology
IEP	Individual education plan
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
JCSP	Junior Certificate School Programme
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LS/RT	Learning support/resource teacher
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PDST	Professional Development Supports for Teachers
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPSN	Personal public service number
SCP	School Completion Programme
SDPI	School Development Planning Initiative
SEC	State Examinations Commission
SEN	Special educational needs
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SESS	Special Education Support Service

SLSS	Second Level Support Service
SNA	Special needs assistant
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TUI	Teachers Union of Ireland
US/USA	United States of America
VEC	Vocational Education Committees

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The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) :

An Extract from the JCSP Programme Statement (NCCA 2010)

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) originated in a number of projects initiated by the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) through its Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). The projects were concerned with identifying potential early school leavers and devising a programme suitable to their needs. In September 1996, following a pilot phase, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Department of Education and Science (DES) launched the *Junior Certificate School Programme*. Since its introduction the programme has expanded from 32 schools in 1996 to 240 schools in 2010. The programme has expanded on a phased basis, to all post-primary schools participating in the *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) initiative. This initiative puts in place an integrated, strategic approach to addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years).

While the majority of settings providing the JCSP are post-primary schools, the JCSP is also offered in Special Schools, Children Detention Schools, Traveller Training Centres and Youth Encounter Projects. The JCSP is aimed at students who are identified as being at risk of early school leaving. The programme offers schools and teachers a more flexible approach than a traditional subject-based curriculum.

Every year a small group of students, many of whom are educationally disadvantaged, leaves school without qualifications. For many of these students their experience of school is one of disengagement and alienation. While these difficulties may, in part, be rooted in the disadvantage they have experienced they may also have to do with the culture of schooling, school organisation and the learning experienced. The JCSP is designed to address some of these difficulties. It enables students to re-engage with their learning. It builds their basic skills of literacy and numeracy and their personal and social skills. It aims to ensure that each student benefits from their time in school and enjoys an experience of success. It does this by offering schools and teachers a more flexible approach to meeting the diverse needs of students and achieves this within the context of the Junior Certificate qualification.

This approach focuses on analysing the student's learning needs and strengths and planning a suitable programme of work around them. In the process, the JCSP places a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills, in particular literacy and numeracy, which are relevant to many areas of the curriculum and are important for managing daily life, both inside and outside school. A further emphasis is placed on the development of the student's personal and social skills, which enhance self-esteem and his/her ability to relate well to other people. Schools using the JCSP adopt active teaching and learning approaches, including cross-curricular thematic work that offers students a smoother transition from the experience of primary schooling. In addition, cross-curricular work supports students in making connections between the various areas of learning across the curriculum, while at the same time developing their basic skills.

Abstract

The consequence of being failed by the education system has life-long implications – if one is deprived of basic education, of literacy and numeracy skills, one is excluded from economic, social, and political participation. Success in education offers the marginalised freedom, choices and possibilities. The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) supports teachers and their students in accessing and succeeding in the mainstream curriculum.

A central plank of the programme is the JCSP Literacy Strategy, which provides schools with an opportunity to put in place a school-wide approach to literacy improvement. Accelerating literacy is key to curricular success, however, there is little research in Ireland as to what works. Such evidence is crucial if our teachers will have confidence in improving adolescent literacy.

The purpose of the study is to explore how the JCSP Literacy Strategy impacts on developing reading literacy among groups of first year JCSP students, with a specific focus on the JCSP *Literacy Medley*. Thirty five schools implemented the *JCSP Literacy Medley* which involved implementing at least three of the JCSP reading initiatives over one academic year with at least one first year JCSP group and setting up a JCSP reading space/corner in their school. Over one thousand students were involved in the study along with over one hundred and fifty teachers.

A mixed methods research approach was taken. Methods included carrying out a student reading survey of 3,653 first year students to gather their perspectives on reading; teachers' and librarians' feedback was gathered through interviews; and a focus group was used as well as online evaluation tools. Standardised reading test information was also gathered from 700 students to establish reading progress which supplemented teacher observations. Additionally, a case study of one school ensured rich data was gathered to complete the picture.

Ten steps to success have emerged from this study that should be considered within the context of a process of change management in participating schools. These include implementing a range of motivational reading interventions supported by bespoke CPD, time to read and access to books in attractive reading spaces.

Introduction

Equality for disadvantaged students at second level in Ireland

We must not believe the many, who say that only free people ought to be educated, but we should rather believe the philosophers who say that only the educated are free.

Epictetus

Those with superior access to valued resources and culture in a society are inevitably positioned to be the major beneficiaries of educational investment (Lynch 2000). Students from poor backgrounds are disadvantaged in our schools and many vote with their feet, with fourteen per cent of students in Ireland not finishing their secondary education (OECD, 2008). We are failing these students. A considerable amount of research has gone into the reasons why students leave school early. There are many factors which contribute to early school leaving: poverty; streamed, segregated, ghettoised schools; poor resources at home; lack of connection with the school (linked to its lack of relevance to their lives); mishandling of poor behaviour; and poor literacy and numeracy skills (Baker, 2004; Lynch and Lodge, 2002; Lynch, 1999). Many students leave school to make money or join apprenticeships; some because their friends have left or simply because they hate school, according to Cosgrove in the Oireachtas report *Staying in Education* (2009). I intend to explore current research into the educational experiences of students from poor backgrounds in Ireland, specifically with regard to literacy acquisition, and in so doing hope to identify the areas that, at policy level, should be examined so as to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of these students.

The consequence of being failed by the education system has life-long implications – if one is deprived of basic education, of literacy and numeracy skills, one is excluded from economic, social, and political participation. You and your children will be outsiders according to Lynch, (1999). Success in education offers the marginalised freedom, choices and possibilities. The windows of opportunity are opened by a good school and teachers. Baker et al (2004) recognise that equality in education offers empowerment, while it defines as well as distributes cultural heritage and privilege and mediates access to social, political and economic goods in society. It is therefore such a powerful mechanism in our society

that, if abused, can ensure that generations of those in poverty will be marginalised, excluded and disempowered.

It is intended in this piece of research to examine the impact of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) Literacy Strategy with particular reference to the impact of the *Literacy Medley* where schools were asked to implement at least three reading interventions with their first year students. Over 1,000 students were involved in the study and over 3,000 were consulted, through a reading survey, on their attitude to reading.

Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)

The Junior Certificate School Programme is in place to support students who may be at risk of leaving school early and who often have negative experiences of school. It has been designed to ensure that these young people can benefit from their time in school and enjoy the experience of improvement and success. It sets out to ensure that each individual student in the Programme experiences success and progression and to make the experience of school relevant and accessible to those young people who find it difficult to cope with the school system. It does this by providing a curriculum framework which assists schools and individual teachers in adopting a student-centred approach to the Junior Certificate. The Programme emphasises a whole-school approach. The focus is on a team approach, consistent methodology and approaches across subjects within the *Student Profiling System*. This helps to make the curriculum accessible and relevant to young people who benefit from a different approach to the Junior Certificate. The goal of the Programme is to ensure that students continue in full-time education, having achieved success in the Junior Certificate examination, and develop a positive self-image in the process.

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) is particularly targeted at junior cycle students who are identified as being at risk of early school leaving, perhaps without completing the Junior Certificate. According to the NCCA's Programme Statement (2010) the JCSP is in place to address many of the difficulties faced by educationally disadvantaged students in schools such as alienation and disengagement.

Every year a small group of students, many of whom are educationally disadvantaged, leaves school without qualifications. For many of these students their

experience of school is one of disengagement and alienation. While these difficulties may, in part, be rooted in the disadvantage they have experienced they may also have to do with the culture of schooling, school organisation and the learning experienced. The JCSP is designed to address some of these difficulties. It enables students to re-engage with their learning. (NCCA's Programme Statement 2010, p. 8)

Following a lengthy pilot phase, the JCSP was introduced to schools in 1996. Since then, uptake of the programme has extended, on a phased basis, to all post-primary schools participating in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative and it is now in 245 schools and centres. While the majority of settings providing the JCSP are post-primary schools, it is also offered in Special Schools, Children Detention Schools, Traveller Training Centres, Youth Encounter Projects and just recently in Youthreach Centers. The programme offers schools and teachers a flexible approach to teaching and learning in the context of the junior cycle curriculum.

I was national co-ordinator of the JCSP for 15 years from 1996 when it was first rolled out as a national Department of Education and Skills programme. Through my work in schools I gained a clear insight into the positive impact of the JCSP on the educational experience of students and its contribution to their positive outlook and engagement with school. According to the NCCA (2009) it supports students in benefiting from their time in school:

It enables students to re-engage with their learning. It builds their basic skills of literacy and numeracy and their personal and social skills. It aims to ensure that each student benefits from their time in school and enjoys an experience of success. It does this by offering schools and teachers a more flexible approach to meeting the diverse needs of students and achieves this within the context of the Junior Certificate qualification. (NCCA 2009 p. 8)

A cross curricular approach is central to this new, innovative approach in schools, as described here in the Programme Statement (NCCA 2009):

The use of active teaching and learning methods across the curriculum promotes student-centred learning and encourages students to become engaged in their learning. Schools using the JCSP find adopting a cross-curricular approach to the development of literacy and numeracy skills beneficial. In this approach, subject teachers are encouraged to adopt specific techniques in addressing the literacy and numeracy demands of their subject area. Cross-curricular activities also involve a

high degree of collaboration where students work together and with the teacher. (NCCA 2009 p.10)

The JCSP approach focuses on analysing the student's learning needs and strengths and planning a suitable programme of work around them. In the process, the JCSP places a strong emphasis on the development of basic skills, in particular literacy and numeracy, which are relevant to many areas of the curriculum and are important for managing daily life, both inside and outside school. A further emphasis is placed on the development of the student's personal and social skills, which enhance self-esteem and his/her ability to relate well to other people. Schools using the JCSP adopt active teaching and learning approaches, including cross-curricular, thematic work that offers students a smoother transition from the experience of primary schooling. In addition, cross-curricular work supports students in making connections between the various areas of learning across the curriculum, while at the same time developing their basic skills.

At the heart of the programme is a profiling system, which facilitates all subject teachers in monitoring and recording students' progress and achievements. The profiling system comprises of a series of statements, each affirming what a student can do, knows or understands. Statements may be subject-specific or cross-curricular in nature. Profiling statements are further broken down into learning targets. The learning targets provide realisable short-term manageable units of work, which encourage students to become more effectively involved in their own learning.

All the students in the programme must be entered for the Junior Certificate examination. Students follow the same curriculum as their peers in the examination subjects they have selected. On completion of the programme students receive an individual *Student Profile* which is a cumulative record of their achievements and is validated by the Department of Education and Skills. This is in addition to any grades they achieve in the Junior Certificate examination.

Profile meetings

Every school appoints a JCSP co-ordinator and they are provided with a weekly time allowance by the Department of Education and Skills to carry out their busy role. The co-ordinators and all subject teachers involved in the programme attend the profile meetings.

Again an enhanced allocation provides time for the JCSP teachers to regularly meet. A core team meets once a week and profile meetings are usually held once a term. The first profile meeting is a planning meeting, usually held in October. It facilitates a discussion on the student's individual strengths, challenges, interests and hobbies. The student's reading and mathematical ages, social abilities, ability to work in pairs, oral communication ability, quality of written work and preferred learning styles are established and discussed.

During the profile meetings each subject teacher also selects subject statements from the student profiling system. The full profiling system with subject and cross curricular statements can be found on the JCSP website on www.jcsp.ie. Cross-curricular statements are chosen based on the needs that the teachers identify so a class may work towards a range of statements such as:

- School function (Christmas celebration)
- Make A Book project
- Visiting an art gallery and museum
- Measurement
- Paired reading
- Using the library
- Homework
- Punctuality
- Speaking and listening
- Functional writing
- Photography
- Horticulture.

JCSP initiatives may also be chosen to compliment the statements and these will be explained fully below.

■ The teachers agree, at these profile meetings as to how positive feedback is to be provided to the students and all subject teachers are asked to give their students feedback over the forthcoming weeks.

■ Finally, teachers agree on how best to use the JCSP literacy strategy and may decide, for example, to run a reading challenge and implement a keyword strategy in all subject areas.

An example of a student profile meeting can be watched on the JCSP website www.jcsp.ie under the Video tab: <http://www.mediaconcepts.ie/jcsp/page64.html>.

The framework for the JCSP facilitates a team approach, encourages a cross curricular and a whole school approach to literacy and numeracy. All teachers are involved, from the history teacher to the science teacher, from the Irish teacher to the materials technology metal teacher. The JCSP meetings provide an opportunity to address curricular issues in the school and facilitates the deepening of teachers' understanding of the students and their learning needs. The process encourages a positive relationship focused on developing the students' confidence and engagement with school.

The inspectorate's evaluation of the JCSP *Building on Success* (2005) concluded that the JCSP had a positive impact on attendance, retention, motivation, attitude, literacy, numeracy, social skills as well as performance in the examination and progression afterwards:

It was reported by the various school personnel that the JCSP contributes towards enhanced:

- _ attendance and retention
- _ motivation and attitude
- _ literacy and numeracy achievement
- _ social skills
- _ performance in the Junior Certificate examination
- _ progression after the Junior Certificate. (DES,2005, p. 103)

The students' positive outlook was particularly noted:

From classroom observation and from the structured interview with third-year students it is evident that the attitude of the students towards their schooling and to their involvement in the programme is positive. The students presented as content and confident, open and friendly and with a strong sense of group identity. Satisfactory attendance levels among the JCSP classes attest to their positive disposition towards the programme. (DES, 2005, p. 105)

The JCSP literacy strategy

The JCSP literacy strategy was put in place twelve years ago by the support service in response to calls from schools who felt that literacy improvement was so central to curricular success. It was also put in place because it became obvious to the service during school visits that JCSP students had in many instances poor access to relevant, interesting and appropriate reading materials. The JCSP students were the very students whose literacy levels were identified on entry into school as being very far behind and schools were struggling with its improvement. Some teachers felt that literacy was not their job. Some

thought that it should be looked after by the learning support and the English departments. Many believed that primary schools should deal with it before the students entered second level. Extensive research was undertaken into what worked in other jurisdictions. It became clear that only when a school engaged in a whole school approach, where every teacher took on their role in literacy teaching, would serious progress be made. Adequate access to appropriate reading materials also needed to be addressed.

The support service set about developing full staff Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes as well as interventions and resources that promote access to books and time to read. It was recognised that the CPD programme needed to encourage and support all teachers to find their role in literacy improvement and to provide practical strategies that they could be incorporated into their classrooms. Strategies were outlined to all subject teachers that could bridge the gap between students' reading levels and the textbooks used in classrooms. They were invited, in each instance to try them out before being reviewed at a later point in the year. Alongside the classroom strategies, school wide literacy initiatives were also offered. Schools considered what initiatives would work best in their context. JCSP initiatives offer schools opportunities to implement and develop various interventions into the formal and non-formal curriculum. The literacy initiatives are generally short term interventions designed to accelerate literacy at an early stage in second level. They are designed to excite, motivate and encourage more engagement with the learning process. They are action-research based activities undertaken by schools, the results of which are used to inform the wider network of schools on imaginative, effective responses to underachievement in literacy. Parallel to the literacy initiative there are curricular and cross curricular initiatives such as home economics: celebrity chef, field trips, a whole range of Irish initiatives such as ceilí, bodhrán making, trips to the Gealtacht etc. There cross curricular include artist in the classroom, horticulture and film making. Within a range of literacy initiatives there are a range that focus on reading literacy such as the Reading Challenge, Readalong and Who Wants to be Word Millionaire? The impact of many of the individual short term interventions have been reviewed favourably (JCSP, 2009, Henefer 2006 and McCarthy, 2005).

The JCSP support service holds JCSP co-ordinator meetings each term in centres across the country. Regularly co-ordinators would stand up and outline how the JCSP literacy strategy

had transformed their school, had been successful in raising literacy and so had strong buy in from teachers. The descriptions were inspiring. Co-ordinators listened to each other and returned to their own school fired up to do the same, to really make the literacy strategy impact. Meeting after meeting we, in the support service, were so encouraged by the positive feedback. Some early pieces of research showed positive impact on students' reading literacy. Many schools participated in a number of days CPD over a five or six year time span and gradually implemented several aspects of the strategy. There were indications that when schools ran a number of literacy initiatives their impact was more powerful (JCSP 2009). It was this observation that prompted this piece of research and a new initiative was developed where schools were invited to run at least three reading initiatives with their first years over one academic year. An exploration of the impact of this *Literacy Medley* on reading literacy and how schools go about its implementation is the focus of this research.

Why is this important?

It could be said that there are three reasons why it is important to explore the impact of this JCSP *Literacy Medley* initiative. Firstly, there is very little research as to what works to improve literacy in Ireland at second level. Secondly, schools and teachers are very keen to be provided with strategies that work. Such research can give confidence to teachers that a strategy works. Thirdly, over the course of this research the PISA 2009 results were published and there was great disappointment that Ireland had fallen by 30 points in the PISA scores. The literacy and numeracy plan was put together by the Department of Education and Skills in response to these PISA results. The focus on literacy was welcomed by the education community but there were worrying aspects to the plan in that many believe that it may encourage a back to basics approach when they recognised the recommendation to re focus on literacy at the expense of the arts in the curriculum. This is an extract from the DES Literacy and Numeracy Plan that outlines the thinking in refocusing on literacy and numeracy:

In recent years there have been demands from organisations, interest groups and various educators that additional emphasis should be placed in school curricula on such areas as social and life skills, environmental issues, arts and music education, scientific understanding, and numeracy among others. While curricula have been adjusted in the light of some of these concerns, we have to recognise that the

curricula cannot mediate all issues that are of relevance to young people. Including a broader range of issues, topics and subjects in school curricula inevitably has meant that the time available for the acquisition and consolidation of critical core skills has been eroded. We have to acknowledge that understanding and using literacy and numeracy are such core skills that time for their development must be safeguarded, sometimes by delaying the introduction of some curriculum areas and always by ensuring that teaching literacy and numeracy is integrated across the curriculum. We have to say clearly to teachers that we want them to emphasise the development of literacy and numeracy above all other aspects of the curriculum. (DES 2010, p. 25)

An expressed concern among educators was the danger of an impoverished educational experience for students. It may be better to see a renewed emphasis on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum rather than a narrowing of educational focus and a dilution of educational experience. Many submission to the Department regarding the draft plan recognised the problem of a reductionist curriculum including this submission from the Reading Association of Ireland (RAI, 2011):

RAI is concerned by the proposed narrowing of and diminished role for the wider curriculum, including the sacrificing of some subject areas, to allow for increased time for literacy development. This reductionist view of how students acquire literacy is contrary to the principles of the Primary School Curriculum and international research which recommends literacy development across the curriculum. (RAI, p. 6 2011)

The points system has already impacted on the educational experience of our students as highlighted by our current Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn in a recent RTE programme which focused on Education in Ireland compared to Finland. He agreed that the tyranny of the points race was distorting what we deliver to our students:

We are now looking at a very good syllabus at leaving cert but it has been distorted and twisted by the tyranny of the points system. The tyranny is not the points system, it is not the teachers, the tyranny is the fact that there are fourteen different grade points when you go to assess and mark the examination papers. (Quinn, RTE, 2012)

David Puttnam (2012) felt, in the same programme, that our current education system is stifling our students' creativity. His challenge is that an education system should facilitate students to be the very best they can and believe in themselves. It should ask, according to Puttnam, 'what would this kid be great at?'

The real challenge is to draw out the very best in the kid and the potential of each individual. I was not a dumb and yet I was allowed to leave school thinking, believing myself to be stupid ...that mustn't happen...do you really think that Steve Jobs would have come out of the points system? There is a type of child and a type of mind that the points system does not suit.

The points system is lazy....

It should have to ask the really important questions.

What could this kid be great at?

(The Business RTE Monday 5th March 2012)

This is exactly what the JCSP strives to do - as noted above - to establish a pattern of success, acknowledge and publically celebrate that success and develop a positive self image in the process. Any new literacy plan should consider this holistic approach and recognise that a back to basics approach may not be as successful as one that truly engages our students. The RAI agrees with a holistic approach as outlined in their submission to the DES regarding the Draft Plan:

RAI believes that the important, core concept of the child as a holistically developing learner is absent from the *Draft Plan* for literacy. This basic and cherished principle of the current and previous Irish Primary School Curricula is of paramount importance and should form the basis for a national plan for literacy (and numeracy). (RAI, P. 6)

It is therefore important that the positive impact of the JCSP literacy strategy should inform the work of the national literacy plan and specifically the work of the Professional Development Support for Teachers (PDST) who are tasked with supporting schools in implementing the national plan and in supporting literacy improvement levels.

Background

I have been involved with schools who cater for large numbers of students from an educationally disadvantaged backgrounds throughout my career. I began teaching in a school on the Northside of Dublin catering for a population ravaged by a cycle of intergenerational poverty. I then spent over ten years in the eighties/nineties in a windswept newly built estate in outer Dublin West that was decimated by eighty percent unemployment. It was most unusual to deal with a student whose household were lucky

enough to have anyone working. While teaching, I recognised the power of a caring educational experience and the possibilities it held for emancipation within these disadvantaged schools. I witnessed the positive impact of teachers on students' life chances. It was clear that schools had a crucial role in the development of young people who were confident in their own capabilities and saw possibilities for their future. In order to achieve this I realised the fundamental importance of being literate by the time students left second level school and developed the belief that it was a moral responsibility of the education system.

I have been involved in the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) for twenty eight years now, thirteen as school co-ordinator and fifteen as national co-ordinator and currently as Principal in a JCSP school. Its beauty is that it is not an alternative programme, rather one that supports students in succeeding in the mainstream Junior Certificate. This facilitates true equality of opportunity when embraced by schools. Many schools are now realising that participation supports the students in doing a better Junior Certificate than their peers and being better prepared for senior cycle because of the approaches adopted within it.

Gleeson et al (2003) concluded, from their examination of the Leaving Certificate Applied in schools, that fragmentation of the system is problematic as it interferes with an integrated approach to supporting the change process in individual schools that could result in equity and inclusion:

The ideal response would be systemic, involving an integrated approach to supporting the change process in a way that takes the idiosyncrasies of individual schools on board. But the prevailing high level of fragmentation (Gleeson, 2000) makes such a response most unlikely - the NCCA looks after programme design, the DES In-Career Development Unit takes responsibility for inservice in conjunction with Education Centres and the curriculum development centres and another agency looks after Whole School Development Planning. The DES can hardly meet its commitment to one of its principle high-level strategic goals, the promotion of equity and inclusion (DES, 2001, p. 5), unless existing fragmentation is addressed. (Gleeson et al 2003, p. 43)

Cohesion of support was a remarkable feature of the JCSP for many years. The role of the Curriculum Development Unit under Anton Trant and subsequently Aidan Clifford in the development of the JCSP was central. The CDU facilitated the development of the JCSP by teachers, for teachers, from the ground up, from the classroom up. It evolved, grew and

developed for a period of seventeen years before becoming a national programme in 1996 (its historical development is outlined in Appendix 28). This organic process meant that teachers were at the heart of the JCSP and this facilitated its full integration into school culture in these schools. For many years the programme design, development and support (both CPD and school planning) were provided by the support service within the Curriculum Development Unit which facilitated no fragmentation of service to schools.

Granville (2005), in an evaluation on the impact of the Second Level Support Service (SLSS), recognised the difference in the JCSP support service compared to other supports within the SLSS viewing the JCSP support service as a specialist one:

A second sampling of participants was undertaken with quite a different type of support provision: the support service for the Junior Certificate School Programme. The JCSP differs from the mainstream of SLSS provision. While JCSP personnel contribute to other SLSS activities, support for the JCSP operates essentially as a specialist programme support service, on the lines of the early generation of programme support services. The JCSP team is based in the CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit and operates within the developmental culture of that agency. School co-ordinators and teachers have a special relationship with the JCSP support team, of a different type from that which applies to the generality of the SLSS. Co-ordinators look to the JCSP team as the source of information and facilitation for curriculum development. (Granville 2005, p. 20)

Unfortunately, but maybe inevitably, fragmentation was eventually thrust upon it and supports are now being somewhat scattered much, unfortunately outside of the CDU. Time will only tell if the programme can withstand such change. Luckily, support has been in place for many years now and most schools have availed of that support.

Rose (2003) suggests that complexities surrounding the provision of an appropriate curriculum for all pupils have inevitably resulted in progress towards inclusion being slower than many would wish. He suggests that generations of researchers have been unable to provide practitioners or policy makers with a clear message. He quotes Mittler (2000) and says that this is not the fault of the researchers, rather a reflection of the immense complexity of the subject and the impossibility of unraveling its many strands in ways that make sense to those who have to make decisions. However, it is hoped in this study, through listening to the voice of the students and their views about their own reading;

examining how one case study school develops a response to the complex issue of improving adolescent literacy; and examining the manner in which experienced teachers implement the JCSP *Literacy Medley* in thirty five second level schools, that we will be in a position to make some useful observations on what works and its implications for policy in Ireland.

Literacy in 2010

What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy. (John Dewey, 1907)

2010 brought literacy into focus in Ireland at a time when this study was well advanced. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results from 2009 were published in 2010 and indicated that literacy levels had plummeted, not only for disadvantaged pupils but for pupils of all backgrounds. The Report has been referred to as a national crisis in many quarters. Literacy levels have been a serious issue in disadvantaged schools for many years. However PISA 2009 has put literacy on the national agenda and with it the 'reading wars' that other jurisdictions have faced. The draft *National Plan for Improving Literacy and Numeracy* (2010) had a mixed reception. The national focus on literacy has been welcomed but many were concerned about the emerging strategy which seemed to involve a back-to-basics approach with a determined focus on standardised testing along with the possibility of comparisons across schools with the *Schools like Ours* strategy being proposed (DES 2010 p. 41). Of particular concern is the narrow, utilitarian view of education. Many teachers are appalled about the apparent brushing aside of the arts and personal and social development, to make time for literacy. An emerging concern is the threat of an impoverished educational experience for students, stemming from the potential marginalisation of subjects outside of literacy and numeracy as outlined in section 4.5 p.30 of the draft *National Plan for Improving Literacy and Numeracy* (DES 2010). The recent review of England's National Curriculum lays bare the legacy of an education system driven by standards in literacy and numeracy which have compromised children's entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum since 1998. The Cambridge Primary Review (2009) contends that the pressure to prioritise the high stakes subjects makes schools find it difficult to justify giving time to the more marginalised subjects :

The one constant throughout our research is the distortion of children's entitlement to breath and balance by a powerful combination of high stakes subjects and national strategies, making it very difficult or impossible to timetable the "low stakes" subjects with any seriousness. (Robin Alexander, Cambridge Review 2009: p.214)

Furthermore curriculum breadth does not have to be incompatible with raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Reports from Ofsted in England repeatedly show that high performing schools essentially distil what is to be taught and learned into a curriculum that is manageable for teachers on a daily basis, and while acknowledging the centrality of literacy and numeracy, still meet the broad and balanced criteria that must be the lynch-pin of a modern curriculum.

Gross (2010) is at one side of the 'reading wars' in Britain as Gross is an advocate for clear lines of teaching where mistakes are picked up immediately and the idea of allowing creativity to dominate the classroom is rejected. She believes that teachers have diverted their energy into an increasing number of topics and projects which are intended to enhance children's "personal and social skills" and to boost their self-esteem. She advocates that circle time be abandoned and rejects the notion of supporting student well-being stating that "the great majority of children, at any rate under the age of eight or nine, are neither ready for nor interested in discussions about emotions, backgrounds, and relationships". She wants phonics back. She argues that phonics was thought to be too unimaginative, didactic and boring – it prevented children from engaging "meaningfully" with the words they were reading and so was partially abandoned in favour of more play-based, less structured techniques. She regards this to be at the root of the decline in literacy. Gross is an advocate for an all-or-nothing synthetic teaching methodology, believing that mixed methods are at the heart of the problem, enabling teachers to default to their usual whole word approach. She believes that mixed ability teaching coupled with the whole word approach was the downfall of teaching literacy.

Gross advocates a very rigid, one dimensional approach to education. She contends that this unflinching focus on phonics is the only answer to improving literacy . Many of the commentators on literacy such as Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) Guthrie, Baker and Wigfield (1999) Baker, Afflerbach & Reinking, 1996; Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999; Guthrie, McGough, Bennett & Rice, 1996; Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996, Allington & Walmsley (2007) would

disagree in so far as they view engagement, motivation, attitude and enjoyment to play an important part in the development of readers. Indeed most commentators recognise that a multifaceted approach is most effective in improving literacy.

So where do we go in Ireland? Will it be all-or-nothing? If we adopted Gross's advise (2010) we could suck the enjoyment out of every classroom, compound everything that is already wrong with our education system. Every teacher I spoke with mentioned how the points race has impacted negatively on their classrooms - so now do we also spoil reading by setting up a structure of standardised testing? What will that do to our classrooms? Far from encouraging a love of reading, this approach could increase drilling and practice and drain the life out of literature, out of reading for pleasure, indeed out of school for many. Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin (2009) urge that strategy statement developers not to design educational experiences that are all merely measurable.

Designers of future strategy statements should ensure that the education experience goes beyond the merely measurable. (Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin 2009, p. 39)

So literacy is on the national agenda in Ireland - can this attention be capitalised upon to benefit students in disadvantaged schools? What are the solutions to the poor literacy levels experienced by so many teenagers in disadvantaged schools? To consider this it is important to examine the impact of educational disadvantage on our classrooms. In order to do this I proposed to explore the issue under ten headings which I call the Ten Cs. Having examined the relevant research nationally and internationally, as well as the theorists who influenced my conceptual framework, before considering the emerging themes from this research I formulated the framework of the *Ten Cs* to help facilitate the exploration of critical issues relevant to the research topic. The *Ten Cs* were identified after I categorised recurring themes that emerged across international researchers and theorists in the area of literacy and disadvantage as well as emerging themes in data that I collected as part of this research. I found that it was possible to explore the majority of the relevant issues linked to my research question under the Ten Cs. The Ten Cs are as follows:

1. Class
2. Capital
3. Critical awareness

4. Communication
5. Curriculum and assessment
6. Care collaboration and relationships
7. Continuous Professional Development
8. Constitution of schools
9. Classrooms
10. Connection

Research Question

It is intended to address the following question through the process of this research. How does the JCSP Literacy Strategy impact on developing reading literacy among groups of first year JCSP students, with a specific focus on the JCSP Literacy Medley?

Epistemological Stance

I base my approach to education on a commitment to justice and equality. My stance is underpinned by social justice and equality and my contention is that many committed teachers also have this viewpoint. I hope that my research will empower and give a voice to the voiceless. It is my contention that experienced teachers, with time to attend to literacy improvement, can impact significantly on literacy improvement. I believe that their intuitive knowledge, which stems from experience, facilitates classrooms that are responsive to the students' needs. It is also my contention that the gap between the educationally advantaged and the educationally disadvantaged can be narrowed if literacy is improved. This can be achieved, in my opinion, if access to books is provided, if time is made available, if teachers are upskilled and specific interventions are put in place over time, maintaining a continual and consistent focus on literacy improvement in first year.

My research will focus on teachers who are directly involved in teaching JCSP students. I believe that many of these teachers are also committed to social justice and many have developed intuitive knowledge, empathy and realise that positive relationships are crucial. Rogers (1969) once wrote, 'the facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal *relationship* between facilitator and learner (1969, p.105-106).' Learning is also enhanced when the teacher understands the students

Rogers (1967). 'Students feel deeply appreciative when they are simply *understood* – not evaluated, not judged, simply understood from their *own* point of view, not the teacher's' (Rogers 1967 p. 304-311). Such teachers know how best to adjust, adapt, transform, react and respond to the ever-changing classroom. They guide and scaffold the work for the students.

The students in the JCSP are a group of students who need a very particular type of education, who need teachers who understand and care for them, who put relationship in the centre – and who like the students. They are teachers who have a sense of their own life experience - enough not to feel threatened by these streetwise kids, rather enjoy their company while recognising their qualities, strength, their potential and their way of viewing the world. Teachers whose care (as Noddings (2005) describes it) combined with a love of their subject area make for great teachers as they facilitate the bringing together of the personal and the academic in a respectful relationship with their students.

The mismatch between school and home impacts on students' education and specifically the mismatch between teacher and pupil language can impact adversely on student learning. The language through which pupils may engage with learning is often seen by teachers as distracting, irrelevant and disruptive whereas it may be the only way in which they truly engage with the learning. Teachers can display impatience and lack of understanding of how children's different styles are shaped by their cultural background – as part of their habitus (Bourdieu, 1979).

Michaels (1981) and Czerniewska (1992) recognise that a mismatch of conversational styles of students and teachers (where students have a high reliance on personal anecdotes) can be as a result of different ethnic backgrounds. Philips (1972) studied native American talk and found that they do not like to talk about their learning until they are confident that they understand it, in order to avoid public humiliation. Shirley Brice Heath (1983) studied the homelife of students in Southern Carolina and found that the children who did best at school were from backgrounds where home experiences of literacy and language were closely matched to the language practices of school.

Concepts Drawn Upon

Disadvantage, in the context of education, is considered to result from discontinuities between children's knowledge, skills and attitudes and the demands of schools (Kellaghan, Weir, Ó hUallacháin and Morgan, 1995 p.xi). Educational disadvantage, as defined in Section 32 (9) of the *Education Act (1998)* "means the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage that prevent pupils from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools". According to the Department of Education and Science (2005) "a child may be regarded as disadvantaged at school if, because of economic, cultural or social factors, the competencies that he or she brings to school differ from those valued in schools" (2005, p.14). There are many students in our schools who have competencies that will never be valued in our mainstream schools and the ultimate test of competencies that the state provides through the examination system seem to cater more and more exclusively for the advantaged students. The Department of Education and Science (2005) goes on to say that:

...where participation and achievement in the education system are impeded by economic or social factors, the state seeks to eliminate or compensate for the sources and consequences of educational disadvantage. (DES 2005, p.14)

In recent years, a number of valuable reports have outlined the context, scale and issues surrounding educational disadvantage (Archer & Weir, 2004; Downes & Gilligan, 2007; Kelleghan, Weir, O'Huallachain and Morgan, 1995; Smyth & McCoy, 2009). These reports form a backdrop to the specific area of interest in this study, which is that of literacy attainment in the context of second level schools catering for large numbers of educationally disadvantaged students.

In the latest, most significant, study focusing on Irish primary students in schools serving disadvantaged communities, *Reading literacy in disadvantaged communities* (Eivers et al. 2004) it was found that the many students who have severe literacy difficulties, are more likely to experience educational failure, and to leave the education system without qualifications (DES, 2005a).

In the National Economic and Social Forum report *Child literacy and social inclusion* (2009) the work of Kennedy (2009) is referred to where she argues that the reading achievement

gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged is in place at a very early stage and the gap grows as the students progress through school:

...research, nationally and internationally, indicates that the reading achievement gap between children in disadvantaged and advantaged schools exists before school starts and in general remains in place throughout a child's schooling. Even more disturbing in the Irish context, is the research that indicates that children's literacy achievement declines as they progress through the primary classes particularly in the most disadvantaged schools. (2009, p.20)

Kellaghan et. al (1995) contends that problems linked to educational disadvantage are very pressing as they contend that such disadvantage should be viewed in the context of broader social disadvantage where students from disadvantaged backgrounds have a deficit of capital – social, financial, emotional and cultural capital. Students arrive at second level following many years of literacy development but, in so many cases, the gap is so wide that they are still considerably behind when they arrive at second level. This is due to poverty in the home, with poor access to reading materials and educational resources, as well as poor attendance at school and deteriorating interest in reading over the years in primary. There is also a discontinuity between home literacies and school literacies according to Kellaghan et al. (1995) which disadvantage the student further, particularly in Ireland with such a poor emphasis on oracy in schools. All of this, coupled with years of learning failure and poor self-esteem, lead our students to have very little interest in reading, going from a stage of saying they “can't” to a stage where they “can't be bothered trying”. Capturing and re-igniting interest in reading, in a caring environment that facilitates the students to believe in their own potential, is crucial if second level is to improve literacy. Students should be motivated to re-engage while being provided with easy access to reading materials that they want to read. The consequences of illiteracy are far reaching according to Kellaghan et al.1995:

Problems social and economic conditions of communities and families and in discontinuities between the experiences of children at home and in school contribute to a situation in which some children experience severe difficulties at school. As a result, their learning is inadequate and they begin their adult lives without the knowledge and skills required for a productive life in contemporary society. Unemployment and other problems in social adaptation frequently follow. (Kellaghan, Weir, Ó hUallacháin and Morgan, 1995 p.xvi)

The impact of poor literacy on a child's experience of education and on their life chances into adulthood is profound. Not only is the individual impacted upon, but the whole of society: a recent UK report found that pupils leaving school with low literacy cost the exchequer over £2 billion annually (KPMG Foundation, 2006, p.3).

It is hoped that one outcome of the research contained in this study will be to clarify what should be done to improve the situation in Ireland. Recommendations from the ERC's examination of 2006 PISA results in *Tomorrow's World* (Eivers, 2007), where they recommended a review of the impact of the JCSP on reading literacy, supports the focus of this current research.

.....schools need support not only in implementing changes, but also in evaluating actual effects on practice and the impact, if any, on achievement. The proposed extension of the Junior Certificate School Programme under the DEIS initiative (Department of Education and Science, 2005) should also be evaluated for its effects on reading literacy. (Eivers, Shiel and Cunningham, 2007, p.35)

The focus of this study is to explore the impact of the JCSP literacy strategy on the educational experiences of participating students, with particular reference to the new *Literacy Medley* which was implemented in schools in 2010-2011. Incorporated into the study will be a reading survey to capture students' views of reading, their preferred reading materials and their views on what strategies will help them most. Additionally, standardised testing and teacher reviews and interviews will be used to gauge improvement.

The literature review will explore where Ireland is placed internationally in terms of reading test scores (before examining what proportion of students are behind) linked to socio-economic disadvantage. Research that indicates a decline in literacy over time is of particular significance to education at second level and so it is intended to examine this research both nationally and internationally. It is also intended to note the studies that have examined the impact of large scale literacy interventions, particularly in the US. Additionally, it is hoped to examine the characteristics of these educationally disadvantaged students, particularly in Ireland, before seeking out what light this research shines on a path forward to support these students in gaining the most out of their second level education in Ireland.

Given the nature of the current study, research that is included in this literature review is largely recent, Irish-based, relating to the Irish education system. The majority of the

research relates to primary school pupils as there is something of a dearth relating to second level and disadvantage. Consequently, the research by Cosgrove, Kellaghan, Forde and Morgan (2000) that describes the results of the 1998 national assessment of reading in Ireland; and by Eivers, Shiel and Shortt (2004) that describes a study carried out in 2003 of the reading achievements of pupils in designated disadvantaged primary schools in Ireland, are important. These are followed by consideration of a report by the Irish inspectorate *Literacy and numeracy in disadvantaged school (LANDS): challenges for teachers and learners* (2005) which focused on literacy in disadvantaged schools. In addition to these reports, research by Cosgrove, Shiel, Sofroniou, Zastrutzki and Shortt (2005) is of particular interest because it examined the reading achievements of 15-year-olds; it is a recent Irish study; and includes a multilevel model of achievement (as does the Eivers et al study, 2004). Multilevel models allow the relationships between achievement and a number of variables to be examined together which allows one to begin to see patterns that guide us towards some useful strategies for improvement.

Other materials drawn on include the results of the most recent PISA (2009), as well as international studies such as *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS, Martin et al 2003), in which Ireland did not participate, but which provides useful insights on variables associated with the reading achievements of primary school pupils. The examination of other reading surveys is also important in order to inform the development of the student reading survey for this study, so there is also a section on similar reading surveys.

What is Reading Literacy? Towards a definition

There are many definitions of reading and 'reading literacy' and increasingly they link to the changing face of literacy in society. Unfortunately, one face of society that has not changed is that of the oppressed and when one is engaging in education in disadvantaged context then a definition of literacy must take account of the powerful role language plays in their lives. Critical literacy must therefore be factored in. Critical literacy challenges the status quo with a dream of a new society against the power now in power, as Paulo Freire proposed (Shor and Freire, 1987). From this perspective, *critical literacy* is understood as "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience

as historically constructed within specific power relations” (Anderson and Irvine, p.82). It is, according to Shor (1999), “language use that questions the social construction of the self. When we are critically literate, we examine our ongoing development, to reveal the subjective positions from which we make sense of the world and act in it. All of us grow up and live in local cultures set in global contexts where multiple discourses shape us”. Freire (1993, p.135) sees critical literacy and the need to master the dominant language as a mechanism for transforming society. Shor (1999) links our language to our personal identities where we build our identity through words as well as actions. Critical literacy emerges through the questioning process:

We are what we say and do. The way we speak and are spoken to help shape us into the people we become. Through words and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us. That world addresses us to produce the different identities we carry forward in life: men are addressed differently than are women, people of color differently than whites, elite students differently than those from working families. Yet, though language is fateful in teaching us what kind of people to become and what kind of society to make, discourse is not destiny. We can redefine ourselves and remake society, if we choose, through alternative rhetoric and dissident projects. This is where critical literacy begins, for questioning power relations, discourses, and identities in a world not yet finished, just, or humane. (Shor 1999)

Although many definitions of reading literacy seem incomplete, at least literacy is no longer viewed simply as decoding and literal comprehension in the majority of them. Reading literacy involves engagement, understanding, reflecting and understanding. Obviously, multimedia literacies now play a major part in our every day lives as so much business and pleasure is mediated via the computer screen. Those who support a focus on multi-literacies such as Street (2003) argue that “literacy pedagogy must now account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies”. At the same time many (Alvermann, 2002; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Love, 2004; Schofield & Rogers, 2004) are urging secondary schools to make room in language and disciplinary curricula for students’ different experiences and outside-of-school discourses expressed through a variety of media. This is where critical literacy may begin to be knitted into our discourse about literacy, embracing parts of Freirean critical literacy in such a way as to lead towards “empowering unempowered communities against oppression and coercion” (Shor, 1999). Certainly critical literacy has never been a feature of the Irish discourse around improving literacy levels in the experience of this author.

The latest PISA 2009 definition of reading literacy recognises the concept of learning, and particularly the concept of lifelong learning, having expanded the perception of reading literacy. Literacy is no longer considered an ability acquired only in childhood during the early years of schooling. It is viewed as an “expanding set of knowledge, skills and strategies” that individuals build on throughout life in various contexts, through interaction with their peers and the wider community. The reader generates meaning “in response to text by using previous knowledge and a range of text and situational cues that are often socially and culturally derived” (PISA 2009).

The PISA 2009 definition of reading also adds engagement in reading as an integral part of reading literacy:

Reading literacy is understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society. (OECD 2009, p.24)

This is the definition of reading literacy that will inform this study.

Importance of Literacy

The importance of literacy cannot be overstated, bringing with it social, emotional, economic and health benefits to the individual and across society as a whole. While Ireland's literacy levels are much the same as our European neighbours, these have not improved for almost thirty years as the national assessments have shown no changes since the 1980s. Investment in literacy must always be a government priority and is even more important in the context of current economic difficulties. There are interesting figures in a UK report by KPMG (2006) referred to by the Children’s Rights Alliance, a foundation that focuses on education and social projects for the disadvantaged, who estimated that the cost to the UK exchequer of pupils leaving school with low literacy is between £44,797 and £53,098 per pupil over half a lifetime. An annual cost of £1.7-£2.5 billion. They calculated that a specific reading intervention at the age of six would lift 79 per cent of children out of literacy failure. The return on investment on every pound from this measure is estimated at between £14.81 and £17.56. However accurate these estimates may or may not be it is clear that if we do not invest in literacy there is a cost to the individual and also to society. So successful

interventions, projects and strategies that work and can be proven to work are well worth the investment.

One in ten children leaves primary school in Ireland with severe literacy difficulties. This figure rises to one in three in disadvantaged communities (Eivers et al, 2005, p.6). These children are more likely to leave school without qualifications. They are also more likely to be low attendees at school, to display problem behaviour, to come from lone parent families and families where parents have lower status occupations, and be medical card holders (Eivers et al, 2005, pp.9-15). The 20-21 per cent of pupils who lived in a lone-parent household in PISA 2009 (up from 16-17 per cent in PISA 2004) achieved mean scores that were between 19 and 25 points lower than the mean for pupils in two-parent households (PISA National Assessment 2009).

...the lack of basic literacy skills affects their ability to participate in today's knowledge society, and this in turn seriously compromises their income, social mobility and ultimately their quality of life (Kennedy, 2009)

Literacy and liberation go hand in hand.



Conceptual Framework



Chapter 1

*We must not believe the many,
who say that only free people
ought to be educated, but we
should rather believe the
philosophers who say that only
the educated are free.*

Epictetus

Chapter 1

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Adolescent literacy, in the context of educational disadvantage, is a complex issue. The conceptual framework therefore has to be woven from a great variety of theories including socio cultural, linguistic, social segregation, equality and critical awareness, as well as reading theories with situated meaning and cultural models before exploring theories around motivation and attitudes to reading.

Supporting students in developing their reading literacy levels within the context of educational disadvantage can be explored under ten headings. These are the '**Ten Cs**': **1. class, 2. capital, 3. critical awareness, 4. communication, 5. curriculum and assessment, 6. care, 7. continuous professional development, 8. constitution of schools, 9. classrooms and 10. connection**. The Ten Cs emerged as a result of contemplating the issue of educational disadvantage and adolescent reading literacy and through reading both the research and theories linked to this field of study. They were finalised once the data gathered in this study was analysed and by examining the emerging themes from that data. I found that it was possible to explore all the relevant issues linked to my research question under the Ten Cs.

The conceptual framework is divided into two sections - section one explores the relevant concepts linked to education disadvantage and the second section explores the relevant concepts linked directly to reading literacy.

Section One

Educational Disadvantage

It is intended to outline the concepts and theories under each of the 'Ten Cs' while elaborating in more detail within this section on Capital, Critical awareness, Communication, Curriculum and assessment and finally Care.

Class: Working class students whose parents are unemployed and are from a single parent family tend to be the ones who gain least from education and are the most represented in the figures of students who leave school early in Ireland (Oireachtas 2010). The class divide – a cultural divide between working class students and their middle class teachers within a middle class education system – creates problems in schools that further disadvantage these working class students and can result in their failure to gain advantage from being in school (Lynch, 1999; Baker et al, 2004). Most pertinently, however, it is a lack of economic capital that continues to exclude this group from reaping the benefits that an education system can offer.

Capital: Poverty is at the centre of educational disadvantage and so should be addressed in a meaningful way if true equality is to be achieved (Lynch, 1999; Baker et al, 2004). Additional resources need to be targeted at those schools with the highest levels of disadvantage as identified within D.E.I.S. (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, DES, 2005).

Critical Awareness: It is also important that all involved in educational disadvantage should undergo a programme of understanding the educational consequences of poverty. This critical awareness training should also incorporate the issues around cultural divide and in particular the part language plays in maintaining that divide (Bourdieu, 1984; Fairclough, 1992, 1995).

Communication: Critical awareness of the part language has to play in the power relations should be an aspect of both teacher and student education (Fairclough, 1995). Teachers need to be aware of the language divide between classes and the part it has to play in furthering inequality in society. Students' home language needs, at least, to be respected and accommodated in schools.

Curriculum and Assessment: Some believe that because the education system has been constructed around the needs of the powerful middle class groups that curricular reform will be very slow (Lynch, 1999; Baker et al, 2004). Although curricular reform is ongoing in Ireland, college entry is central to the business of second level education. The 'fair' leaving certificate will not be interfered with but maybe we can hope to diminish the impact of the points race on junior cycle through the current junior cycle review. The disadvantaged cannot compete with the advantaged but perhaps we can aim that they at least receive an education that will benefit them.

More emphasis should therefore be placed in the new junior cycle on developing literacy and numeracy skills. But also more time should be released so that students can participate in subjects that are of interest and relevance to their lives, which appeal to their type of intelligence (Gardner, 1993) and which also facilitate the development of their own critical awareness (Lynch, 1999; Baker et al, 2004; Noddings, 2005, 2006).

Care collaboration and relationships: The care that teachers provide their students is crucial across the education system but is most important in the context of disadvantage. Good teachers care about, even love, their students (Baker et al, 2004; Freire, 1998). Literacy levels will flourish best in such a context.

Continuous Professional Development: It is very clear from the literature review below that teachers need further support to meet the needs of the students, to develop new strategies and methodologies to support literacy development but most importantly to develop their critical awareness of poverty, culture and language of their students.

Constitution of Schools: The complex issue of school enrolment policies that result in segregated schools needs to be addressed in an attempt to ensure that all schools take in a good social mix of students. We have a highly segregated education system (Baker et al, 2004) and increasingly we are creating education ghettos. Social segregation and years of housing policy that compounded social segregation has left our schools with little choice, but worse, within these socially segregated areas there is an exodus – the mothers who understand the system have a choice and get their children out. Only strong system leadership will change this, but change it we must if we are to achieve equality.

Classrooms: Schools can proclaim all kinds of policies but when the classroom door is closed it is the teacher student relationship that is key. Teachers need to be skilled in respectful classroom management strategies and passionate about educating the students in front of them. They can be subject experts but frustrated by their students' slow uptake. It is here that the real understanding, care and empathy have to be in place in tandem with expertise in engaging, exciting and motivating their students to participate in class.

Connection: Strategies to engage, encourage and excite our students at second level should be embraced to ensure our students can connect with their teachers, their peers and their learning. The early development of a sense of capability is crucial to their successful engagement at second level and the likes of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) profiling, strategies and initiatives have a lot to offer every school in this regard. Here the NCCA (2010) describes the work of the JCSP:

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) has been developed as a curricular intervention for those young people who may be educationally disadvantaged, many of whom have become disengaged and alienated from school. The JCSP enables students to become re-engaged with their learning. It builds their basic skills of literacy and numeracy and their personal and social skills. It aims to ensure that each student benefits from their time in school and enjoys an experience of success. It does this by offering schools and teachers a more flexible approach to meeting the diverse needs of students and achieves this within the context of the Junior Certificate qualification. Schools using the JCSP adopt active teaching and learning approaches, including cross-curricular thematic work that offers students a smoother transition from the experience of primary schooling. In addition, cross-curricular work supports students in making connections between the various areas of learning across the curriculum, while at the same time developing their basic skills. (NCCA 2010)

It is clear from many of the submissions to the NCCA on the reform of the junior cycle that many agree that the examination-driven classrooms are militating against student connection.

There is clearly a case for reforming the way student achievement is assessed at the end of the junior cycle in order to bring about an increased level of engagement between the learner and the teacher and the learner and the subject matter (IVEA, 2010, p.12).

The JMB agrees as they argue that reform should facilitate the introduction of formative assessment :

Students should have a real attachment to the learning process and assessment should largely represent a formative element within any new framework. The light goes out of students' eyes in second year. Why this is and how this can be addressed must form an urgent and central theme for our exploration of Junior Cycle. (JMB 2010, p.14)

Hopefully, reform at Junior Cycle will facilitate the reform of modes of assessment.

Five of the Cs will be explored in more detail in the next section namely: Capital, Critical awareness, Communication, Curriculum and assessment and finally Care:

1. Capital

Central to this study is the quest for provision of an equitable education system which facilitates all students in becoming literate, regardless of socio-economic background. The majority of teachers care deeply for their students and often have some understanding of the impact of poverty on their educational progression. Continuous professional development can have a role in developing such understanding. It is positive if those involved in education have an understanding of the impact of educational disadvantage. If educators do not understand the cause of educational disadvantage it could lead to a blame culture where the student and their parents are blamed for the educational failure. A cultural deficit model of educational inequality could be normalised in such educational thinking. "This model implies that the reason low-income working-class groups do not get on well in school is because they have socially and culturally problematic backgrounds. In a very real sense, the cause of class inequality is located in the victim of that inequality" (Lynch, 2000).

It is intended to draw on the work of the theorists in equality studies in Ireland, including Lynch, Lodge and Baker. Lynch and Lodge (2002) believe that credentialised knowledge is playing a role in the distribution of privilege and so the role of education according to them is social and political along with being cultural:

The role of education is not purely cultural however; it is also deeply social and political. ...credentialised knowledge plays an increasingly powerful role in determining the pattern of occupational opportunities, education is a central player in the distribution of privilege. (Lynch and Lodge 2002, p.1)

Students from low income backgrounds are unable to access, participate and achieve in education on equal terms with other students according to Baker et al. (2004, p.144). "The economically advantaged are best positioned to confer educational advantage on their children in an economically stratified society" (Baker et al, 2004, p.145). No grinds, no private schools, no capital. The correlation between social class background and highest levels of education attained has become so strong that educational credentials are operating in practice, albeit not in principle, as a kind of state-sponsored system of inherited privilege according to Baker et al. (2004, p.145).

Lynch (1999) marks it out clearly as she states that it is the lack of money that underpins their sense of powerlessness and isolation, which is the most powerful excluding force. The principle problem that working class people have in relation to education is that they lack adequate income to maximise the advantages that the system could offer: looked at it another way, they are seriously deprived of resources relative to the middle class people with whom they must compete for credentials (1999, p.57). They are also affected significantly by the indirect effects of poverty as it affects the learning environment at home. "...study is a considerable cause of stress in confined spaces where the hassle of survival is paramount" (1999, p.57).

The majority of people in working class communities are keenly aware of the importance of education and value it for their children (Lynch and O'Riordan, 1996). Bourdieu is correct to say that class differences in habitus take the form of differences in manners, tastes, styles of dress, speech, dispositions and attitudes and that there is a type of symbolic violence being done to working class culture in school (Bourdieu, 1979). Symbolic violence has also been referred to as soft or gentle violence as it occurs where there is unconscious domination. Sometimes gender dominance or racism are referred to as symbolic violence. Position or prestige can provide someone with symbolic capital. A school teacher may have such symbolic capital as their position can be a source of power. A school teacher may therefore be in a power position with parents in a school particularly in a disadvantaged area. Many working class parents are very intimidated by teacher and schools in my experience. Such teachers can exercise symbolic violence unconsciously as the parent will accept a subservient position to the teacher. There can be a presumption that the middle class

culture, customs, styles and speech are superior and this is symbolic violence. It is not the norm that working class culture is incorporated into, represented in, or drawn upon within the mainstream curriculum. However, what alienates working class children from the system most of all, according to Lynch (1999), is not only the middle class character of the formal and the hidden curriculum, but the absence of the financial resources to make the system work for themselves (1999, p.58).

She goes on to note that where there is a more secure and well paid sector of the working class in Ireland (skilled and manual workers), they have consistently higher participation rates in higher education. This would certainly suggest that working class people can achieve well in the education system when they have the resources to do so and when the economic conditions make education essential for labour market participation (Lynch 1999, p.58). A distinction should therefore be made between those who have resources and those who do not – primarily the unemployed working class, who find it most difficult to take advantage of the education system.

When you are poor you have very different priorities and so, according to Lynch (1999), any policy to promote equality in education between social classes can succeed only if it is accompanied by economic policies aimed at eliminating the income and wealth differentials which perpetuate educational inequality in the first place (1999, p.173). True, but unfortunately the economic tide has turned in Ireland and poverty will be on the increase. Faced with this reality.....there are many barriers facing low-income students, [but] these barriers are not insurmountable” (Baker et al, 2004). I believe that schools can go a long way to levelling the education playing field. Additionally, understanding from teachers of the effects of poverty is crucial in this, – at the very least the teachers need to be very clear on the implications of coming to school from a poor home – no heat, no breakfast, no evenings to the theatre, no newspapers, no space to study, no money. This is where CPD is important in order to encourage an understanding.

Poverty will now increase and so should our understanding of its impact on the children. Poverty deprives people of the opportunity to have certain types of capital that facilitates progress and success in the system. Teachers therefore need to develop an understanding of the cultural context that the students come from and an understanding that does not

apportion blame but recognises the complex reasons for a young person to be disaffected from the education system. Such critical awareness must emerge from a close examination of the theories around it.

2 Critical Awareness

Pierre Bourdieu's work can shine a light in this area. In his writing he seeks to make public the processes that consolidate divisions in society. If teachers become critically aware of the balance of power between the classes and the rules of the game this could help teachers towards a position where they may feel better equipped to guide students towards critical awareness. Bourdieu is a sociologist and his explorations attempt to establish a theory of practice that exposes the causes of social differentiation.

Education is regarded by Bourdieu as a field with many interconnected sub-fields such as primary, second level and third level. Each subfield has its own structure, its own way of doing things, rules, assumptions and beliefs: "in sum, its own legitimate means" (Grenfell and James, 1998, p.20). The legitimate, however, is never made fully explicit: "...an instruction, or an action, or a usage is legitimate when it is dominant and misrecognised as such, that is to say tacitly recognised" (Bourdieu, 1989, p.110). So within each field the rules of the game are not consciously held in the heads of the players but have become automatic and hidden. If you are an outsider (Lynch, 2004) you may well lose the game as no one will let you in on the rules.

Like any marketplace all products have value which allow the participants to buy other products. This is how capital becomes imbued with power. Bourdieu believes there to be three types of capital: economic, social and cultural. Cultural capital is the product of education or "academic market". According to Grenfell and James (1998) Bourdieu sees this cultural capital as having three main forms "connected to individuals in their general educated character - accent, dispositions learning etc. connected to books, qualifications machines, dictionaries, etc and connected to institutions – places of learning, universities libraries etc" (1998, p.21). The more capital one has the better things are and will be – better job prospects and good salaries. Those pupils with habitus which most resembles schools, and hence values through which the school seeks to work, gain the most (Bourdieu, 1973). Students born into financial privilege are not only provided with economic capital

therefore but often also with social and cultural capital and are culturally disposed to and aligned with the norms of the education system. These are the insiders (Lynch, 2004).

Additionally, Bourdieu contests that because families with less capital do not understand the rules of the game, they can unwittingly reinforce negativity and promote a sense of failure that appears to be part of their nature. While it is presumed that privilege and the success associated with it is 'natural' in families with high levels of capital parents of underprivileged families often assume that it is natural that they do not succeed. Thus parents become “unknowing collaborators in the process of legitimising social distinction as ‘natural’ differences” (Grenfell and James, 1998, p.21). Therefore the legitimising authority of school can redouble social inequalities because the least favoured classes, too aware of their future and yet too unaware of the routes by which it happens, contribute in its way to its realisation. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, p.109).

Bourdieu helps to bring clarity to educators as well as an awareness of the processes that keep the cycle of poverty alive and well. However, crucial players (the teachers) are often unaware of the game that is going on around them.

We therefore have to find mechanisms through continuous professional development to open up dialogue with teachers and to invite them to explore, reflect and become critically aware.

3 Communication

My third branch of the framework is Communication. The communication divide between classes can be such as to prevent students ever really engaging with education in a personal way, never becoming fully literate and never gaining much to bring forward into their lives from their time in school. Successful communication is surely fundamental to successful education.

Grenfell and James (1998) have taken Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, capital, legitimacy and symbolic violence in terms of language of teaching and learning. According to Grenfell, Bourdieu believes that “language is never just a vehicle to express ideas, rather it comes as a product and process of social activity which differentiating and differentiated; thus differentially valued with fields of social activity.” “Language is value laden and

culturally expressive according to standards of legitimacy and opposition to them” (1998, p.73).

...linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power of which relations of power between speakers and their respective groups came into being in a transfigured way. A consequence, ...even the most simple of linguistic exchange brings into play a complex and rarefying network of historical power relations between the speaker, endowed with a socially specific authority and his audience who recognises his authority in varying degrees, as well as between the respective groups to which they belong. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 118)

and James (1998) develops this to say that a field will have its own linguistic norms of language that can be seen as a linguistic market. This linguistic capital is used to varying degrees by the dominant class depending on their structural position within the field. It is in the school context perhaps that differences in language usage are most pronounced and social distinction established (Grenfell and James 1998). Fairclough (1989) argues that language is the main instrument by which ideology is propagated, and hence a study of language must lie at the centre of any investigation of how power is distributed in society and within institutions. Fairclough describes discourse and language as a critical practice and believes that there are three levels of context – the immediate social one, the institutional context and the structures provided by society. The knowledge or social experience that participants bring is akin to Bourdieu’s social and knowledge capital. Fairclough recognises that the participants draw on this knowledge to engage in social practice including discourse. The linguistic norms referred to above are called order of discourse by Fairclough, which is a system of genres used in any field. Fairclough promotes critical language study. He recognises that every linguistic interaction has the potential to be a political one which reinforces certain social and power relations between participants then it is important that the participants are aware of the role that they are playing, particularly when such a role may form part of their own disadvantage and oppression. Fairclough and Bourdieu wish to expose what Fairclough calls naturalisation, the norms that are taken for granted and accepted (if they are recognised at all).

Fairclough’s view of society is one in which individual subjects are greatly constrained by social structures and ideological effects of discourse over which they have little control.

Critical language study, however, provides a possibility of emancipation from the oppressive effects of the dominant discourses.

The mismatch between teacher and pupil language can impact adversely on student learning. The language through which pupils may engage with learning is often seen by teachers as distracting, irrelevant and disruptive whereas it may be the way in which they truly engage with the learning. Teachers can display impatience and lack of understanding of how children's different styles are shaped by their cultural background – as part of their habitus.

Heath (1983) concluded that the dominant model of literacy is central to the school and that while the schools tend to be good places to practice mainstream literacy once you have acquired it, there is no facility to learn it if you have not already acquired it. A strong statement but one borne out in my work in JCSP, where thousands of students are illiterate on entry into second level. Heath suggests that an intervention is needed to inculcate the children in the dominant literacy. Surely the adoption of mainstream literacy practice could involve a change in identity for participants who may have to take a different world view from the community of origin? Should the school, not the child have to change? We should be moving away from a language deficit model where school perpetuates a myth of equality while at the same time privileges the dominant groups. This approach continues to consign underprivileged communities to massive failure rather than recognising that students can have different literacies.

Many people retain ungrammatical forms of speech according to Nel Noddings (2006) despite the best efforts of teachers throughout their school days. Such people may even be able to identify correct and incorrect forms on written texts, but they cling to the familiar incorrect ones. This is a matter of considerable educational and social importance according to Noddings, and it is also controversial. It is controversial because people associate their speech habits with their social, ethnic and class origins. Noddings agrees with these other writers as she questions why should any of these habits be judged wrong? Why should middle class majority educators insist on changing them? However, like Heath, she believes we should share with students the real possibility that some patterns of communication are more closely associated with academic success than others, although this gives rise to a

possible conclusion that we should support the maintenance of the status quo and devalue the communication structures of all but the middle classes.

Freire (1972) links education and specifically literacy directly to the empowerment of oppressed peoples within the third world. Education is the process of becoming critically aware of one's reality in a manner which leads to effective action upon it. Freire believes that this can be achieved by a facilitator, an equal, who will be familiar with the cultural background and codify significant words or elements of the culture in images. These images are used as a basis of directed discussion in an attempt to get to the heart of the matter of 'deep structure' issues such as why slums exist. 'Conscientisation' emerges through both reflection and action and takes place as the people, through discussion, realise some of the contradictions in their situations. His notion of 'conscientisation' is central to developing a true understanding of the world, of getting beneath what Bourdieu saw as symbolic violence. The hidden world is exposed as the learner takes action against the oppressors.

So how should we go forward in Irish schools? Clearly the current system does not provide equality. Students from socio-economically deprived backgrounds come to second level schools and they are immediately 'outsiders' (Lynch, 2004). They are coming to the game without an understanding of the rules and are engaged, unbeknown to them, in symbolic violence, with the parents having often put a great deal of trust in the education system as an escape route from poverty for their children. Bottom line, however they do not have the capital and their advantaged peers tend to succeed.

The most privileged students so not only owe the habits, behaviour and attitudes which help them directly in pedagogic tasks to their social origins; they also inherit from their knowledge and savoir faire tastes and good taste. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964, p.30)

Irish education and curriculum could construct itself to support these students to break through such invisible barriers if critical awareness, as purported by Bourdieu, Fairclough and Freire, was incorporated into our schools and classrooms.

4 Curriculum and Assessment

If we are to move towards a more inclusive form of schooling it will be necessary to reform schools as a whole, including the curriculum, the means of assessment and the ways in

which we value the performance of pupils (Rose, 2003). Baker et al (2004) finds a curriculum biased towards students with (written) linguistic and logical/mathematical capabilities, “one that promotes exclusion of so many students” (2004, p.149). Oral capabilities are not valued in these classrooms. Working class students are found to be lacking in intelligence in this context where they are required to work through linguistic (mostly written) modes of expression and pen and paper tests – regarded by the system as the very fairest way of determining who should go to college and go into what colleges – but fair for whom? The most vulnerable learners loose out according to Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin (2009):

key skills are not assessed, students with verbal and written communication problems are at a disadvantage and it encourages teaching to the test. Of course this perpetuates the disjuncture between primary and post-primary schooling, arguably with negative consequences for the most vulnerable learners, leading to early dropout and exclusion. (Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin 2009, p. 39)

The current preoccupation with summative assessment contributes to ‘competitive individualism’, according to Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin (2009) and a ‘narrowing of the curriculum arising from the tendency to teach to the examination rather than to the aims of the curriculum (2009, p. 38)’.

Assessment continues to operate within these narrow social and intellectual bands despite all of the evidence of multiple intelligences and the breadth of society. Working class culture is not studied, by and large, and this, according to Baker, reinforces their subordinate position.

The fact that the life and culture of the economically subordinate are not studied in schools reinforces the sense of their subordination in society. (Baker et al, 2004, p.150)

Nell Noddings (2005) believes that tinkering with the standard curriculum is futile and suggests drastic change would contribute to a new environment in schools. Noddings outlines an ideal (rather aspirational and utopian) curriculum that would facilitate care where half the students' time should be spent working on activities linked to real life caring. I can't see this being acceptable to the system no matter how much more real, satisfying, motivating, engaging, relevant and enjoyable it may be (for teachers and their students). There is a reluctance to veer away from the mathematical/linguistic emphasis that is much

easier to assess (Lynch, 2004). Perhaps we can still improve the provision of care without such radical changes to curriculum? Ross (2009) wonders if teachers have the luxury of time to even consider the curriculum they are teaching.

So formal curricula are political. They lay down what is to be learned, and what is included is one of the critical factors in the development of a proper underrating of human rights. It is a problem that we cannot, as teachers, indulge over-long in the luxury of debating the philosophy of what we teach, because we have to get on with tomorrow's lessons – we have to get out there and perform on Monday morning. (Ross, 2009, p.7)

According to Ross (2009) the school curriculum is not a given. It is a social construction: that is, concepts such as subjects, disciplines, knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities are all inventions or constructions made by and shared with members of a particular society. As Berger and Luckman argue (1966), we socially construct reality through everyday interactions with others.

I would like to explore four approaches to curriculum theory and practice: curriculum viewed as knowledge to be transmitted; the product model of curriculum; curriculum as process; and curriculum as praxis.

Curriculum can be viewed as a body of knowledge to be **transmitted** where education is seen as a “process by which knowledge is delivered to students by the most effective teaching methods” (Blenkin et al, 1992: 23).

Curriculum that is solely concerned with outcomes or **product and content** is one that has dominated the Irish curriculum now for some time. The measuring of the outcomes has dominated our classroom curriculum.

Franklin Bobbitt (1918; 1928) and Ralph W. Tyler (1949) wrote within this product tradition. In *The Curriculum* Bobbitt writes as follows:

The central theory [of curriculum] is simple. Human life, however varied, consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities. However numerous and diverse they may be for any social class they can be discovered. This requires only that one go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which their affairs consist. These will show the abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations and

forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, definite and particularized. The curriculum will then be that series of experiences which children and youth must have by way of obtaining those objectives. (Bobbitt 1918: p.42)

Tyler also placed an emphasis on the formulation of behavioural objectives.

Since the real purpose of education is not to have the instructor perform certain activities but to bring about significant changes in the students' pattern of behaviour, it becomes important to recognize that any statements of objectives of the school should be a statement of changes to take place in the students. (Tyler, 1949 p. 44)

The product orientated curriculum is obviously very attractive to the system as the outcomes can be so easily measured. It also facilitates the hidden curriculum as the students are left with no voice, they are told what they must learn and how they will do it. The success or failure, according to Smith (2000), is that the individual learner is judged on the basis of whether “pre-specified changes occur in the behaviour and person of the learner (the meeting of behavioural objectives)”. Worse, this model can turn teachers into technicians as curriculum writers try to 'teacher proof' the programme, according to Smith (2000). The curriculum is pre-determined and its effectiveness judged by terminal examinations. It assumes everything is measureable and results in a reductionist curriculum and very dull classrooms - all pointed in the one direction - towards the points. It is a model of curriculum theory and practice largely imported from technological and industrial settings according to Smith (2000).

The apparent simplicity and rationality of this approach to curriculum theory and practice, and the way in which it mimics industrial management have been powerful factors in its success. A further appeal has been the ability of academics to use the model to attack teachers. (Smith 2000)

I believe there is a tendency, recurrent enough to suggest that it may be endemic in the approach, for academics in education to use the objectives model as a stick with which to beat teachers. 'What are your objectives?' is more often asked in a tone of challenge than one of interested and helpful inquiry. The demand for objectives is a demand for justification rather than a description of ends... It is not about curriculum design, but rather an expression of irritation in the problems of accountability in education. (Stenhouse, 1974, p.77)

Process Model

The curriculum as process model sees the curriculum less as a physical thing, but rather the interaction of teachers, students and knowledge (Smith 2000). Curriculum is about classroom interactions, it is alive and active. Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) produced an exploration of a process model of curriculum theory and practice. He defined curriculum as an “attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice.”

The process model does not fit so well in the ‘points race’ model of education in Ireland, which demands conformity to a prescribed curriculum and syllabus. In this model the curriculum is less prescribed, less a package of materials or a syllabus of ground to be covered. “It is a way of translating any educational idea into a hypothesis testable in practice. It invites critical testing rather than acceptance” (Stenhouse, 1975: 142). It begins to facilitate the uniqueness of each classroom setting and does not put the outcomes in the centre. It allows for content and manner of delivery to be dictated by the classroom practice that is appropriate, where the students are part of the interaction and there is a shift from teaching to learning (Grundy, 1987). The approach is dependent upon the cultivation of wisdom and meaning-making in the classroom. Project Maths is a model that is dipping the Irish second level teachers' toes into a process model - and so many maths teachers are feeling the pain. It is clear in Ireland that the adoption of a process model is closely tied into the product model in that one reason that Project Maths came about was because of industry's demand for more high level maths graduates. Certainly there is no evidence yet, at second level, nationally of a curriculum as praxis. The jury is still out on Project Maths.

Those influenced by praxis are not only involved in action but have a commitment to the well-being of their students and respect for others. It does challenge people to make prudent decisions and develop an awareness of how best to act in each situation (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 190). Such wisdom is about being able to see the bigger picture.

The mark of a prudent man [is] to be able to deliberate rightly about what is good and what is advantageous for himself; not in particular respects, e.g. what is good for

health or physical strength, but what is conducive to the good life generally. (Aristotle, 1976,p. 209)

The praxis model

The praxis model of curriculum theory and practice according to Smith (2000) brings “collective human well-being and the emancipation of the human spirit to the centre of the process and makes an explicit commitment to emancipation.” Here we find teachers and students involved in critical pedagogy, according to Grundy (1987: p.105) where, they attempt to come to an understanding together about very real life-relevant problems.

Finally, some would argue that we also need to view the curriculum in context. They would argue that curriculum is what actually goes on in the classroom, “an ongoing social process comprised of the interactions of students, teachers, knowledge and milieu” (Cornbleth, 1990: 5). Curriculum is contextually shaped and related to the hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968). The hidden curriculum involves the subtle messages that students receive from the school and it shapes what students learn about life and how people relate to each other. Disciplines are firmly bounded, with specialists to cultivate the subject and to guard the ideological hegemony of the discipline (Ross, 2009). These disciplines form a kind of protection around individual subject teachers. In some schools these boundaries serve to increase disadvantage, as teachers argue that they are only there to serve their discipline. Certainly shared responsibility for non subject-specific knowledge is problematic and the students just have to do without.

It is the clash between the product model of curriculum and the process and praxis models that makes the idea of the JCSP one that poses challenges to schools. JCSP is about process and so many teachers involved take on a praxis approach - the problem has always been that it has to struggle with the product orientated formal curriculum. It is well recognised that if we provide an alternative curriculum for disadvantaged students we will only serve to further disadvantage them and so JCSP operates on the boundaries of product and process, always keenly aware of having to deliver within the product model for the students. It facilitates teachers to engage with a process and praxis approach within the context of the product model. It allows for a success orientated process model based on the needs of the students rather than the prescribed curriculum. However, it does not deprive the students

of engagement with that prescribed curriculum that they must achieve within if they are to progress. It is always a balancing act and one that some teachers have become adept at. JCSP facilitates students in being active rather than passive recipients of information or instruction. The activity is used as a vehicle for learning and the immediate life experiences of the students are respected, acknowledged and utilised in many classrooms. Reflection is the element in the process that facilitates learning. The teachers' appreciation, interest in and knowledge of the students' situation contributes to the content of the process. Experiential learning is promoted through the JCSP curricular and cross curricular initiatives on offer to all teachers.

Many JCSP teachers appreciate that all students do not start on the same page and so the manner in which the curriculum is delivered is differentiated. Success is engineered through the use of the JCSP student profiling system and progress actively acknowledged, affirmed and ultimately publicly celebrated. Positive, respectful and indeed loving relationships have been found to be central to the successful delivery of the curriculum, with many teachers involved in a praxis model of teaching. The JCSP is an illustration of how we do not have to be dominated by the product model, even if it does cast a very long shadow.

Will reform at junior cycle bring real change? The key skills that will now be the focus of learning at junior cycle include managing myself; wellbeing; communicating; being creative; working with others; and managing information and thinking. Certainly a very interesting list of key skills developed on foot of the NCCA's consultation process. The process highlighted a national weariness of the points race and examination driven classrooms. We are on the cusp of a very interesting time for Irish education as there is a thirst for change both within and without the formal education system and a stated determination by the NCCA to lead this change.

5 Care

No matter what reforms are put in place surely the most important factor of all is to maintain care in centre stage in our schools. Most teachers would agree that so much falls to them in our deprived schools. The schools are surrounded by poverty, the students are ravaged by it, many exposed to lives that are unimaginable. Some of our students are carers to drug abusing mothers, feeding their siblings as best they can; some are involved in

serious crime, drugs, pornography, gang warfare. Many have very negative relationships with their mothers (especially the boys) because of peripheral but weird male role models in their lives. These negative relationships tend to extend to all females, if allowed. Many live in very unstable home environments with several family units, of sorts, under the same roof. So many have been rejected within their families. It's painful for a teenager to suddenly find their father pushing another woman's buggy, often from just around the corner. This is pain that they have no skills to deal with. They often blame their mothers as they are the significant person in their lives, and also often the person that they may have witnessed being abused in the household. These teenagers are quite lost, lonely and angry. Our classrooms are filled with them. This was expressed by all involved in this study.

Our teachers and librarians are often skilled at providing safe havens for these damaged students (Hasslett, 2005). Additionally, schools are sanctuaries of stability in many of these chaotic communities. Students sometimes beg not to be suspended as the last place they want to be is home. However, the reality is that next-to-no services exist for them (except on paper), so it is the teachers who take care roles on. Can we provide such care? Hochschild (2003) sees the cold modern solution is to "institutionalise all forms of human care" – cold and modern it may be, but for many students it's better than nothing.

Perhaps we can find solutions through a deeper understanding of Noddings' notion of care. Noddings (2005) outlines three approaches to curriculum instruction and discipline "guided by the ideology of control and dominated by a search for method" (2005, p. 10). She proposes that academic development is at the centre of our schooling; however we cannot progress academically without providing caring and continuity for our children and we must take public responsibility for raising healthy, competent and happy children.

Noddings (2005 and 2006) outlines her vision of care. The majority of teachers would agree that we are in a caring profession, where liking the students is fundamental to a successful classroom and that creating a positive learning environment is essential to positive learning. However, Noddings goes a little deeper in her consideration of the notion of care. "Caring is a way of being in a relation", so it cannot be mandated for in a way that learning outcomes can.

Care is reciprocal in nature according to Noddings (2005), characterised by mutuality. Perhaps it is here that such care relations can fall down in schools. Adults (and so teachers) with unsecure attachments cannot provide secure space for their students (Fleming, 2008). These needy people in themselves need mutuality, perhaps more than others but cannot find it in themselves to wait patiently for this two-way activity to get going with their students. Additionally, insecure students often cannot see the care from the teacher as positive – they are the enemy. A kind teacher, a caring teacher is to be just as mistrusted as the typical hard-hearted tyrant. Indeed, a hard-hearted tyrant fits their view of teachers and so maybe can be trusted more easily than the carer!

“Ethics of caring involves modelling dialogue, practice and confirmation” according to Noddings (2005, p.22). Many teachers tell us that they are not social workers, they are history or French teachers. How can care be mandated for? Indeed the capacity to care cannot be assumed – it is neither natural nor given in direct ways from social circumstances. However, she sees that this capacity to care matters because without it society would not survive. Naturally every school has a mix, has a share of teachers who can and do care. As Noddings herself admits “...the capacity to care may be dependent on adequate experience in being cared for” (p.22). It can only be hoped that there are enough teachers in any one establishment to model caring so our students can develop this capacity.

This conceptual framework is divided into two sections - section one above explored the relevant concepts linked to education disadvantage and the second section below explores the relevant concepts linked directly to reading literacy. Adolescent literacy, in the context of educational disadvantage, is a complex issue. The conceptual framework therefore has to be woven from a great variety of theories including socio cultural, linguistic, social segregation, equality and critical awareness, as well as reading theories with situated meaning and cultural models before exploring theories around motivation and attitudes to reading.

The concepts and theories were outlined under each of the 'Ten Cs' in this section while elaborating in more detail on Capital, Critical awareness, Communication, Curriculum and assessment and finally Care.

Section two will explore the reading theorists' views on developing a literate student body.

Section 2

Reading Literacy

This second section of this conceptual framework focuses entirely on theories about reading with a specific focus on adolescent reading in the context of educational disadvantage. The theory of reading and intervention research will firstly be explored.

It is intended to explore the notion of situated meaning and cultural models before exploring theories around motivation and attitudes to reading.

Theory of Reading and Intervention Research

The current study is involved in examining the impact of a literacy intervention, the *Literacy Medley* within the JCSP literacy strategy. It is therefore interesting to examine some theories on examining such interventions. Pigott and Barr (2000) argue that if we are to develop useful studies of literacy interventions we must increasingly ensure the balance between theory, practice and policy. "The tension between the use of evaluation findings to inform local practice versus higher level policy, the difficulties in comparing different approaches to alleviate a problem, and conflict between the purpose of basic research and evaluation research have been in existence since the first attempt at interventions studies" (2000, p.99). They therefore conclude by challenging intervention researchers to ensure that research will not only be grounded in literacy theory but should also contribute to theory. The emphasis within experimental design research (which is the method of this study) has been on findings being useful locally and for policy stakeholders only while Piggott and Barr (2000) worry that some of the evaluations have been atheoretical and have not considered how the research may contribute to educational researchers' thinking about issues of classroom learning and teaching. In order to develop this aspect of such studies they recommend that all such studies should be "grounded in theory" and the interventions studied should "demonstrate a connection to literacy theory" (2000, p.106).

There are several reading theories that could be drawn on. Some relevant ones include *ethnomethodology and conversational analysis*. These highlight that social and verbal interaction produces institutional order and knowing how to proceed within them is essential for the individual to partake in these social interactions (Schiffrin, 1994, Ch.4).

The ethnography of speaking (Gumperz, 1982) explores how meaning is constructed by the individual in a certain context drawing on their own social group norms.

Sociohistorical psychology, following Vygotsky, argued that we internalise words and patterns and that all reading is mediated by cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978 and 1987). Following on from this is situated cognition theory which argues that knowledge is not held within the individual but distributed across social and language practices and so knowing is being linked in with this network while learning involves changing patterns of participation within it (Gee 2000, p.196).

Sociocultural literacy studies theory (Gee, 1996; Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; and Street, 1984, 1995) explores the link between social class and linguistic engagement, showing that there are many different types of literacies and that all have a political influence. Heath's research outlined in Section One is an example based on such sociocultural literacy study.

Cultural models theory proposes that individuals make sense of their experiences by applying 'cultural modes' to them which are established by whatever social group to which one belongs and which shape how we communicate (D'Andrade, 1995).

All of these theories must influence our pedagogy and, most importantly, inform our approach to supporting disadvantaged students in becoming literate in our society. Supporting students in becoming insiders in the communication rules is certainly important and therefore critical literacy must feature. The fact that learning is distributed should also inform a more social approach to literacy acquisition.

Discourse theory

The post-structuralist and post-modernist work of Bourdieu (1984), Fairclough (1992) and Foucault (1973, 1977) centre around the notion of discourses. Discourses are ways of communicating and ways of relating towards people and things, between institutions, or simply between two people. Assumptions underlie the discourse that are taken as normal or natural (Bourdieu, 1979) while others are regarded deviant or marginal (usually those of the poor), as discussed in the section above on communication and capital.

Gee (2000) contends that reading literacy is influenced by the fact that the human mind is social. Firstly it is a pattern recognizer, but one that must be guided in “selecting which patterns to focus upon” and guided by teachers and more expert peers according to Gee (2000, p.198). Secondly, developing the situated cognition theory, mentioned above Gee, sees human thinking as distributed across other people, so in order to construct meaning we need to collaborate, according to Gee. The need to construct learning communities is therefore an important factor if we are going to accommodate this social learner model (Brown & Campione, 1994; Brown, Collins and Dugid, 1989).

Social learning theory, situated learning and cultural models

The concept of 'situated meaning', based on sociocultural experiences, is also of significance for the teaching of reading as “thinking and using language is an active matter of assembling the situated meanings that you need for action in the world”, (Gee 2000, p.199). How you assemble meaning is associated with your socioculturally defined experiences in the world and more-or-less normed by the sociocultural groups to which you belong and with whom you share practices (Gee, 1992). Gee (2000) recognises this theoretical notion of situated meanings as a version of schemas (D'Andrade, 1995) which has been a significant influence on reading theory and practice for some years. People construct meaning from text from different sorts of situated meanings. The sociocultural aspect of this is of particular relevance to this study with the focus on socially disadvantaged students. Meaning of words are tied to 'cultural models' or theories that belong to socioculturally defined groups of people (Gee, 2000) and tend to be influenced by the particular viewpoint of the sociocultural group. These shared cultural models give meaning to words and in part define the group in the first place according to Gee (2000). One tends to bring the viewpoints of your group to the reading in hand and through this lens make your own meaning of the text. An example of this was referred to by the JCSP librarians who were involved in administering standardised reading tests. Regardless of the location in Ireland many of the JCSP students had a certain take on a sentence in the test which included “there was a break in the afternoon”. Several librarians reported that the students took this to mean that there was a burglary in the afternoon. One reads from your own experience and back again to your social experience according to Gee (2000).

The direct implication of these two theories of reading - situated meanings and cultural models - on the strategies that should be used to support reading development is firstly that students should experience immersion in a community of practice and secondly should be helped to focus on the most useful patterns in their experience through overt focusing and scaffolding from experts (Vygotsky, 1987). Gee refers to it as the learner becoming an apprentice within a context of a mix between immersion and support.

If we are to examine reading literacy through this situated sociocultural lens it is important that we see reading as not just one thing but many things, “many different socioculturally situated reading practices” (Gee, 2000, p.204). It means that we need to recognise that the meaning of words is formed from the experience of the student and so must be supported by an expert or at least someone who has more experience in order to bring the student to the correct meaning. The JCSP paired reading initiative facilitates this relationship. We cannot ignore the potential difficulties inherent here, however, of the power positions within an institution dominating the discourse while not respecting the discourse that the students bring to the table. There is still a great deal of work to be done in teacher training in order for them to recognise this power imbalance.

In the end to read is to be able to actively assemble situated meanings in one or more specific 'literate' discourses. (Gee, 2000, p.204)

Whether in the efforts of one religious tradition to dominate another or in revolutionary times for one political group to use literacy to break the mould with a past regime, literacy has at times been used or invoked as a way to divide, separate and rule from a position of power. Literate traditions have also brought diverse ethnic groups together in common pursuits for mutual benefit. Thus, like all human endeavours, literacy often mirrors what is best (and worst) in human society. (Wagner in Powel, 1999, p. 1-8)

JCSP peer tutoring helps counter any possible power domination in the reading relationship. JCSP second years with poor literacy are trained as reading tutors for second class students. This has proven to be a powerful relationship empowering the JCSP students as they are now in expert mode but with great empathy for the emerging reading in second class in primary schools.

Reading Choices

Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris (2008) challenge some of the misconceptions about adolescents and their choices related to reading. It is a relevant study in that it explores adolescent reading in a sympathetic, respectful way (respectful to the adolescent). The reading practices of adolescence from an urban setting are examined using mixed methods so as to define what, how often, and why adolescents choose to read. The authors focused on the features of texts they find motivating, and found that reading and writing occur in a range of literacy contexts outside school. However, only reading novels on a “regular basis outside of school is shown to have a positive relationship to academic achievement as measured by school grades” (Moje et al, 2008). The authors outline how adolescents “read texts that are embedded in social networks, allowing them to build social capital” (Moje et al, 2008). They are not able to provide the answers but certainly raise the question of how to build on what “motivates adolescents’ literacy practices in order to both promote the building of their social selves and improve their academic outcomes” (Moje et al, 2008).

Language

Members of a literate society have the possibilities of developing logical functions of specialising in the 'truth functions' of language and of extracting themselves from the embeddedness of everyday social life. (Street, 1984, p.20)

Patricia Greenfield (1972) studied the language usage of schooled and non-schooled children in Wolof in Senegal. She argues that the significant difference between the two groups was between written and oral language. She contends that speakers of an oral language rely more on context in their communication and that this has implications for cognitive processes. She contends further that oral communication is egocentric and depends on a shared point of view. The fact that oral literacy is shared by a smaller group than written literacy contributes to the common frame of reference within a group that relies on oral language.

Schools are more likely to use literacies that tell the story out of context, therefore requiring more abstract thinking. Those who use a preponderance of oral language will therefore have difficulties in this context with reduced cognitive abilities according to Greenfield (1972). Bernstein refers to the restricted code (1971) that he found within working class students.

Greenfield's conclusions are disturbing however in that she appears to conclude that as a result of her analysis of the different responses from schooled and non-schooled children, that the non-schooled children are almost cognitively retarded. They seem to have "the inability to shift perspective in concept formation problems" (Greenfield, 1972, p.173). She concluded that the enhanced cognitive abilities of the schooled children emanated from their abilities in written language. This is a further development of the way in which we classify people in different cultures - the 'great divide' theory, primitive versus modern, a view discredited by social anthropologists and sociolinguistics.

Street (1984) challenges these viewpoints too and questions the theoretical basis on which the oral language was analysed. He contends that ill-informed Europeans did not understand or correctly interpret what was being said by the 'primitive people'. Labov (1993) studied language within negro youth in New York ghettos. He found that representation of cognitive 'deprivation' was founded on misunderstanding of the real meaning of peoples' words and actions. As it turned out the language of the youths who were regarded as somewhat retarded had the qualities associated with logical thought. He analysed the language usage and patterns to show that they used just as complex highly structured systems, through misunderstood language usage.

One reason Street proposes for the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the logical abilities of the children from deprived backgrounds was the unreliability of the tests used. Nothing much has improved in this regard, "leading to bright children being labelled as unresponsive and subnormal" (Street, 1984, p.27). What is being tested according to Labov is the social conventions of the dominant class rather than universal logic. Labov argues that the dominant languages are more explicit in their expression and dismiss the less explicit language usage of other groups. Maybe such groups need to be formally taught how to be explicit in their language usage. He contends, as does Street (1984), that the language that Bernstein was exploring was in fact non explicit language versus explicit, rather than logical versus retarded. They regarded such explicit language to indicate cognitive flexibility according to Street (1984, p27).

Framing written language as used in examination is a convention, one that working class children need to learn. Street suggests that middle class students could also do with being

taught working class convention of speech too - maybe he is saying this tongue-in-cheek in the knowledge that the dominant class would never appreciate it!

Conventions derive their meaning from social context rather than logical qualities.

The next section examines the relationship between achievement and motivation.

Reading engagement is linked to achievement

Influences on motivation to read

So why are some students motivated to read and others are not? What do they perceive to be the functions of reading and what influences their perceptions of themselves as readers? There appears to be a number of factors. If their parents ensure that they view reading as an entertaining activity then they tend to have more positive views of reading (Baker, Scher & Mackler, 1997), while children who do not view in-school learning as relevant to their lives are apparently less motivated to invest time and effort in learning to read (Stipek, Feller, Daniels & Milburn, 1995).

Self efficacy

People's judgment of their capabilities to deal with different realities is central to how they will perform. Social cognitive theory analyses developmental changes over lifespan in terms of evolution and exercise of human agency. Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than "beliefs of personal efficacy" according to Bandura (1984). This core belief is founded in human motivation, well being and accomplishment. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions they have little incentive to act or persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions (1984, p.3).

Social cognitive development and self efficacy

The social cognitive development of adolescents profoundly influences their lives. Aspiration and self efficacy determine whether positive outcomes will be realised according to Bandura (2006), as they determines whether they can keep trying. Only if they believe that eventually they can succeed will they continue trying. This is intrinsically linked to emotional well-being. A traditional pattern in education is that you get trained, you use strategies and methods before being tested and then you correct problems. However, the success of this

process is linked to how firmly you believe in your own self-management efficacy and this provides the staying power. So many of the young people in JCSP have a serious problem with this - it is hard to keep trying when you really do not believe that you will eventually succeed. The stronger the students' self efficacy to manage their own learning, the higher their aspirations and accomplishments according to Bandura (2006). The move to second level can hit the adolescents' self-efficacy very hard as they move from a familiar personalised school environment to an impersonal departmentalised environment that has curricular tracking to third level. Now that they have to re-establish their self efficacy, social connectedness and status within the larger context of getting to know a new school, it is essential that they are in a caring, understanding school and experience the tenderness of an experienced teacher skilled in engineering the success they need to develop a sense of capability. Morgan (2005) in his studies considers the importance of extra curricular involvement in curricular success. In order to build esteem we do not need to be capable at everything but we all need to feel capable at something. This is therefore the challenge put to JCSP schools: to put in place measures that ensure their first year students experience success very quickly, that they establish explicit ways to acknowledge and affirm their success. It is only from this platform of self belief can we begin to tackle any reading problems.

Being competent in reading assists in the development of the ability to work with limited supervision and to persist with school work. (Morgan, 2005, p.2)

One concerns how the concept of self is influenced by school experiences in general, and by reading failure in particular. There are strong indications that feelings of self-efficacy are influenced by success in school and, given the importance of judgements of self-efficacy across a range of domains, this shows how the important association between school experiences and social behaviour can be brought about. Self-efficacy relates in turn to self-esteem, thus linking school experiences to this very significant area. (Morgan, 2005, p.6)

The results of PISA 2000, according to Morgan (2005), indicated that better reading scores were associated with a "sense of success with self regulation" (students who read better judged themselves to be better at regulating/controlling their own behaviour). Superior readers also had a better sense of academic self-esteem.

The capacity for self-regulation and academic self-esteem influences the motivation for involvement in reading according to Morgan (2005). However, it is equally likely that doing well in reading may well result in an increase in ability to self-regulate behaviour. For example, a good reader can decide how they can organise their own learning and study and thus have a stronger sense of self-regulation. Nothing creates a stronger sense of control than a student knowing that they can find out things by themselves.

The evidence for the effects of academic success on self-esteem is even greater. The weight of the evidences indicates that success enhances self-esteem rather than vice versa. (Morgan, 2005, p.4)

Even when previous performance is controlled, ability beliefs can predict performance (Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, Meece & Midgley, 1983). Students with a high sense of academic efficacy show greater persistence, effort and intrinsic interest in academic learning and performance (Schunk, 1984).

Furthermore, Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) propose that engagement in reading may substantially compensate for low family income and educational background, as they engaged readers from low income families were achieving higher than readers from high income/education backgrounds in their study. In summation, engaged readers can “overcome obstacles to achievement, and they become agents of their own reading growth” (2000, p.405).

So if there is such a strong relationship between a student's self-efficacy, perceived competence and self-concept and educational achievement and reading, then strategies to improve educational attainment generally and literacy skills specifically must take cognisance of this and ensure that strategies that build up a pattern of success, such as formative assessment (as exist in the JCSP profiling system) are utilised to their fullest. A key component of the JCSP literacy strategy is a range of interventions and strategies to develop this interest and motivation in reading. Students must believe in themselves as learners, it is central to success. This is a most significant aspect when we are considering adolescent literacy in the context of educational disadvantage. Years of learning failure can have a very negative impact on an adolescent to the extent that they see no way back into educational success. They often enter into second level with such a poor self-image that it can take a very experienced and insightful teacher to recognise this. Students so often cover up their

poor self image though acting out or becoming disruptive while others become invisible within the learning environment, often accompanied by poor attendance patterns. They ensure that teachers do engage with them on a superficial level through being compliant though disconnected. These invisible students can often disappear from our schools and nobody notices. They have honed their skills so well as they often hide behind the cover of the louder students. Their good behaviour is rewarded by not being noticed. If learning success is not experienced very early in first year a pattern of learning avoidance can quickly become established. Giving someone faith in their own potential is a challenge to second level schools. The JCSP supports a framework in many schools in building the pattern of success, affirmation and public celebration of student achievement. It supports the participating young people to believe in themselves.

Attitude

Attitude and motivation are two central themes to this current study and so it is important to explore what theorists tell us about the associations between attitude and reading achievement. Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) suggest that reading motivation stems from the individual's personal goals, values and beliefs with regard the topics, processes and outcomes of reading. Under this rubric they include motivational goals, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, self efficacy and social motivation. They make the point that motivation is distinct from attitude and interest in that a student can be interested and like reading but still may not be motivated. Indeed, students can report self efficacy but still not like reading (M.Kenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995; Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993).

Attitudinal variables that seem to be linked to achievement include enjoyment of (and interest in) reading and pupils' motivation for reading (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cosgrove et al, 2000; Eivers et al, 2004; Eivers, Shiel, Perkins and Cosgrove, 2005). Pupils' views of themselves as readers tend to correlate positively with other measures of achievement. Academic aspiration and expectation are linked to reading achievement, e.g. those who want to, or expect to, attend college typically have higher reading achievement than those who want to leave school after Junior Certificate (Cosgrove et al, 2000; Eivers et al, 2004; Weir & Milis, 2001; Eivers, Shiel, Perkins and Cosgrove, 2005).

Increased motivation leads to more reading, which in turn increases competence which in turn increases motivation. Motivation is the link between frequent reading and reading achievement. Guthrie & Wigfield (2000) say that motivation is the “foundational process for reading achievement and is a major contributor, when things go awry, to disengagement from reading” (2000, p.405).

Reading achievement and attitude to reading

Engaged reading is strongly associated with reading achievement. Students who read actively frequently improve their comprehension of text as a consequence (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992).

Why are students motivated to read?

Engaged readers are motivated to read for different purposes according to Baker and Wigfield (1999), as they utilise knowledge gained from previous experience to generate new understandings and participate in meaningful social interactions around reading.

Baker et al (1999) based their view on reading motivation on what is called “the engagement perspective on reading” which integrates cognitive, motivational and social aspects of reading (Baker, Afflerbach & Reinking, 1996; Guthrie & Alvermann, 1999; Guthrie, McGough, Bennett & Rice, 1996; Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996). As Baker et al (1996) put it, “the engagement perspective views readers as motivated, strategic, knowledgeable, and socially interactive” (1996, p. xv). In conceptualising reading motivation, they consulted views developed by theorists in the achievement motivation field. Currently, many of these motivation theorists propose that individuals’ competence and efficacy beliefs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and purposes for achievement play a crucial role in their decisions about which activities to do, how long to do them, and how much effort to put into them (Bandura, 1997; Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Wigfield, Eccles & Rodriguez, 1998).

So motivated readers engage more in reading (Guthrie, Van Meter et al, 1996; Oldfather & Wigfield, 1996) and have positive attitudes toward reading (Athey, 1982; Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Mathewson, 1994; McKenna et al, 1995). The trick is to get them motivated it appears.

Conclusion

The challenge to bring about equality in education certainly remains. I have considered educational disadvantage under the 'Ten Cs': Class, Capital, Critical awareness, Communication, Curriculum and assessment, Care, Continuous professional development, Constitution of schools, Classroom and Connection. Lack of economic capital and segregation are at the root of inequality and need to be tackled to ensure meaningful change in our education system. As this is tackled, targeted resources need to support schools with heavy concentrations of disadvantage. Understanding and awareness of the impact of this poverty and the cultural and linguistic divide between the classes needs to be constantly promoted. The stranglehold that college entry has on our curriculum and assessment modes should be faced allowing for a more inclusive education. Above all, schools and teachers have to be supported in their crucial role of providing and modelling care, which in itself can provide an environment where, against all odds, disadvantaged students can gain a meaningful education and be put on the path of lifelong success.

This exploration has highlighted the need to delve further into certain issues linked to educational disadvantage such as critical awareness programmes, particularly related to culture and language and how they could be embedded into all teacher training. To what extent does this training exist at all and how could it be promoted, developed and delivered to best effect? Can a framework of care be put in place or should we simply rely on the intuitive care provision that seems to be willingly provided by so many teachers?

Finally, the dynamic of staffrooms that pay heed to vocal teachers who are of the belief that poverty no longer exists and thus facilitates an aggressive discourse leading to social exclusion should be examined. This, according to Lynch (2000), leads to a cultural-deficit model of educational inequality being normalised, allowing "the cause of class inequality to be seen to be located in the victim of that inequality" (p.16).

Despite the fact that we have a segregated education system with great inequalities I would hold out great hope. I agree with Lynch (2000) that despite the fact that upper socio-economic groups have superior access to resources and power which enables them to gain great advantage from education the problem is not insurmountable. Schools can and are

putting in place all kinds of imaginative responses in an attempt to ensure a truly inclusive education system will emerge for one and all.

As DEIS (DES 2005) states, *“unless children reach adequate literacy standards, they cannot properly benefit from the literacy-based education system that is at the core of a modern developed society. Research has shown that those with low levels of attainment in literacy are significantly more likely to experience educational failure and to leave the education system without qualification”* (DES, 2005a, p35).

Education is the key to your future. It’s the path out of poverty. We need to be against all institutions that allow for one group to get unfair advantage over another. (McVerry, 2009)



Literature Review



Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Levels of Literacy: Impact of poor literacy

Young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds tend, on average, to have lower levels of literacy and numeracy and lower levels of engagement in school generally (DES, 2005b; Eivers, Shiel & Shortt, 2004; Houses of the Oireachtas, 2010).

...holding all other variables constant, a pupil from a low SES family will, on average, be expected to have significantly poorer reading achievement if s/he attends a low SES school than if s/he attends a high SES school. (Eivers, Shiel, Perkins & Cosgrove, 2005, p.11)

Furthermore, there is strong evidence of the detrimental effects of low literacy levels on the life chances of individuals, with such effects often persisting into adulthood. In a report on the *International Adult Literacy Survey in Ireland*, low literacy levels were associated with early school leaving, low-paid employment, unemployment and lower rates of uptake of adult education/training (Morgan, Hickey & Kellaghan, 1997).

Morgan and Kett's 2003 study of literacy levels in Irish prisons found that 52 per cent of adults in the prison system had low literacy skills, compared to 23 per cent in the general population. They conclude that poor literacy restricts a range of life-choices (particularly employment) and thus can become a predisposing factor in anti-social activities.

Through the literature review it is hoped to examine the national literacy trends and the patterns of change. The following three sub-sections examine the level of literacy nationally through an exploration of the findings of the national assessments, followed by how students in educational disadvantaged communities are performing. The section concludes with an examination of how Irish students perform internationally. Section Two will examine the achievement dip in overall performance but specifically in reading. Section Three will examine the characteristics of students with poor literacy from educational disadvantaged backgrounds and factors that influence reading improvement.

SECTION 1 Performance of Irish students

Section One traces the trends in literacy progress in Ireland through an examination of the national assessments carried out by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) from 1972 to 2009. A focus will also be placed on the Irish research into the levels of literacy in schools catering for large numbers of students from educationally disadvantaged schools, specifically the 2002 study on literacy in disadvantaged primary schools as well as the inspectorate response to this reports in 2005.

Irish performance on international studies will also be explored, specifically the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement* (IEA), the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The national targets that various governments have set will also be examined to see how achievable they are, based on the findings of these reports. Finally, there will be some discussion on the achievement dip in section two that affects the older learner in primary and the students at transfer stage going into second level.

Level of the Problem nationally: trends over the years

According to Kellaghan (2001), criticism of the standards of the achievements of pupils, either while at school or on leaving school, dates back at least 140 years, when a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (1870) concluded that “the progress of the children in the national (elementary) schools of Ireland is very much less than it ought to be.”

In 1972, the first formal assessment of English reading was carried out by the Department of Education and Skills as part of a broader system designed to monitor educational achievement (Kellaghan, 1997; Cosgrove, Kellaghan, Forde & Morgan, 2000). Since that time, five further assessments of English reading have been carried out — in 1980 (Department of Education, 1982); 1988 (Department of Education, 1991); 1993 and 1998 (Cosgrove, Kellaghan, Forde & Morgan, 2000); 2004 (Eivers, Shiel, Perkins and Cosgrove, 2005); and 2009 (Eivers, Close, Shiel, Millar, Clerkin Gilleece & Kiniry, 2010). All of these assessments were implemented at primary level and involved pupils from fourth and fifth classes, although the 2009 assessment differs in that the target classes changed to second

and sixth classes (to represent the end of the junior and senior cycles of primary school). Since 1980, overall standards of reading have not changed. All commentators expressed disappointment that, despite investment (particularly in learning support) no improvement was noted.

Level of the problem nationally compared to disadvantaged schools in Ireland

Central to this study is how students in schools serving disadvantaged communities perform in terms of literacy levels. There have been several studies conducted in Ireland and all have found that pupils attending primary schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils, or schools designated as disadvantaged, have significantly lower average reading achievement scores than their counterparts in non-designated schools or in standardisation samples (eg Archer & O'Flaherty, 1991; Cosgrove, Kellaghan, Forde & Morgan, 2000; Hayes & Kernan, 2001; McDonald, 1998; Weir & Eivers, 1998; Weir, Millis & Ryan, 2002; Eivers, Shiel, Perkins & Cosgrove, 2005). Smyth (1999) found that the "social class mix (average social class) within a school has a significant impact on pupil performance on the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations, even when pupils' own social class is taken into account" (1999, p.49).

Weir and Ryan (2000) found that the average achievement of Junior Certificate students who received their primary education in severely disadvantaged schools that participated in the Breaking the Cycle scheme, was considerably below that of students nationally. Weir (2001), in a review of reading in disadvantaged primary schools, concluded that pupils had average reading scores that were between one half to one full standard deviation below national mean scores, with pupils in schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage performing more poorly than pupils in disadvantaged schools in general.

Weir's 2001 review concludes that standards in the most disadvantaged schools may have declined over the years. In support of this she cites significant declines in achievement between the 1993 and 1998 National Assessments of English Reading among pupils in fifth class whose parents held medical cards (Cosgrove et al, 2000) and between 1997 and 2000 among pupils assessed in the Breaking the Cycle scheme (Weir, Millis & Ryan, 2002). Weir (2001) also notes that a greater percentage of pupils in sixth class achieved very low reading

scores and a smaller percentage achieved very high scores in Breaking the Cycle schools in 2000, compared to the percentages reported by Archer and O’Flaherty (1991) for a study conducted in a similar sample of schools in 1983. So as bad as things may appear - perhaps they are even getting worse. This has certainly been the experience of the JCSP support service with indications that, before students begin the JCSP they are, on average, four years behind in their reading (Haslett, 2005) on entry into first year.

Kennedy (2009) argues that “research, nationally and internationally, indicates that the reading achievement gap between children in disadvantaged and advantaged schools exists before school starts and in general remains in place throughout a child’s schooling.”

Reading Literacy in Disadvantaged Primary Schools ERC Study

The Department of Education and Science asked the ERC in June 2002 to conduct a study of reading standards in designated disadvantaged schools (Eivers, Shiel and Shortt, 2004). This was a most significant study and although not focused on second level, provided very valuable information for everyone involved in literacy development in disadvantaged communities. Indeed this research could be said to be one of the most important pieces of research available in the Irish context that explores literacy in a disadvantaged context.

Eivers et al (2004) found that 27 per cent of pupils in first and sixth classes in a national sample of designated disadvantaged schools had ‘serious literacy difficulties’ as they scored at or below the 10th percentile and between 43 per cent and 52 per cent scored at or below the 25th percentile.

In third class, the estimate approached one-third (Eivers, Shiel, Perkins & Cosgrove, 2005). The reasons for this are not fully understood. Similar results were found by the department’s inspectorate in *Literacy and Numeracy in Disadvantaged Schools: Challenges for Teachers and Learners* (April 2005), a review of a sample of disadvantaged schools involving 1,477 pupils. 43 per cent of pupils in the schools surveyed had literacy levels that fell into the bottom 20 per cent of pupils nationally (Government of Ireland, 2006a). These findings illustrate that children living in disadvantaged communities have nearly three times the rate of severe literacy difficulties than children nationally.

“Fewer than half the children in middle and senior classes were able to read fluently and with understanding” (DES 2005b, p.10) as reading levels generally appeared to be lower in the senior classes.

The inspectors remarked that pupils were not benefiting fully from their educational experiences.

Many pupils are transferring to second-level schools with a very limited range of skills and core competencies and, as a result, their potential to benefit from second-level education is very limited. The findings should be of major concern to schools and to policy-makers, given the importance of language competence as a foundation for learning in many disciplines and the central importance of mathematical skills and concepts in engaging with scientific and technical areas of learning at second level. (DES, 2005b, p.30)

It is of value to examine the several recommendations made by the inspectorate to make things change. They sought a more systematic, school-based planning and review process; differentiated teaching approaches with planned literacy targets; a high level of presentation, engagement and consolidation of learning with students; development of early start/community models; strategies to attract and retain experienced trained teachers; professional development for all stakeholders; development of community and parental involvement in literacy programmes; as well as the provision of speech and language therapy support to develop whole-school programmes to address language deficits. This, they believed, would provide schools with opportunities to address language delay, which is believed by teachers, according to this report, to be one of the root causes of the difficulties associated with literacy acquisition in poor communities. This report advised that a team of expert teachers should work in a professional development role to provide specialist support for schools in these curricular areas. It also recommended that high-support programmes, such as *Reading Recovery*, should be extended, giving priority to the most disadvantaged schools.

43 per cent behind, so very far behind. Nearly half of the students in disadvantaged schools were leaving primary school illiterate and the ERC established that only twenty minutes was being spent on English instruction per day. It seems disappointing that more radical action was not taken at this point. The PISA 2009 results emerged to show that literacy levels had fallen across all schools and not only students in disadvantaged schools had literacy

problems then literacy was really taken seriously and a national plan has been put in place. The next section will explore the PISA results.

Ireland Performance in International Studies

So how do we compare internationally? Ireland has taken part in two international studies of reading literacy: the 1991 study of the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement* (IEA), which assessed 9-year olds and 14-year olds, and in which 32 systems of education participated (Elley, 1992; Martin & Morgan, 1994), and the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1995 (Morgan, Hickey & Kellaghan, 1997; OECD, 1995b; OECD/Human Resources Development Canada, 1997; OECD/Statistics Canada, 2000), which was carried out between 1994 and 1998 (Kellaghan, 2001).

The interesting aspect of these research reports is that it focuses on the older student. Irish 9-year olds ranked 12th among 27 participating countries in this study on overall literacy score (Martin & Morgan, 1994). However, at the 14-year old level, Irish pupils ranked 20th among all 31 participating countries. The position of Irish pupils relative to that of pupils in other education systems was lower at 14 years of age than at 9 years of age (Kellaghan, 2001). This echoes the studies mentioned earlier where the trend is for literacy levels to decline as students progress through the grades. Additionally, Ireland tended to have relatively more low achievers [OECD, 1993, Table R1(B), p. 155].

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a project of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), designed to assess the scientific, mathematical and reading literacy skills of 15-year-olds. First conducted in 2000, PISA runs in three-yearly cycles. In PISA 2009, reading was again the major area of research, as it was in 2000.

Despite the fact that on average students in Ireland did well in PISA 2006 this report hid a more worrying trend when one examines the reading performance of students attending designated disadvantaged post-primary schools in Ireland. About 20 per cent of 15 year olds in designated schools achieved at or below Level 1 on the reading proficiency scales (Cosgrove, Shiel, Sofroniou, Zastrutzki & Shortt, 2005), achieving a mean score that was one-half of a standard deviation below the mean score of students in non-designated schools (Shiel, Cosgrove, Sofroniou & Kelly, 2000; Eivers, Shiel & Cunningham, 2007). Additionally, a

staggering 11 per cent of Irish students were at or below Level 1 on the PISA reading proficiency scale. This means that 11 per cent of Irish 15-year-olds can complete only the most basic of reading tasks (Eivers, Shiel & Cunningham, 2007).

In PISA 2006 Kennedy argues that 'not having the skills to participate in today's knowledge society seriously compromises an individual's 'income, social mobility and ultimately their quality of life (Neuman & Celano, 2006)'. (Kennedy, 2009, p.2)

But it was the results of PISA 2009 that sent shockwaves through the education system. There were no great surprises in this report for those working in the context of educational disadvantage but PISA 2009 revealed that Ireland had plummeted 31 points since 2000 (the largest decline across all participating countries). Ireland's rank dropped from 5th to 17th among the 39 countries that have data available for both cycles. This time, more importantly, the performance of students in Ireland dropped uniformly across each of several key percentile points between 2000 and 2009. This report showed that not only are the disadvantaged behind, but that the middle classes are also losing their place. The percentage of students at/above Level 5 declined significantly from 14.2 per cent to 7 per cent.

There has been a corresponding significant increase of just over 6 per cent in the percentage of students below Level 2 in Ireland. This increase has been more marked in males (from 13.5 per cent to 23.2 per cent) than in females (from 8.3 per cent to 11.3 per cent). A staggering 17 per cent of students in Ireland (from 11 per cent in 2000) achieved a reading proficiency level at or below Level 1a, which is considered to be below the basic level needed to participate effectively in society and in future learning, an increase that has been more marked in males (up by 10 per cent) than in females (up by 3 per cent).

On average, 23.7 per cent of students in DEIS schools were at a significant disadvantage in almost 70 score-points on the PISA reading scale, compared with students in schools not in receipt of the programme.

Unfortunately, the Celtic tiger did not seem to improve educational resources at home or in school:

While Ireland's level of material possessions changed from being not significantly different from the OECD average in 2000 to being significantly above it in 2009, there was not a corresponding change in the levels of home-educational resources and cultural possessions in Ireland. (Eivers et. al, 2010)

This was also noted by Eivers (2010) within the findings of the *2009 National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading*:

We have seen dramatic increases in home internet access, but no change in the number of books in the average home. This has consistently proven to be one of the best predictors of how pupils will perform on reading and maths tests. Yet, about one in ten pupils still has fewer than 11 books at home, suggesting that the message is not getting through to some parents. (Eivers et. al, 2010)

Most striking is the lack of engagement in reading. There was a substantial increase in the percentage of students in Ireland reporting that they don't read for enjoyment, from 33.4 per cent in 2000 to 41.9 per cent in 2009. However, when you look at students in the lowest ESCS quartile, 56.3 per cent reported that they never read for enjoyment, while among those in the top quartile, just 26.0 per cent reported never reading.

Finally, there came a reprieve with the scores for the digital literacy in PISA 2009. Ireland's mean score on the digital reading assessment was significantly above the OECD average. Ireland ranked 8th out of the 19 countries that participated in the digital reading assessment, compared with 11th out of 19 countries on the print reading assessment. Ireland's mean score on the digital reading test was 13 points higher than its mean score on the print reading assessment. Females continued to outperform with Ireland emerging with the third highest gender difference of 31 score points compared to the OECD average difference of 24 score points.

The OECD finish with three challenges for the education system, one of which was

What can be done to encourage teenagers to engage in reading for pleasure more often, and can increased levels of reading for pleasure improve performance on print and digital literacy? (Cosgrove, J. et al, 2011)

Summary

Section one traced the trends in literacy progress in Ireland through an examination of the national assessments carried out by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) from 1972 to 2009. All commentators expressed disappointment that, despite investment since 1980, overall standards of reading have not changed.

A focus was placed on the Irish research into the levels of literacy in schools catering for large numbers of students from educationally disadvantaged schools and all reports conclude that students from educationally disadvantaged schools are further behind, but worse the trend is for literacy levels to decline as students progress through the grades. The findings illustrate that children living in disadvantaged communities have nearly three times the rate of severe literacy difficulties than children nationally. PISA 2009 revealed that Ireland had plummeted 31 points since 2000 (the largest decline across all participating countries). Reading for enjoyment has dramatically decreased among our adolescent population.

The focus of the next section is on the achievement dip that affects the older learner in primary and the students at transfer stage going into second level.

Section 2 Achievement Dip

A very worrying trend has also been identified in Ireland where the gap between pupils attending designated schools and those in national norm groups increased as the pupils progress through school in earlier studies (Weir, 2001 & 2003; DES, 2005b; Kennedy, 2009). The data from the Inspectors indicates that there is some evidence that the attainment of pupils declines as they progress through primary school, and the attainment of pupils in fifth and sixth classes in literacy and numeracy is particularly low (DES, 2005b, p.63). The 2009 national assessment in Ireland confirms that the trend is continuing, with the gap between low SES and high SES pupils wider at sixth class (Eivers et.al. 2010).

The international research that focuses on the reasons why students may regress in this manner is of particular relevance to this study. If we can ascertain why students not only stop making progress but actually regress, then we may gain insights into possible solutions.

The transfer period was identified as a time of significant change. Explanations of a dip therefore focused on discontinuities in learning that can arise at this stage, as this year represents a period of adjustment for students during which they are coming to terms with a broader curriculum and with a greater range of knowledge areas, as well as teenage maturation. Additional factors identified included family background, teaching methods, school organisation and a lack of preventative measures according to studies (Whitby, Lord, O'Donnell and Grayson, 2006, p.22-33; Smyth et al, 2004). The majority of students generally do not appear to make progress in the first year after transfer (age 12-13). This is referred to as dips in performance. Any decline in positive attitudes towards school, teachers and the curriculum was found to become more pronounced in the second year (age 13-14) This is referred to as dips in motivation (Whitby, Lord, O'Donnell and Grayson, 2006, p.17). A student's ethnic or social group was also related to a potential dip in performance.

Furthermore Queensland Government (2003a) explained that this can be a time when "school calls for more sophisticated learning skills, especially in literacy, and greater engagement with abstract knowledge" (2003a, p.4). Research further suggests that courses and curricula should be relevant and meaningful to students' interests (Gottfried et al,

2001). The literature identified that the occurrence of a dip might be addressed by providing courses and curricula that are rigorous and have high expectations:

The one change in school practices that has the greatest impact on achievement is to give every student the opportunity to complete a challenging academic core... (Hall and Kennedy, 2006, p.4)

Decline in interest in reading

Echoing PISA 2009 findings many researchers (DES, 2005b, p.27; Kennedy, 2009; Weir, 2003) have observed that motivation and attitude also becomes less positive over time, and that the “sharply worsening attitudes of poor readers contribute substantially to the downward trend across the total population of students” (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995, p.952). Decline in interest and competence beliefs regarding reading occurs in children's transition to junior high school according to Wigfield et al (1991), Oldfield and Dahl (1994). The decline in reading is linked to changes in classroom conditions where children move to a teacher-centred environment in which children had fewer opportunities for self-expression and little opportunity for negotiating with teachers about their learning. Other researchers put it down to the explosion of vocabulary at second level coupled with the hormonal changes that the young people are going through.

The pathway to improvement in reading for students depends on support from teachers who can give the students confidence and autonomy in their reading over time leading to motivated and self determined readers. Interest in reading is facilitated by classroom and school contexts that emphasize the relevance of texts to student background knowledge and experience. (Assor, Kaplan & Roth, 2002)

A central plank of the JCSP literacy strategy is the attention to motivation. Many schools are implementing the JCSP literacy initiatives and it has been noted in recent research (*Enriching the Classroom*, JCSP, 2010) that there was a noticeable improvement in literacy levels where a school implements multiple initiatives in the course of the academic year. One of the recommendations from this recent research report included:

...more extensive research be carried out on those schools that are implementing multiple reading initiatives over the course of the academic year by conducting in-depth case studies. This quantitative and qualitative evaluation would allow us to measure their effectiveness in boosting the literacy achievements of JCSP students and to inform practice and choices of approach. (*Enriching the Classroom*, JCSP, 2010)

A study has been conducted by Hall and Kennedy in the US, focusing on progress through grades in 29 states where the goal is to increase achievement for all students, while accelerating gains for the low-income and minority students who are furthest behind, thereby closing achievement gaps. While many states are meeting this goal in the elementary grades, the middle and high school results are a cause for concern. So in America too there is a lot of time, energy and resources being devoted to younger students, but research is increasingly finding that it is at second level that progress can either stop or regress. Hall and Kennedy (2006) note how important it is to focus on literacy at second level.

If literacy is a stumbling block for many struggling students, then it follows that attention to literacy will raise student achievement across the curriculum. This is exactly what we've seen in schools that have been successful with previously low-achieving students. In the high impact high schools, students who arrived behind spent 25 percent more time over four years in courses with substantial reading and/or reading instruction than their peers in high schools that do not demonstrate the same academic gains. This translates into at least 60 additional instructional hours per year that are focused on literacy acquisition, or 240 hours additional instructional hours over four years. (Hall and Kennedy 2006, p.5)

Hall and Kennedy (2006) conclude that the ability of teachers to support struggling readers and utilise reading and writing to advance subject-matter knowledge across the curriculum is essential to improvement. "Meeting the literacy needs of secondary school students, as with all school improvement efforts, ultimately depends on the quality of classroom instruction" (2006, p.5).

Summary

So far the levels of literacy have been examined within Ireland, looking at Ireland in relation to international trends as well as exploring how students from educationally disadvantaged communities have been faring with regard to their literacy levels. The worrying achievement dip was also explored with transfer being an issue and motivation and interest in reading declining over time. It is important now also to explore what the research tells us about what should be done to improve literacy. The following section picks out some recurring themes that are identified in Irish and international research, detailing characteristics of poor readers and highlighting what advice seems to be emerging from research findings as to how we should tackle the issue effectively.

Section 3

Characteristics of Children with poor literacy and Factors that Influence Reading Improvement

Research from the ERC shows that students with poor literacy are statistically more likely to be low attendees with poor behaviour in school; less likely to have been at a pre-school; more likely to be living in lone parent families and with parents with lower status occupations; to have medical cards; and not be members of a library (Eivers et al, 2005). In addition, reading scores are directly related to social class and the mother's educational attainment level (DES, 2006; Smyth & McCoy, 2009).

It is of interest to the current study to examine the common characteristics of students with poor literacy as well as factors that influence reading development as these may provide the system with pointers to what the national response should be to improve their educational experience and ensure that they leave school fully literate. Home characteristics, access to books and reading materials, the value of responsive teaching, communication skills development, integration of literacy instruction into subject specialists classrooms, as well as instructive and assessment practices will be examined. The importance of personal and social development in the context of a student centred education as well as the impact of gender will be investigated. Teacher continuous professional development programmes that impact positively on literacy improvement are also very relevant to this study. School organisation characteristics, effective classrooms, expectations of students and their attendance at school along with appropriate structures for learning support will all be explored in this section of the literature review. They will be examined under the ten Cs.

1&2 Class and Capital

Characteristics of the Home Environment

Many Irish and international studies have found strong associations between family socio-economic status (SES) – including employment status, occupation, income, medical card coverage and education – and reading achievement (eg Cosgrove et al, 2000; Eivers et al, 2004; OECD, 2001; Cosgrove et al, 2005). Pupils from high SES families typically have much higher reading achievement scores than pupils from low SES families according to Eivers, Shiel, Perkins and Cosgrove (2005). Other family characteristics associated with lower pupil

achievement include having a large number of siblings (pupils with four or more did less well than pupils with fewer siblings); speaking a language other than the language of instruction at home; and coming from a lone-parent family (Eivers, Shiel, Perkins and Cosgrove, 2005).

Students in lone-parent families remain at a significant disadvantage of 13 score points in Ireland when socio-economic status is controlled for when compared to 5 points on average across OECD countries. (PISA, 2009, p.5)

Home background factors such as socio-economic status, activities that reflect a structured approach to the management of the household and an emphasis on educational activities were also related to achievement (Cosgrove et al, 2000), as well as the number of books in the home (those with fewest books at home did least well; 22 per cent of pupils lived in home with fewer than ten books).

The term 'cultural capital' has been used to conceptualise the influences of families and the communities in which they are embedded on children's academic development. According to Kellaghan (2001), it exists in three forms: in cognitive and non-cognitive competencies derived from past experiences (particularly familial ones), which actively organise future experience; in an objectified state in cultural goods (pictures, books, instruments); and in an institutionalised state (educational qualifications). Language is viewed as constituting an important part of the cognitive dimension of cultural capital since, in addition to being a means of communication, it provides (together with a richer or poorer vocabulary) a system of categories that enables one to decipher and manipulate complex logical and aesthetic structures (Bourdieu, 1986). Kellaghan (2001) identifies a number of behaviours and conditions in the family that contribute to cultural capital, including modeling (in use of complex language; in planning and organisation to ensure that space is well structured and used; intellectual-cultural orientation in activities; and moral-religious emphasis); providing motivation and reinforcement (encouraging and rewarding school-related activities and independence in decision making); holding high academic aspirations and expectations; providing direct instruction (guiding and supporting academic work; helping with homework); and ensuring that the activities engaged in are developmentally appropriate.

It was also noted in the Oireachtas report *Staying in Education* (2010) that early parental involvement and an intergenerational approach to literacy development are effective for both children and their parents, and that gains in literacy persisted over time with this

approach (2010, p.261). A home environment according to Eivers et al (2004) where reading materials are readily available, where parents read to or with their children from an early age, and where there is a high level of verbal interaction is more likely to facilitate reading development than a home environment where such features are absent (e.g. Hess & Holloway, 1984).

Access to Books and Reading Materials

Across the international research it has been established that access to books and reading materials is one of the most important factors in young people's access to literacy improvement. Such research has guided the JCSP literacy strategy, in particular the JCSP demonstration library project and several of the reading initiatives that provide reading corners. Repeatedly, reports have been produced that show how limited this access is for students from educationally deprived backgrounds. The clarity of this finding in research internationally and specifically in Ireland is an example of how research can inform policy in the national support for a literacy strategy which strives to level the playing field and provide more access to appropriate, relevant reading materials for adolescents in disadvantaged schools.

Studies show that middle class children enter first grade having experienced an average of 1,000-1,700 hours of storybook reading in the home, compared with 25 hours for children from very low-income homes. (Partners of Manitoba, 1999)

The number of reading materials in the home is directly linked to levels of literacy.

Just over one in ten students in Ireland reported having between zero and 10 books in their home, while at the other end of the scale almost 9 per cent reported having more than 500 books (Ireland and OECD). There is a very clear relationship between the number of books in the home and achievement. More access to reading results in more reading; this result applies to books in the home, classroom libraries, school libraries and public libraries (Krashen, 2004). In fact, sometimes a single, brief exposure to good reading material can result in a clear increase in enthusiasm for reading (Ramos and Krashen, 1998; Cho and Krashen, 2002).

Improving the print environment and providing time to read improves reading. This is a very straight-forward finding from research. If there is a gain in literacy, it is likely that this was

the main reason why (Krashen, 2003, 2005). Perhaps the most serious problem with current literacy campaigns is that they ignore, and even divert attention from, the real problem: lack of access to books for children of poverty, according to Krashen (2003 & 2005). Research consistently shows that children who live in low-income neighborhoods have little access to reading material in their public libraries, in their schools, and at home. After investigating access to reading material in different neighborhoods, Neuman and Celano (2001) concluded that "...children in middle-income neighborhoods were likely to be deluged with a wide variety of reading materials. However, children from poor neighborhoods would have to aggressively and persistently seek them out" (p.15).

If more access leads to more reading, and if more reading leads to better reading, writing, spelling, grammar and a larger vocabulary (for overwhelming evidence, see Krashen, 2004), this means that the first step in any literacy strategy needs to ensure children have access to plenty of books.

In the opinion of Martin and Morgan (1994) the place to focus is the library, both the school and public library. Studies show a positive relationship between library quality (school and public) and the amount read, as well as a relationship with reading competence. Better libraries mean more literacy development for younger readers as well as for adolescent readers.

However, for a number of variables the results are especially clear-cut and consistent. For both 9-year olds and 14-year olds, there was an association between having large school libraries and mean achievement scores. In other words, students in those countries that have relatively large school libraries tend to do rather better than students in those countries where this is not the case. Given that more prosperous countries would tend to have larger libraries and also to have better reading scores, it is noteworthy that the relationship was still significant after controlling for level of general development. (Martin and Morgan, 1994)

We know a great deal about how to encourage reading when books are present. Successful approaches include read-alouds, models (seeing others read), providing some time in school set aside for reading and, under certain circumstances, direct encouragement (Shin, 2003). But the first step is to provide access to plenty of age-appropriate, interesting reading materials, and allocating time to read.

3. Critical Awareness: Responsive teaching and literacy

In *The Best Practices of Adolescent Literacy Instruction* (2008) Hinchman and Sheridan discuss current “Perspectives Toward Adolescent Literacy Instruction.” One feature of all current American thinking in relation to literacy is the concept of responsive teaching in the field of literacy. The authors suggest that nearly all adolescents engage in a variety of literacy practices outside of school and these must be accessed if the student is to succeed within the school. The divide that exists in many classrooms between the reading and writing done in and out of school works only to increase the student’s perception that school work is unreal and irrelevant in real world contexts. For this reason, the contributors recommend engaging in responsive teaching by determining what forms of literacy students are practising at home and finding ways to apply them within the classroom. In “Life: Understanding and Connecting to the Digital Literacies of Adolescents” Dana Wilber suggests incorporating strategies using blogs, Live-Journals, webpages, podcasts and digital pen pals as ways to “build on the expertise of students” and “build bridges between schools and their communities” (p.73). Another contributor, Shelley Hong Xu, recommends developing intersections between scholastic and personal literacies by developing what she refers to as hybrid spaces or areas connecting the academic works of the school to the interests of the student.

Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo and Collazo (2004) show how Latina students draw on funds of knowledge learned from family, community, peers and popular culture to create a 'third space', a cultural space where students make connections across various knowledge sources, including the school science curriculum. However Moje et al found that these connections were rarely called explicitly into the discourse of the science classroom. Fairbanks (1998) and Lee (2001) did find that when a curriculum is designed specifically to draw on students' cultural and linguistic resources the results can be dramatic. In Lee’s study students were asked to research very personal topics or culturally relevant literature. He concludes that students’ cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge offer “a fertile bridge for scaffolding literacy response, rather than a deficit to be overcome” (2001, p.101).

The failure to align school curricula with students’ interests and outside-of-school competencies is thought to be behind the general erosion of engagement in reading and learning experienced by many youths as they make the transition from elementary to

secondary school (Anderman, Maehr & Midgley, 1999; Eccles et al, 1983; McPhail, Pierson, Freeman, Goodman & Ayappa, 2000). Teachers should gradually scaffold secondary students into academic discourses by using texts that utilises a sociocultural approach regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. O'Brien (2001) agrees that instruction should be responsive to the diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of adolescents. The JCSP Librarian in an inner city Dublin school recently recognised that students will read anything about guns, if allowed. This resonated with a piece of research by Moje (2000) who undertook a study with five students who identified themselves with fringe gang members. She recognised that their literacies - written, oral and body discourses - were not simply idle or deviant but that the "language and literacy practices ...are communicative and transformative in the sense that they are used to make and represent meanings, to change or construct identities, and to gain or maintain social positions in a particular social space" (2000, p.670). Although the literacy activities of the students involved remarkable sophistication there was no place for their gang-related literacy practices - or indeed for the student themselves in school. The students were apparently controlled, silenced, or dismissed by school literacy. While Moje recognises that there is no place for gang literacy in school she nonetheless advocates that we engage students in the study of the problem and issues, as well as providing them with multiple forms for representing and discussing these topics with their peers.

The debate as to whether all students should be taught standard usage and initiated into academic discourses used in traditional disciplines, or whether students should be encouraged to use the language they bring to class (called *students' rights to their own language* in a controversial policy statement by the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1973) is a debate alive and well in the United States according to Shor (1999). In the US, the argument for teaching standard usage to black youth has been taken up strenuously by Lisa Delpit (1995). Others like Smitherman in *The Real Ebonics Debate* (1998), a long-time proponent of black students using African-American English for writing and teaching, suggests that schools should honour and use the students' community language while also studying standard English.

A critical awareness programme should embed the teaching of standard form in a curriculum oriented towards democratic development. This is a debate that is at a very early

stage of development in Ireland and will not influence the formal curriculum in my opinion for some time.

4. Communication

“The challenging behaviour of many young pupils arises mainly as a result of poor language and social skills...” (Ofsted, 2005). A particular element of any literacy strategy needs to deal with communication skills - to support the students in dealing with social situations. Skills training in how the student can communicate effectively and handle conflict situations, deal with authority, deal with peers, persuade, negotiate, handle criticism and recognise the correct language register to use in different situations is centrally important in upskilling the student body and helping them keep out of trouble in the school setting. Providing students with an insight into the language of power can assist students in avoiding conflict situations.

The Pisa 2009 national summary report noted the link between strong literacy and good behaviour:

Students in schools with a lower amount of negative student behaviour were found to have a significant advantage (35 score-points) over those in schools with an average amount of negative student behaviour. (PISA, 2009, p.29)

Responsibility

Peer mentoring is an effective means of facilitating students in taking on responsibility and changing their view of themselves within the school for the better.

5. Curriculum and Assessment: Literacy instruction versus examination focus

Research illustrates the constraints placed on content area teachers by the pressure to cover curriculum and prepare students for examinations (Phelps, 2007). He agrees that in such environments there are limits to how much explicit strategy instruction a teacher can provide. The incorporation of literacy-related strategies into teachers repertoires of methodologies remains a challenge. Moje (1996) researched a high school chemistry teacher who used literacy strategies such as SQ3R, note taking, graphic organisers and summary writing as organisational tools. Moje concluded that the strategies did not really become incorporated but rather sat on top of her usual manner of teaching. Deshler et al (2001) also found that teachers use a limited number of literacy strategies despite

recognising their value and the need of their students for such strategies, due to the demands of their course content. Sturtevant & Linek (2003) researched teachers' attitudes towards using literacy strategies in their classrooms and found that teachers in America are just as concerned about the conflict between covering the curriculum and including literacy instruction. Time constraints and not having access to resources were cited as factors that made including such strategies difficult. We hear it every day in JCSP in-service courses. Sturtevant & Linek found that teachers were not overtly resistant to the use of strategies but were somewhat set in their ways. Phelps (2007) draws the conclusion regarding teachers who are successful in blending literacy and content that it is as much the environment that is conducive to learning and positive teaching as any particular curriculum or methodology.

Use of certain instructional and assessment practices

Use of certain instructional and assessment practices can lead to improved pupil reading achievement. Instructional practices associated with effective teaching of reading include frequent use of small-group instruction, use of a range of word-recognition strategies and use of higher level comprehension questions (Taylor et al, 2002). In particular, the use of **formative assessment** has been found to have positive effects on learning, with effects strongest where pupils engage in self-assessment and where teachers follow structured feedback procedures (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Black and Wiliam reported moderate to large effect sizes (between 0.4 and 0.7) for the use of formative assessment (their work was a meta-analysis of studies of formative assessment) with low-achieving pupils obtaining the most benefits.

Personal and Social Development

For literacy development to be effective it should take cognisance of the need to integrate a personal development programme into the literacy strategy. This could be achieved through involvement in outdoor education programmes, JCSP formative profiling and involvement in sport and fine art.

6. Care; Positive Interaction with the Teacher

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) commissioned the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI Smyth et. al. 2004) to carry out a longitudinal study of 900 students from 12 schools in the junior cycle stage of post-primary education (12- to 15-year-olds). The data suggested that one of the strongest influences on how they get on in their second year of secondary education is the amount of positive interaction students have with teachers and the school. Students who have experienced positive interactions with teachers have a more positive self-image, both academically and socially. The opposite is the case for students who have experienced negative interactions with their teachers, who are also more likely to become disengaged from learning and from school life; have lower academic aspirations; miss more school; and are more likely to leave school before or after the Junior Certificate. Positive, student-centred teaching that meets the needs of all students can make a big difference.

Such student-centred teaching may encompass teaching and learning that is challenging, involves novelty and encourages autonomy, according to Whitby et al (2006), Gottfried et al (2001) and Hall and Kennedy (2006). Teachers who encourage, provide feedback and recognise students' learning progress and achievements may improve performance at second level (Queensland Government, 2003a; Gottfried et al, 2001). These are encouraging findings in that they describe what the JCSP Programme asks of teachers throughout the implementation of the programme and specifically within the student profiling system.

The quality of the relationship also directly impacts on reading scores according to PISA 2009:

Quality of student-teacher relations, as measured by extent of student agreement with a number of statements (e.g., 'I get along well with most of my teachers' and 'Most of my teachers treat me fairly') is also positively associated with reading scores. (PISA, National summary, p. 29)

Gender

There is a marked gender difference in the retention of students of different genders at second level. For example, of the cohort that entered post-primary school in 2001, for every 14 girls that left school early, 23 boys did so (2010, p.21). A gender divide is also growing in literacy as girls consistently perform better than boys.

In the 1999 IEA international literacy survey, girls performed better than boys in all countries at the 9-year old level, and in most countries at the 14-year old level. Furthermore, Ireland was one of the few countries in which the advantage of girls over boys actually increased between ages 9 and 14 (Martin & Morgan, 1994). Nearly three times as many boys as girls at age 14 had relatively poor reading achievement, based on the criterion of scoring one standard deviation or more below the mean. This disparity seems higher than in other countries (Morgan & Martin, 1993, p.16). In a multi-level model of reading achievement in third class (Sofroniou, 2004), male pupils attending schools with high levels of disadvantage did less well than female pupils attending such schools. Girls seem to acquire language skills at an earlier age than boys and studies have consistently found a female advantage in reading/literacy skills (e.g. Eivers et al, 2005, 2008). In PISA 2006 the stronger performance of female students was also noted, which obviously suggests there is a need to focus on improvement in the performance among male students in particular. Eivers, Shiel & Cunningham point out that it must be recognised that gender differences in reading literacy arise for a variety of reasons, including the particular combination of text and item types that are assessed and low engagement in reading among males (2006, p.35). In the 2009 assessment, there were statistically significant gender differences (favouring girls) on the overall scale and on all subscales at second class. In contrast, at sixth class, there were no significant gender differences overall, or on any of the subscales.

Finally, Martino and Kehler (2007) argue that research-based evidence confirms that hegemonic masculinity is central to many of the struggles boys face as literacy learners. Claims about what it means to be a man are used to police boys' behavior in school, and these "truths" seem to be at the core of the boys' crisis. One of the boys in Martino's (1995) study explained it this way: "English is more suited to girls because it's not the way guys think.... Therefore, I don't particularly like this subject. I hope you aren't offended by this, but most guys who like English are faggots" (p.354). Clearly this boy asserted his gendered identity by positioning himself in opposition to femininity and homosexuality. Reluctance to participate in English, as expressed above, which stems from an understanding of what is acceptable masculine behavior, must be challenged and deconstructed if we hope to improve boys' achievement.

As we have suggested by referring to a few key factors, the complexities surrounding boys' literacy underachievement are multiple and interwoven and cannot be explained solely by gender. (Watson et al., 2010, p. 357)

The panic about boys' underachievement that has been allowed to dominate current literacy policy initiatives on an international scale has worked to divert the public radar away from concerns about girls according to Watson et. al. (2010). The performance levels of some girls remain unexamined largely because the response to boys' declining achievement revolves around helping them to compete with girls as literacy learners. More boy-friendly strategies and resources, the recruitment of more male teachers and the creation of single-sex classes are presented as logical solutions.

7. Continuous Professional Development

Evaluation sheets used in a series of JCSP sessions show high levels of satisfaction (Granville 2005, P. 21).

Phelps (2007) notes that professional development should assist teachers in making explicit connections between their ideas, their beliefs and their practice. This professional development in his view should also take into account the realities of classroom life and (given the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the school population and the inclusion of students with learning disabilities) teachers need guidance on how to best serve adolescents who are susceptible to failure or dropping out (2007, p.25). Good advice should be incorporated into the JCSP CPD approach. The vast majority of the teachers interviewed during the Irish inspectors' study of literacy and numeracy standards in disadvantaged primary schools (2005) indicated that their initial teacher training did not prepare them sufficiently for the challenge of their present teaching situation and that their training was not an effective preparation for teaching in a disadvantaged setting.

The teachers referred to their day-to-day practice in the schools as being very removed from theory addressed in colleges. Teachers referred to learning primarily from their own experiences, and a general sense of "learning as you go" was evident in some of the teachers' responses. (DES 2005, p.32)

As a result of these findings the Inspectorate recommended that a team of teachers with recognised expertise in literacy and numeracy should work in a professional development role to provide specialist support for schools in these curricular areas, in order to enhance and develop teacher expertise and to further develop in-school management processes and

systems. It was also recommended that high-support programmes (such as Reading Recovery) that feature systematic support for individuals or small groups should be extended, giving priority to the most disadvantaged schools. Further to this the comptroller and auditor (Government of Ireland, 2006) advised that the wide variety of successful approaches and interventions aimed at increasing literacy levels should be provided with a forum to exchange experiences and information, especially in relation to evaluation of the approaches taken.

Engagement in ongoing professional development can lead to modest gains in pupil achievement. For example, the US National Assessment of Educational Progress found that teachers who had more professional training were likely to use a wider variety of instructional practices, and less likely to engage in extensive use of activities such as reading kits and basal readers [National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), n.d., cited in Darling-Hammond, 2000]. Taylor, Pearson, Peterson and Rodriguez (2005) found that professional development was most effective (in terms of effects on pupil achievement) when it was evidence-based, ongoing, involving collaboration amongst school staff and providing opportunities to reflect on practice.

In Ireland, according to Eivers et al (2005) pre-service training in relation to the teaching of reading is not fully meeting the needs of teachers or pupils, and in-career development is unsatisfactory for identifying and dealing with reading difficulties (2005, p.11). They recommend that pre-service training should have a greater focus on reading development, with a particular emphasis on teaching educationally disadvantaged pupils.

Irish and international research provides a very rich source of good practice that can be drawn upon to support the further development of the JCSP literacy strategy.

According to Voght and Shearer (2011), professional development must be multidimensional rather than a single-hit workshop or presentation. It must address shared goals, with support structures planned for each goal. Support structures could include “planning sessions, formal workshops and problem-solving, formal or informal observation, peer coaching, individual consultation, dissemination of resources, incorporation of specialised materials, self-evaluation, in-class support, or lesson modeling by reading specialists and literacy coaches” (Voght and Shearer, 2011, p.219). A collaborative and

communicative environment is key. Goals should include periodic assessments and teachers' individual goals should be supported in some way. We must find a way to move from the old transmission model of dumping information into teachers to a constructivist approach that incorporates their own skills and desires in a living, breathing, meaningful, ongoing, site-based, organic model. The way we teach teachers must be a model of how we expect them to teach students.

Eithne Kennedy's work in her 2010 dissertation on the empowerment of teachers in high-poverty schools using professional development provides direct evidence in support of Voght and Shearer's assertions. In a model that included consultation with the whole staff, a decision was made to "implement interventions among first graders, their parents, their classroom teachers, and the four special education teachers" (Kennedy, 2010, p.385) in Dublin. Teachers gained knowledge in essential literacy skills, were equipped with strategies to address these skills and used "assessment tools to enable them to respond to students' needs in a way that would capitalise on their motivation and engagement (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999) while building their metacognitive awareness (eg Paris, Lipson & Wixon, 1994) and honouring their agency and creativity (e.g. Grainger, Gooch & Lambirth, 2005)". The results of the study were impressive, with powerful effects on student achievement. The impacts of the multidimensional approach ranged far and wide. "Parents were of the opinion that their children were engaged in reading and writing outside the school in ways they had not seen prior to the intervention, and this was seen as having a positive influence on the family as a whole" (p.385). "Teachers reported having higher expectations for the students and higher levels of self-efficacy and confidence in their own ability to address literacy difficulties" (p.385). Finally, "a more systematic, coherent, integrated, and cognitively challenging curriculum was in evidence by the end of the study" (p.386).

Kennedy makes several suggestions in her conclusion. She writes "First, provision of a multifaceted professional development programme for teachers is essential in addressing underachievement in literacy... Second, it is important that teacher creativity and individuality is honored throughout the professional development... Third, it is important to introduce change gradually and to build early success into the change process. Significant changes in teachers' beliefs and attitudes occurred *after* positive changes in student learning outcomes, motivation, and engagement were apparent... Fourth, a systematic,

coherent, integrated, and cognitively challenging curriculum is especially important in a high-poverty context... Fifth, blocks of time and a 'push-in', collaborative approach are crucial. Finally, although not a major focus of the study, parental involvement was also a significant factor" (Kennedy, 2010, p.386).

It is interesting to note that there is a precedent in the US and the UK to investigate the impact of literacy interventions. We do have interesting research in the primary sector in Ireland but very little is written on second level. It is like the problem goes away for a period once the students transfer to second level, only waiting to re-appear in the adult literacy section of research reports. Maybe researchers have been waiting for a set of interventions to measure? Of course the emphasis should be on primary but this literature review certainly reveals the great need that continues on into second level. What lessons can be taken from the research? First and foremost that a multi-layered response must be put in place for such a complex issue. Apart from reading instruction, access to books and reading materials, we must give the students confidence that they can succeed. Before this can happen we need as a profession to build our own confidence and be clear how we can help.

Exploratory studies with regard to two selected programmes—Leaving Certificate English and the JCSP—were undertaken to examine, among other research issues, the extent to which teachers were actually challenged to operate outside their comfort zones. The indications were that engagements of a critical professional nature did indeed occur, which affirms the quality of professional engagement. (Granville, 2005, p.19)

It is hoped that the JCSP literacy strategy with action research based interventions will support the profession in gaining this essential component - confidence.

8. Constitution of School: School Management

Aspects of school management, organisation and climate can also be associated with reading achievement according to Department of Education and Science (DES, 2005b). School effectiveness researchers, such as Taylor, Pressley and Pearson (2002) have found that strong leadership, collaboration among staff and an emphasis on professional development are features of effective schools that are associated with superior reading achievement (DES, 2005b). Irish research has also found a link between a negative disciplinary climate in English classes (as perceived by students) and poorer student reading achievement (Shiel et al, 2001). Monitoring pupil achievement is another feature of schools

and classrooms associated with reading achievement. Regular assessment and monitoring of achievement is a characteristic not only of effective schools (Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore, 1995), but also of effective teachers (Wray, Medwell, Poulson & Fox, 2002). In 2005, the Inspectorate of the Irish Department of Education and Science (DES, 2005b) reported that, although teachers in very disadvantaged schools demonstrated strong skills in teaching emergent literacy, beginning reading, and basic reading comprehension, aspects of the broader school learning environment were problematic.

9. Classrooms

Effective classroom practice is obviously crucial to literacy improvement and a central focus of the JCSP literacy strategy. The support service are concerned with the up-skilling of teachers in classroom strategies that improve and develop literacy. What should be going on in our classrooms to ensure literacy is improved? Research provides us with signposts and highlights the areas that we should be taking care of. Teacher expectation is first to ensure we expect the students to improve and are challenging them enough to make the necessary improvements. Obviously the students have to be in front of us in classrooms to make any improvement, and poor attendance patterns are linked with poor literacy. Many recommend the restructuring of learning support be considered for improved impact. The use of scaffolding strategies and reciprocal teaching are recommended as students achieve maximum learning when teachers present new learning strategies in small steps, model the strategy carefully and provide opportunities for on-going feedback as students practice the strategy with increasing independence. Additionally, text metacognition and engagement in reading, text instruction have been found to be crucial in developing strong readers. Finally, reading apprenticeships and peer tutoring are strategies that all schools should include in their range of literacy supports. It is intended to examine each of these: expectation, attendance, scaffolding literacy instruction and comprehension, commercially prepared instructional materials and reading apprenticeships/peer tutoring in more detail in the sub-sections below.

Expectations

A culture of low expectations in families and schools (Archer & Weir, 2004, p.4; Kennedy, 2009) contributes to poor literacy. Research has indicated that teachers in disadvantaged

schools often have low expectations for their students (Eivers et al, 2004). They recommend that raising teacher expectations of their students' achievement should be part of any strategy. According to Archer & Weir (2004) "deliberate attempts to raise expectations could be important in the disadvantaged context" (p.30).

Attendance

Among more school-related characteristics associated with reading achievement, attendance is probably the most widely recognised (Eivers, Shiel, Perkins and Cosgrove, 2005). Every teacher that you speak with names attendance as one of the main barriers to educational achievement in disadvantaged schools. It was noted in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report (Government of Ireland, 2006) by the principals interviewed that the pupil who misses one block of time is not as disadvantaged as a child missing a large number of single days (2006, p.37).

On average 19.5 per cent of pupils in the schools visited had missed more than 20 days in 2003-2004. The proportion of pupils missing in excess of 20 days varied from 4 per cent of pupils to as high as 45 per cent. These findings are in keeping with the levels identified by the NEWB. Analysis of survey data in respect of schools located in RAPID Areas showed that around 24 per cent of pupils had been absent for more than 20 days in 2003. The schools visited had a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing attendance levels. (Government of Ireland, 2006, p.38)

Regular attendees are generally better readers than students with poor attendance records (Cosgrove et al, 2000; Eivers et al., 2004).

Learning Support

How schools provide additional support to low-achieving students can affect achievement. Research from programmes such as the US-based *Success for All* suggests that where a large proportion of a school's enrolment are in need of additional support, whole-school restructuring of reading instruction may prove more effective than simply offering additional support to low-achieving students (eg Borman, Hewes, Overman & Brown, 2003). Some support for the need to restructure is offered by Shiel, Morgan and Larney's 1998 study of remedial education provision in Irish primary schools, which found that while participation in remedial classes was generally associated with improvement in reading achievement, this was not so in the case of students in designated disadvantaged schools.

Team teaching and the co-ordination of all kinds of reading interventions may yield more effective supports for underachieving students.

Scaffolding Literacy Instruction and comprehension

Engagement and metacognition are both seen to have a significant correlation with reading proficiency and are responsive to teaching and learning (PISA 2009; Artelt, Schiefele & Schneider, 2001; Brown, Palincsar & Armbruster, 2004). Explicit or formal instruction of these strategies is believed to lead to an improvement in text understanding and information use (OECD 2010).

The reader, it is believed, becomes independent of the teacher after these text related strategies have been learned and can be applied with little effort. By using these strategies, the reader can effectively interact with the text by conceiving reading as a problem-solving task that requires the use of strategic thinking, and by thinking strategically about solving reading comprehension problems. (OECD, 2010, p. 72)

The general finding of the report of the U.S. National Reading Panel (2000) was that remediating poor reading literacy is possible through explicit teaching of metacognitive skills. That is, when readers are given cognitive and metacognitive strategy instruction, they make more significant gains on measures of reading comprehension than students only trained with conventional instruction procedures (Pressley, Graham & Harris, 2006; Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick & Kurita, 1989; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; Rosenshine, Meister & Chapman, 1996).

Metacognition in reading refers to the awareness of and ability to use a variety of appropriate strategies when processing texts (OECD 2009, p.72). Learning from texts requires the reader to take an active role in their reading by making inferences, filling in gaps, predicting, segmenting etc. Students need to become aware of text structure not only in the role of a reader but also in the role of a writer. Such explicit teaching of text structure is certainly a feature of many primary classrooms in Ireland but upon entering into second level the student is bombarded with different genres. How they navigate them, read them or write using their various structures is primarily using a 'sink or swim' approach. Few are taught text structure in any shape or form. Formal teaching of text structures was witnessed by the author in several Harlem schools this year. Students were thoroughly taught the form and complexities of each genre. Engagement in such strategic activities develops an

awareness of text structure and how it facilitates understanding. Students can become very competent readers if they are able to use text knowledge to find and use information in a text strategically (Baker & Brown, 1984; Borkowski & Turner, 1990; Körkel & Schneider, 1992). Ideally, teachers would be trained in strategies to incorporate the teaching of text structures into their classrooms.

These reading strategies help the learner to achieve cognitive purposes and include questioning, highlighting and summing up important text information (identifying main ideas); frequent comprehension monitoring and self-checking; and a repertoire of approaches for dealing with text difficulties (clarifying). (OECD, 2009, p.72).

Such strategies are outlined in the JCSP literacy strategy and many are advanced during in-service and supported by specialised materials. It could be said that Irish teachers in disadvantaged schools may employ some such strategies, but few do so in a focused, purposeful way.

Students achieve maximum learning when teachers present new learning strategies in small steps, model the strategy carefully and provide opportunities for on going feedback as student practice the strategy with increasing independence (Phelps, 2007; Gersten, Fuchs, Willians and Baker, 2001). Teachers who explicitly teach a comprehension strategy as well as modelling it, who follow this with guided practice, independent practice and continual feedback and discussion have been able to get students from diverse backgrounds and abilities to learn and use the strategies effectively (Alvermann & Moore, 1991). This further reinforces the value of scaffolding strategies and the use of writing frames strategy in the JCSP literacy strategy. Rosenshine and Meister and Chapman (1996), in a study on reciprocal teaching, found that students who ask questions about text they have read gained in comprehension. They concluded that the key to effective strategy instruction was not so much which strategies were taught, but rather the importance of careful scaffolding of instruction. Teachers who related new content to students' prior knowledge, and who made effective use of research validated teaching strategies such as the use of graphic organisers and mnemonic devices, were subsequently able to effectively use strategies in class, leading to higher student achievement as a result (Deshler et al, 2001).

Stevens (2003) also found that direct comprehension strategy instruction within a multifaceted approach yielded good results. This yearlong study of 4,000 students in urban middle school found that the use of high quality literature; writing process instruction; cooperative learning; and strategies instruction in summarising, understanding main ideas and clarifying, were most effective as compared to the more traditional instruction.

Commercially prepared instructional materials

Studies on commercially prepared instructional materials such as the SRA reading laboratory used as part of the JCSP literacy strategy have mixed reviews when compared to strategic instruction where students are engaged in high quality discussion. When students have opportunities to express opinions and understanding, these were found to be more effective according to Applebee, Langer, Nystrand and Gamoran (2003). High quality discussion and high academic demands are significantly related to higher literacy achievement for both low and high ability students.

Reading Apprenticeships/Peer Tutoring

Deraper (2002) recognised that few textbooks incorporate literacy strategies into their materials and felt that such textbooks may be partially to blame for some teachers' resistance or indifference to helping students with reading and writing in their subject. It must be said that in Ireland we can sometimes presume that the issue of inappropriate textbooks is confined to this island. Literacy development classes such as those developed by Greenleaf, Schoenbach, Cziko and Mueller (2001) in San Francisco high school, where they developed a yearlong academic literacy course that featured reading apprenticeships (they presented the adolescent poor reader as inexperienced rather than deficient), where adult expert readers inducted their apprentices into the world of reading by systematically showing them how to improve, seem to be very worthwhile. The focus was on developing fluency and reading many types of text. Instead of an exclusive focus on isolated skill development, such classes were carefully designed to involve students in challenging, content-based instruction that was tailored to their developmental needs. The programme resulted in significant gains in reading comprehension in standardised tests. This is similar to the strategies that operate most successfully in the highly effective schools in the UK Basic Skills Research (1998). Here too, literacy instruction was tied into the classroom instruction

and reinforced by what the classroom teacher did in class. There are now some instances of JCSP schools taking on such structures within the library project as well as part of their literacy strategy (Hasslett, 2005).

Phelps (2007) also noted that instruction is most effective when well-informed teachers are directly involved in its design, saying that curriculum reform and development need to be “consensual and collaborative” - the model in place in the JCSP programme. Added to this he noted the importance of a positive learning environment that is conducive to improvement. Lee (2001) reminds us that “loving and respecting young people is the mortar from which good teaching is built” (2001, p.133).

Echoing the advice from *What Works in Secondary Schools* (Basic Skills, 1998) Brooks (2002) also recognises that success with some children with the most severe problems is elusive, and this reinforces the need for skilled, intensive, one-to-one intervention for these children. Reading Recovery is an intervention whose positive effect on accelerating literacy levels (Fudge, 2001; Gardner, Sutherland and Strain, 1997; Iversen & Tunmer, 1993; Moore & Wade, 1998) means that it must be mentioned in this light. Increasingly, *Better reading partners* (Taylor, 1999), a second level version, has also been positively evaluated and is now part of the JCSP literacy strategy as the librarians are now trained as trainers in Better Reading Partnership strategy. Reciprocal learning also shines out across research reports on effective programmes (Palincsar, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994), as does paired learning. The positive impact of paired learning/peer tutoring on learning must also be noted across UK research reports, demonstrating how pivotal it should be as a literacy strategy (particularly by Morgan (1976, 1986); Topping (1990, 1995, 2001); Topping and Lindsay (1992); Topping and Wolfendale (1985); and Wolfendale and Topping (1996)). It has also been positively evaluated in Ireland (Nugent, 2001; Cassidy, 2004).

10. Connection: Leisure Reading and interest in reading

The *Competent Children, Competent Learners* project conducted by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (Wylie et al 2006), is of particular interest because of its focus being on the 14-year olds. This was a longitudinal study which focused on a group of about 500 students. Wylie et al (2006), authors of this study, concluded that it is not enough just

to learn to read – one of the strongest indicators of positive engagement in school and learning was the enjoyment of reading. The findings were very clear. Those who enjoyed reading also had higher average scores for positive relationships with family and friends, and showed less risky behaviour.

Wylie et al (2006) conclude that encouraging enjoyment of reading could be crucial as enjoyment of reading is a key indicator for “engagement in learning and for competency levels at age 14” (2006, p.4).

Although more than half the sample still enjoyed reading at age 14, there was also a decline in enjoyment since age 12. Enjoyment of reading was a key indicator for competency levels and engagement in learning. Students who enjoyed reading had higher scores on the cognitive and social/attitudinal competencies than both those students who enjoyed it sometimes and those who did not enjoy it at all. Those who sometimes enjoyed reading, in turn, had higher scores than those who did not enjoy it at all. On average, those who enjoyed reading at 14 had consistently higher scores for mathematics, reading, and the composite score for the attitudinal competencies from age 5 than those who did not enjoy reading. And, on average, they had consistently higher scores from age 8 for all the competencies (mathematics, reading, logical problem-solving and the attitudinal composite) than those who did not enjoy reading at age 14. (Wylie et al., 2006, p.15)

There is ample evidence of a link between attitudes to reading, motivation to read and reading achievement in other studies (Eivers, 2004; Cosgrove et al, 2000; Elley, 1992; Sofroniou, Shiel & Cosgrove, 2002). In its summary of research the *Commission on Reading* concluded that “becoming a skilled reader requires ...learning that written material can be interesting” (Anderson et al, 1985, p.18). Smith (1988) observed that “the emotional response to reading is the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most non-readers do not read” (1988, p.177).

Quite a number of studies have found that frequent engagement in leisure reading and use of public libraries, below-average time spent on other leisure activities (eg playing computer games or watching TV) and engagement in a positive manner in classroom activities are associated with reading achievement (Elley, 1992; Cosgrove et al, 2000; Cosgrove et al, 2005; Eivers et al, 2004). It is interesting how the Reading Association of Ireland picked up that this was a missing ingredient from the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan (DES 2010) as they noted that 'reading for enjoyment was missing from the plan'. They suggest that a

new definition of reading literacy incorporate elements of Eivers et. al. (2005) definition provided in the 2009 National Assessment Report (Eivers et al., 2010) which was as follows:

[Reading literacy is] the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of the reading situation. Young readers read to learn, to participate in communities of readers, and for enjoyment. (Eivers et al., 2005, p. 15)

Conclusions: No Quick Fix

The picture of why so many students are behind is being painted by the researchers above as we learned what variables contribute to poor literacy. Many of these factors are somewhat outside the influence of the school – poverty, large families, being from the traveller community, being a disadvantaged boy, having a dearth of resources at home, having a low level of interaction around print in the home, poor attendance and those who are poorly motivated to read – these factors all contribute. There are also school factors that contribute however – poor management, inexperienced teachers, poor discipline, not enough time spent teaching English, poor access to learning support – all contribute to poor literacy.

The focus of the current study is on how the JCSP Literacy Strategy impacts on developing reading literacy among groups of second level students, in the context of disadvantage, as unfortunately there are few studies in Ireland (apart from in the primary sector) that examine what works at second level. This graphic summarises what researcher have found to work at primary level:

The following is a summary of the elements of the research reports that mention the impact of specific actions that schools have taken to improve literacy.:



Figure 1: Summary of the elements that schools have taken to improve literacy from research reports.

From researcher to researcher we find advice that urges policy makers not be simplistic in their recommendations to improve literacy, Kamil (2003); Biancarosa and Snow (2004); and Shanahan (2005) to name three. These three serve to summarise the views of the researchers quoted above.

Kamil (2003) examined the reliable, empirical evidence that exists on how to improve the literacy. This evidence consisted of four of the most prominent reviews of research on adolescent literacy conducted by Alvermann and Moore (1991), Snow, Burns and Griffin (1999), the National Reading Panel (2000), and Rand (2002), along with materials from other investigations. Kamil urged policymakers to use research-based knowledge that is available about adolescent literacy as a foundation for change in secondary school, focusing on three particular areas of policy: 1) methods of maximising motivation and engagement in adolescents; 2) careful assessment of reading skills to be certain that individualised instruction is provided to each student; 3) encourage sustained, embedded professional development for teachers in secondary schools.

In *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*, a report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Biancarosa and Snow (2004) suggest that “practitioners and programme designers should flexibly try out various combinations in search of the most effective overall programme. Any combination should include three specific elements: professional development, formative assessment and summative assessment” (Biancarosa and Snow, 2004, p.5). A very relevant piece of advice for the Irish context.

We can also learn from the Chicago Reading Initiative which was designed to ensure that all students in Chicago Public Schools have access to high quality instruction in reading. The initiative has five major focus areas:

1. A uniform instructional framework for teaching reading, consisting of four major components: word knowledge, fluency, comprehension and writing.
2. A mandated two hours of literacy instruction (reading and writing) per day in elementary and high schools, and a focus on literacy instruction in all content areas.
3. Extra support and reading specialists for schools with low performance or lack of progress.

4. Development of high quality professional development opportunities for teachers and leadership teams in reading instruction, and implementation of the literacy framework.
5. New materials and assessment tools, and extra support for all schools.

Shanahan (2005) described how the Chicago Public Schools saw significant gains in reading achievement.

Greg Brooks (2002) has also been involved in large-scale research projects on the impact of literacy interventions. A very significant conclusion that Brooks has come to is that ordinary teaching does not enable children with literacy difficulties to catch up and supports an argument for implementing fairly high density short term (no longer than one term) initiatives. He emphasised the importance of working on children's self-esteem and reading in parallel. This is a view that I also hold.

Finally, if change is to be significant, lasting and meaningful it takes time according to Fullan. There is no quick fix. He believes that change can lead to "revitalisation of teaching and learning that is so desperately needed in the lives of educators and students today" (Fullan 2001).



Methodology



Chapter 3

The focus of the study is the examination of the impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy on the reading literacy levels of the participating first year students, with particular focus on the newly-introduced multiple literacy initiative, the Literacy Medley.

What is the Purpose of the study?

The study of how educational interventions work can never be far removed from the task of engineering them to work better. (Newman, Griffin, and Cole, 1989, p.147)

This study will examine the impact of the JCSP literacy strategy on developing reading literacy among groups of first year JCSP students, with a specific focus on the JCSP Literacy Medley. The study was carried out through collaboration with all of the stakeholders as well as a close analysis of the implementation of the new JCSP multiple literacy initiative. The JCSP literacy strategy offers a range of support to second level schools participating in the JCSP who wish to develop a school wide approach to literacy. It provides a range of initiatives that schools can choose from as well as specifically designed materials that are suitable for second level. National, local and school based continuous professional development is also available. The *Literacy Medley* was introduced (as part of this study) to the range of JCSP initiatives in 2010. Schools were invited to apply for this new initiative which involved implementing at least three of the JCSP reading initiatives over one academic year with at least one first year JCSP group and set up a JCSP reading space/corner in their school. It was rolled out in 35 of the 240 second level schools participating in the JCSP in September 2010. 1,010 students were involved and over 150 teachers. The literature review, in the previous chapter, attempted to gain a clearer understanding as to why so many second level students still struggle with literacy in disadvantaged schools, and the study of the impact of the *Literacy Medley* is to examine how it was effective in improving reading literacy levels in such schools.

The *Literacy Medley* is nested in the overall JCSP literacy strategy, so a case study provided context and background information along with an outline of the CPD programme that is necessary to prepare a school for the implementation of the Medley. Several methods, both qualitative and quantitative were employed in an attempt to capture the richness of the school activity. Underpinning the research questions is a belief that much can be done at second level to improve reading literacy levels and experienced, critically aware, praxis orientated teachers know and understand best what should be put in place. These teachers are, however, operating within the context of a flawed education system, dominated by an examination culture. Literacy can be sacrificed in the narrowly-focused classrooms aiming only at examination success. The fact that so many disadvantaged students are effectively illiterate is thus a socially/politically constructed reality and so any exploration of this issue cannot ignore this backdrop.

The next section will explore the rationale behind the choice of methodological approaches employed to investigate the impact of this literacy intervention. An interpretative approach may prove to be more appropriate to examining the human interactions that are central in classrooms where teachers are often creatively producing their own environments.

A mixed methods approach was chosen as the approach for this study and so will be examined below. A mixed methods approach often incorporates the use of pre and post tests of student understanding, structured interviews, students' class observations, teachers' daily notes, and questionnaires. This mixed method methodology was chosen to ensure that the methodology was responsive to the complexity of the issue in hand. Several methods (qualitative and quantitative) were employed. These included a student survey to gather their perspective on reading; teachers' and librarians' feedback was gathered through interviews focus groups as well as online evaluation tools. Standardised test information was also gathered to establish reading progress which supplemented teacher observations. Additionally, a case study of one school ensured rich data was gathered to complete the picture. The intuitive knowledge of experienced practitioners is invaluable, in my opinion, in the successful implementation of any new initiative. The case study, as well as the interviews and school visits, facilitated capturing how teachers implemented an innovative instructional intervention in the reality of their schools.

The literacy strategy is multi-layered and so mixed methods were found to be the most effective way of gaining the insights necessary to address the research question.

Before exploring the above it is interesting to trace the trends behind researching literacy interventions internationally.

METHODOLOGY

The most challenging themes and theoretically exciting questions are ...reached by a process that resembles artistic imagination. (Antonesa et al., 2007, p.17)

Investigating Literacy Interventions

The study of literacy interventions represent an important class of studies where theory, practice and policy intersect. According to Pigott and Barr (2000) this is because the research is inherently concerned with how the intervention 'works' in a given context (p.106). It is interesting to trace the history of intervention research over the last three decades as it highlights many issues salient to the study of programmatic interventions and helps to show how the thinking and the approaches have developed. Tracing this development also helps highlight the most appropriate methodological approaches to studying this literacy strategy in Ireland. The tensions between the use of research findings to inform local practice versus higher level policy, the difficulties in comparing different approaches to alleviate a problem, and the conflict between the purposes of basic research and evaluation research have been in existence since the first attempts at intervention studies according to Pigott and Barr (2000). They argue however, that research into programmatic interventions can, in fact, contribute to the three areas of theory, practice and policy through careful design and a grounding in both literacy theory and classroom practice.

If one believes that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible then a positivist approach to methodologies would be appropriate, but when one sees knowledge as personal, subjective and unique then it is more appropriate, according to Cohan et al (2007) to be anti-positivist or interpretative. The critique of positivism is now in place for some time, indeed, since the 1970s as Horkheimer (1972), for example, criticised positivist approaches for reducing reason to formal logic, for making a "fetish of facts and pretending to have disentangled facts from values." Supporting Horkheimer (1972), Cohan et al (2007) also believe that

positivism is less successful when applied to the study of human behaviour, where the immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world (p.11). This point is nowhere more apparent than in the classroom and school where the problems of teaching and learning and human interaction present the positivistic researcher with a great challenge, as they view human behaviour as passive, essentially determined and controlled, thereby ignoring intention, individualism and freedom (according to Cohan et al, 2007). Humans exercise agency and are autonomous. Surely then the only way to understand their world is to attempt to share the terms of reference, otherwise one could dehumanise rather than see the person as a whole (Buhler and Allen, 1972).

Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to view Irish teachers as responding mechanically and deterministically with their environment. My experience has been that they are more likely to be initiators of their own actions with free will and creativity producing their own environments. "It is critical therefore to attempt to understand the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself in" (Cohan et al, 2007, p.8). It is hoped in this research to gather an overview from information provided in interviews, written evaluation, reports and surveys, with a hope of allowing the idiographic to illuminate and perhaps even explain the universal.

Descriptions of programmes

During the last three decades researchers of literacy interventions such as Stake (1975) went against the prevailing model of the identification of input/output relationships in evaluation research. Increasingly, interpretative data collection became a feature of intervention research. This approach allows for the inclusion of more comprehensive descriptions of programmes, empowering researchers to understand why certain results have occurred (according to Robinson, 1998). Such understanding of practice requires the acknowledgement that classroom practices are context dependent. Therefore, it is hoped to include some descriptive sections in this research as it allows for a deeper understanding of the manner in which schools interpret and adapt interventions so as to mould them into the structures of their own school and make them work.

The approaches that use the linear and causal relations can misrepresent the complexity of the interaction that occurs between instruction programme and student. Interpretative researchers argue for seeing research as value-laden activity that is inherently social and political. These researchers seek to gain a very close understanding of activities and the experiences of the participants (Pigott and Barr, 2000, p.104). The case study in this study allows for such closeness.

Mixed Method Methodology

Mixed method methodology is appropriate for this project because it allows for the collection of several complementary types of data. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered in more or less equal amounts.

Multilevel mixed designs

Both types of data are analysed accordingly and results are used to make multiple types of inferences which are then integrated into meta-inferences according to Tashakkori & Teddie:

when the qualitative and quantitative data from the different levels are used to answer related questions about topics of interest, then the resulting meta-inferences are necessarily mixed. (Tashakkori & Teddie, 2009, p.156)

The research question was answered by the analysis of the outcomes of a combination of the following:

- A Reading Survey of all 1st Year JCSP students
- Interviews with the teachers who implemented the *Literacy Medley* in 35 schools
- A focus group of a selection of the above teachers
- Observation in schools
- An online evaluation by the teachers
- Standardised Tests
- An online survey of the JCSP librarians involved
- A case study of one school using questionnaires, interviews and observations.

(Parallel Mixed Designs, Tashakkori & Teddie, 2009)

The different layers of the research often occurred in parallel to one another. The research took place over one and half academic years. The case study school began planning its year ahead in April 2010, the reading survey took place in September 2010 as schools were applying for the Literacy Medley. The 35 *Literacy Medley* schools proposed their plan by September 11th 2010 and were approved by October to get started. Standardised reading tests were administered in September/October and again in May. Schools began the work of the Medley in October/November. Interviews took place over the period from January to June and the focus group took place in January. So the projects took place in a concurrent manner (Cresswell & Planto Clark, 2007), each phase addressing some of the basic research question.

Methodological Framework

In constructing a methodological framework for this study a mixed methods approach was selected as this facilitates the exploration of the issue from many angles, using multiple sources of information, allowing a fuller description of the programmatic innovation and allowing for the collaborative participation of many stakeholders. This study is more suited to a synergy between two broad methodological options that would be complementary, perhaps guiding teachers to improve instructional practice while also offering the system some suggestions for future direction.

Exploratory Questions:

It was intended to explore the following questions over the course of this study:

Reading Survey

1. What are the 1st year JCSP students' attitude to reading? What is the extent of their access to reading materials? How much time do they spend reading? What do they choose to read? What is their attitude to reading and what would encourage them to read more? What is the level of parental involvement in their reading?

Case Study

2. In what ways have a school engaged with the JCSP Literacy Strategy over time and how has it developed in the school to facilitate the implementation of the *Literacy Medley*?
3. How does JCSP CPD support and develop the implementation of the literacy strategy in subject classrooms and across the school and what elements of a school wide approach raise reading literacy levels?
4. What was the impact of the *Literacy Medley* in the case study school?

Literacy Medley

5. How do schools implement the *Literacy Medley* with a first year JCSP group?
 6. What combination of interventions do schools decide to implement and what interventions work best?
-

The Participants in the study

Teachers, principals, students and JCSP co-ordinators were all included in the study.

Traditionally, in a variety of disciplines, children have been allocated a voiceless role in research according to Henefer (2008). There was a view that rather than being participants, children were the objects of research studies. Of late, researchers are beginning to adopt a more child-oriented approach to their studies, emphasising the importance of children's rights in the research process from initiation to recommendations. Increasingly, researchers have recognised the need to develop collaborative and respectful methodologies in working with children of all ages. These methodologies should strive to place the child in the centre of the research process. As with all marginalised groups, this kind of emancipatory and participatory approach would help researchers to determine whether their efforts truly are serving those intended (according to Henefer, 2004). As such the voice of the student is central to this study. In developing a methodological approach for this study, an emphasis was placed on enabling JCSP students in the schools to contribute their views and voices to the investigation.

Critical Theory

Layered on the mixed methods methodological approach it is necessary to take into account the views of critical theorists because of the context of this research. The paradigm of critical educational research is an emerging approach to educational research as it regards positivist and interpretative approaches as lacking political and ideological context.

According to Siegal and Fernandez (2000) many literacy researchers had a particular view of reading acquisition - that it was an autonomous, psychological process unrelated to any of the social, political, cultural and economic patterns that shape schooling. This fuelled their positivist approach where in many cases reading test results were enough to illustrate a point. "Literacy was separated from power and ideology in much research up to the 1970s when it was gradually admitted that there was a socio political dimension associated with its role in society and ways in which it was deployed for political, cultural and economic ends" (Venezky, 1991, p.46).

Critical policy research assumes that educational problems must be conceptualised as part of the social, political, cultural and economic patterns by which schooling is formed,

patterns that reflect the unequal power and access of some groups in society (Siegal and Fernandez, 2000, p.143). The work of Paulo Freire (who is most associated with critical approaches) highlights how illiteracy is not regarded as an individual failing but as an historically constructed product of a society structured to produce inequality.

There is evidence within research on literacy of a critical approach, particularly in critical discourse analysis with Fairclough (1989 and 1992) and Gee (1990). Others have more of a socio cultural theory such as Street (1984), Lynch (1999 and 2000) and Lodge & Lynch (2004). The critical theory approach serves to remind us not to get too stuck on the interventions or strategies to improve literacy or teach reading but also to remember the bigger picture about inequalities and injustices that persist in schools and society.

Research Instruments

Research Instruments that were built into this research project in order to identify and evaluate progress and achievement, as well as difficulties and limitations, include a reading survey that was issued to all first year JCSP students in the 240 participating schools as well as the use of a standardised test GRT2 NFER Nelson group reading test. All students participating in the *Literacy Medley* (described below) were pre and post tested using the standardised group reading test above. Many group reading tests were explored and this one had the advantage of assessing reading comprehension, is a fairly easily administered test that is completed in thirty minutes, with parallel forms of the test available to facilitate retesting. A number of caveats, however, must be made with regard to the test chosen. It has a number of limitations: firstly it was developed for use as a short screening/monitoring test for groups of students, rather than as a means of obtaining detailed assessment information about individuals, and consequently it works best for the majority of students and less reliably at the extremes of ability (Cornwall, France & Hague, 1998). Moreover, this test is standardised on British norms but there is no equivalent test available based on Irish norms. It needs to be appreciated that the results will only offer a crude measure of reading ability. It is important to note that the Education and Research Centre in Drumcondra began work on an Irish-normed standardised reading test for second level this year.

Anecdotal evidence of attitudinal change throughout the project period was gathered through informal and formal interviews with the teachers involved. The inclement weather

before Christmas in 2010 impacted on the interview schedule and so a focus group was put in place in order to meet some teachers together. Additionally, more telephone interviews took place than were originally planned. A good deal of emailing also took place as the teachers and JCSP co-ordinators sent regular updates of progress. The eighteen librarians were asked to complete an online survey on completion of the initiative. A research notebook was maintained throughout. Affective outcomes were judged through the use of semi-structured teacher interviews. Semi-structured student observations were gathered following an analysis of the reading survey returns. Richer information was gathered by chatting to students and so every opportunity was used to do this during school visits and when they visited the *Make A Book* exhibitions in Dublin and Cork.

On completion of the project, the teachers were invited to engage in an evaluation through the online evaluation instrument on the JCSP website www.jcsp@iol.ie (Appendix 2). A selection of participating teachers were interviewed at the start and end of the project to discuss the critical issues and questions, as well as articulate the successes and achievements of the project. Sharing of best practice and future recommendations was a feature of these meetings. The focus group meeting in January was interesting as the participants commented that it was the very best form of in-service courses that they had ever participated in. They found the small group focused on one issue of conversation to be such as to allow for great sharing of good practice. They shared resources that they found useful, described how they implemented certain interventions so they could be replicated for each other, but most noticeable was how they were excited by how common their experiences were whether from an urban or rural school. They shared how they worked with the students and agreed on the big issues that were impacting on their classrooms such as the class divide and student attendance. Throughout, confidentiality of participants was assured and a control group of students was not used for comparative purposes as this could reflect negatively on that group. Consent letters were prepared for each context and were signed by participants (Appendix 27).

The Planning Phase

The critical steps of the planning phase of a survey include clearly identifying the construct to be measured, the determination of the target group for which the measurement is intended, and establishing operational definitions of the construct according to DeVellis (2003) and Benson & Clark (1982). The first draft of the reading survey was put in place in October 2009 and was a development of one used in previous years. A JCSP research meeting was held and the original questionnaire was updated resulting in a questionnaire (included in Appendix 6) of 13 items. There were several changes made to the original at this stage. Most significantly items on the frequency of reading of different types of materials were introduced. Scales were also introduced to the question about attitude to reading and a question on parental involvement was devised.

Construction Phase

The critical steps of the construction phase of a survey are selecting a response format, generating an item pool and obtaining content validation (DeVellis, 2003; Gable & Wolf, 1993; Benson & Clark, 1982).

Stage one What is already out there

Review of similar surveys

A number of reading surveys have been developed in America and Ireland (McKenna and Kear, 1990; Henk and Melnick, 1992 & 1995; Bean and Readence, 1995; Gambrell, Palmer, Codling & Mazzoni, 1996; Bottomley, Henk & Melnick, 1998; Wigfield and Guthrie Ivey, G. & Broaddus, K 2001; Eivers et al, 2004; Clark and Foster, 2005; Pitcher et al, 2007; PISA, 2000; and Hasslett, 2002 and all of these are summarised in appendix 1. The items from the Reading Connects Survey (Clark & Foster, 2005; Clark & Douglas, 2009) were particularly interesting as the literacy strategy in place is very similar to the JCSP Literacy Strategy and this was a survey particularly targeting adolescents. It, more than others, served to inform many of the items in this reading survey.

Stage two

Preliminary stage of design

This involved the development of a clarity regarding the purpose of the survey, the population being surveyed and the generation of the topics/constructs and concepts to be addressed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2009), as well as decisions regarding the measures, scales, questions and responses required.

Type of questionnaire items:

There are several kinds of questions and response modes that are possible. This reading survey was constructed taking into account the ease of administration for the teachers involved and with regard to the students whose literacy levels, concentration span, willingness or not to engage with a questionnaire, unwillingness/inability in some cases to write too much and possible negative attitude to completing a survey had to be considered. Clarity of purpose for both teachers and students had to be in place. This meant that the questionnaire only took about 10 minutes to complete and it needed to be self-contained. There needed to be enough copies provided to the teacher for a full class group as this would ease administration, and comprehensive guidelines needed to be prepared for the teacher. A stamped addressed envelope was provided to the teachers involved. Finally, the questionnaire had to be structured to include closed questions in the main to avoid too much writing and allow for speedy completion.

Category of items

Total number of Items: 22

Total number of categories: 13

Category of items within the Reading Survey

1. Student name (Q1)
2. Gender (Q2)
3. Amount of reading (Q5)
4. Time spent on other activities (Q4 & Q6)
5. Number of books possessed (Q7 & Q8)
6. Attitude to reading (Q3 & Q12 & Q14 & Q15 & Q16)
7. Choice of reading materials (Q9 & Q10)
8. Preferred choice of reading location (Q11)
9. Strategies for reading unknown words (Q13)
10. What would encourage to read more (Q17 & Q18 & Q19)
11. Description of an enjoyable reading experience (Q20)
12. Who would help you to read (Q21)
13. Parental involvement (Q22)

Generating the Questions

The types of questions were given consideration and the types of questions and wording across a further range of reading/school questionnaires were examined in an effort to further improve the reading survey, namely PISA (Shiel et al, 2000), What's the Story? (Haslett, 2002) and in particular Reading Connects (Clark & Foster, 2005). Closed questions, rank order questions and rating scales were all used. A range of types of questions was also included within the survey to ensure variety was in place so that the students did not fall into answering in a routine way. Additionally, dichotomous questions – closed, yes/no type responses – were also used for the gathering of basic information. One open ended question was included because it had the potential to provide “gems of information that

otherwise might not be caught in a questionnaire” (Cohan et al, (2009, p.330). It is a window of opportunity for the respondent to shed light on an issue (p.331).

The effect of the questionnaire on the students was also given due consideration and an attractive layout and design was felt to be an important factor in engaging the students.

Final Question selection: Stage Three

Several research team meetings facilitated in-depth discussion regarding the merits of each question and the manner in which it is framed. This process added to the suitability of the questions.

Piloting the Survey

Two librarians were asked to pilot the first draft of the JCSP Reading Survey and administer it to first year students. A summary of the changes made as a result of this review can be found in appendix 15.

The Final Survey can be found in appendix 7.

Carrying out the Survey

The survey was administered in September 2010 to all JCSP 1st year students before they embarked on any of the JCSP initiatives. A letter accompanied the survey as well as some guidelines for administration (Appendix 10 & 11) and a stamped addressed envelope (in an attempt to increase return rates). It was a non-probability sample as only JCSP students were sampled in schools. Quota sampling was then employed to ensure proportional weighting to male/female strata, reflecting their weighting in the overall JCSP population.

In the academic year 2009–2010 there were a total of 3,659 first year students participating in the JCSP made up of 2,166 boys and 1,493 girls. It was important that this proportion be represented in the random sample of returned surveys. All schools were invited to survey all their 1st year students and a random sample was taken from the respondents. Eighty eight per cent (210n) of schools returned completed surveys with 3,653 surveys returned from 1,517 female students and 2,136 male students.

Quota sampling of returned surveys was then employed to ensure that proportional weighting to male/female strata reflected their weighting in the overall JCSP population. To ensure 95 per cent confidence a sample of reading surveys from 701 boys and 609 girls was required, providing a confidence level of 3.05.

Interviews with Teachers

The preliminary results of the Reading Survey influenced the approach to the interviews with the teachers. Twelve face-to-face interviews took place in schools, during in-service courses and Make A Book exhibitions. The interviews were semi-structured and focused on capturing the authentic voice of the teachers. It was decided to replace the idea of carrying out a teacher survey/questionnaire in favour of conducting interviews (following some consideration being given to inviting teachers to complete a survey). It was felt that richer information would be gathered through interviews. The model of data collection was based on the discourse model or active interview (Antonesa et al, 2007; Holstein and Gubrium, 1999) as this facilitated a very close conversation as opposed to a formal interview. The interviewees were known quite well to the researcher from working with them over the years and this facilitated a more conversational style of interview. Indeed, the formality of recording the interviews proved a little artificial but the interviewees soon settled into the conversation often eager that their views be captured on tape. Many double-checked that the device was working mid-interview, so keen were they to be recorded.

Purposive sampling was undertaken as the cases were handpicked on the basis of judgements of their typicality, possession of the particular characteristics sought, and critical cases akin to critical events. They were all experienced teachers who had specific experience of running elements of the JCSP Literacy Strategy over the years. As Cohan et al says (2009) “the purpose is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it” (p.115). Flick (1998) refers to intensity sampling – “chosen because they embody an intensity of interesting features.” It was hoped that this sample would provide such an intensity of interesting features.

The teachers were chosen from the schools that were implementing the *Literacy Medley* approach (below) and from the case study school. There was also an openness to snowball

sampling - where individual teachers felt it was useful for me to speak with other specialist teachers in a school to gain further insights into classroom practice.

Being in the position of national co-ordinator had the potential to affect the manner in which the teachers engaged with the researcher. It was hoped that because they were known and over the years have had a relationship that is very equal in terms of power distribution, they would feel free to allow access into their real classroom world and allow the researcher to gather rich information. This turned out to be the case as the participants were more than eager to be listened to. They were very aware of the respect for their professionalism that was in place and so there was no sense that they felt that they should “only tell me what I wanted to hear.”

Working to elicit rich, meaningful, quality insights from teachers entailed taking into consideration the reality of a teacher's school life. Should all interviews only take forty minutes for example – would it be possible to get a teacher to give much more than a free class? When they were being interviewed also played a part - opportunities to meet them outside of school on the likes of in-service days were grasped. Trying to interview teachers in the staffroom, for example, was obviously problematic. Space and time had to be considered. It turned out, however, that the teachers were more than willing to organise ample time for a long interview in each case as they valued the opportunity to be listened to in all instances.

Questions were open as recommended by Holloway et al (2000) in Antonesa et al (2007) and participants were encouraged to tell stories and relate critical incidents while avoiding straightforward 'why' questions. This allowed the participants to ramble somewhat, allowing ideas to emerge. There were three key questions that were asked of all those interviewed:

1. Why do you think students are in 1st year with such poor literacy?
2. What do you think should be in place that would ensure students leave school literate?
3. What works best for you?

The Case Study

It is intended to provide an in-depth examination of the JCSP Literacy Strategy in one school, which will be called St Anthony's for the purpose of this study and examine an example of a change process in this school. The school was randomly chosen from the group of schools. According to Cohen et al, (2000) case studies strive to portray 'the close-up reality and 'thick description' of participants' lived experiences' (2000, p. 182). As my relationship is not an inspectorial one and the nature of the relationship has always been a supportive one it facilitated capturing this 'subjective reality', and facilitated honesty, trust and openness between researcher and researched which is essential according to Rooney (2005). The teachers have always been clear that my role in the support service is to gather from them what is working best and facilitate dissemination across the network of schools. This has led to a relationship that was very useful in this research. I have always been a realist and clear that we are supporting often very difficult classrooms. The knowledge we share needs to be formed from the full picture of what works and what does not work "warts and all". This perspective was translated into this piece of research and all participants were clearly told that if something does not work we need to know about it in equal measure with what does work well.

The case Study School: St Anthony's

The board of management was asked for permission to carry out this study and consent letters etc can be found in appendix 27. This approach served to provide a context for the thirty five schools involved in the *Literacy Medley* initiative in that all of the schools had a history of implementing JCSP literacy initiatives and had been involved in CPD over time in the same way as the case study school. The literacy interventions that had been implemented in St Anthony's over a period of three years, 2007-2010 were traced, and their impact was examined. The impact of whole school literacy continuous professional development (CPD) programme that has been put in place in the school was outlined and examined. It provided an opportunity to examine the full context behind a school implementing the Literacy Medley, to examine the journey that the school was on and explore how the Medley would be implemented within this context. All schools that

participated in this study had a similar history of implementing JCSP initiatives and participating in national and school based in-service programmes.

A planning meeting took place on 31st May 2010. Stacia Somers, JCSP Regional Development Officer and I met with the Deputy Principal, the JCSP co-ordinator and the English teacher. A review of current practice was conducted by the use of a staff questionnaire (Appendix 18). The questionnaire was completed by the staff during a staff meeting in early June. A full staff, day long, in-service seminar took place before school commenced on 26th August 2010. A review meeting took place on 9th November when there was a meeting with the Deputy Principal, the Principal and the learning support teachers to examine progress. It was agreed that a staff review was timely if staff were reminded of the strategies and plans that were put in place in August. This half day staff review took place on 14th November 2010. Teachers were asked to discuss how things had gone since September and complete a review questionnaire (Appendix 22).

An further formal review meeting took place in May to reflect on the year with a selection of the staff. I had a meeting with the Deputy Principal, the two JCSP co-ordinators, as well as the learning support teacher. Staff questionnaires, written evaluations of initiatives and CPD, oral feedback from full staff discussion, interviews, and focus groups were all used to gather data in the case study school over the course of the year.

Focus Group

A focus group was put in place after inclement weather disrupted the interview schedule and there was a worry that there would not be ample time to carry out sufficient interviews. Participating schools were invited to a focus group meeting on 28th January 2011 in the Curriculum Development Unit. Seven schools attended: Schools 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10. Morgan (1988) suggests that between four and twelve people per group is necessary and he also suggests over-recruiting as I did to ensure a viable group was in place.

Each participant was asked permission to be audio and video recorded for the purpose of the study and all agreed enthusiastically. Chairing/facilitating the group was an important factor as it turned out that all participants had strong opinions that they were eager to share. It was important that all had an opportunity to describe the Medley in their school setting as well as exploring the bigger issues. Additionally, they were very keen to listen and

learn from each other, eager to find out and note what was working in other schools. They were very vocal about the appropriateness of this as a form of in-service course as they found that they had an opportunity to really probe each other and learn best practice. They were invited to discuss broad issues before being asked to describe the *Literacy Medley* in their own school setting. The group met from 11am-1pm and finished with lunch where much discussion continued. Participants were asked to complete an outline of the Medley in their school (Appendix 22). A list of questions was prepared to encourage the conversation about adolescent literacy to remain focused. A key question concerned their perceived reasons for adolescent illiteracy. I also included in the discussion the issues emerging nationally about PISA 2009 and the draft literacy and numeracy plan in order to elicit their views on what should be put in place nationally to improve literacy. I also encouraged participants to expand on the reasons they found certain approaches, methodologies strategies or resources to work well with the students.

The advantage of holding a focus group, according to Morgan (1988, p.9), is that the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher, yielding collective rather than an individual view. It is from the interaction of the group that the data emerged. The focus group can generate hypotheses according to Krueger (1988) and Robson (2002, pp.284-5) and can also serve to triangulate with the other interviews and observations.

Telephone interviews

Some teachers found that they could organise a telephone interview more easily than a face-to-face interview and I took up the offer willingly. Several teachers telephoned me to give me updates and outline the progress they were making throughout the year. Sykes and Hoinville (1985) and Borg and Gall (1996) suggest that telephone interviews reach the same proportion of the population as standard interviews and produce comparable information to standard interviews. I would disagree to some extent in the context of this study as interviews with teachers within their school setting allowed them to show me how things worked, what resources were most successful, as well as providing me with opportunities to talk to other teachers while in the school and see what was going on with the students. School-based interviews provided opportunities for observing classes, for observing levels of

literacy among the students, for observing relationships and student interactions and in many instances facilitated chats with the students themselves.

Emails

Many teachers communicated via emails, providing me with progress reports throughout the year.

Validity and Reliability

The fact that I was the JCSP national co-ordinator and was part of the team that constructed the JCSP Literacy Strategy itself has implications for the objectivity of this research. It is important that the project would not be compromised by such closeness to the work. Particular care had to be and was taken at all times to ensure validity and reliability of the instruments used. My position as national co-ordinator placed me as an insider within this research project (Merton 1972) and inevitably impacted on the relationship with the participants and as a result the mixed methods methodology was chosen to ensure a variety of opportunities were in place to gain a complete picture.

There are advantages and cautions associated with insider research. Robert Merton (1972) defined the “insider” as “an individual who processes *a priori* intimate knowledge of the community and its members” (quoted in Hellawell 2006). Hockey (1993) says that as an insider, the researcher does not have to deal with culture shock, enjoys enhanced rapport with the subject, is able to measure the accuracy of the responses to questions, and is seen by the respondent as empathetic.

On the side of caution, Gunasekaia (2007) warns that the “informed perspective” of the interviewer may influence both observations and interpretations. Positivists may argue that, because of insider involvement, the researcher is no longer ‘objective’ and their results may be distorted (Kvale 1995). Additionally, neopositivists and anti-positivists claim that, because complete objectivity is impossible, the researcher's biases threaten validity or trustworthiness (Rooney 2005). Caution therefore had to be observed in the following four areas:

1. I needed to ensure that my relationship did not have a negative impact on the participants' behaviour such that they behaved in a way that they would not

normally or get into a mode where they would tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. This emerged from clear communication with each participant about the nature of the research and the absolute necessity to get a true, honest and real picture of their reality.

2. I had to ensure at all times in the analysis of data that my tacit knowledge did not lead to misinterpretation of data or false assumptions being made. This was helped by evaluating and cross examining the reliability of the qualitative data by using a variety of methodologies so that qualitative and quantitative information gathered in different ways could be triangulated. Triangulation facilitates the validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. Interviews, focus groups, surveys, the case study, questionnaires, as well as standardised testing all allowed the trends emerging from the schools to be interrogated from several angles. It was borne in mind at all times that the processes adopted and the procedures used must be able to withstand critical scrutiny. It was hoped that by combining multiple methods intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method would be overcome.
3. I also had to ensure that my perspective as national co-ordinator did not lead to misrepresentations of any data or to subconsciously distorting data. This was helped by facilitating respondent validation by providing participants with an opportunity to check how reliable and truthful my accounts of what they said or did were through returning to schools or emailing participants with the written accounts to check that it corresponded to their own 'subjective reality'. All participants asked were willing to engage in this process.
4. I also needed to guard against making assumptions or failing to address or probe important issues as a result of being in my position as national co-ordinator. Particular attention was paid to ensuring validity and reliability of findings with continuous checking that the quality of measurement procedures was such as to ensure repeatability and accuracy.

My task, indeed my professional responsibility, was to minimise the impact of biases on the research process, to carry out research in consciousness of its socially situated character and to make my position as researcher vis-à-vis the research process transparent (Hammersley 2000). By making the research process transparent and honest, it is argued that readers can

construct their own perspectives which 'are equally as valid as our own' (Cohen et al. 2000: 106). Ensuring that the research is unbiased and objective meant that I needed to consciously take each step in an unbiased manner and draw each conclusion, to the best of my ability, without introducing any personal interest or views. It was especially important to ensure that the research was rigorous, systematic, valid and verifiable as well as empirical and critical. I was careful to ensure that the correct objective and systematic procedures were followed to ensure such rigor.

Advantages of being an Insider

There are also many cited advantages of insider research that could be ascribed to my position. Some argue that insiders have a wealth of knowledge which the outsider is not privy to (Jones quoted in Tedlock 2000). It is argued that interviewees may feel more comfortable and freer to talk openly if familiar with the researcher (Tierney 1994). Insider research has the potential to increase validity due to the added richness, honesty, fidelity and authenticity of the information acquired (Rooney 2005). I have valuable knowledge and experience of the research context which an outsider would not have. When conducting the research I used this knowledge to obtain richer data (Coghlan 2003). Miles and Crush (1993) say that the interview, when conducted by an insider, achieves "a degree of depth, flexibility, richness, and vitality often lacking in conventional questionnaire-based interviews" (Miles and Crush, 1993, p. 85). Portelli (1998) asserts that such an approach facilitates the discovery of "not only what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did" (Portelli, 1998, p. 67). An insiders' perspective can help, according to DeShane" to illustrate the important nuances of meaning and understanding not to mention terms and phrases employed (DeShane, 1996, p. 97). Likewise, Robertson observes that a thorough knowledge of a culture is best gained from being a part of the culture under study (Robertson, 1983). DeShane adds that objectivity is a matter of personal opinion as to what is important and indeed Rosaldo (1989), argues that it is a myth that any researcher, insider or outsider, can become objectively detached, as if they were blank slates.

Research conducted by insiders cannot capture the total experience of an entire community. But neither can research conducted by outsiders.... No one commands the power to know all things. (Foster, 1994, p. 144)

Validity, being crucial was also ensured by the size of the sample necessary and so it was important to involve all JCSP schools and all first years in the reading survey to ensure reliability and validity. Additionally, the number of schools that participated in the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* study was also important to ensure validity and so a sample of 35 schools was chosen.

Ethical Issues

Formal permission was sought from all participating schools/teachers/students and their parents. Confidentiality was assured. Letters, forms for consent and accompanying information notes that were signed by all participants are to be found in appendix 27. The researcher was also guided by the manner in which participants wanted any feedback. A discussion took place with all participants in the interviews and focus groups about what the nature of the research was.

The possibility of an unequal power dynamic was also considered between researcher and participants. As already noted, the researcher was in the position of National Co-ordinator at the time of the research which had potential implications for the power dynamic between the researcher and participants. Every effort was made to ensure equal power relations. It must be noted that there was never an inspectorial role as co-ordinator of JCSP, the role was always clearly stated as one of support. I hoped that because I knew the participants over the years and had a relationship that was very equally based in terms of power distribution that they would feel free to allow me access into their real classroom world and allow me to gather rich information. They were very aware of the respect I have for their professionalism and the breadth of their experience and so hoped that they would in no way feel that they should 'only tell me what I want to hear'. The support service made every effort to ensure teachers in schools worked with us as equals, our job was to support them in the successful implementation of JCSP as well as learning from their expertise and, if agreed, share it within the JCSP network of schools. Nonetheless, participants in this research were further assured that they were not in any way being evaluated, rather the focus was on the impact of the of implementing the Literacy Medley.

It was not anticipated that any sensitive information would emerge to the point that original consent needed to be revisited, however, there was a readiness to do so where appropriate.

Analysis Procedures

The reading survey responses were coded and analysed using PASW (formerly SPSS) 18 software. Results from reading tests were analysed through the use of a specially designed JCSP database.

Data from the online evaluations by teachers of the initiatives were collated and coded. After a process of sorting, organising and cross sectional indexing (Mason 2010) emerging themes were identified and similar themes were noted from the outcomes of the interviews. There was particular interest in seeking out anything new. Interviews were coded and organised into thematic categories. The thematic categories that emerged supported the development of the Ten Cs as mentioned in the previous chapters. Clear themes emerged as interviews, questionnaires were coded and analysed and as patterns emerged during school observations. Large sections of the interviews were transcribed (apart from sections that proved more interesting to listen to or were not focused on the topic).

'Divergent views, negative cases or outliers' can and did provide a rich source for further analytic thinking, as you learn from them and grow your understanding to incorporate them in your theorising (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Bazeley (2009) points out that in qualitative work they cannot be ignored, but more than that, at times they provide the hint that explains what is happening for the larger sample. In the case of this research most negativity was focused on logistical issues that the particular participants managed to iron out in their own setting. However, a keen ear was maintained to gather such negative views so as to ensure unbiased reporting of findings towards positive outcomes.

I found the use of a matrix display of my qualitative data in excel very useful in establishing patterns , catagories and verifying that themes were evident in several settings. From this matrix display it was possible to ensure that themes were only noted when they were emerging in several settings. The creation of various forms of displays helped establish the patterns of categories or themes that were emerging and ensuring that they were substantiated in the available data. The matrix display provided both the frequency of responses and the detailed content of responses, allowing me to assess both patterns of association and the nature of the associations (Bazeley 2009).

Patterns of evidence were examined to explore where discourses were emerging, enabling repertoires, values and attitudes to come to the fore. It was hoped that the data would provide some useful insights into the students' view of reading and the impact of the implementation of a range of literacy initiatives but most importantly it was hoped that the experienced teachers would have some insights into what works best in Irish schools, in Irish classrooms. Theorising on the emerging findings was a critically important element of this research and involved a return visit to some of the research sites to chat further with the teachers or to check some point of information to ensure that interpretation was accurate. The theorising stage began with the first interview, the first returned survey and test result. One was on the watch for the gems, for the surprises or for the patterns that emerged from the passion of experienced teachers.

As a result of the close review and analysis of findings within this research I developed a framework within which to explore the emerging themes, issues and findings. I call this the Ten Cs. Having examined the relevant research nationally and internationally as well as the theorists who influenced my conceptual framework before considering the emerging themes from this research I formulated the framework of the ten Cs to help facilitate the exploration of critical issues relevant to the research topic. The Ten Cs were identified after I categorised recurring themes that emerged across international researchers and theorists in the area of literacy and disadvantage as well as emerging themes in data that I collected as part of this research. I found that it was possible to explore the majority of the relevant issues linked to my research question under the Ten Cs. The Ten Cs are as follows:

1. Class
2. Capital
3. Critical awareness
4. Communication
5. Curriculum and assessment
6. Care collaboration and relationships
7. Continuous Professional Development
8. Constitution of schools
9. Classrooms
10. Connection

Conclusion

The methodologies that are employed must recognise that multiplicity and complexity are the hallmarks of humanity. (Antonesa et al, 2007, p.16)

Using a mixed method approach that includes some of the thinking of critical theorists it was intended to explore the impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy in schools and specifically the *JCSP Literacy Medley*. *The Literacy Medley*, was rolled out in September 2010 in 35 second level schools participating in the JCSP. Schools were invited to implement at least three of the JCSP reading initiatives over one academic year with at least one first year JCSP group and set up a JCSP reading space/corner in their school. 1,010 students were involved and over 150 teachers. It was intended to explore first year students' attitudes to reading, their level of access to reading materials along with their views of what might help them most to improve. This was achieved through the administration of a reading survey to over 3,000 students. It was also intended to explore the impact of the new *JCSP Literacy Medley* through a case study which allowed for the context of implementation to be explored through conducting interviews /focus groups with the teachers, interviews with students involved as well as the examination of written evaluations and pre and post testing students' reading levels. Edel (1982) observes that research into education should not be so much about how it works but more about how to help it work better.

Education is not in need of research to find out how it works. It is in need of creative invention to make it work better. (Ebel, 1982, p.18)

The examination of the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* may well lead to some insights not only into how it does or does not work but may give us some insights into how it can work better in the future.



The Findings: Reading Survey



Chapter 4

Chapter 4

The Findings : An Introduction

Introduction

The findings section is divided into four chapters. This chapter provides an overview of the findings from the reading survey, chapter five provides an outline of the findings from the case study school, chapter six provides an exploration of how the *JCSP Literacy Medley* was implemented in the thirty five participating schools before drawing conclusions and recommendations in the last chapter.

This research is exploring the impact of the implementation of the *JCSP Literacy Medley* in thirty five disadvantaged schools on literacy levels of their first year students. All participating schools were serving populations of educationally disadvantaged involved in DEIS. This research is significant because there is a dearth of research into what works at second level to improve literacy in Ireland. PISA (2010) has shown us, in Ireland, that there appears to be a decline in literacy levels. If we can establish what works to improve literacy levels of educationally disadvantaged students we will not only serve to inform teachers in these schools but the learnings may also inform the whole of second level literacy education in Ireland.

One JCSP school will be examined within a case study approach to explore the impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy on developing reading literacy among groups of first year JCSP students. The case study will provide background and context. It will also facilitate the exploration of the work of the JCSP support service on promoting and facilitating the development of a school-wide approach to literacy development. This is of interest because it affords the opportunity to track a process of change within one JCSP school and to examine the impact of this change on student reading and specifically on the implementation and impact of the *Literacy Medley*.

Presentation of Findings

Findings will be presented in three chapters. Results from the Reading Survey will be presented first in chapter four, the Case Study will be outlined in chapter five and the overall findings from the *Literacy Medley* will be presented in chapter six. In this section, the emerging findings are combined with the discussion. This is in order to connect the theories

that underpin my thesis with my findings as they emerge. As themes emerge from the findings, theories that are relevant will be drawn upon in order to illuminate these findings. This will serve, not only to illuminate the findings, but also to contextualise them in theory and previous research. Such an approach will therefore serve to corroborate the findings of this research as well as aid in its interpretation. This facilitates a critical view of the overall implications of this research presenting 'theoretical linkages and speculations' (Silverman 2010 p. 356). As Silverman noted data and theory need to go hand in hand: ...

Theory without data is empty; data without theory say nothing. (Silverman 2010 p. 356)

A discussion of findings also facilitates not only the reinforcement of its importance but also allows reflection on the findings and their possible relevance to schools across the country. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) believe that data collection and data analysis do not make sense when treated in an 'intellectual vacuum' and divorced from more general and fundamental disciplinary frameworks (1996 p. 153). I have a desire to give this research a broader perspective by relating all the findings to the broader issues that have been discussed in the literature review chapter and the conceptual framework thus relating the topic to a broader social process. In this way it is hoped to develop the theoretical ideas about 'social processes and cultural forms that have relevance beyond the data themselves' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996 p. 163).

The next section will contextualise the place of the *Literacy Medley* within the JCSP literacy Strategy of the Junior Certificate School Programme by examining the hidden curriculum and the JCSP before going on to examine the findings of the study.

The Junior Certificate School Programme

All schools in the study are participating in the Junior Certificate School Programme. The JCSP approach challenges the mainstream approach and asks teachers to reconsider their traditional approach to the education of the junior cycle students.

.....the JCSP are examples of significant curriculum development, because they challenge the traditional practices and norms of the postprimary school, in both scale and intensity. (Granville, 2004, p. 56)

Schools are education sites of reproduction. The Department of Education and Skills is a powerful controlling force, according to Lynch (1988), which needs to reproduce both the skills and attitudes necessary for the capital accumulation which “funds the state machinery”. Lynch (1988) believes that schools are simultaneously both universalistic and particularistic. By particularistic she means that schools are partisan. They reproduce inequalities through the unequal treatment of pupils depending on their class, race, sex and ability. By universalistic she means that schools create certain universal experiences for all types of pupils (Lynch, 1988, p.151). The content of the formal knowledge systems which is transmitted in Irish second level schools is tightly controlled by the central organisation, the state / Department of Education and Skills: the content of what is taught, therefore, is highly universalistic in character (Lynch, 1988, p.154). Many believe that this, in itself, is therefore fair and non-discriminatory. According to Lynch (1988), particularism is promoted in schools as a result of the relationship between the Department, the middle class and the bourgeoisie. It seems to me that the DEIS schools would lose out in such a system, where there is a hidden message of “keep up or get out.” It is my experience that schools whose intake suddenly changes to working class from being primarily middle class can take a while to understand the needs of the students and may briefly adopt this attitude. However, it is my experience that the majority of teachers in DEIS schools develop an understanding of their students and take a different approach. They are empathetic and strive to bridge the educational gaps between their working class students and their middle class peers. They recognise, sometimes consciously, but often unconsciously the *hidden curriculum* that is very present in schools.

Curriculum and The Hidden Curriculum

According to Lynch (1989), Jackson (1968) was the first to use the term “hidden curriculum” in *Life in the Classroom*. Here he acknowledges that students have to come to terms with the crowded classroom, required to “wait, and cope with denial of their desires and social distractions and most particularly the unequal power relations that give the teacher authority to command the pupils attention.” Some would say that the very structure of

schools as institutions prepares students to be drones in a capitalist society. Bowles and Gintis in *Schools in Capitalist America* (1976) locate their debate on the hidden curriculum in the context of the larger social system. They suggest that schools reproduce the existing social relations of capitalist society by reproducing the consciousness necessary for such relations. The particular social relations which they deem important in the reproductive process were principally: the hierarchical division of labour between teachers and pupils; the alienating character of pupils' school work itself; and the "fragmentation in work...reflected in the institutionalized and often destructive competition among students through continual and ostensibly meritocratic ranking and evaluation" (Bowles and Gintis, p.131). They believe that schools help the maintenance of the capitalist system. The hierarchical division of labour in school fosters compliance which is necessary for the capitalist structures. They also point out that the experience of school differs for individual students helped by the constant testing and grading of students.

Apple (1995) in part agrees with Lynch (1999) that economic struggles offer part of the answer to the conditions but he claims that we cannot ignore education as he searches for what can be done to counter the process of capital accumulation and the system's need to legitimise the process. He sees school as a site of reproduction and production. Apple (in *Education and Power*, 1995) claims that the state supports "the petty bourgeoisie" reproducing itself through supporting technical/administrative knowledge. They are the group that will find this type of knowledge most useful as, according to Apple, as it is organised "according to the principles of possessive individualism... This knowledge is commodified and accumulated as a form of cultural capital by the most powerful interests in the economy and state" (Apple, 1995, p.153). This learning has had a profound impact on the experience of students in DEIS schools as it translates the experienced curriculum into the timetable that facilitates the points race. Regardless of your stage of development as a student you are very likely to experience the universalistic. So a first year from a severely disadvantaged background, perhaps living in a bed and breakfast with a chaotic home life with a reading level of an eight year old is very likely to be brought through the "curriculum" and prepared for the junior certificate in the same way as a middle class first year with a reading level of a fifteen year old. Being treated the same is not necessarily fair and does not necessarily lead to emancipation or equality.

The resistance, as Apple (1995) calls it, to the hidden curriculum, is accepted only in part as many students and teachers reject and/or mediate its logic and social relations.

This very process of resistance, mediation, and transformation (part of which currently goes by the name of declining test scores and lowered standards, discipline problems, lack of motivation and the like) cause new forms of technical knowledge to be employed (in curricular form and so on) just as in the offices and factories. (Apple, 1995, p.153)

It is, according to Apple, as a result of these altered forms of control and social relations that new technical/administrative and new ideologies are ultimately produced “in and by the educational apparatus.”

Challenge to the Hidden Curriculum

It could be said that the JCSP offers schools and teachers a mechanism of challenging the hidden curriculum as it facilitates a non-traditional cross curricular approach through providing teachers with weekly time to meet and plan. It also encourages teachers to engage in formative assessment and differentiated teaching. It challenges the stereotyping of literacy teaching that believes this is the job of the learning support and English teachers and provides real strategies, resources and methodologies to encourage all subject teachers to get involved. It encourages schools to become less rigid, to base their teaching plans on the actual needs of the students in front of them rather than the next chapter in the textbook. The work has presented huge challenges to the support service over the years. Many teachers see the intrinsic value of the JCSP approach while many others pose challenges to the approach. Teachers from the tradition of *techne* (Gleeson, 2009) typically ask “why should I change when what I am doing works?” “My students get on very well in the Junior Certificate.” “It is the primary schools that should have the literacy thing sorted. What are they doing about it?” “I have no training for this kind of thing.” “Where would I get the time to do this kind of thing? It takes me all my time to get these guys through their exam.” These are quotes from teachers attending in-service courses who had students in their classes with an average reading level of eight year olds - five years behind. It was, however, someone else's problem, in their view. These are the teachers who see themselves as “the fountains of information, technicians who use the 'tricks of the trade' and follow the manual” (Gleeson, 2009, p.4). These teachers had the know-how to get their

students through the examinations successfully, illiterate, but on paper passing the examination (and with flying colours in most cases). Why would they change?

Luckily, we have teachers who can see beyond this, who choose praxis. Certainly fifteen years ago I would have been amazed to find the sort of cross curricular work that is now commonplace in many JCSP schools. Irish teachers tend to enjoy the isolation and the power that single subject teaching allows them and so it can take some courage to take a different approach.

The next section explores the findings of the Reading Survey, following on from that the next chapter explores the implementation of the JCSP literacy Strategy and *Literacy Medley* in the case study school and chapter six examines the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* in the thirty five schools.

Findings I

JCSP Student Reading Survey

The student reading survey was administered in September 2010 to all JCSP 1st year students before they embarked on any of the JCSP initiatives. It was a non probability sample with JCSP students sampled in schools. Non Respondents attrition and respondent mortality had to be considered hence all 233 schools who had JCSP 1st years were invited to survey all their JCSP 1st year students and a random sample was taken from the respondents. Each school received a quantity of surveys based on the number of participating students and a letter accompanied the survey as well as some guidelines for administration and (Appendix 8).

In the academic year 2009–2010 there was a total of 3,659 first year students participating in the JCSP on the official Department of Education and Skills database made up of 2,166 male students and 1,493 female students. Eighty eight per cent (210n) of schools returned completed surveys with 3,653 surveys returned from and 2,136 male students and 1,517 female students.

Quota sampling of returned surveys was then employed to ensure that proportional weighting to male / female strata reflected their weighting in the overall JCSP population. To ensure 95 per cent confidence a sample of reading surveys from 701 boys and 609 girls was required providing a confidence level of 3.

Reading Survey Returns from Schools		
Schools that returned Reading Surveys	210	88.00 %
Schools that didn't return Reading Surveys	23	9.00 %
Schools that don't have 1 st Years	7	3.00 %
Returned Reading Surveys:		
Female		1,517
Male		2,136
TOTAL		3,653
Official Number of JCSP 1st Year Students from DES		
29th January 2010 - latest figures available from DES		3,659
Sampled		
Female		701
Male		609
TOTAL		1,310

Table 4.1: Reading Survey Returns from Schools

Findings: The Reading Survey

The findings are described in percentages throughout the report. Differences in the sample by gender were analysed using PASW (formerly SPSS) 18. The statistical test chi-square tests of independence was used predominantly to explore background differences in the main variables. The findings from the reading survey are grouped according to the thirteen sections of the survey as follows:

The Reading Survey is divided into thirteen sections as follows:

1. Levels of reading enjoyment
2. Levels of ownership of reading materials
3. Regularity of reading
4. Different types of reading materials
5. Favoured reading location
6. Basic reading strategies
7. Attitude to Reading
 - a. Reluctance to read
 - b. Self-efficacy
8. Importance of Reading
9. Conditions that would encourage more reading
10. Choice of who could help with reading
11. Preferred reading activities
12. Preferred types of reading
13. Parental attitudes to reading

The following section summarises the findings of the survey under each of the thirteen sections.

1. Levels of reading enjoyment

Eighty two per cent of students only like to read a little or not at all. Only 8 per cent of boys and 10 per cent of girls like reading a lot. Twenty Seven per cent of students do not like reading at all and another 55 per cent only like reading a little. Eighty two per cent of students therefore only like to read a little or not at all.

These are high figures compared to the 10 per cent that did not enjoy reading, for example, in the National Literacy Trust's study on attitudes to reading in the *Young People's Reading and Writing - Attitudes to Reading Report (2011)*. This is an important finding as enjoyment of reading is significantly related to reading attainment according to National Literacy Trust (2011), with young people who are at or above the expected reading level for their age

enjoying reading more than young people who are below the expected level for their age. Reading for enjoyment has a positive relationship with reading achievement according to PISA 2009 (ERC, 2010B, p. 6) but unfortunately 42 per cent of Irish students reported in that study that they never engaged in reading for enjoyment. Certainly JCSP students are well represented in this figure.

Only 8 per cent of boys and 10 per cent of girls like reading a lot.

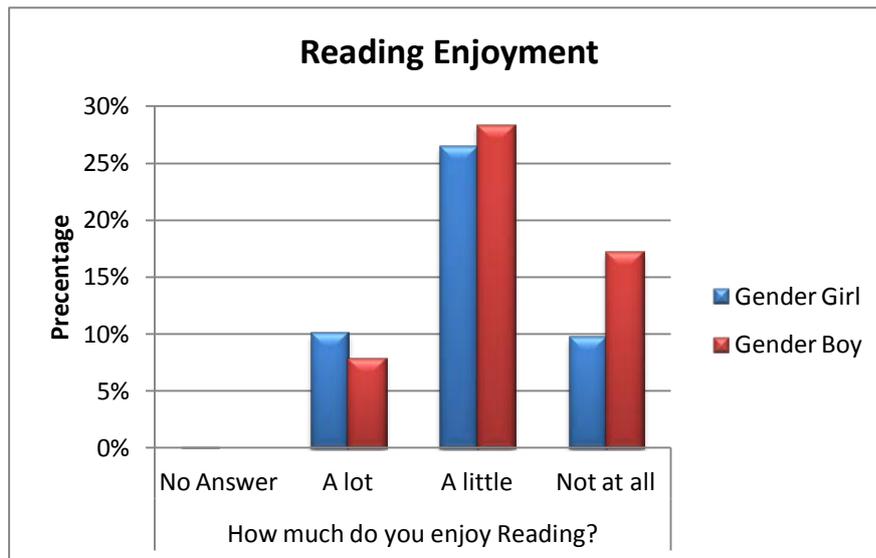


Figure 2 Percentage of girls and boys who enjoyed reading according to the reading survey returns

2. Levels of ownership of reading materials

Fifty Three per cent of students have fewer than 25 books at home with 27 per cent with only between 1-10 books at home which illuminates the poor access to books that these students have. The ERC report on Literacy in disadvantaged primary schools (1998) found that 19.6 per cent of 6th class students had between 0 and 10 books at home. There is a very clear and strong relationship between larger number of books in the home and higher scores on reading tests as those who struggled with reading were 'less likely to have books of their own at home' (ERC, 2010, p. 15).

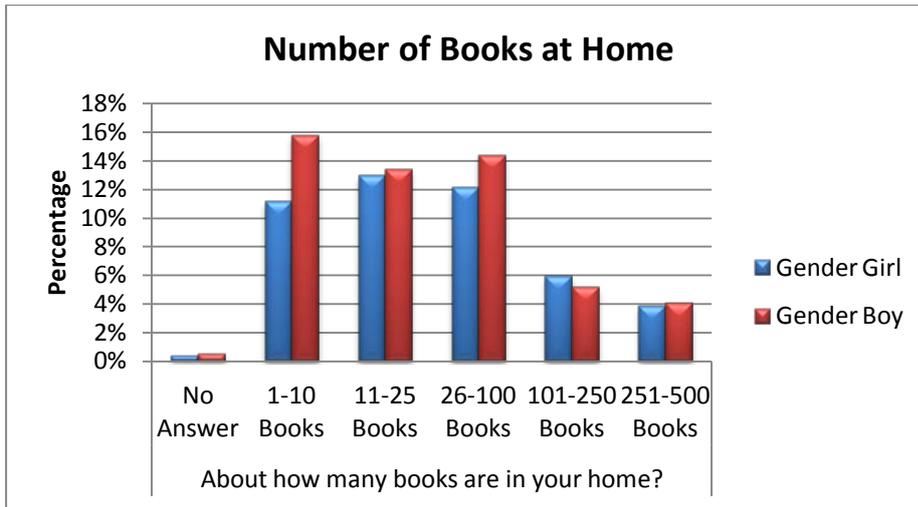


Figure 3: Number of books in the home according to reading survey returns

According to PISA 2009 (ERC 2010) students with 0-10 books had a mean score that was 115 points lower than students with over 500 books' (p.7).

3. Regularity of Reading

Seventy Six per cent of the JCSP 1st year students read for the minimal amount of time 0-1 hours while 77 per cent spend between 1-4 hours watching television with only 22 per cent spending over 1 hour reading. 62 per cent spend 1-4 hours on computer games – Xbox and the like.

The frequency with which young people read is related to their reading skills according to attitudes to the national literacy trust (2010). Young people who struggle with reading are more likely to say that they rarely or never read compared with young people who are at or above the expected reading level. The mean score of students who read for enjoyment for more than one hour per day was 93 points higher than that of students who did not read for enjoyment in Ireland in PISA 2009, (ERC 2010 p.7). Additionally, socio-economic background mediates, at least to some extent, the association between frequency of reading and reading achievement (ERC, 2010 p.7).

The internet and computer games were ubiquitous according to Eivers et al. (2010), with only 9 per cent of sixth class pupils reporting that they did not spend any time on schooldays using the internet or playing computer games. 'The 21 per cent who spent at least one to two hours per school day on each activity (i.e., totalling a *minimum* of two hours each day)

were classified as high users of technology while the remaining pupils were classified as moderate users. The high group obtained significantly lower scores on reading and mathematics than pupils who reported moderate usage' (Eivers et al., 2010, p. 51). There may be little schools can do about the games usage but they can certainly aim to increase time spent reading.

4. Types of Reading Materials

Thirty two per cent of students never read newspapers with 40 per cent never reading instructions. However, 75 per cent read text messages every day, 55 per cent websites, 50 per cent bebos, 49 per cent facebook and a further 33 per cent MSN and 30 per cent emails. Compared to the percentages that read fiction (22 per cent) non fiction (13 per cent) graphic novels (17 per cent) and only 7 per cent reading cookbooks ..screen reading is certainly favoured. It is clear what the students are choosing what they read, these are certainly a multi media group.

These are also worrying figures when compared to the ERC in Reading literacy in disadvantaged schools (1998) figures. The proportions of sixth class pupils who read magazines or comics for fun was high, with only 12per cent of sixth class pupils indicating that they hardly ever or never did so while 59per cent of JCSP students never or rarely read these items. The 32 per cent of sixth class pupils in the ERC study (1998) who read a comic or magazine on a daily basis have a significantly higher mean achievement score (102.2) than those who did so a few times a month (98.0), or hardly ever or never (95.0). Such a revelation from the survey encouraged me to hold a Superhero competition for JCSP schools to encourage graphic novels and several of the Medley schools participated. Students were asked to read about Superhero origins and design their own superheroes in order to encourage the reading of graphic novels and comics.

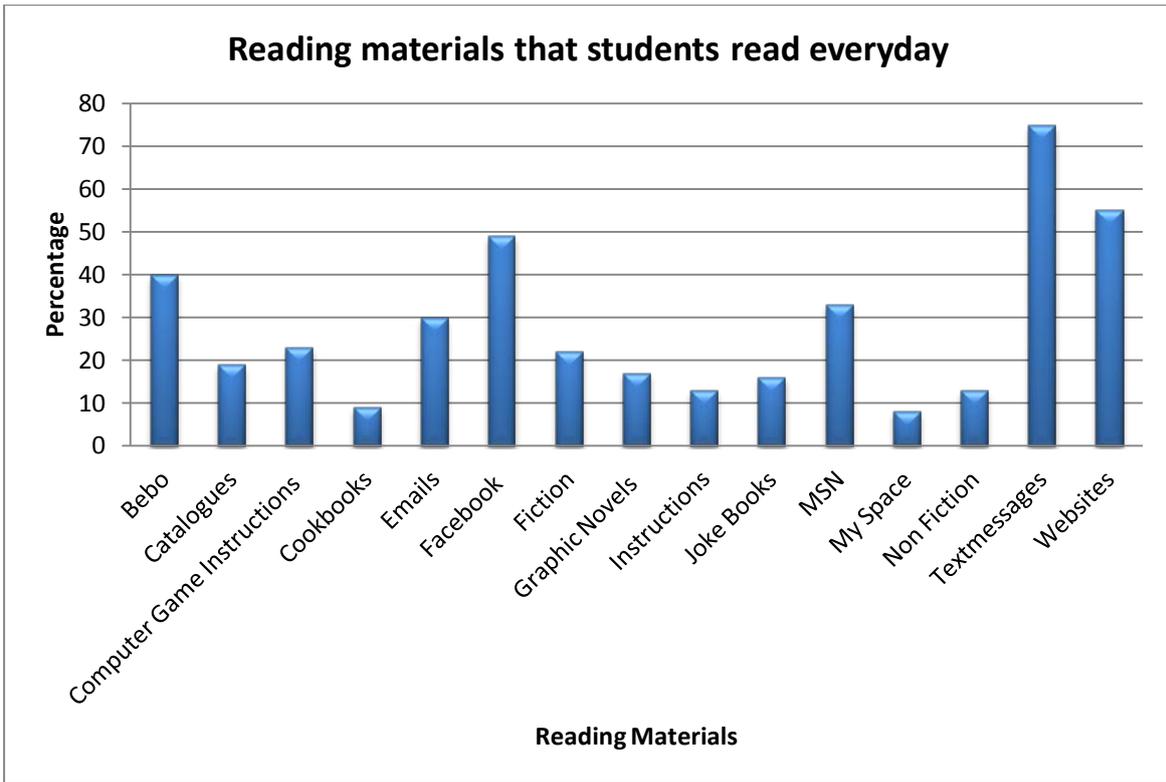


Figure 4: Reading Materials that Students Read each day according to reading survey returns.

Thirty two per cent of sixth class pupils read newspapers in the ERC study on a daily basis, but only 25 per cent of JCSP 1st years do so and interestingly more boys (16 per cent) than girls (10 per cent) are involved on this occasion. Those who read newspapers in the ERC study on a daily basis had a significantly higher achievement score than those who hardly ever read newspapers. Thirty two per cent of JCSP students state that they never read a newspaper.

Here is a clear indication that newspapers in the classroom needs encouragement.

5. Where students like to Read Most

With near half the students (48.5 per cent) preferring to read at home and this may indicate that they view reading positively and as a leisure activity. Only 15 per cent choose a library and 31 per cent school with 42 per cent saying that they only read in school. This may indicate a need to develop home reading programmes in parallel with the school based programmes.

6. Reading Strategies

Students were asked what strategies they used when reading and remarkably 37 per cent of students stated that they do not have a reading strategy to fall back. Nearly 30 per cent of students said that they will sound out a word if they don't know it, another 18 per cent will ask for help and 15 per cent will try reading the whole sentence to figure out the word. Nineteen per cent will guess at the meaning and a further 11 per cent will just skip the word. This is clearly an area that needs attention at second level.

7. Young people's opinion as to whether they read enough

Sixty eight per cent of JCSP students say that they read enough. Encouragingly 30 per cent said that they would like to read more while only 18 per cent of young people in the *National Literacy Trust Study* (2011) said that they want to read more.

8. Attitudes to Reading

Thirty four per cent of the JCSP students find reading hard which is encouraging as it may be expected that this would be a higher proportion. More boys (20 per cent) than girls (14 per cent) find it hard. Twenty two per cent say that they find reading easy. Fifty three per cent do not love reading while a strong 43 per cent either agree or strongly agree that they love reading. These findings compare well to the national literacy trust study (2011). Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a very strong relationship between reading attainment and young people's perceptions of their own reading ability according to National Literacy Trust (2011 p. 38).

Students were asked to recall a memory when they really enjoyed reading and relate what made it enjoyable. Interestingly, there was an overall positive response to this opportunity with many remembering being read to by their primary school teacher as their highlight. Overall, it facilitated positive memories of enjoyable reading moments which are very encouraging, providing a lot of possibilities for the rekindling of a love of reading.

I remember my teacher reading in primary school the book called holes it was a very good book.

Others remembered reading in their room:

One time I read a book in my own bed. I love novels or horror it makes reading enjoyable for me because it's interesting and it gives more ideas.

Others remembered a specific book

I had a soccer book like when I was around 10/Reading *The boy in the Striped Pyjamas/Prince and the Pauper*, that's one I thought was really interesting because it was a fun book and it was called *Horse and Pony*. At home in my room when I got a Liverpool book/I liked reading the Arsenal annual it told me about the great season Arsenal had...

Although only 10 per cent of responses were negative, the one thing that was noticeable from the answers was the determination with which the students answered this question - many wrote in block capitals - many even indented the page with their pen because of the fervent way they wrote the answer. Most answers were short but the message was clear:

NEVER!!!!

I Hate reading!!!!

What do students say would encourage them to read?

Seventy one per cent of the students said they would read more if they enjoyed it more; 54 per cent if it were easier; 32 per cent would read more if their friends read more; and 32 per cent would read more if someone read aloud to them.

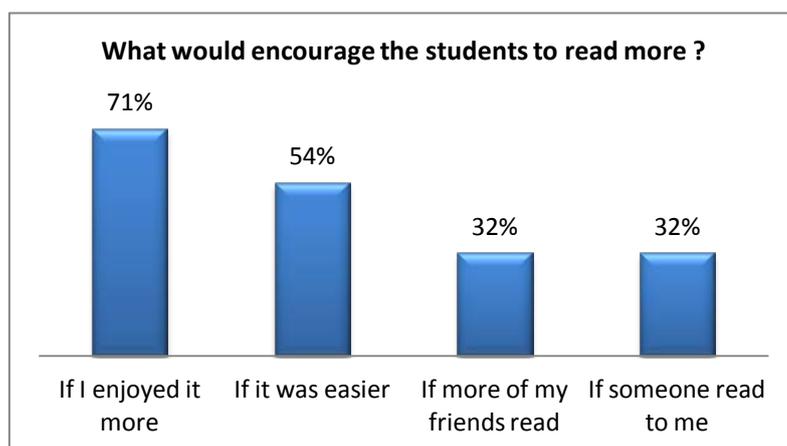


Figure 5 What would encourage the students to read more according to the Reading Survey returns.

Seventy one per cent would like to choose their own books; 63 per cent would enjoy making their own website or magazine; and 62 per cent would like to help younger children to read.

Over 50 per cent would like to read on the internet as well as engaging in reading games. The lowest choice surprisingly was having somebody read to them (34 per cent).

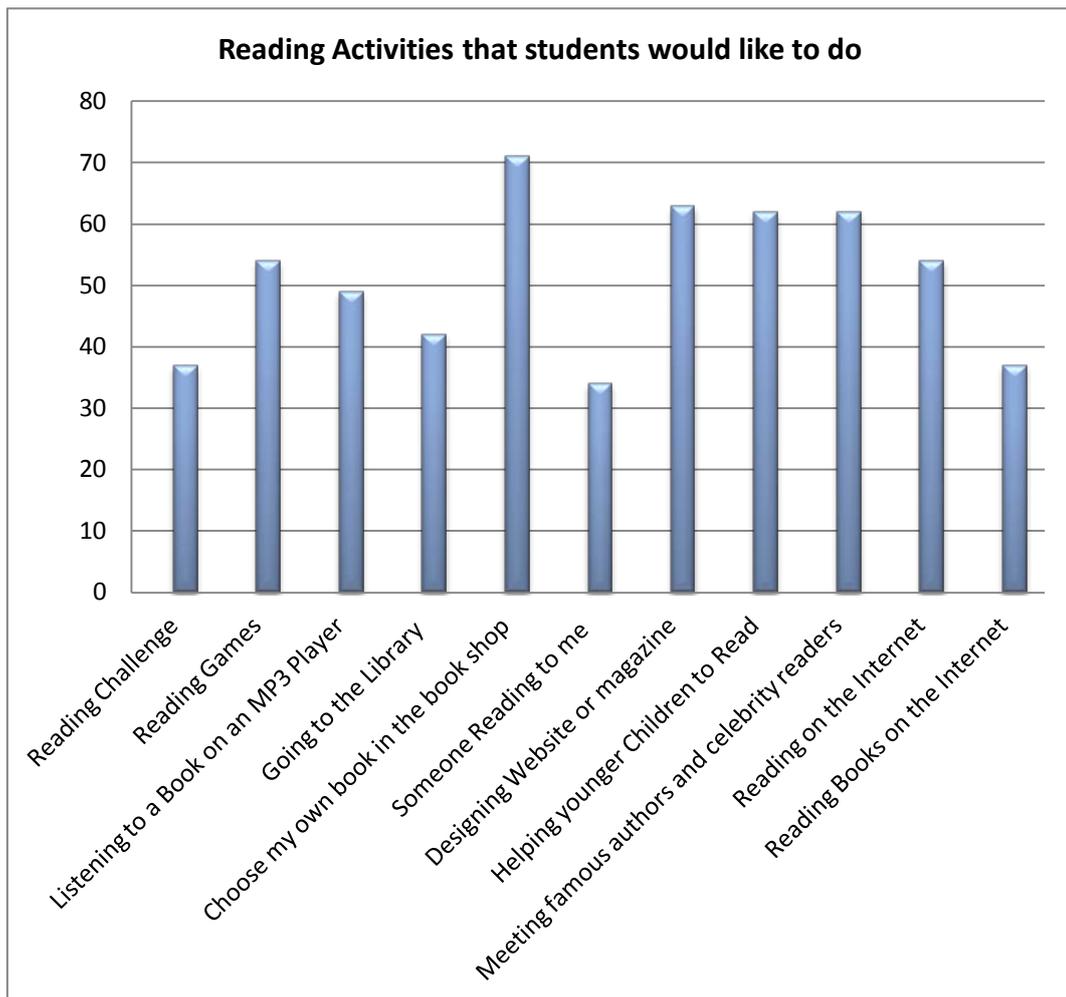


Figure 6 : Reading Activities that students would like to do according to the Reading Survey

Half of the students say that they only read when they have to and of these 31 per cent were boys with 22 per cent girls. Thirty nine per cent of the JCSP students find reading boring and of these more are boys (23 per cent) than girls (16 per cent). Thirty three per cent stated that they do not like books. Half of the students find that reading does not help them relax, with however 44 per cent saying that they like being read to. Sixty one per cent do not like reading aloud in class with 78 per cent preferring to read silently. Many students may therefore find classrooms where they are unexpectedly asked to read an unpleasant environment and this should be taken into account by their teachers.

9. Importance of Reading

A massive 84 per cent of students agree that reading is important and 89 per cent recognise that reading will help them get better examination results. Additionally, 82 per cent realise that reading will help them to get a better job. Clearly the JCSP students have no doubt as to the benefits of reading something that could be capitalised upon by schools.

10. What would encourage the students to read more?

Seventy one per cent would read more if they enjoyed it more, 54 per cent if it were easier, 32 per cent would read more if their friends read more and 32 per cent would read more if someone read aloud to them.

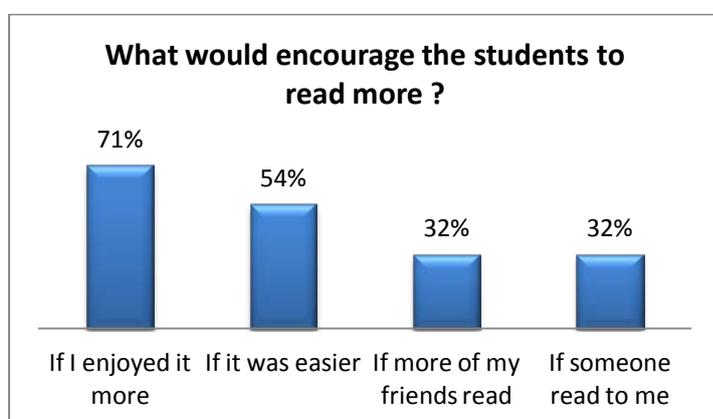


Figure 7: What would encourage the students to read more according to the reading survey returns

11. Reading Activities that students would like to do

Seventy one per cent would like to choose their own books in a shop, 63 per cent would enjoy making their own website or magazine and 62 per cent would like to help younger children to read. Over 50 per cent would like to read on the internet as well as engaging in reading games. The lowest choice was having somebody read to them at only 34 per cent.

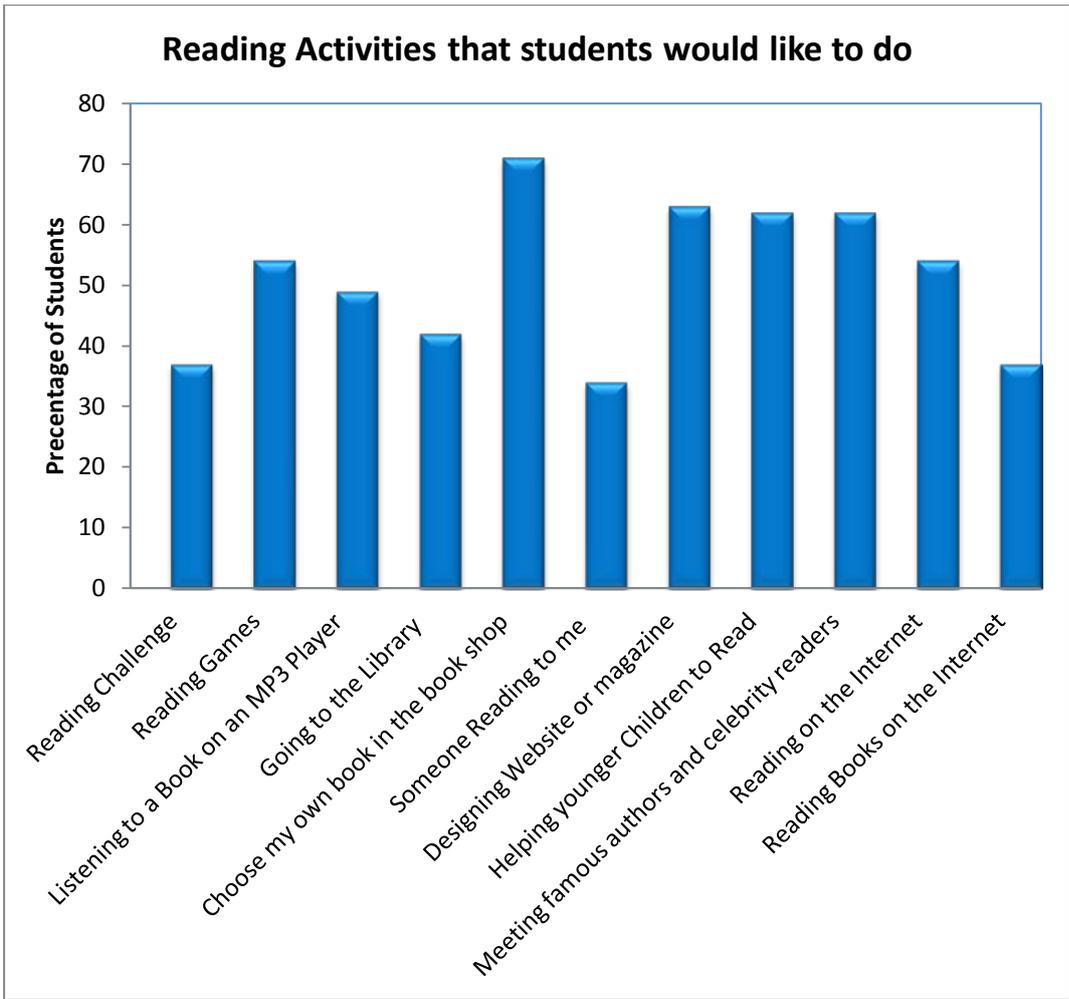


Figure 8: Reading activities that students like to do, according to the reading survey returns.

This is a most important section as the students made clear statements as to what they would like to do regarding their reading. Clearly, many have strong views about choosing their own reading materials with 71 per cent wanting to be involved in choosing a book.

12. Help with Reading

Family members came out tops in whom a student would choose to get reading help from at 47 per cent with teachers coming second at 39 per cent. Many (37 per cent) did not want help from anyone. Help from older student came in amazingly low at 16 per cent and librarians were only counted by 10 per cent as someone they would look for reading help with - perhaps an indication of the small proportion of JCSP librarians (only thirty of the 240 schools).

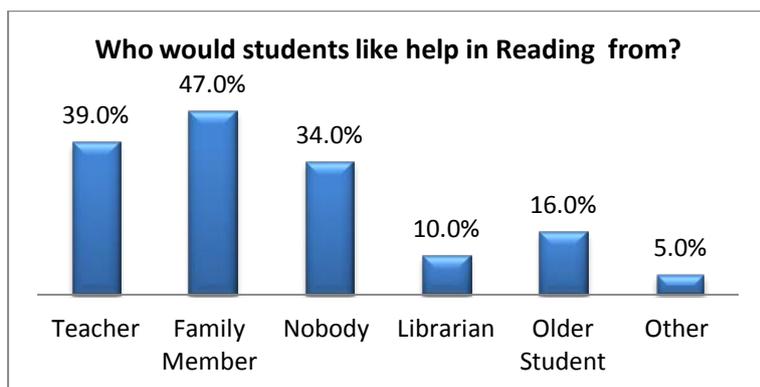


Figure 9: Who the students would like help from according to the reading survey returns

13. Parental Involvement

Ninety four per cent of parents think it is important to be good at reading according to the students with 67 per cent saying that their parents always think this and 27 per cent stating sometimes. Only 3 per cent disagreed with this statement. Eighty four per cent said that their parents encouraged them to read with 55 per cent always and 30 per cent sometimes. Only 10 per cent of the JCSP students said that their parents never encourage them to improve reading. These students were very clear in saying that the majority of their parents regarded reading highly.

Summary

The survey provides an insight into the students' view of reading and reading materials as well as their preferred place to read and with whom. The results highlight the poor access to books with 53 per cent of students have fewer than 25 books at home, the poor view of reading with 27 per cent not liking reading at all. Seventy six per cent of the JCSP first year students read for the minimal amount of time (0-1 hours) however spending too much time on computer games with 62 per cent spending over 3 hours per day on computer games. Screen reading is certainly favoured with over 50 per cent reading websites/facebook every day. It is clear what the students are choosing what they read, in that these are certainly a multi media group. An astonishing 32 per cent of these first year students never read a newspaper. Nearly half the students (48.5 per cent) preferring to read at home over school. Many of the students (37 per cent) claim not to have a reading strategy to fall back on which might explain why 34 per cent find reading hard leading to 53 per cent stating that they do

not love reading and nearly half say that they only read when they have to despite the fact that a massive 84 per cent of them agree that reading is important for exams and for life and claim that 94 per cent of their parents agree.

How can schools encourage more reading? Well, according to the students themselves 71 per cent would read more if they enjoyed it more, 54 per cent if it were easier, 32 per cent would read more if their friends read more and 32 per cent would read more if someone read aloud to them. Seventy one per cent would like to choose their own books in a shop, 63 per cent would enjoy making their own website or magazine and 62 per cent would like to help younger children to read. Over 50 per cent would like to read on the internet as well as engaging in reading games. Although some students said that they would not choose to get help from anyone with their reading (37 per cent), others would like help from home (47 per cent) as well as from their teachers (39 per cent).

So this reading survey has afforded an insight into the views on reading of the first year students in JCSP. It certainly brings clarity that access to books is often problematic and that strategies to encourage and engage students in reading are important in any literacy strategy so as to improve the amount of reading activity and thus improve reading.



The Findings: Case Study School



Chapter 5

The Findings II

Chapter 5

The Case Study School

In this chapter it is intended to provide an in-depth examination of the journey one school has taken within the JCSP Literacy Strategy and examine the manner in which they implemented the literacy Medley. The case study provides an opportunity to outline the preparatory work that was in place before the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* through continuous professional development as well as their experience of implementing JCSP initiatives over the years. It provides an example of a change process in a JCSP school. It will serve to provide a context for the thirty five schools involved in the *Literacy Medley* initiative. All of these schools, over time, have been provided with much the same CPD programme from the JCSP support service as this case study school, which I will call St Anthony's. Typically, representatives from all JCSP schools attend national in-service off site and all thirty five schools have also been in receipt of full staff in-service days on a school-wide approach to literacy development and the JCSP Literacy strategy. The next chapter will explore the manner in which the *Literacy Medley* was implemented in these thirty five schools as a result of analysing the interviews, the reading surveys of first year students, the focus group discussion, the emails, the online evaluations and the reading test scores while this chapter stays focused on how one school prepared, over time, to implement this initiative.

Certain themes emerged in the case study school and further ones emerged in the Medley schools. Having examined the relevant research nationally and internationally as well as the theorists who influenced the conceptual framework, before considering the emerging themes from this research, I formulated the framework of the Ten Cs to help facilitate the exploration of critical issues relevant to the research topic. The Ten Cs were identified after recurring themes were categorised that had emerged across international researchers and theorists in the area of literacy and disadvantage as well as emerging themes in this data. The majority of these themes can be examined under the Ten Cs. The framework of the Ten Cs facilitates a structure for the discussion, contextualising and the interpretation of the findings.

Ten Cs: 1. Class; 2. Capital; 3. Critical awareness; 4. Communication; 5. Curriculum and assessment; 6. Care; 7. Continuous professional development; 8. Constitution of schools; 9. Classrooms; and 10. Connection.

Themes such as continuous professional development, critical awareness, space to read, constitution of schools and care particularly surfaced in the case study school.

It is intended to trace the literacy interventions that have been implemented in St Anthony's over a period of three years, 2007-2010, and examine their impact. It is also intended to outline the whole school literacy continuous professional development (CPD) programme that has been put in place in the school and examine the changes, if any, that this programme has brought to the school. It is hoped that this focus on one school will afford the opportunity to examine the influences on the implementation of the new Literacy Medley. The JCSP Medley invites schools to run three reading initiatives with first years over one academic year.

To start I am going to explore the continuous professional development (CPD) programme that is typically available to JCSP schools to ensure clarity is provided to the reader about the type of and background to the CPD that was provided in St Anthony's school.

JCSP Continuous Professional Development Programme (CPD)

The JCSP support service was charged with providing CPD programmes that supported a school wide approach to literacy development in JCSP schools. The CPD provides teachers with a research-based context towards conceptualising a school-wide approach to literacy in their school. The intention of the CPD is to provide teachers with a potential toolbox of literacy strategies (suited to each subject discipline) that they can dip into. But more, it facilitates a new discourse to emerge in schools about disadvantage, its impact on student learning and the power schools and teachers have to make a difference. It challenges the commonly held beliefs about disadvantaged teenagers and opens the discussion about the impact of these inequalities on the learning in the classroom. Fundamentally, is it about exploring the mismatch that sometimes occurs between working class students and school before exploring how best the students can be supported to experience an enriched educational experience. Additionally, it facilitates teachers to learn from each other and it has created professional communities of practice. This process of engagement with a school

and the network of JCSP schools through the JCSP strategy incorporates possibilities to fulfill Fullan's seven premises of effective change strategies within the theory of action (2006) in that it has the potential to create motivation, capacity building and learning in context within a reflective action framework. The process of revisiting the issues over the academic year also facilitates and encourages another of Fullan's (2006) essential premises: persistence and flexibility. Finally, the national in-service courses facilitates what Fullan calls change of context as it leads on to establish "lateral capacity building" in which teachers and schools learn from each other as well as facilitating tri-level engagement as Principals collaborate - a practice that could lead to systemic change according to Fullan:

When this happens two change forces are unleashed, namely, knowledge (best ideas flow); and motivation (people identify with larger parts. Meetings across districts of the system). (Fullan, 2006, p.10)

International research based CPD, according to St Patrick's College's response to the draft literacy and numeracy plan (2011, p. 13 - 14), suggests that there is no single method for teaching literacy. What matters most is the level of teacher knowledge relating to literacy (International Reading Association, 2000). St Patrick's also considers that, in relation to DEIS schools, action plans and targets should be devised after professional development has occurred and some initial success has been realised in raising achievement (Guskey, 1986; Kennedy, 2009). DEIS schools should be supported in designing a cognitively challenging and engaging curriculum framework for their own particular school. The JCSP CPD Programme aims to provide this support.

St Anthony's School: The Background

This case study school is a girls' secondary school in North Dublin and is part of the DEIS Support programme. The school has been part of the JCSP since 2006. In February 2010, according to the Department of Education and Skills database, there were 494 students in the school. 225 of these were at Junior Cycle and of these 76 students were in the JCSP – 36 first years, 25 in second year and 15 third years. They also offer Transition Year, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational.

There were two JCSP co-ordinators in place in the school. They were provided with the allocated time to run the Programme and were supported by a team in the school who regularly met. There was a strong management team within the school and significant support for the JCSP programme in evidence. The school had been in an ongoing process of reviewing their DEIS plan, particularly with regard their literacy plan and as a result contacted the JCSP support service to support that review and provide an in-service seminar to the staff in September 2010. An input to the staff had already been provided in the first year of their joining the programme in 2006 when an overview of the JCSP programme was presented, inducting the staff into the programme. The following year the school requested a full staff in-service seminar in literacy and numeracy. That seminar provided the staff with an opportunity to explore their views on disadvantage, their views on why the students had poor literacy skills as well as an overview of the latest research findings. The staff were also provided with some strategies to support the teaching of keywords as a reading strategy as well as some Directed Activities Towards Text (DARTS).

Along with the CPD programme the school have implemented a range of JCSP initiatives over time:

JCSP Initiatives that the school has been involved in since joining the Programme:			
Year 1: 2007	Year 2: 2008	Year 3: 2009	Year 4: 2010
Christmas Celebration	Christmas Celebration	Summer Celebration	Summer Celebration
Cross Curricular Resource	Field Trip	Book Review	Christmas Celebration
Field Trip	Make Your Own Opoly	Christmas Celebration	Community Service
Reading Challenge	Maths Games	Field Trip	Cross Aged Paired Maths
Drop Everything and Read	English Pen Pal	Study Skills	Field Trip
	Paired Reading	Paired Reading Top Up	History
	Readalong	Storytelling	Study Skills
	Reading Challenge	Photography (English)	Film Making Initiative
		Dictionary, Thesaurus, Subject Topic Boxes	Drop Everything and Read
		Reading Corner	Reading Challenge
			Storytelling
Literacy Initiatives highlighted in green			Accelerated Reader

Table 5.1: JCSP Initiatives that the case study school has been involved in since joining the Programme

The initiatives that the school had been involved in were evaluated by the organisers each year. So far the school have implemented 13 different JCSP literacy initiatives. Ten had been evaluated using the JCSP online evaluation tool on the JCSP website by the teachers at time of writing. Many involved pre and post testing using the NFER Nelson group reading test 2 (Cornwall et. al., 1998). All have involved the use of the associated JCSP profiling statements with the students.

Below is an outline of the main findings from these evaluation reports from the school, based on the information that the school provided via the online evaluations as well as from field notes and interviews.

Reading Challenge and a DEAR project

The school ran a JCSP Reading Challenge and a DEAR project in their first year when they began the process of building their appropriate book stock based on the results of carrying out the JCSP literacy review.

We ran a 'Drop Everything' and a 'Reading Challenge' simultaneously as our literacy initiative with ninety five students involving twenty teachers. The Reading Challenge ran over the course of six weeks. Students and teachers were asked to 'drop everything and read' for three class periods per week. In preparing for the challenge we firstly purchased the books, we then divided the books into three levels and colour coded them with stickers. I used the JCSP recommended book list when choosing books. ...Students were asked to read as many books as possible. (Teacher)

Peer Tutoring Project

The following year the school participated in a peer tutoring project which helped develop their links with the local library and primary schools as well as an opportunity to train their students as reading tutors. The students gained confidence in their own reading because they were reading at their own level and were given time to prepare. They enjoyed the status of being tutors as they enjoyed interacting with the younger children and took on the role very seriously according to the staff. The success of this initial project was also developed in subsequent years.

The 30 students took their tutoring role very seriously. They prepared their reading and loved keeping their own records. They seemed to mature when dealing with the younger kids. They had a little party with the kids at the end of the six weeks - giving their tutees crisps and chocolate. (Teacher)

One student said

God, this is like being in college.

All students improved their literacy levels.

Storytelling

Storytelling was added to the range on offer the following year in 2009 with 124 second year and 103 first year students involved.

We wanted to get the students' imagination going. We invited the storyteller Niall de Burca to visit the school. We ran three hourly sessions and invited all of the first years, second years and third year JCSP class to attend. The teachers who would otherwise have had those classes came to watch and many others who happened to be free joined also. (Teacher)

It was a great success according to the teachers and students.

JCSP Reading Corner A Space to Read



All of the Medley schools had implemented literacy initiatives over the years leading up to the implementation of the Medley. As part of participating in the Medley they were provided with funding to put in place a JCSP Reading Corner which is created to provide students with a comfortable space to read for pleasure and to allow for appropriate books and reading materials to be put in place. This initiative can be used to create a

reading corner with shelves that have books on a variety of topics, targeting a range of reading levels and provide a wide range of genres, both fiction and non-fiction. Additionally, a dictionary grant was provided to each school. Sofas, coffee tables and bean bags and MP3 players could also be a feature of the reading corner.



St Anthony's school put in place a JCSP reading corner in their library complete with couches, book caracals and a warm mat.

They also purchased a number of class sets of novels for whole class reading.

Additionally, new shelving transformed the space with fresh stock in place as well as a section of the library dedicated to the accelerated reading books. There was a vibrancy about the place which is certainly now more inviting for adolescents and it is clear that there are more inviting, attractive and relevant reading materials now in place.



This supported independent reading and boosted student interest and confidence in reading, vital for the Junior cert. 1st and 2nd Year students have a weekly reading class in the library to help improve literacy. This allowed students to enjoy reading outside the classroom and to get relief from formal classroom structure. Students' positive attitude to reading and enjoyment of the space were the highlights of having a reading corner. (Teacher)

The JCSP co-ordinator used the opportunity of the initiatives to highlight the resources in the library to the staff in order to encourage the space to be used “as we're really trying to develop it this year.” The storytelling event, for example, was held in the library for this reason, providing maximum exposure to the staff.

Success of the literacy Initiatives

It is clear from the evaluations provided online, the interviews, the school visits and the observations and the reading test results that the suite of JCSP literacy initiatives had been a success. It is also clear that the successful initiatives were becoming embedded in the school. The teachers highly regarded their worth. They were not satisfied however. They were clearly disappointed in the improvements on the standardised test and wanted to further target improvements. They saw that they needed to do more and become more focused. Now that they had established that the reading interventions outlined above were working well in the school they saw the need to dig deeper, to facilitate time for all teachers to become engaged in the work for it to truly become a school-wide approach. They were a school determined to get better results in improving literacy levels.

The next section describes the planning process and the review of literacy practices in St Anthony's that lead into their implementing the *Literacy Medley*. My involvement in this process allowed the opportunity to reflect on certain themes that begun to emerge and will be considered under the headings of 1. critical awareness of teachers regarding their students and their literacy difficulties 2. continuous professional development (CPD) programme, the initial input and a mid year review of progress, 3 Continuum of change and the JCSP Literacy Medley, 4. Care, 5. Cultural Shift, 6. Constitution of School, 7. Culture of Reading, and 8 Change - a reflection time by the school. Finally the impact of the *Literacy Medley* on reading literacy will be considered.

Planning the Next Stage in the School 2010

As part of their DEIS planning work the Deputy Principal requested that the JCSP support service work with the school to plan the further development of a whole school approach to literacy. A planning meeting took place on 31st May 2010. Statia Somers, JCSP Regional Development Officer and I met with the Deputy Principal, the JCSP co-ordinator and the English teacher. They expressed concern about the levels of literacy and felt that it would be appropriate to review the current provision and plan for a full staff in-service to take place before school commenced on 26th August 2010.

A review of current practice was conducted through a staff questionnaire (Appendix 18). The questionnaire was completed by the staff during a staff meeting in early June.

Change process: Review of Literacy

The review was interesting in that it revealed the level of engagement of the full staff. All forms were returned and all were fully completed bar two. They revealed that the majority of teachers were already implementing literacy strategies outlined in the previous JCSP CPD, specifically: keywords; skimming and scanning; cloze tests; labeling; table construction; sequencing; prediction diagram completion; and summarising.

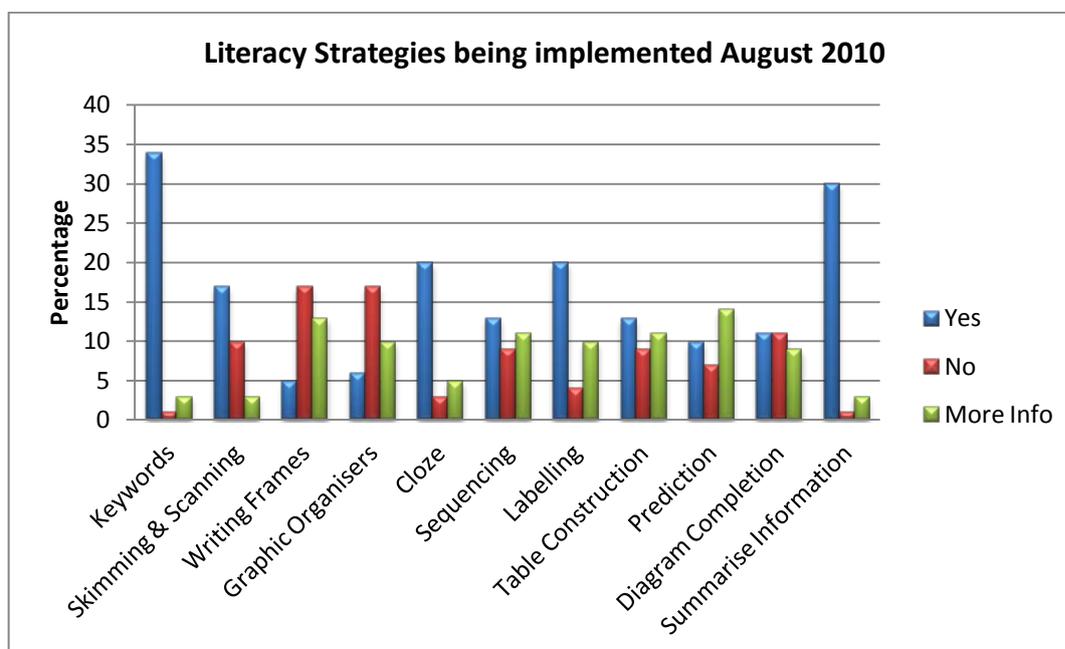


Figure 10: Literacy Strategies implemented in Case Study School August 2010

Many teachers were also involved in out-of-class literacy interventions indicating their willingness to go well beyond the formal curriculum and work in a cross curricular fashion. They recognised that breaking down the barriers of the classroom and joining forces as a teaching staff that much more significant progress could be made. There was a great sense of collegiality across the school with informal planning groups formed around many curricular activities.

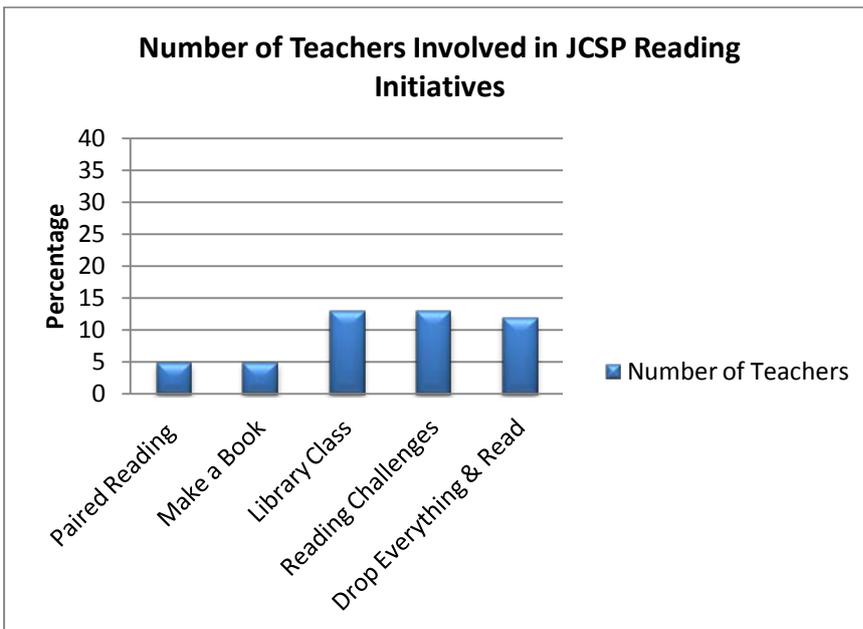


Figure 11: Number of Teachers Involved in JCSP Reading Initiatives in Case Study School

The following eight sections explores key themes that emerged from this case study school. The themes were established through coding the data from the questionnaires, discussions at the CPD days, discussion that took place during review meetings and individual interviews. Themes were identified as they stood out from the data from more than one source or they were recognised by the participants as crucial to successful implementation of the *Literacy Medley* or were clearly influencing positively or negatively the implementation of the Literacy Medley. The following eight themes emerged: 1. critical awareness of teachers regarding their students and their literacy difficulties 2. continuous professional development (CPD) programme, the initial input and a mid year review of progress, 3 Continuum of change, 4. Care, 5. Cultural Shift, 6. Constitution of School, 7. Culture of Reading, and 8 Change - a reflection time by the school. Finally the impact of the *Literacy Medley* on reading literacy will be considered.

1. Critical Awareness

Teachers have to be aware, according to Wehlage et al, (1989) of the cultural and value differences which children bring into the classroom. They need to understand the importance of the community in children's lives and be attentive to the conflicts which can arise between school and this community. These social and cultural differences also mean pedagogy and curricula should be reconsidered. Wehlage believes that there are four core values that together constitute a positive teacher culture facilitating engagement for students:

1. Teachers accept personal accountability for student success;
2. Teachers believe in practising an extended teacher role;
3. Teachers accept the need to be persistent with students who are not ideal pupils;
4. Teachers express a sense of optimism that all students can learn if one builds on their strengths rather than on their weaknesses.

Such understanding seemed to have developed in this school. The teachers saw a clear role for themselves both in the failures and successes which was evident in the manner that they completed the initial questionnaire. They made bold statements about what worked and what did not work. They stated that they were disappointed in the reading improvement in the past and took responsibility for working on strategies to impact more successfully. Many teachers were clear that students found reading aloud and silently in class difficult along with the fact that most students had a restricted vocabulary including the subject specific language, examination language and the associated spelling, grammar and punctuation. The inability of pupils to summarise a language passage correctly and poor comprehension skills were identified by the majority of teachers. They also stated that they had no skills as to how to approach difficult texts.

On the other hand they were clear about what worked and in what ways they were being successful. The teachers identified many strategies that they felt worked well such as paired reading, subject specific spelling strategies, reading challenges and DEAR etc. They were very proud of such successes.

Seeing the students get excited about certain books and recommend books to one another was just brilliant. It gave you a great sense of achievement. (Teacher)

They practiced their extended role by being part of an emerging whole school approach to literacy in implementing various literacy interventions mentioned above. Their persistence was clear in that they were determined to improve literacy and continuously review practice so as to refine their approach. Their persistence was particularly evident in the reading training programme implemented and outlined later on.

It took a while - longer than we thought but it was worth it.... now they hardly need to be supervised at all whereas before we'd have to bring in SNAs and as many teachers as were around. (Teacher)

Finally, there was evidence that they believed in being positive with the students and were already implementing the JCSP profiling system held regular awards ceremonies and JCSP celebrations.

It's great to see how proud they are of their certificates and love their photos being taken their work. (Teacher)

Through the process of reflecting on the attitudes and approaches of the teachers in this school and comparing them to the teachers that were met across all thirty five schools involved in this study it became clear that there was a common thread across the majority of the teachers that were involved. They had an approach to their students that could be compared to a gardener who knew the variety in her/his garden, knew the conditions necessary for each plant to thrive, knew the temperatures, the moisture balance, the sunlight levels. They knew when to lavish care and when to neglect. Their sensitivity to each student was intuitive. This was evidenced in their responses to the review as they showed how they knew the students' strengths and weaknesses but more importantly they were sensitive to their fears and what would engage them. The majority of teachers mentioned the importance of differentiation in class and looked for opportunities for subject departments to further develop this in the school. Others were quite specific about strategies they thought would appeal to their students, for example:

We should introduce more reading into the culture of the school including a reading day with fun activities, visiting authors and poets, book clubs, a class treat for reading a set number of books, or a themed week. The first years (name of class) should be paid particular attention to. They are very reluctant to read out loud and -- ----- and ----- need to be given separate reading materials as the textbook is just double Dutch to them. We need to have some strategies to turn reading into fun for them and get away from their fear of it. (Teacher)

...we need to do more that would help improve literacy but in fun ways. We could keep the focus on subjects but lighten it up with new ways of approaching it. I know that the -----class would really respond to this. I think they have a very poor view of themselves. (Teacher)

Literacy Problems

Teachers in St Anthony's were asked what literacy problems caused the most difficulty in class. It was clear from the level of response that the teachers had a critical awareness of their students' difficulties and the impact of disadvantage on their learning. Interestingly there was no indication from any respondent of blame, rather an understanding of the difficulties and a hope of finding strategies that would help. The fact that students found reading aloud (and silently) in class difficult was identified by many teachers. Most students had a restricted vocabulary, according to their teachers, including very restricted subject-specific language. Additionally, poor comprehension skills were identified by the majority of teachers as a problem and in many instances students had a poor understanding of the questions being asked of them.

Theydon't understand what the questions are asking them to do (Maths). Can't understand the Maths questions or the mathematical language involved. Students find it difficult to understand the language used in questions. Can't understand/read the questions for Maths. (Maths Teacher)

Additionally, the difficulty of the textbooks was referred to as a problem as the students have no skills to approach difficult text as presented to them at second level. Dealing with so much diversity in each classroom was also identified:

The grouping of students whose needs are too diverse - little or no English/good English and high intelligence/very poor reading skills and concentration/behaviour issues/needing fulltime attention of teacher. (Science Teacher)

The teachers identified many strategies that they felt would make a difference to improving literacy in their school including more time and space for reading, a whole school literacy policy, time for teachers to develop strategies and a common approach to strategies and resources. The call for time to develop consistency across the school was clear. This was a staff open to change and willing to engage. The management were willing to listen and facilitate.

2. Continuous Professional Development in St Anthony's

The CPD that was offered to the school was developed in consultation with the staff.

The notion of a 'generic, skills-based programme' is problematic, as a one-size fits all approach cannot meet the needs of all children. In fact, research shows that CPD is most effective and successful when customised to the needs of the teachers and the particular school context, and sustained over a period of time. Future approaches to the issue should be informed by research and should draw on international standards. (St Patrick's, 2011)

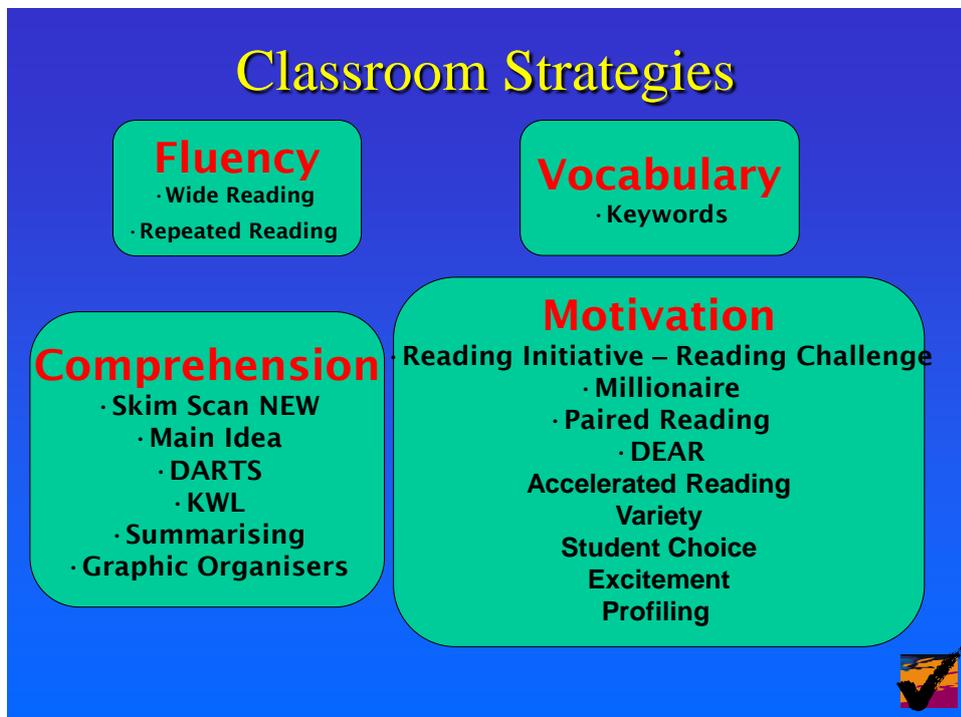
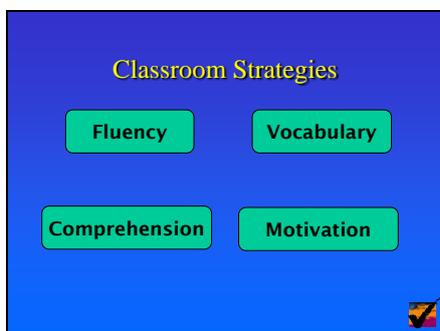
It has already been noted the teachers at second level are very dissatisfied with the level of pre-service education regarding literacy across the curriculum and so are eager to seek out CPD to support this ever-increasing issue in our classrooms. CPD is also essential in raising awareness of the cultural divide and its consequences to teaching and learning. It has a key role to play in the development of critical awareness of inequality in schools and broadly in society. According to Kennedy (2010), provision of a multifaceted professional development programme for teachers is essential in addressing underachievement in literacy. When professional development is customised rather than pre-packaged; takes place over an extended period of time to facilitate early success; and uses a range of research-based approaches (including a strong, ongoing focus on student achievement), and teacher creativity and individuality is honored throughout the professional development, it can have a major impact on student achievement, motivation, and engagement (Kennedy 2010).

Joyce et al (2002) identify four key components of CPD. The first focuses on knowledge and consists of exploring the theory or rationale for the new skills or strategies. Subsequently, they suggest, training needs to involve modeling the new skills – ideally in a setting closely approximate to the workplace. The third component is the practice of the skill and the authors estimate a substantial period of time (8–10 weeks, involving around 25 trials) to “bring a teaching model of medium complexity under control.” Finally, peer coaching, the fourth component, is the collaborative work of teachers in planning and developing the lessons and materials to implement the training effectively. These four key components were present in the JCSP CPD to support schools in putting in place a school-wide approach to literacy.

The CPD day was delivered by Statia Somers and myself in the school in August 2010. The content included a review of what is already in place in the school and feedback to teachers on their review of literacy. This led to a far-reaching discussion about literacy levels in the school and what has worked best to impact positively. The JCSP CPD has always

incorporated sessions on probing the hidden curriculum, on hearing the views of the teachers and discussing those views and certainly there have been some interesting debates where teachers have argued that there is no poverty, simply budget mismanagement and so ultimately parents are to blame for poor literacy. Additionally, there are usually a number of teachers who believe the primary schools to be at fault. This kind of debate happened in St Anthony's in the first CPD day but it was not so noticeable on this occasion.

Some national and international research on literacy at second level was presented before we explored literacy supports under four headings: fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and motivation.



Strategies were outlined under each heading that could support literacy in subject areas. Workshops were held whereby the teachers went into small groups to try out the practical

strategies themselves. Following feedback, teachers were asked to get into subject groups and come up with a literacy plan. The groups took this task very seriously and prioritised the aspect of literacy that they would focus on for the year as follows:

Table 4:2: SUBJECT GROUPS FEEDBACK in case study school August 2010

Geography		
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords – e.g. JCSP Notebook	<input type="checkbox"/> Transforming text	<input type="checkbox"/> Notetaking system (Cornell)
Maths		
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords– topic/exam	<input type="checkbox"/> Matching definitions	<input type="checkbox"/> Showme-Boards
<input type="checkbox"/> Skim and scan	<input type="checkbox"/> Ticket <u>to</u> leave!	<input type="checkbox"/> Visual Aids
Gaeilge		
<input type="checkbox"/> KW-L	<input type="checkbox"/> Skim and Scan	<input type="checkbox"/> Persuasion/discussion
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords	<input type="checkbox"/> Bookmarks	<input type="checkbox"/> Word Puzzles
<input type="checkbox"/> Transferring text	<input type="checkbox"/> Ticket to leave	
<input type="checkbox"/> Role- playing	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic organisers	
Science		
<input type="checkbox"/> Toolbox Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Show me Boards	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic organisers
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords: Colour coded	<input type="checkbox"/> W-L	<input type="checkbox"/> Exam Language Definitions
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-2-1	
English		
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading Book Boxes	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing Frames	
<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword/Notebook	<input type="checkbox"/> Card Board cut out	
French		
<input type="checkbox"/> Phonetics	• Keywords	<input type="checkbox"/> Pair-work
<input type="checkbox"/> Video- conferences	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> Websites
<input type="checkbox"/> Clues – headings visuals/etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing Frames	<input type="checkbox"/> Interactive Whiteboard
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mind Mapping	Idioms.....phases
German		
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords	<input type="checkbox"/> Book mark	<input type="checkbox"/> Mind Maps/Spider graph
<input type="checkbox"/> Questions focus	• Sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing Frames
<input type="checkbox"/> Text working	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-2-1	
Art		
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords: Technical terms etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Visuals	<input type="checkbox"/> Notebook	Display
Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Oral language	<input type="checkbox"/> Definitions (examples)	Multiple choice questions practice
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords and lists (Displayed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Spider grams	<input type="checkbox"/> Show-me-Boards
<input type="checkbox"/> Listening	<input type="checkbox"/> Pair work	
Home Economics		
<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword posters laminated –	<input type="checkbox"/> Graphic organisers	<input type="checkbox"/> Showme-Boards
Business		
<input type="checkbox"/> Keywords	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers/Scrapbook	<input type="checkbox"/> Dictionary

In addition the school planned to implement several JCSP initiatives including the *Literacy Medley* with first years. They planned to implement accelerated reading, the reading challenge, DEAR as well as the JCSP Word Millionaire Reading Challenge with the first years. The teachers told us that they enjoyed the day and they were all fully engaged in all of the workshops. All participants left full of enthusiasm and saying that they were eager to try out their new ideas.

A meeting was requested by the school and took place on 9th November when there was a meeting with the Deputy Principal, the Principal and the learning support teachers to examine progress. It was agreed that a staff review was timely. and useful if staff were reminded of the strategies and plans that were put in place in August.

Literacy Review 2010

A meeting was held in the school and it was clear that the review was timely as many teachers felt that they needed to be reminded of their focus and were very happy to re-examine literacy in their classrooms. They were reminded about what each subject department had agreed to implement or develop. Teachers were asked to discuss how things had gone since September and complete a questionnaire (Appendix 22). Here is a summary of the responses from teachers compared to how they had responded before the initial in-service day was provided. The teachers indicated that they had successfully implemented many of the strategies in their classrooms.

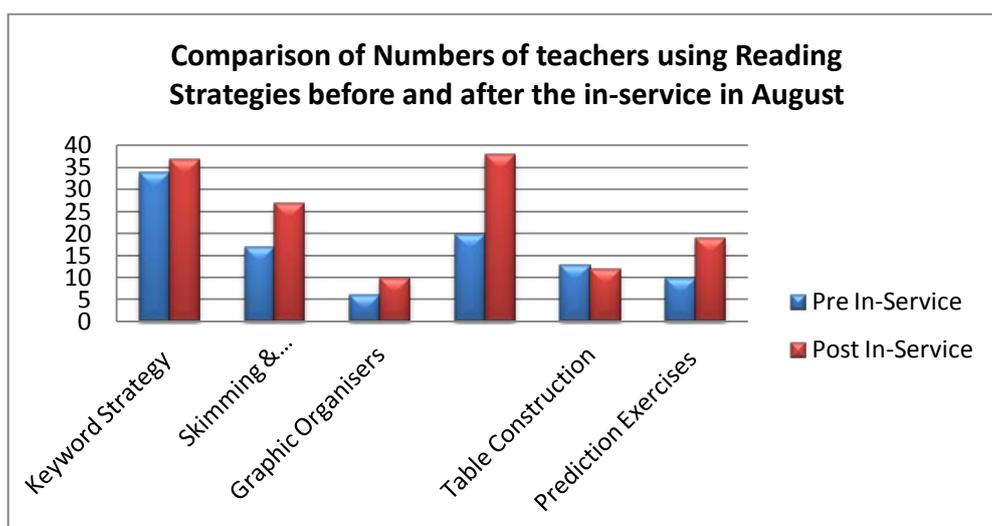


Figure 12 Comparison of Numbers of teachers using Reading Strategies before and after the in-service seminar in August

Additionally, teachers included that they used writing frames and one teacher had developed the student use of CDs at home to practice new words, build vocabulary and improve intonation. Finally, it was noted that providing model/sample answers had proved successful.

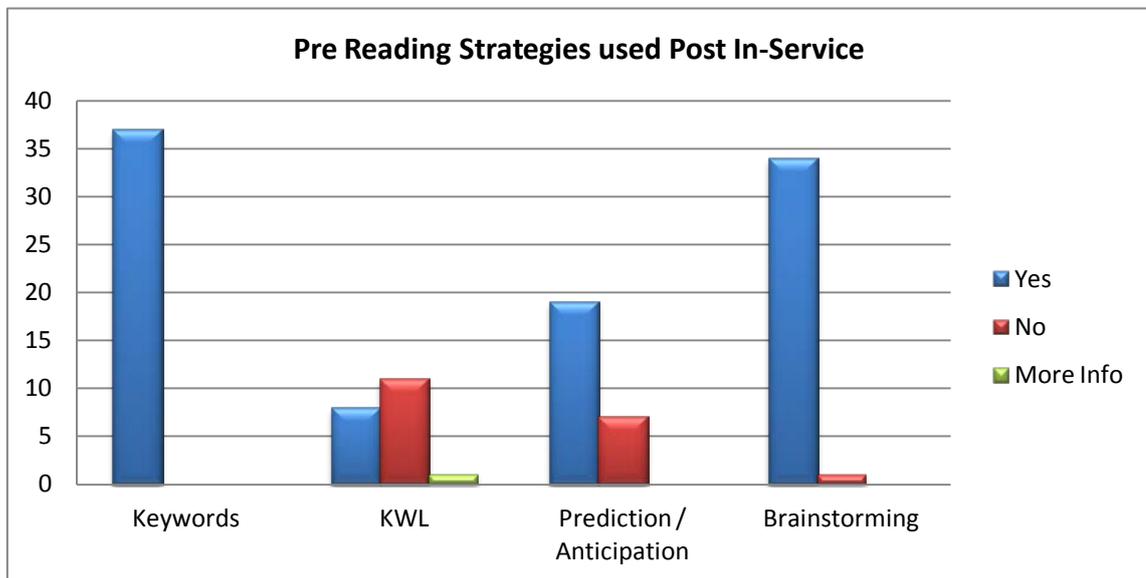


Figure 13: The number of teachers now using "pre reading" strategies in case study school

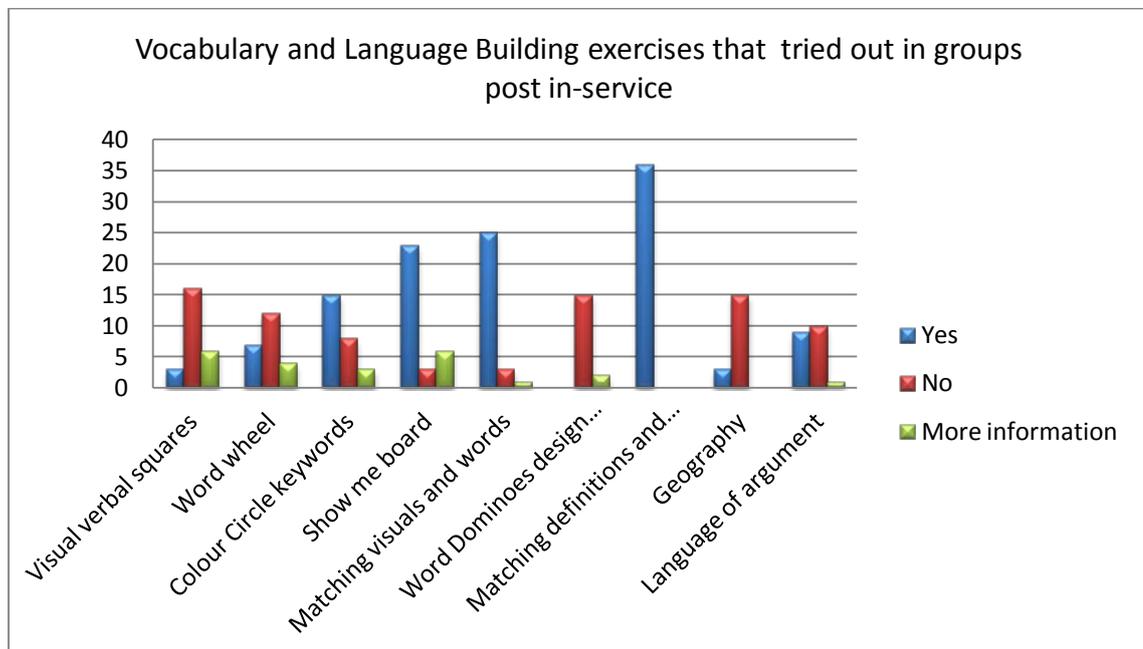


Figure 14 The number of teachers now using vocabulary and language building exercises with their students in the case study school

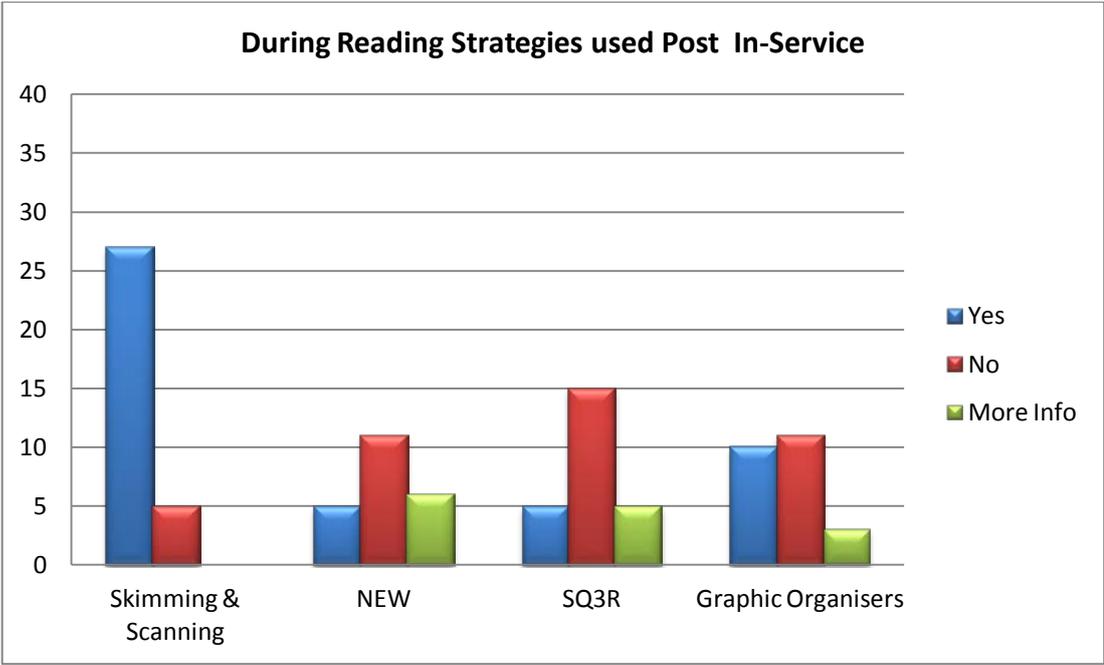


Figure 15 The numbers of teachers using "during reading" strategies with their students in the case study school

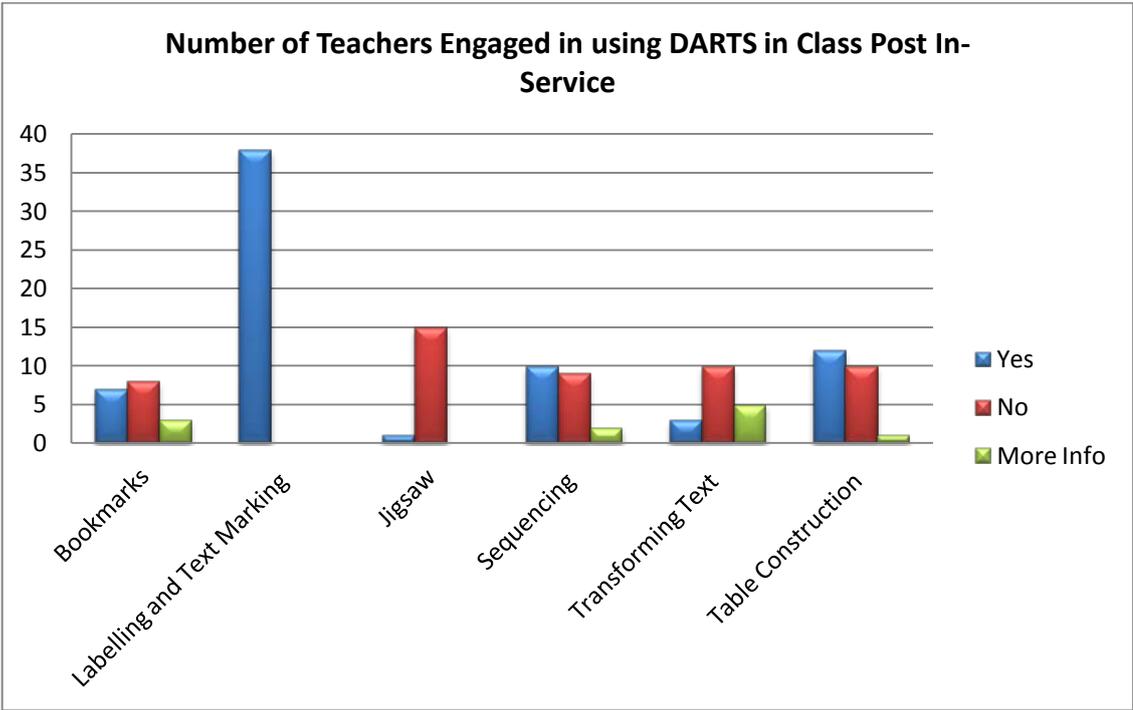


Figure 16 The number of teachers now using DARTS with their students in the case study school

Teachers had also introduced the reward 'ticket system' outlined at in-service. Class sets of *Show me boards* had been put in place and were in use in many classrooms. The JCSP class

sets of dictionaries were beginning to be used as well as recognition of the potential of writing frames.

It is clear that teachers were implementing a great range of literacy strategies following the CPD programme. All noted that they were finding greater participation and engagement of the students in their learning as a result. They recognised a greater understanding of the content now as they allowed their students to use literacy strategies to deepen their engagement with the text. Many teachers noted that homework was also improving as a result. There was an emerging excitement that a culture of reading was developing across the school. Evidence of increased cross curricular work was also found in that there was a great deal of collaborative work across subject areas. All the teachers expressed satisfaction with the positive impact of these strategies and were now very clear as to what additional supports they wanted to put in place to develop literacy skills. The CPD aspect of this research emerged as a very important element of its success. There was an initial input and then the staff were brought together for review and further planning over the course of the year. The teachers stated that it provided them with opportunities to establish the strategies that could support literacy and it facilitated planning time. They were very clear that the structure of the CPD helped as they regarded it as a supportive framework through which they could plan, implement, review, evaluate and plan again. They regularly stressed the value of an outsider checking in with them over the course of the year as being useful to maintaining the momentum.

....it's great to have you come into the school because with the very best will in the world it's hard to keep everything going, school is just so busy , we don't have time to think. At least when you come we can sit down for a minute and kind of refocus ourselves. There is actually a lot going on but sometimes I'm not sure if it's focused. Your visits help keep us focused.....(Deputy Principal)

I'm delighted that we are having this review now, it's exactly what's needed to keep us going at this time of the year.....(Teacher)

3. Continuum of change and the JCSP Literacy Medley

Interestingly, everyone on the staff recognised that they were on a continuum of development, involved in a process of change. They recognised how far they had come but were clear that they had to continue. The process of change and the overall increased engagement with literacy by all teachers facilitated the implementation of the Literacy

Medley. The staff were excited by the apparent success of their new approach to reading across the school. The seeds were planted and the shoots were emerging. Now the tending phase had to be taken in hand. Many teachers recognised how a culture of reading could be further promoted in the school if time to read was prioritized. It was suggested that they build on the success of the JCSP Reading Challenge and expand it to all years. Teachers specifically mentioned the successful JCSP Drop Everything and Read Project (DEAR) that had been in place in the school, asking that more time be given to it and that it should be expanded to senior cycle.

I like the idea where everyone in the school reads what they want, but at the same time. (Teacher)

The DEAR initiative worked very well last year, this should be extended to all classes. (Teacher)

Many teachers suggested strategies for introducing more reading into the culture of the school including a reading day with fun activities, visiting authors and poets, book clubs, a class treat for reading a set number of books, or a themed week :

Themed subject weeks – place posters/keywords for a given subject around the school for a given week; plan lunchtime activities in relation to the subject during the week e.g. poetry/drama/recitals/science experiments/geography demonstrations/French breakfast/brunch times. (Teacher)

It was also suggested to hold a “literacy campaign” in the school.

...involving students & student council or perhaps all teachers can focus on certain techniques with different year groups per term, as well as students representing each subject area to raise awareness of the importance of literacy in every subject. This could culminate in a special “Literacy Week” where parents, students and teachers are involved in promoting reading and literacy in the school – also to include DEAR. (Teacher)

The library had, by now, become a feature of all conversations - a new development in the school indicating the success of the JCSP co-ordinator's strategy to showcase the possibilities of the library through running various reading programmes within it. The staff recognised the value of it and felt that its impact should be expanded with more timetabled library classes and the suggestion that the facility of borrowing books to bring home be introduced. It was felt that all students should have a book with them at all times to read if

time became available and that classes should have a bank of books/newspapers available for students to access if they don't have work to do.

Additionally, the in-class strategies were mentioned again such as keywords and spelling. Time was made available for subject departments to meet and arrange resources such as subject topic boxes and the use of writing frames, show me boards, keyword flash cards etc as well as an agreement regarding "subject-specific vocabulary across all subjects and posters of agreed keywords could then be placed around rooms/school." Additionally, they sought agreement regarding the training that should be put in place for students i.e. training in how to skim and scan. It was intended to continue the development of a tool box of resources in science as outlined in the August in-service. Finally, it was mentioned that access by all teachers to information regarding reading levels of the students would be beneficial.

4. Care

The hidden curriculum is taught by the school, not by any teacher... something is coming across to the pupils which may never be spoken in the English lesson or prayed about in assembly. They are picking-up an approach to living and an attitude to learning. (Meighan, 1981)

It must be noted that all of the above was being implemented in the context of a culture of care. There were some teachers who questioned the reasons why students had such poor literacy during the initial CPD. They questioned what the primary schools were doing about it (they knew little or nothing of what was actually happening in the DEIS primary schools), they wondered if the parents were more involved would it help etc. However, once these views were aired and discussed openly they were no longer heard. There was no evidence of blame. Teachers now recognised that it was part of their job to support literacy, and more importantly they now had practical strategies to use, in and out of the classroom. They were developing a confidence about what they could do about literacy rather than dissonantly accepting poor literacy. Care was evident in all interactions with all members of staff. They cared about the students and they cared that they improved their literacy.

It's just brilliant to see the -----(name of class) enjoying not just reading but school now so much. They are really making strides and they know it - the charts on the wall are great - they take such pride in showing you how well they are doing - it's just great. (Teacher)

I visited the staffroom on several occasions over the course of the year and I experienced palpable excitement growing in the staffroom as the year progressed as teachers approached me to tell me how things were going:

I tried the writing frames in French - they are great and the kids love them.....(Teacher)

They just love the library.....(Teacher)

It's hard to keep up with them with books - they are just devouring them. The Barrington Stokes are great. (Teacher)

It was clear that they were now beginning to see the fruit of their labour and as a gardener tends her/his garden these teachers tended their students with equal care. Each flower needed different levels of care, some needed more sunshine, some regular watering while others could be neglected and they enjoyed just getting on with it – regardless, the teachers guarded each with the care of a loving gardener who knows intuitively how to care for each flower.

The physical environment in all schools gives strong messages of the hidden curriculum and it was clear in this school that student work was valued. Artwork, photographs of celebrations and achievements adorn every wall in the school. Nonetheless, all the staff agreed that there was need for more literacy visuals and posters to be introduced into classrooms. Additionally, it was felt that this would be facilitated by teachers having their own classroom or subject-specific room so charts with keywords/matching keywords and definitions to visuals could be put on walls.

Overall, there was a very upbeat response across the staff, they were delighted that the focus on literacy was being revisited and recognised that they needed to be reminded so as to remain, as a staff, focused on improving literacy. They were also keen to ensure a continuation for such CPD was in place and outlined what they wanted included in future.

5. Cultural Shift

It was clear over the course of the review day that the place of literacy in the school had been transformed. All teachers engaged in such a way as to indicate that they saw their place within it. The culture of leaving literacy to others was well and truly gone from the discourse. There was a stated belief that what was in place was working and an eagerness

from all subject teachers to develop and build on it. Perhaps the tradition of running literacy initiatives had facilitated a cultural shift among the staff caused by the fact that the interventions were introduced gradually and their success was clear to all.

The students definitely gained confidence in their own reading because they were reading at their own level and were given time to prepare. They really stepped up to the role of tutor and acted in a very mature fashion. They loved the trips out of the school even though the primary school is within a short walking distance. They enjoyed interacting with the younger children. All students improved their literacy levels. (Teacher)

The highlight included:

Seeing the students get excited about certain books and recommend books to one another. (Teacher)

About the Storytelling:

The students absolutely loved this event. There were kids begging to be let into sessions for a second time. They were absolutely enthralled. Niall had them speaking Irish and they barely realised it. Both the students and teachers were in stitches. We all really enjoyed it. I think the students experienced something they never would have otherwise. I think the students may be turned on to the world of fiction and make believe and hopefully realise that literature and cultural events can be fun. (Teacher)

About the dictionary Initiative:

These are an excellent resources for class groups visiting the library according to the co-ordinator. Classes can be planned around these. Students became confident and familiar with using dictionaries and broadened their vocabulary. Teachers commenting on how useful they are as a resource. Students also enjoy being able to find answers and words for themselves. (Teacher)

About the pen pal initiative:

The excitement of the students when they received their letters. We are a girl's school and there were boys in the other school. (Teacher)

One student told me 'I used to hate reading. Now it's alright'.

Just the general atmosphere of calm when a reading session took place. The majority of students really enjoyed taking part in the challenge. I feel reading became 'normalised' for the students. I purchased JCSP books with the money granted for the initial literacy set up. The books are kept within reach of the students and they do not think twice about asking to take a book out now. This was not the case at the beginning of the year. (Teacher)

This kind of early success can be an important catalyst according to Kennedy (2010):

Success enhanced teachers' self-confidence and self-efficacy and raised their expectations for students. It cemented their commitment to the change process, supported their desire to continue to add new elements to the framework, and prompted them to share their new expertise with colleagues not yet involved in the study. This, in turn, contributed to the development of the school as a professional learning community and a shared vision of what was possible. (Kennedy, 2010)

The same could be said for this school.

6. Constitution of the School

There was evidence of what Fullan (2002) calls a *cultural change Principal* in St Anthony's where there was expertise in evidence among the management team of the process of change. An expert Principal will allow the change process to develop and deal with the hitches as they emerge but will, according to Fullan, expect the change process to go smoothly in the first few months of implementation. Such a Principal would also push ahead expecting progress within a year, having created the conditions for the process of change to yield results sooner rather than later (2002, p.6). There was evidence here of positive leadership in the manner in which this change process was managed as it was recognised that developing relationships and team building was an essential aspect of this change process. The management appreciated that time was needed for this and provided it.

Literacy difficulties in the context of a disadvantaged school require a multifaceted approach if improvement is to be significant. St Anthony's certainly were putting in place strategies and structures across the school to impact on literacy, including the implementation of the JCSP and its use of formative assessment, affirmation, building patterns of success and public acknowledgements of success through the Christmas and summer celebrations, the classroom strategies, a cross curricular keyword approach, reading time and library use. These were visibly supported by the management who also continually reviewed their structures - timetable use of learning support and class formation to ensure maximum benefit to the students.

Learning support was not only about developing basic skills but was also supporting curricular work. The school had developed a culture of experimentation illustrating their lack of complacency. There was a sense of continual development and continual responsiveness to the needs of the students. They had been trying out several models to

seek the best for the students. They had a timetable, for example, that facilitated seven periods of English per week for certain classes (which was taken out of the fact that they did one less option than other classes) but their experience was that the students got bored with so much so they decided to provide an extra geography and history period. As in the majority of the Medley schools it was also noted that there are some students who, despite one-to-one intensive programmes of reading support simply do not make progress. It was found that if they did the *Toe by Toe* (1993) phonic reading programme every day it began to make a difference - a programme noted by over half of the Medley schools as being effective for individuals. This was further evidence of an approach being taken akin to gardeners as they poured support on some students as the need emerged.

7. Transforming the Culture of Reading

The case study school implemented the *Literacy Medley* in 2010 - 2011 school year. The focus of the medley was to provide structures that ensured students read regularly. Finn (1993) identifies students paying attention as foundational to successful participation in school. Some at-risk students are inattentive, have short attention spans, and/or are highly distractible (Lehr & Harris, 1988). They are students who daydream, or are otherwise passively disengaged in classroom academic activities. They also have very minimal or no involvement in sports or other extracurricular activities (Bempechat & Ginsburg, 1989).

At an early stage in the implementation of the Medley the teachers recognised that the students simply could not settle down, never mind read a page of a book. So they set about a *reading training programme* as a pilot. Their intention was to “change how they read.” Initially, they had to have five adults in the library with forty students to try to get things settled. They “just did not know how to read.” They took weeks to settle properly, indeed the teachers nearly despaired, but luckily they persevered. “Now it flows - they just know so well what to do.” “We now know we can do it.” In many ways the most extraordinary change in this school was in the teachers as they now have such a different perspective on literacy, on reading – now that they know that they can “train” their students in the reading habit:

...we know that the 1st years will be able to do it, it works. We know that they will be able to behave and read. (Teacher)

Luckily they did not give up when it was hard work initially or the school may never have returned to library reading. They used the process of bringing their students through what we can now see as a reading training programme - where it was not so much the process of reading that was taught but the practice, the act of reading. These are teenagers on the go, using Facebook, texting, living in sound bites. Nothing can last too long or stay still too long so it was a huge achievement to teach them how to read - the act. This was also very evident in other schools - students are readily reading much to the delight and amazement of their teachers.

The overwhelming success has been the development of a culture of reading in the school. (JCSP co-ordinator)

I went into the library to announce a very positive message about something and I was more or less told later, later..... we are reading. (Deputy Principal)

I just can't believe it ...when I go into classrooms, the way the students are reading - they are fully engrossed and just don't hear you. (Principal)

Following on from this training programme students settled to reading regularly. There was an emerging love of books. Students were given book tokens as prizes and it was noted that in other years students would have "turned their nose up at a book token but they were just delighted with them this year." "These are students who hated reading, never read a book before but who now say that 'reading is lethal'." "They will buy books, show off their books to each other and demand their reading time."

Book Club

The school has a senior book club in place where they have read seven novels. They had two meetings per book for 4th, 5th and 6th classes. The students reportedly loved the book club and loved chatting to each other about the books. They finished the year by going to the pictures to see the movie of their last book. A pattern of teachers talking to them about their books has emerged. Gee (2000) noted how students will construct knowledge in collaborative ways and so recommends the need to construct learning communities to accommodate the social learner (Brown & Campione, 1984; Brown, Collins & Dugid, 1989). One reads from your own experience and back again to your social experience according to Gee (2000) and so the book clubs facilitate meaning-making in the appropriate socio cultural context so that students can develop their meaning from within a familiar context. This

book club and the others in the Medley schools are perfect examples of these emerging learning communities. Interestingly as the library is now open at lunchtime to first years ten of them got together to form their own book club! The school has decided to set up a junior book club next year as a result. These are two examples of how the school was changing the culture of reading in the school coupled with time and space for reading.

8. Change: A Reflection

Change “must be fuelled by a bias for reflective action” according to Fullan (2006, p.10);

“we learn by thinking about what we are doing. It is the purposeful thinking part that counts, not the mere doing. (Fullan 2006, p.10) ”

The research has been clear and consistent for over 30 years—collaborative cultures in which teachers focus on improving their teaching practice, learn from each other, and are well led and supported by school principals result in better learning for students. (Fullan, 2011).



There was an opportunity in May to reflect on the year with a selection of the staff. I had a meeting with the Deputy Principal, the two JCSP co-ordinators, as well as the learning support teachers. Overall, they had a very positive view of the year. A literacy task force was put in place as a result of the final in-service day.

The teachers could see that the year had shown cultural shift in the staff and their view of literacy. The readability of textbooks was now discussed at every subject department meeting

and subject planning meetings and the teachers had reviewed the book list so that they were more accessible to their students. The literacy strategies that were outlined in the CPD programme were being implemented and the “literacy task force” were there to encourage and facilitate all of the plans that were outlined at the in-service day. Literacy and numeracy were now on everyone's agenda, so to speak, according to the management and teachers.

Working with the school provided an insight into how a school can play a distinct role in providing an equitable education to their students, albeit it within a socially segregated schooling system. Outstanding here was a respect for the students and a belief in them. There were no signs of symbolic injustice, there were no indications of cultural domination by the teaching staff apart from the usual power relations of such an institution. Lynch & Lodge (2002) state that the changes that are required to address inequalities of recognition are about managing difference in schools in a respectful way, “organisationally, pedagogically and intellectually in terms of curricula, syllabi and assessment system” (Lynch & Lodge, 2002, p.181). They also believe that the reason why student voices are not heard is because they lack institutional power (p.182) and are seen as subordinate in status terms. They note too that, as relations are of dependency and interdependency, they are “deeply affective in character and so inequality may arise in the affective sphere of educational relations especially when caring is neglected” (p.182). This was a school where such relations were not neglected, where respect featured and the voice of the student was encouraged and listened to. This is evident in the manner in which they adapted their timetable based on student feedback as well as their drive to finish with streaming. The display of student work throughout the school, as well as the fact that students were consulted widely on appropriate choice of reading materials, shows a respect for the student voice.

Through the lengthy process of the engagement of the JCSP support service with the school there were many opportunities to review the structures at junior cycle, the timetable, the possibilities for cross curricular work and of course the school-wide approach to literacy development. Mixed ability was an ongoing area of consideration and they moved further into mixed ability with a common end-of-year test. They had also put a lot of thought into the structure of their timetable. Up until now they had JCSP students separated out for English, Irish, Maths as well as History and Geography. They now intend to radically reform the JCSP class leaving them mixed for everything but supporting literacy and numeracy during classes when they do one less option than everyone else. The fact that all junior cycle students participated in their literacy strategy and the interventions within it was also important as they succeeded in not ghettoising literacy and reading.

9. The Literacy Medley: The Impact

Over the year the school succeeded in running the *Literacy Medley* which incorporated the implementation of accelerated reading, Reading Challenge, DEAR and the JCSP Word Millionaire. A keyword approach as well as the widespread use of show me boards and extended use of their library/reading corner was used with their first year group. A cross curricular Make A Book was exhibited in Dublin Civic office of which both staff and students were very proud. It really got the students to perfect a piece of writing according to the teachers. It provided a “wonderful focus and the students were delighted with what they produced.”

On evaluation of the impact of the challenge it was found that the majority improved their reading literacy levels. One of the highlights for the teachers was “seeing the students ask for books and wanting to take books home to finish.” One teacher commented that “I feel that we have normalised reading for many of the students.”

Having pre and post tested the students with the GRT2 it is clear that the majority of students' reading ages have gone up. (Teacher)

One student told me 'I used to hate reading. Now it's alright'. (Teacher)

There was great enthusiasm to consolidate the successes from this year and expand them.

Reading challenges and accelerated reading coupled with word millionaire and DEAR were seen as a "magic formula". The JCSP students involved had read 795 books - an average of 36 each, with over 2 million words read. They found that the star test as part of the accelerated reading was a great motivator, particularly the 100 per cent wall, a place of great honour where they placed stars with their name on them when they succeeded in getting 100 per cent in their star test.

Attitudes towards reading were greatly improved and students were more willing to read aloud in class. Also, students' behaviour in the library improved and they developed independent reading skills. (JCSP co-ordinator)



Some of
the
Accelerated
Books



Improved Attitude to Reading

The teachers noted improved attitude to reading, with students now reading more. The students are now enjoying reading more according to their teachers and they are more willing to read. They also noticed a trend where the students were now more willing and eager to discuss their books with each other. Surprisingly, students themselves have commented that they are now better readers.

We found that daily library time really improved students' attitude to reading. They enjoyed their time in the library and found the quizzes fun. (Teacher)

It was clear that this new culture of reading did not just happen. There was a concerted effort to train the first years in how to read. Over time the teachers are very excited by the fact that the students can now go into the library practically unsupervised, choose a book and settle to reading - completely content just to read.

Reading every day encourages students to engage with written texts. Also, it helps develop a reading culture within the group. (Teacher)

The teachers said that they cannot believe the change - they cannot believe how well it has gone. This fact has transformed their view of putting structures in place to support reading as they now know it can be done. They are already planning the next years' programme. So the continuum of change that the school has embarked on continues.

People learn best through doing, reflection, inquiry, evidence, more doing and so on.
(Fullan, 2006, p.10)

Conclusion

The case study provides an insight into the kind of literacy development process that many JCSP schools are involved in as all of the thirty five schools that implemented the *Literacy Medley* have been involved in national and school based CPD on a whole school approach to literacy improvement over the last number of years and have engaged in a process of change to a greater or lesser degree culminating in their agreeing to participate in the *Literacy Medley*. Themes that began to emerge in St Anthony's were considered in eight sections including: 1. Critical awareness of teachers regarding their students and their literacy difficulties 2. Continuous professional development (CPD) programme, the initial input and a mid year review of progress, 3 Continuum of change and the JCSP Literacy Medley, 4. Care, 5. Cultural Shift, 6. Constitution of School, 7. Culture of Reading, and 8 Change - a reflection time by the school.

Evidence of the development of a professional reflective learning community can be found in the encounters with St Anthony's school. Professional learning communities are “in fact about establishing new collaborative cultures, ones that focus on building the capacity for continuous improvement, are meant to be a new way of working and learning. They are meant, so to speak, to be enduring capacities, not just another program innovation” (Fullan, 2006, p.6). I would contend that such an enduring capacity is developing in St Anthony's.

The process of change in St Anthony's facilitated the successful implementation of the *Literacy Medley* and this process of change was helped by the support available.

It is essential that professional developers working with DEIS schools possess a high level of expertise around literacy processes, stages of development, methodologies, development of motivation and engagement and assessment procedures, as well as knowledge of change processes. It is also essential that their workload allows them to engage with the school over a prolonged period and with sufficient levels of intensity to initiate and sustain change within schools. (St Patrick's, 2011)

All the thirty five schools have implemented individual literacy initiatives and have gained a confidence through their experience of them. The staffs in these schools are also implementing literacy strategies in their classrooms to a greater or lesser extent complementing the work of the initiatives. Fullan has long recognised that system change must impact within the classroom:

I am not saying that standards, assessment, curriculum, and professional development are wrong things to do. I am saying that they are seriously incomplete theories of action because they do not get close to what happens in classrooms and school cultures. The latter is not easy to alter and this is indeed why people have failed to tackle it. (Fullan, 2006, p.5)

The case study has illustrated that if there is adequate, ongoing CPD, tailored to the needs of a school, it is possible for a full staff to fully engage in a reflective process of change. Teachers are open to learning new skills and classroom practice can incorporate new strategies, methodologies and resources to support literacy. All staff can engage once they are provided with subject-appropriate strategies to support students accessing their curriculum. Subject departments, if facilitated by management, can take on common approaches and a cross curricular approach can emerge through management support. The hidden curriculum can be challenged and subverted. A culture of reading can emerge in a severely disadvantaged school once students are trained into being able to settle to reading and are provided with a wide ranging choice of relevant, motivating reading materials. The culture is further supported by full staff participation. Programmes such as Reading Challenge, DEAR and accelerated reading support ongoing regular reading patterns. I would contend that it is the combination of the above that contributes to a most significant change in that it is a cultural change in a school, not only in the student body but also among the staff.

The next chapter will explore the emerging themes from the *Literacy Medley* schools which build and expand on the themes from this case study.



Literacy Medley Findings



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Findings III

The JCSP Literacy Medley

I don't think we can emphasise the importance of literacy strongly enough. The *Literacy Medley* plays an important role in putting literacy in the spotlight and keeping it there through the school year. I think it is a great idea. (School 17)

One of the chief recommendations from the *Enriching the Classroom* report (2011) on the impact of JCSP initiatives for the academic year 2008-2009 was to carry out “more extensive research... on those schools that were implementing multiple reading initiatives over the course of the academic year by conducting in-depth case studies... This would allow us to measure their effectiveness in boosting the literacy achievements of JCSP students and to inform practice and choices of approach” (2011, p.38). This recommendation came on foot of an emerging trend of increased reading improvement for the students who had been exposed to multiple reading interventions over the course of one year.

It was decided that it would be interesting to invite schools to run three literacy interventions with first years and examine the impact on their literacy levels. Successful schools were provided with a grant for each of the three initiatives - five hundred euros each as well as an additional amount to put in place or enhance their JCSP reading corners to ensure ample access to appropriate reading materials. Schools were invited to apply for the *Literacy Medley* as described on the JCSP website in the following way:

The Literacy Medley is a reading initiative targeting first year students. It is built on the best practice emerging from schools. Many schools are already running a number of reading initiatives with a year group. So this initiative asks that you put together a medley of existing JCSP Reading initiatives to form a full first year reading programme. It is envisaged that at least one JCSP reading initiative is implemented with the chosen group each term in order to ensure sustained interest in reading. Enhanced funding is available for this initiative to support the purchase of age appropriate reading materials. This may supplement your JCSP reading Corner if you have one or help to put one in place if you do not have one yet.

This initiative is not a new one, rather a way of structuring your reading initiatives to maximize the benefit to your students. We seek to investigate the impact of a planned and sustained approach to improving reading. A research dimension is an integral component of this initiative, which necessitates pre and post testing of the target group. Students are not tested at the end of each initiative but only at the beginning of the year and post tested at the end. You will no doubt see the benefits of actively sustaining reading throughout the whole of first year.

A total of thirty five schools participated in the Literacy Medley, eighteen of which were JCSP Library Schools. Each decided on their own combination of initiatives as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reading Challenge •Library Programme •Keyword <p>School 1</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Drop Everything and Read •Readalong •Reading challenge <p>School 2</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Drop Everything and Read •Reading Laboratory •World book Week •Paired Reading <p>School 3</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Read Challenge •Word Millionaire •Readalong <p>School 4</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Paired Reading •Accelerated Reading •Poet Visit •Drama <p>School 5</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reading challenge •Keywords strategy •Spelling Challenge •Book day <p>School 6</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Drop Everything and Read •Reading Challenge •Accelerated reading •Word Millionaire <p>School 7</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reading Challenge •SRA •Reading Class •Word Millionaire •Accelerated Reading •Author in Residence •Book Club <p>School 8</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •keywords •paired Reading •Drop Everything and Read <p>School 9</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Paired reading •Reading Challenge •Book Review <p>School 10</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Word Millionaire • Paired Reading •Drop Everything and Read or Reading Challenge. <p>School 11</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Drop Everything and Read •Reading challenge •Readalong <p>School 12</p> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Word Millionaire • Reading Challenge •Book Review <p>School 13</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reading Classes •SRA •DEAR •Storytelling <p>School 14</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Paired Reading •Reading Challenge •Word Millionaire <p>School 15</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SRA •DEAR •Accelerated Reading <p>School 16</p> 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • Readalong • Reading Classes • Silent Reading Programme • Storytelling • Accelerated Reading • Home Reading Programme • Book Review • Fast Lane Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • Reading Classes in the Library • DEAR • Book Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paired Reading • Reading Classes in the Library • Silent Reading Programme • SRA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paired Reading • SRA • Storysacks
School 17 	School 18 	School 19 	School 20 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • Readalong • Paired Reading • Reading Classes in the Library • SRA • DEAR • Accelerated Reading • Book Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author Visits • Reading Classes • Book Reviews • DEAR • Readathon • Paired Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Classes • Silent Reading Programme • Storytelling • Accelerated Reading • Book Reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Classes in the Library • DEAR • Accelerated Reading
School 21 	School 22 	School 23 	School 24 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • Paired Reading • Reading Classes in the Library • Silent Reading Programme • SRA • Book Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • Reading Classes in the Library • Silent Reading Programme • Storytelling • DEAR • Book Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paired Reading • Word Millionaire • DEAR • Accelerated Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word Millionaire • Reading Class • Accelerated • Readalong • SRA • Storytelling • DEAR • Book Review
School 25 	School 26 	School 27 	School 28 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • Paired Reading • Cross Age Peer Tutoring • Reading Classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • Paired Reading • Reading Class • Silent Reading • SRA • Book Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRA • DEAR • Accelerated Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keywords • Readalong • Reading Challenge • Subject Topic Box • Free Reading • Drama
School 29 	School 30 	School 31 	School 32 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paired Reading • DEAR • Keywords • Readalong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenge • DEAR • Library Classes • Cross age peer tutoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated Reading • Reading Challenge • DEAR • Library Classes 	
School 33 	School 34 	School 35 	

Table 6:1: The combination of JCSP reading initiatives each of the 35 schools implemented.

Implementation of the Literacy Medley

The JCSP *Literacy Medley* was implemented in each school in a unique way. Each school choose a combination of initiatives based on a needs analysis of their students and in many cases influenced by previously successful initiatives in their school (as in St Anthony's) as well as the influence of the JCSP CPD programme. Many of the teachers said that they were confident in the potential of each of the components of the Medley which meant that they were approaching this new venture with a positive attitude.

Implementation and Impact

It is intended to examine the implementation and impact of the *Literacy Medley* through the examination of data gained from school visits, from emails, from nineteen interviews with teachers, JCSP co-ordinators, JCSP librarians, principals and meetings with JCSP students as well as from thirteen online written evaluations along with a focus group with six of the participating schools along with nineteen completed librarian surveys. Additionally, the data gathered from an analysis of the student reading surveys as well as the analysis from standardised test scores from twenty eight schools. The focus groups and interviews afforded the opportunity to explore teachers' attitudes towards adolescent literacy, why so many are behind and what key issues need to be addressed in order to improve literacy levels, as well as how the *Literacy Medley* was going in each school.

Interviews with Medley co-ordinators were planned for December 2010 but the weather conditions meant that they had to be postponed. Instead a focus group was then put in place after Christmas and participating schools were invited to a meeting on 28th January 2011 in the Curriculum Development Unit. Seven schools attended: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10. Each participant was asked permission to be recorded for the purpose of this study and all agreed enthusiastically. Individual interviews took place between January and July 2011.

Visits to schools and classrooms afforded the opportunity to see the *Medley* in action and the response of the broader group of teachers and Principals as well as students to the initiative. Co-ordinators were also emailed to track progress through the year and an online survey (survey monkey) was used to gather librarian feedback. The online evaluation tool on the JCSP website was used to gather the views of the impact at the end of the school year. The focus group provided a very interesting forum for a number of key co-ordinators

involved in the Literacy Medley. All but two had a great deal of experience which facilitated a very revealing interchange. The following chart indicates the level of engagement of each of the thirty five schools in each aspect of this research.

Table 6.2 The *Literacy Medley* and the engagement of schools in research activities

The Literacy Medley and engagement of schools in research activities							
School No	Attended focus group	Telephone Interview	Completed Reading Surveys	Interview	Completed On Line Evaluation	Completed Survey Monkey	Reading Test Scores Returned
1		Yes	Yes		yes		Yes
2	yes	Yes	Yes				
3	yes		Yes				
4	yes		Yes	Yes			Yes
5	yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
6		Yes	Yes		yes		Yes
7		Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
8			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
9	yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
10	yes		Yes	Yes	yes		Yes
11		Yes	Yes	Yes	yes		
12			Yes		yes		
13		Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
14			Yes			Yes	Yes
15			Yes		Yes		
16		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
17			Yes			Yes	Yes
18			Yes			Yes	Yes
19			Yes			Yes	Yes
20			Yes			Yes	
21			Yes			Yes	Yes
22			Yes			Yes	Yes
23			Yes			Yes	Yes
24			Yes			Yes	Yes
25			Yes			Yes	Yes
26		Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
27			Yes			Yes	Yes
28			Yes			Yes	Yes
29			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
30			Yes			Yes	Yes
31			Yes			Yes	Yes
32			Yes		Yes		Yes
33			Yes		Yes		Yes
34		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
35			Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Totals	6	9	35	10	13	19	28

The next part is divided in to two sections. The first examines the emerging themes and the second examines the impact of the medley on the reading ages before exploring the advice from schools on the content of a first year reading programme.

Section 1 Emerging Themes

The data that was gathered from all of the above was coded in order to identify themes. A matrix facilitated the identification of overlapping themes from the different data sources. It facilitated triangulation and all the identified themes emerged from at least three data sources. The emerging themes will be examined under the focus of ten themes. These themes include six of the Ten Cs. namely, critical awareness: as to why students have such poor literacy, communication: classrooms textbooks and critical awareness and responsive teaching, capital and access to reading material, connection and care, as well as cross curricular and thematic approaches, self efficacy and choosing reading material and finally time for reading. As already noted I formulated the framework of the *Ten Cs* to help facilitate the exploration of critical issues relevant to the research topic. The *Ten Cs* were identified after recurring themes were categorised that emerged across international researchers and theorists in the area of literacy and disadvantage as well as emerging themes in the data collected as part of this research.

Some themes have already emerged in the case study school, specifically the impact of CPD, critical awareness of the teachers, care as well as the impact of the constitution of schools on the literacy strategy. These will be further explored based on the feedback from the *Medley* schools. The impact on communication, of the restricted language code of the students, as well as the impact of poor school attendance on their literacy levels emerged in the data. Evidence of the delivery of the curriculum through a responsive teaching approach in the context of a socio cultural model will also be outlined. Evidence of the respect for the authentic voice of the students will be highlighted. An expression of the counter culture towards the hidden curriculum in the setting will be highlighted as well as the thematic and cross curricular approaches evident in schools. The support of the self-efficacy of the students through their central involvement in choice of their reading materials as well as the efforts schools put into countering the students' lack of capital and provision of access to books in their school contexts will be examined. Evidence of pro-active strategies to connect

with the students, to motivate, excite and engage will also be highlighted. Finally, it is intended to examine the impact of the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* on students' reading ages before outlining what might be included in future programmes from the learnings of this initiative.

The themes will therefore be addressed in the following order:

1. Critical Awareness: why students have such poor literacy
2. Communication: restricted language
3. Critical Awareness and responsive teaching
4. Classrooms textbooks and responsive teaching
5. Cross Curricular and thematic approaches,
6. Self efficacy and choosing reading material
7. Capital and access to reading material
8. Connection
9. Time for reading
10. Care

1. Critical Awareness: Why students have such poor literacy

Teachers gathered in the focus group brought the dialogue a little further than in the case study school. Through the discussion that took place there was evidence of teachers who were committed to praxis. They were also well capable of viewing the issues in their classroom, the issues that their students faced, in a broader social and political framework. They were aware of the cultural divide and its impact and were committed to being part of improving the well being of their students through a respectful, appropriate and challenging curriculum.

....middle class child will have so many thousands more words in their vocabulary from being read to as a small child before they ever start school even if they can't read. (Teacher School 2)

The thrust of the response from the group could be divided into two themes. Firstly, there was clear evidence of critical awareness of the level of disadvantage as there was unanimous agreement that the socio economic divide was at the very heart of the problem impacting on the development of language skills; secondly, that attendance in primary and in post primary due to disadvantage (according to the teachers) lead to huge gaps in their learning. Interestingly there seemed to be very little knowledge at second level as to what programmes are in place to teach, support and promote reading at primary level. All were eager to stress that in their opinions primary schools were doing their best. There was no blame expressed.

A close analysis was made of the discussions that took place over the course of the focus group meeting and coding facilitated the identification of certain themes that were held by the full group. The group also came to consensus through their discussion which also facilitated concluding that their views could be summarised within the figure below.

Summary of the views of the focus group as to why our young people have such poor literacy:

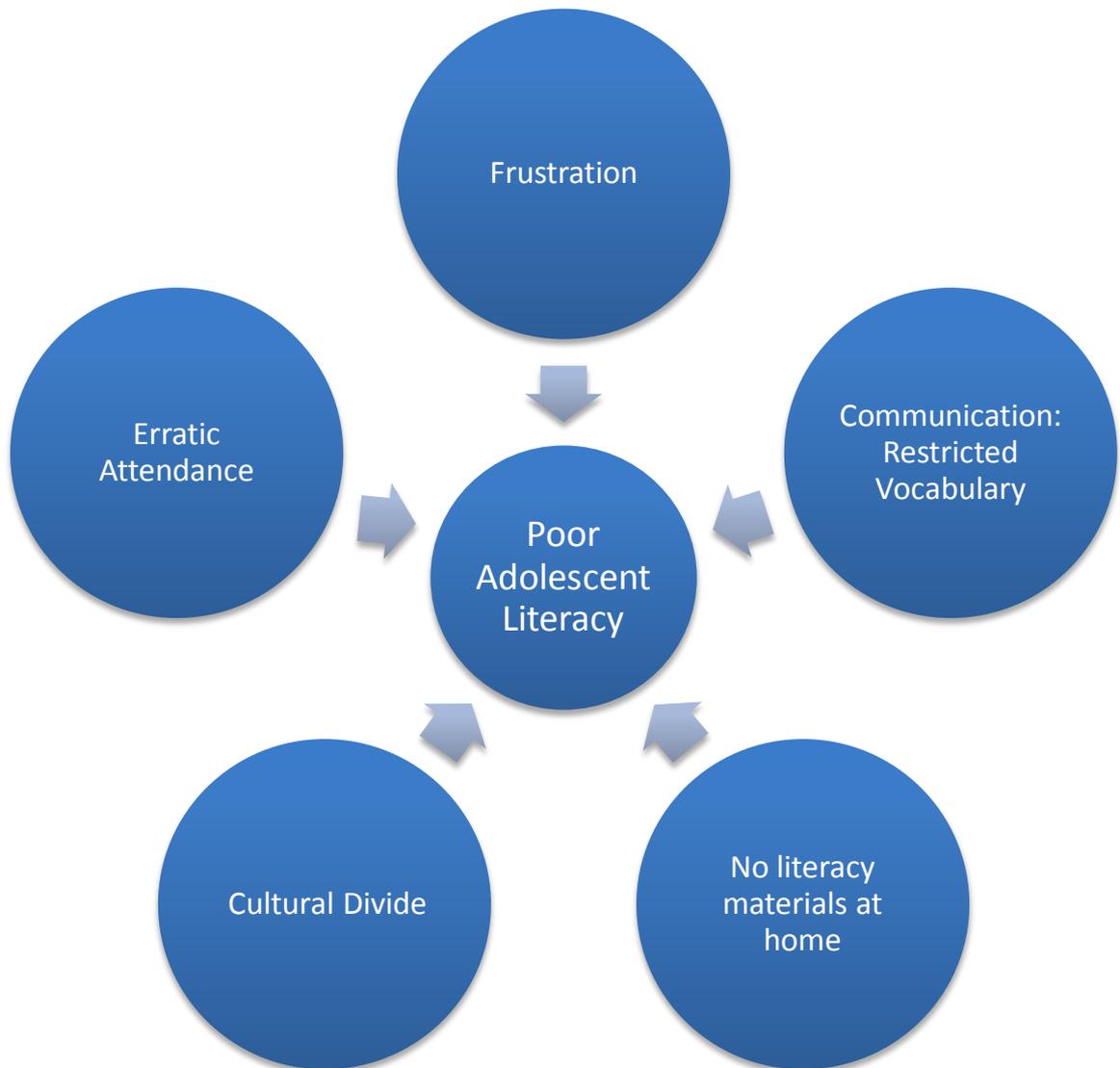


Figure 17: Key factors contributing to adolescent literacy according to teachers in focus group.

Teachers were critically aware of the place of communication and language in shaping the educational experience of their students.

2. Communication: Restricted Language Skills

We are what we say and do. The way we speak and are spoken to help shape us into the people we become. Through words and other actions, we build ourselves in a world that is building us. (Shor, 1999)

Linguistic capital or lack of it was regarded as central in why teenagers have such poor literacy and the full group discussed this with great vigour, engagement and energy. There was a clarity that the restriction comes about because of class divide. The discussion continued outlining how the students reject people that do not talk like them calling them "posh". One participant referred to the students' language as a badge they wear just the same as their trainers.

They regard us (the teachers) as posh. and they often reject people that do not talk like them calling them 'posh'. ...the students' language is used as a badge they wear just the same as their trainers. So this is something that we have to bear in mind while still building up a useful vocabulary. Their vocabulary is so limited, just in terms of normal conversation but when it comes to specialist vocabulary it's just not there.....(Teacher School 4)

The group acknowledged the positive impact of a middle class home on student learning, where students are read to before they come to school, while JCSP students have little or no reading materials at home, according to the experience of these teachers.

I teach Irish and Maths and ...they don't like when I use language in class that they do not understand - I am not talking about mathematical language just English words that they do not understand and ...they'll use the word 'posh' to describe a person who does not talk the way they do ...it's a corporation estate so we are talking about disadvantaged kids ...the language that they use when we're speaking, vocabulary that they use ...a lot of them don't want to extend that because they see it as their vocabulary. (Teacher, School 10)

this is the way I talk miss ...this is who I am. (Teacher, School 5)

Teachers assume that students possess a wide vocabulary coming into second level but the teachers in the focus group recognised that it is important not to assume understanding. One teacher commented on how careful teachers have to be in assuming understanding of language :

I had a top stream girl for junior cert and we came across the word 'wither' - not a 'withering look', it was literally to wither, you know, and she said to me "what's that miss?" and I was shocked because of course I just didn't think, I just assumed that she would have heard that word somewhere, even that leaves wither I thought ...we

just don't know what they don't know - the assumptions we make - we do assume an awful lot when they come in - we assume that they can do this ...we assume a lot. (Teacher, School 2)

There was a recognition that this restricted vocabulary leads to frustration and anger but, even more importantly for educators, leads to restriction of their thinking ability.

...your speaking vocabulary is absolutely exactly equal to your thinking vocabulary - if you can't say it, you can't think it. (Teacher, School 4)

They agreed that these pupils may present to teachers as weak intellectually because their restricted vocabulary interferes with the manner in which they present themselves as well as their performance in the IQ tests. The students then progress through school perceiving themselves as weak and their teachers often regard them as limited in their ability to learn. The group were unanimous that the students are at a serious disadvantage compared to their middle class peers and so deserve and need interventions to address these inequalities.

Language is viewed as constituting an important part of the cognitive dimension of cultural capital since, in addition to being a means of communication, it provides, together with a richer or poorer vocabulary, a system of categories that enables one to decipher and manipulate complex logical and aesthetic structures that “prevent pupils from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools” (Bourdieu, 1986). According to the Department of Education and Science (2005b) “a child may be regarded as disadvantaged at school if, because of economic, cultural or social factors, the competencies that he or she brings to school differ from those valued in schools” (2005b, p.14). There is no doubt that such a divide is evident to all of the teachers interviewed.

Attendance

Poor attendance contributes to educational disadvantage. It exacerbates underachievement and increases the likelihood of early school leaving. (Lynch 2011)

Attendance was the second identified reasons for poor literacy at second level. All in the group felt that poor attendance patterns throughout primary and into post primary was one of the most significant barriers to literacy progress and felt that all literacy interventions must go hand in hand with strategies to improve attendance. This resonates with the findings of the ERC in Literacy in disadvantaged schools (2004) where they found that

attendance was significantly correlated with reading achievement. The teachers were very clear as to the significance of attendance on literacy levels.

...all of these initiatives are tremendous and long may they continue, and we can talk about what happens in the classroom, our problem is getting them into the classroom and getting them in every day ...if a child is missing two days a week or two days a fortnight at primary level ...they learn so much in a single day in primary school if they miss two days a week, two days a fortnight you are talking about them missing bricks out of the wall - the wall will collapse... (Teacher, School 10)

All agreed that the issue of attendance has to be tackled if we are to address literacy levels in Ireland.

...my biggest worry now is about this student's literacy, that she missed so much time in primary school and she is going into the emotional block now we're going into the teenage thing no one is getting near to her. (Teacher, School 2)

The findings of the ERC (Eivers et al 2004) support those of other studies (eg Cosgrove et al, 2000; Kain & O'Brien, 1999) in highlighting an association between poor attendance and low achievement. Moreover, in their multilevel model of achievement, attendance was related to achievement, even after adjustments for other relevant variables had been made.

The model also revealed an interaction between attendance and being read to at home before the beginning of formal schooling. One can infer from this interaction that a high attendance rate could, in certain circumstances, compensate for the effects of not being read to prior to formal schooling. Given this, it would seem that strategies to promote attendance and to deal with non-attendance are important aspects of efforts to raise achievement. (Eivers et al, 2004)

There are strong recommendations in this report directed at the NEWB to develop models of best practice on within-school methods of promoting attendance and dealing with persistent non-attenders, which can be used by EWOs to support schools in developing and implementing measures to promote attendance. They should also strive to raise public awareness of the importance of regular school attendance, including the effects of attendance on achievement (2004, p.171). It was clear from the notes attached by the teachers with the individual students' reading scores that the students with the poorest attendance pattern made the poorest improvements as a result of being involved in the Literacy Medley. Some actually regressed in the reading scores on the standardised tests.

3. Critical Awareness and responsive teaching

Many believe that when a curriculum is designed specifically to draw on students' cultural and linguistic resources the results can be dramatic. Lee (2001) observes that students' cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge offer "a fertile bridge for scaffolding literacy response, rather than a deficit to be overcome" (2001, p.101). There was evidence in the Medley schools that there were attempts to align school curricula with students' interests and outside-of-school competencies. It can be effective in undoing the general erosion of engagement in reading and learning experienced by many youth as they progress through the grades. (Anderman, Maehr & Midgley, 1999; Eccles et al, 1998; McPhail, Pierson, Freeman, Goodman & Ayappa, 2000; Brozo, 2010).

One example was to be found in the manner one teacher presented a text, as recommended by, Burke (2009), that "utilises a sociocultural approach to instruction focused upon engagement and differentiation as ways to gradually scaffold secondary students into academic discourses regardless of their abilities or backgrounds." Such approaches were also evident in other schools and the example of school 9 exemplifies an approach that I witnessed in many schools.

The co-ordinator in School nine was an experienced teacher (of about 30 years) whom I will call Jim, who incorporated the JCSP literacy strategy and the *Literacy Medley* into a pre-existing structure and approach. There were several remarkable aspects to highlight in the manner of implementation but most especially the evidence of respect within a sociocultural responsive approach to education. His approach exemplifies an understanding that was evident among the teachers at the focus group - a critical awareness of the cultural divide and the responsibility of schools to attempt to bridge that gap. His approach was responsive to the diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of adolescents (O'Brien, 2001). This was an example of how a teacher can utterly transform the curricular experience of the students. He adapted the approach and the content to the identified needs of the students and took the *Literacy Medley* and incorporated it into his yearly plan. He had no textbooks and yet he had a very structured approach.

He works in a very disadvantaged school that is nestled within a housing estate in Dublin. He describes it as a "working class area, very decent people, and where literacy is not a

priority” and a “great number of families have zero books at home.” So his aim in doing the *Literacy Medley* was to improve the literacy of some of their first year students and consequently to improve their confidence in reading and to develop a love of reading among these students. The interventions were planned at the JCSP weekly meetings, at DEIS meetings and during whole staff development days to ensure a school-wide engagement. He had put aside textbooks and based his programme on a themed approach using a *story of the week* as well as individualised programmes (such as *Toe by Toe 1993*) and a parental involvement programme. These became successfully merged with the *Literacy Medley* as reading corners were established in several classrooms along with a Book Box scheme for the school. He ran a Reading Challenge, a paired reading programme every Tuesday from mid-September to December with a group of parents, and a DEAR programme for the whole school before the February mid-term break, 2011. The JCSP students were requested to read, at home, for five nights a week throughout the year. All subject teachers were asked to use the keyword approach within their classrooms, which is a vocabulary building and reading strategy. All were asked to use the JCSP keyword charts. The students were also involved in Make A Book.

Jim was clearly a teacher who valued the voice of the students and made use of the reading survey information (conducted on 14 October 2010), particularly the section that asked students to identify what ways they could be helped with reading. Nearly half expressed a desire to read in a quiet space and one quarter wanted to read out loud with others asking for shorter books with larger print that had more pictures and overall more interesting books. Others asked explicitly for more non-fiction reads. Nearly half asked for help from teachers or parents. Jim acted on their requests.

Books were purchased and instead of putting in place one reading corner Jim believed that there should be books everywhere so there are several corners in several classrooms with couches surrounded by books.

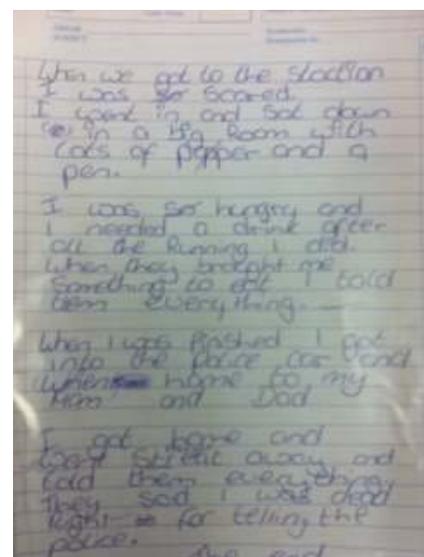
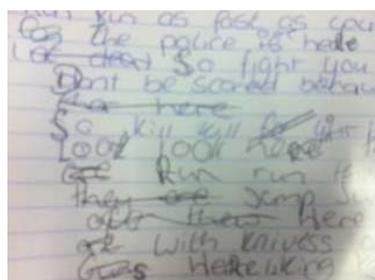
Apple, in *Teachers and Text* (1986), explores the negative impact of the textbook culture on education and reproduction, and the negative impact of education packages - “teachers are being deskilled through the introduction of educational packages and test requirements” (1986, p.32). The formal curriculum assumes that there is no inequality, no disadvantage, no

problem with literacy. It assumes all twelve year olds enter second level with the same level of cultural and economic capital and so are at the same page of the textbook so to speak. The evidence here is that those assumptions are being questioned and indeed overturned.

4. Classrooms, Textbooks and responsive teaching

Lynch (1989) points out that because Ireland has such a centrally controlled curriculum teachers are “not free to present children in working class areas with the type of knowledge they deem suitable for their perceived social class needs.” That is not the case in Jim's classes. Jim decided that the textbooks were totally inappropriate for his students long ago and decided to take things into his own hands by writing his own original textbook. He found the commercially produced textbooks to be completely unsuited to the cultural context of the students, their areas of interest or their reading level. So he set about writing an appropriate story for every week for each class group for each week of the year, linked in with seasonal themes that link out to poetry, functional writing etc. Jim said that the students love the story of the week and when you read them, all based in the local area, dealing with serious adolescent issues, many true stories and most filled with local humour and relevance, one can understand why. He develops the students' reading and written work through this thematic approach. He encourages the real fun, creative voice of the student to emerge through their writing as well as head-on dealing with real adolescent issues. Their pieces were a highlight of the annual JCSP Make A Book. He blends in the JCSP Dictionary initiative along with the keyword approach throughout. Technology is also utilised with the smart board being used to support all of the literacy work. The old and the new are interwoven with the parental reading programme and the story of the week is now woven in with his Reading Challenge and the dictionary work and the keywords.

Some examples of the student's writing.



This was an example of a supported literacy curriculum. The classroom that I witnessed provided for the students to be involved in authentic, student-centred literacy tasks, cognitive reading and writing strategies explicitly taught within a classroom that facilitated talk, and peer discussion in small groups. Morocco, Hindin, Mata-Aguilar and Clark-Chiarelli (2001) found a curriculum of authentic reading and writing was superior to an emphasis on isolated skills and mechanics. Hamel and Smith (1998) also found that lower-track students, given appropriate, scaffolded strategy instruction, can discuss and interpret literature in a sophisticated way. Such contextual talk, student-centred reading tasks, cognitive reading and writing strategies and authentic reading and writing all feature in Jim's classes. And it works:

Typically the students' reading ages go from 8 years to 10 years - reading ages taken from the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability - with only three or four students ever sitting foundation level English as the majority are encouraged to take ordinary level. (Jim)

The formula, according to Jim, involved the parents, having consistent reading at home with the help of a daily check, and regular calls home made a real impact. This was coupled with access to books and strategies to keep the focus on reading throughout the year. Overarching again is evidence of a nurturing environment.

Jim was disappointed with the GRT2 test results for his students and felt that the results of the post test were not an accurate representation of the improvements he had witnessed. The average improvement over the academic year was 10 months, significant, but Jim is adamant that these scores do not represent the improvement he witnessed.

I used the Group Reading Test - C & D parts. For some of the eleven students, parts A & B would have been more suitable. Some of the big words in the D part of the Group Reading Test made some of the students stop trying to do the test. They gave up, despite encouragement. All eleven students will be tested on form 2 of the NARA next September as is routine and should yield more accurate results. (Jim's online evaluation)

Nonetheless one student improved his reading age by 15 months from a reading age of 10 to 11:3 while another improved 16 months from 8:06 to 9:10. Another improved by 38 and another by 31 months from 9:0 to 12:02 and from 12:03 to 15:00. One made no improvement and stayed at 9:04. Three disimproved going down 11 months from 7:09 to 6:10, another by one month from 7:01 to 7:00 and another 9:00 to 8:07. This could be

because they are at the lower end of the test scale where it becomes more unreliable, coupled with their poor attendance patterns.

The co-ordinator however found improvements in literacy in many other different ways. He said that it is now on the school's agenda and is a key target in their school. It is now often discussed with students, parents, teachers, Principal and S.N.A.s. Reading for homework among most of the students in the target group is now seen as routine and checking the journals everyday to see if it is being done has helped to improve communication with the student and parents. The paired reading with first years is now an annual event.

The school is planning on running a similar programme next year due to this year's success:

Most of the above activities and events are now institutionalised in our annual calendar. (Jim's online evaluation)

The students love it and it creates a lovely buzz in the classroom. All teachers took the keyword charts and now many teachers use them in their classrooms. During the DEAR programme many classrooms were offered extra books - for the simple purpose of pleasure reading - and teachers were asked to retain these books in their rooms. "Many of our classrooms now have a good supply of reading books."

The DEAR initiative was one of the highlights. It created a bit of a buzz around the school. Some students and teachers wanted to know when we were running this initiative again.

Students' confidence and self esteem increased. When the students read out loud in class it was possible to hear the improvement in their reading. Some of the students who were very afraid of reading out loud, now choose to read out loud. (Jim's online evaluation)

There is no doubt that the *Literacy Medley* is benefiting the students, particularly in the hands of an experienced teacher who blends the interventions into a well established programme to best effect and to some extent casts aside the formal curriculum, the textbooks, and focuses on the needs of the students in a responsive manner.

5. Cross Curricular and thematic approach

The sterile breath of the machine seems evident in much of the predominant curriculum thinking today. This thinking seems to fit neither the richness of the natural world nor the complex and varied world of the classroom. Rather the focus is

upon technology and developing curriculum that fits neatly into marketable packages. (Holt, L. and Krall, F., 1976, p.140)

JCSP has become a platform for ongoing and dynamic curriculum development in that it is in continuous development from the ground up. Teachers inform the process as a result of their feedback from the reality of their classroom experiences. It provides an alternative approach within the formal curriculum and can facilitate schools in countering the hidden curriculum as already outlined. JCSP has, in many schools, become a site of curriculum integration as it facilitates a thematic mode of curriculum delivery. Within this site possibilities are provided for a school-wide approach to literacy to develop. A thematic cross curricular approach is more akin to the approach at primary level. It facilitates more interesting interactions between subjects and can provide a more holistic approach to a topic. The use of a thematic cross curricular approach to the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* was taking hold across all the schools. The various reading initiatives emerged out of a thematic approach in many instances.

Another feature already mentioned is the manner in which experienced teachers and co-ordinators succeeded in blending the JCSP initiatives into their own existing reading programmes and the impact of the blend is such that students are receiving a very rich range of reading interventions over the course of the academic year. It is therefore hoped, by providing a description of the manner in which some schools implemented the Medley over the year, that this study will reveal the manner in which initiatives dovetailed and complemented each other and so collectively impacted on students' reading literacy. Noddings (2005) and others suggest that we should radically reform the curriculum in order to create new learning environments more conducive to successful learners. There is a model emerging in the Medley schools where the structures and boundaries of the currently constructed curriculum are being bypassed through this thematic approach.

Thematic Approaches

Disciplines are firmly bounded, with specialists to cultivate the subject, to mark the boundaries, and to guard the ideological hegemony of the discipline. (Ross, 2009)

Several schools described an integrated approach that had emerged over the previous years but had now been consolidated by the *Literacy Medley*. The schools ran some of the

interventions separately for several years and as a result they were becoming embedded into their school - one described it as “they are now part of the school calendar.” Allington and Walmsley, (2007) recognised how important this embedding of interventions is:

Special intervention programme must become part of the fabric of the schools- incorporated into the belief system of teachers and administrators and fitted into the routines and organisational plans of the school. (Allington and Walmsley, 2007, p.254)

The *Literacy Medley* facilitated an integrated thematic approach in many cases. The following is a description of how schools three, five and two implemented a thematic approach:

School Three

The year began in school three with a book fair to develop their Reading Corner for their first years. Word Millionaire ran before Christmas to great enthusiasm and alongside the SRA-supported literacy development in the English classrooms. The co-ordinator went to some lengths to illustrate how the programme is transforming the manner in which they engage with the students and the manner in which English is taught in the school. They described how the work, over the first two terms, was culminating in a thematic literacy week, themed on Myths and Legends as a result of the influence of the JCSP storytelling initiative from the previous year when a Sheanchai worked with the students, who became totally enthralled with the theme of myths and legends. The literacy week, which was cross curricular, incorporated their Make A Book on the same theme, with a *Children of Lir* book being produced. An essay project - *A Legend in my life* – also included a handwriting competition with certificates for all and led into their Make A Book submission with the art department. Another local story teller was also involved.



at the end of today we have Niall De Burca who has them in the palm of his hands ...always with worry - they are going to eat him alive - they could not get closer straining to hear what he was saying. (Teacher school 3)

This was followed up by a puppet drama workshop focused on a scene from the *Children of Lir* while alongside they ran a DEAR project with all their first years each day during their nine and two o'clock classes.

The co-ordinator has noted that interest in reading had noticeably improved and they “love coming in.”

School Five

A thematic approach was again in evidence in school five where all students were on average three years behind in their literacy with a reading age of nine years on entry into first year. They read *Butterfly Lion* as a project and developed their Make A Book from its themes, supported by a trip to Fota Wildlife Park to see Cheetahs alongside an author in residency. A paired reading programme with transition year complemented their reading routines along with accelerated reading.

These are images of their Make A Book exhibition in Cork:



The students produced a wonderful mosaic of the themes from the *Butterfly Lion* by Michael Morpurgo with their Art teacher. This is an example of the cross curricular nature of the work. These are some panels from the mosaic:



School Two

School two organised their literacy interventions around the celebrations at Halloween, Christmas and St Patrick's Day, again with a cross curricular focus between, in this instance, English, French, geography and home economics. Parents were also involved.

...it transforms the relationship with the parents and so it is invaluable. (JCSP co-ordinator)

These students were involved in a regional reading project with home school liaison as well as running a DEAR project (now an annual event) alongside Reading Challenge and readalong. A table quiz was aligned to the JCSP dictionary initiative and the resources are well used across the year group.

Overall the co-ordinator concluded that it is more than a series of interventions but “so much depends on the manner of implementation and the belief that it will make a difference.”

Not so much what you do but the energy you put into it. (School 2)

Schools have been criticised for their rigid adherence to the formal curriculum, for carrying out the rule of the Department of Education and ultimately reproducing inequality through their compliance and accommodation. However, many experienced teachers have learned that such an approach will only yield a one dimensional education and will leave the students disengaged and poorly behaved. The thematic approach in evidence in so many schools not only facilitated an integrated delivery of the JCSP reading initiatives but also facilitated an enriched cross curricular approach.

6. Self-efficacy: Choosing their own reading materials

It was clear from the Reading Survey that students want to choose their own books as 71per cent made a clear statement when they were asked what would encourage them to read more. Choosing their own book got the highest percentage of positive responses by the students. Many schools in the *Literacy Medley* brought the students to the local book shops and allowed them to choose their books, while others brought the book shop to the school.

The stronger the students' self-efficacy to manage their own learning, the higher their aspirations and accomplishments (according to Bandura, 2006). The move to second level

can hit the adolescent self-efficacy very hard as they move from a familiar personalised school environment to an impersonal departmentalised environment that has curricular tracking to third level. Now they have to re-establish their self-efficacy, social connectedness and status within the larger context of getting to know a new school. It is essential that they are in a caring, understanding school and experience the tenderness of an experienced teacher skilled in engineering the success they need to develop a sense of capability. We have seen how care is a feature of these thirty five educational establishments. There is also considerable evidence of their openness to listen and act upon the voice of the students. We could see it in the case study school. Another example of this is the manner in which schools look to the students to both choose and purchase their reading materials. It is the beginning of the development of self-efficacy. 34 per cent of the students found reading hard and 53 per cent stated that they do not love reading in the reading survey of JCSP 1st years. Self-efficacy is built from success and there is evidence of success in engagement in reading, in increased book borrowing, in increased amounts of reading and very importantly in increased confidence levels among the students as a result.

Types of Reading materials: Reading Survey

Certainly the reading survey of JCSP first years was revealing in terms of what they chose to read and what they choose not to read. There is evidence that the majority of the schools involved the students in choosing the reading materials through surveys, questionnaires, involving communications with home and simply listening to the students. Many of the JCSP librarians suggest that most schools should simply throw out the majority of the books in their libraries as so many of the collections simply serve to fill the shelves while the students have no interest in actually reading them. It is essential that we review our attitudes, as teachers, to suitable reading materials. Most importantly we need to ask the students. This impacts on self-efficacy, motivation and attitude.

Choosing books in the Medley schools

School Thirteen

The reading ages of the group of nineteen first years was between seven and nine years in school thirteen. Some students had never read a book before and others were fair readers (according to the co-ordinator). Comprehension was again noted as the biggest problem as they can “read away but don’t comprehend what they are reading.” They ran a Word

Millionaire, a Reading Challenge and a readalong and all were embedded into what is going on already and interlaced with Make A Book. Additionally, like schools nine and seventeen, school thirteen gave reading homework.

Choosing books for themselves proved to be the biggest winner for these students. They brought the shop to the school with a former student who works in Easons coming into the classroom to tell them about buying books.

The bookseller brought a selection of books to add to the library. She met the students for two periods per week and shared her love of reading and her favourite books with them. Students also had the opportunity of reading aloud and getting more comfortable with an audience.

The co-ordinator reported that the “students increased their interest in reading with a great desire to read the next edition or books of the same author. Functional English improved. Students’ confidence improved with the use of a new word.”

There was a great sense of achievement among the students as they reportedly read their first book. “I never finished a book before” (Student).

There was greater participation, more positive attitude, a sense of challenge and most impressively a move to enjoyment of reading. The hope is that they will continue reading over the holidays. (Teacher)

The highlight for school thirteen, as in so many other schools, was the complete change in attitude to reading as students looked for more books to read. They began very actively to not want to be interrupted while reading, “surprised when the bell rings for break in class.” One “reluctant reader named reading as one of their hobbies as part of their reference.” The students in this school improved on average by 10 months in their reading ages.

School Twelve

School twelve began their year with the teachers interviewing the 1st years to reveal what books they were interested in; if they read at home; if they liked reading; and to gain a basic overview of the interest levels of the students. A questionnaire was filled in with parents at home. This informed on how they selected books and the manner in which the students

with all junior classes. There was a resistance amongst management to allow it to become a whole school activity, as much as the co-ordinator and core team would have liked it to. A Sheanachai and a storyteller were also involved and linked to a JCSP library outreach programme. *Poetry by heart* was a very successful project according to the teachers, culminating in the students standing up publicly and reciting their poem. A perpetual trophy and plaques were presented to the students who most engaged following an afternoon devoted to the recitations. Make A Book had a scientific theme as a result of a visit to the previous year's exhibition. It was noted that corrective reading – an SRA reading programme – has proved very successful with a select number of very poor readers producing “amazing results in a short time.” So again, in school ten the interventions became embedded into the school and the presence of a Reading Corner has proved to be very successful in the school. According to the Principal the JCSP literacy strategy has transformed how they approach things now in the school, with a reading culture becoming widespread. It was clear from talking to the Principal that it was not only the students who were transformed by the project but the management and staff as well. It was clear that this worked and they are going to invest a great deal more next year as the JCSP team will be strengthened and expanded.

The amount of literature the students read over the course of the year was greatly increased compared to the year previous without the initiative. (School 12)

The students' interest and enthusiasm for reading time was nothing I would have imagined. (Teacher, School 12)

Can we have an extra ten minutes miss? (Student, School 12)

7. Capital: Access to books

Research has demonstrated time and time again that consistent exposure to high-quality literature will expand a child's world and be reflected in their vocabulary (Kambarian, 2001; Robbins and Ehri, 1994).

The Reading Survey clearly illustrates the poor access to books that the JCSP students have with 53 per cent of students having fewer than 25 books at home with 27 per cent with only between 1-10 books at home.

those who struggled with reading were less likely to have books of their own at home. (Clark et al., 2011, p.29)

According to PISA 2009 (ERC, 2010) on “a measure of home educational climate (number of books in the home), students with 0-10 books had a mean score that was 115 points lower than students with over 500 books” (p.7). According to the ERC, 6.4 per cent of variation in reading achievement in PISA 2009 is explained by books in the home after accounting for all other factors. “This is consistent with earlier research using previous PISA data that confirmed that the relationship between reading achievement and books in the home holds, even when school and home socio-economic status are controlled for” (p.7).

"Reluctant" readers are often those who have little access to books. Worthy and McKool (1996) studied 11 sixth graders who "hated to read." Nine of the 11 had little access to interesting reading material at home or in school, and none had visited the public library during the previous year. The two who had access to interesting reading were the only ones who read "with any degree of regularity" (p.252). Ironically, even though all were described as "reluctant readers," all appeared to be quite enthusiastic about "light reading" (e.g. comics). Krashen (2004) suggests that teachers should provide access to light reading, such as comic books, graphic novels, children's series, magazines and teen romances. He shows that current comic books have about 2,000 words each. A student who reads one comic book per day will read about 500,000 words yearly. More research shows that comic book readers read as much as if not more than those who don't read comics. Also, reading comics usually leads to more serious reading.

Access to books and reading materials including the provision of school libraries and filling classrooms full of reading materials will improve literacy according to international research (Krashen, 2003, 2004, 2005; Martin and Morgan, 1994; Ramos and Krashen, 1998; Cho and Krashen, 2001; and Neuman and Celano, 2001).

Allotting a designated portion of a classroom to a library corner has been found to increase children's use of literature, especially during free-choice periods. (Morrow & Weinstein, 1982 & 1986)

Access to books and reading materials is one of the most significant predictors of reading success according to Martin and Morgan (1994). Atkinson (1998) noted that to counteract the headstart in literacy that middle class students have at the completion of primary schooling each working class classroom would need to be stocked with 1000 books (as well as possessing a school library).

The facts are clear - JCSP students do not have adequate access to books. Providing such access should impact positively on their literacy levels. Libraries were put in place by the JCSP support service in thirty of the participating schools in 2002 because of the findings of international research so the students are very well catered for in these schools. Seventeen are participating in this study. The remaining nineteen Medley schools were provided with funding to put in place a Reading Corner.

Learners of every age need an environment that encourages them to read recreationally, think creatively, explore with curiosity, and revel in new knowledge. (Pavonetti, Brimmer and Cipilewski, 2002/2003)



Example of a JCSP Library

All co-ordinators mentioned that the reading corners have provided wonderful access to books along with new, relevant and engaging reading materials. It can be difficult however to convince schools to spend money on soft furnishings, couches, rugs and the like. It goes against the grain, perhaps, of the traditional sharp, formica, steel-bound furniture that they have typically provided their students. How can they sit back in comfort and enjoy a good read in steel clad chairs I ask? In some instances it took quite a number of visits to convince teachers to spend the money on anything other than books. It took a lot of convincing. One had to be told that we would take the money back! Books are fine - they are used to books

but “wasting it” on soft furnishing, lamps or artwork to create a funky atmosphere takes a lot of convincing I found. So there were mixed results in terms of how inviting for an adolescent these spaces turned out to be. In some instances they are only a step up from the formica. Certainly some teachers proudly showed off their patterned Oxfam purchase that your granny would turn her nose up at! Others got the idea and went all out to get the leather sofa and the funky wall hangings. Some are still challenged to find an appropriate space in the school and in the interim have mobile shelves and even suitcases full of books! However, in some of these instances the co-ordinator has said that the success of the Medley has resulted in school management allocating a space for a full reading room next year. Success.

Some have provided corners in several classrooms so the impact is felt across the school.

Here is an example in School 9.





A Reading Corner in
a Science Room
(School 9)



Books in every
classroom (School9)

Others have developed a section of their library - indeed many have reported that the corners have revitalised their old library and as such the students now want to come in and read in the comfortable, friendly reading spaces.

The Reading Corner has transformed a sad library in school two.



A positive relationship has been developed in most of the schools with their local library as a result of the developments of the reading spaces.

All students become public library members. (School one)

School Seven

School seven invested a lot of money on books for these initiatives so it was easier for the students to pick out books according to the teachers. They visited the local library and the librarian gave them a talk on opening an account, so some now use the local library too.

We visited our local county library in town on pupils request. They were introduced to the librarian and the range of books which they could borrow if they went and visited themselves. We had a coffee morning to celebrate the end of the reading initiatives and they brought their favourite book to talk about, quite like a book club. The students really enjoyed this. (School 12)

Accessibility plus good design, supply and appropriate use have been found to increase children's interest in looking at and reading books when compared to children who do not have access to such an area (Bissett, 1969; Coody, 1973; Huck , 1976). (Allington and Walmsley. 2007, p.105)

The Literacy Medley certainly made the participating schools put a lot of thought into the provision of reading materials and appropriate spaces for reading and all improved their provision.

8. Connection

Wylie et al (2006) concluded that it is not enough just to learn to read – one of the strongest indicators of positive engagement in school and learning was the enjoyment of reading. The findings were very clear. Those who enjoyed reading also had higher average scores for positive relationships with family and friends, and showed less risky behaviour. A massive 84

per cent of JCSP students agreed that reading is important in the Reading Survey of 1st years and 89 per cent recognise that reading will help them get better examination results. Additionally, 82 per cent realise that reading will help them to get a better job. Clearly the JCSP students have no doubt as to the benefits of reading. However, half of the students say that they only read when they have to. 39 per cent of the JCSP students find reading boring and 53 per cent do not love reading.

So why do they read so little, dislike books and find reading boring? Perhaps it is because 34 per cent of them find reading hard. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a very strong relationship according to National Literacy Trust (Clark et al. 2011, p.38) between reading attainment and young peoples' perceptions of their own reading ability.

A central part of the many JCSP literacy initiatives is to support schools in re-engaging students in reading through challenges and excitement. The schools are encouraged to build anticipation before the start of the initiative, involve the whole staff and ask them to support the activity at every opportunity. Colorful support materials are supplied in order to support the visibility of the initiative within the school and classrooms. Schools are asked to run them for a set period of five to eight weeks and regardless of how successful they are to close them down while the students are still engaged. All are provided with funding not only for the reading materials but importantly for the money to ensure a celebration is held that includes student prizes. The initiatives incorporate the reading activities in the chart above that students indicated would encourage further reading.

School Six

School Six was one example of a school which actively focused on connection, which actively and energetically engaged the students, created anticipation before each initiative and ensured that each activity engaged every individual. 25 per cent of their incoming first years had very poor literacy skills. An ambitious plan for literacy development was implemented successfully. It was clear that real connection was achieved by subverting the rigid curriculum structures of subject teaching. *Reading for Pleasure* zones were put in place across the school. A junior Book Club was set up at lunch time for first years where students were given a personal CD and an audio recording of books. This group met every Wednesday and Thursday lunchtime. Book Clubs feature in many of the Medley schools and

can facilitate the construction of meaning among a group of students regarding the reading materials they are engaged in. I witnessed such groups in school eight and it was interesting to find very young students discussing their views of characters and plot and author style as well as their very personal take on the emotions the books they were reading evoked. Such Book Clubs, coupled with initiatives such as paired reading, serve to give individual attention. Students experience immersion in a community of practice and are helped to focus on the most useful patterns in their experience through overt focusing and scaffolding from experts (Vygotsky, 1987). The student/teacher relationship is also key. Gee refers to it as the learner becoming an apprentice within a context of a mix between immersion and support. This is exactly what these schools were facilitating.

These initiatives created an environment for students to talk about books in school with their peer group. (Co-ordinator)

Such personal meaning making and connection was further facilitated with poet Steve Murray's involvement. All students produced their own poetry during the workshops, and read their work to their class. This was to improve students' confidence in reading their own work.

.....one of the primary purposes of reading story events is the construction of meaning through the interaction of adult and child. ...some particularly useful behaviors include prompting children to respond, scaffolding or supporting responses for the children to model when they are unable to respond themselves... Allington and Walmsley, 2007, p.104)

Every JCSP student was given a JCSP Reading Folder and given one class a week to read. They then took that book home to read. As the year unfolded there was a change in the student body. They were very tuned into reading enjoyment and appeared connected into the reading habit.

Over the course of their year these students were involved in a plethora of reading activities. Motivation and engagement were maintained by the variety, success patterns, affirmation and energy of the teaching staff. Everyone was involved, sending out clear signals to all students that this was important. Paired reading with fifth years was followed by a Reading Challenge for all first years. Meanwhile all first year subject teachers monitored Keywords and participated in a Spelling Challenge. Drop Everything and Read

was also organised for the whole school in December and January before the school celebrated *World Book Day* with competitions and activities. A “Book in the Bag” and “Get Caught Reading Campaign” was run before Easter, alongside access to e-books in the computer room, with book reviews on display all over the school.

The students improved their attitude to reading, students, in particular, liked being read to. (Teacher school 6)

The majority of students demonstrated positive attitudes and motivation during the course of the initiative, improved attendance and behaviour was noted, and students improved on average by 18 months in their reading ages. They implemented the reading medley with all of their first year groups but in an intensive way with the two JCSP groups. Interestingly the average improvement was greater for the JCSP groups. One began with an average reading age of 8:08 and increased to 10:00 - average improvement of 23 months - while the other began with an average reading age of 6:05 and improved to an average reading age of 9.58 - average improvement of 37 months.

	Average Pre Reading Ages	Average Post reading ages	Average Improvement
Class 1	12.58	13.17	7.00
Class 2	10.08	11.42	16.00
Class 3 JCSP	6.50	9.58	37.00
Class 4	12.42	13.17	9.00

Table 6.3 The average reading ages in School 6 pre and post implementation of the Literacy Medley.

Students typically would say “Miss, I read that book last night, it was deadly.” Students were genuinely very proud that they completed a full book, students were keen to get more time to read. They were fully connected.

Additionally and crucially the literacy initiatives provides a structure for all students with time to read. Time to read has been a central plank of the JCSP literacy strategy. We have to provide students with appropriate reading materials and give them time to read them (Krashen, 2003, 2004, 2005; Ramos and Krashen, 1998; Cho and Krashen, 2002; Neuman and Celano, 2001 and Martin and Morgan, 1994).

9. Time for Reading

Results of the Reading Survey indicated that 76 per cent of the JCSP 1st year students read for the minimal amount of time (0-1 hours). The frequency with which young people read is related to their reading skills according to attitudes to the national literacy trust (2010). Young people who struggle with reading are more likely to say that they rarely or never read compared with young people who are at or above the expected reading level. The mean score of students who read for enjoyment for more than one hour per day was 93 points higher than that of students who did not read for enjoyment in Ireland in PISA 2009 (ERC, 2010, p.7). Additionally, socio-economic background mediates, at least to some extent, the association between frequency of reading and reading achievement (ERC, 2010, p.7).

Stefl-Mabry, J. (2011), states that we must accept the fact that “there will never be a silver bullet to quickly resolve the reading crisis.” She believes that if we are to improve literacy and develop good reading habits we have to provide students with “regularly scheduled times to read, without the typical pressure to demonstrate or prove what they have read.” She is right when she says teachers are worried that this reading will just be a waste of time. One Principal was initially worried that the students seemed to be “lounging around” and appeared to be time wasting – now he is a total believer in time to read in comfortable relaxed spaces. This took some time however. It is a cultural change. Teachers always want book reviews, summaries written or a worksheet completed rather than just allow the students the opportunity to enjoy a good book. The *Literacy Medley* provided schools with a framework and structure for such time to read.

According to Stefl-Mabry, J. (2011), students who “engage in reading on a daily basis may demonstrate a carry over effect and increase their knowledge across the board in all academic areas” (Kambarian, 2001). She notes that students who read more for pleasure make more progress:

Trelease (2001) explains that when the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) compared the reading skills of 210,000 students from thirty-two countries it found the highest scores (regardless of income level) among children who were read to by their teachers and children who read the most pages for daily pleasure (Chapter 5, 1). (Stefl-Mabry, 2011)

She recognises that Krashen (2003; 1993) argues that there is “consistent evidence that those who have more access to books read more and students who have more time for recreational reading demonstrate more academic gains in reading than ‘comparison students” (2003, 16).

What is different about the Medley is that students did not only engage in one but in at least three initiatives over the year. Every school commented that it served its purpose - it maintained a focus on reading throughout the academic year and facilitated matching the appropriate reading materials to the individual students. It facilitated students being taught how to settle down to read and magically reengaged these very reluctant readers - every single school reported this.

It was clear from all of the reports that key initiatives featured - Reading Challenges, Word Millionaires, readalong, Drop Everything and Read (DEAR), paired reading and accelerated reading; all of which seemed to dovetail into each other successfully. These were core in developing the reading culture in schools. They all facilitate “free voluntary reading” which according to Cho and Krashen 2001 improves vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar and writing among first-language acquirers as well as among second-language acquirers. They explain that:

...reading itself appears to be the most powerful motivator for encouraging additional reading: those who participate in sustained silent reading (SSR) programs show clear increases in the amount of free reading they do outside of school (Pilgreen and Krashen, 1993) and the effect appears to last years after the SSR program ends. (Greaney and Clarke, 2001, p. 170)

School Eight

On 12th April I spent a day in school eight in an urban setting. The school ran a range of literacy initiatives. Central was facilitating time to read.

I witnessed several of the JCSP reading interventions in place with the first year group. All first years had to have a book at all times and were provided with regular time to read. They were gaining great confidence in choosing the right book at this stage. Echoing the results of the reading survey many of the students told me that they did not like reading generally. All but one said that they would never read at home or outside school and they all said that they “never read like this”, in that they claimed that they had never really read before. One girl described how she would read during primary school reading time and mimicked scanning the book and chatting to her friend behind the book. She had now read 35 books according to her record since the beginning of first year. The *Time to Read* programme had worked. They were very keen to do their Star Quiz on accelerated reading and a pattern of high scores could be seen. Over the day about 7 students gained 100 per cent on their star quiz which meant that they got to put their name on the 100 per cent wall, which made them very proud.

Being exposed to books which are of their reading level and interest is a first for many of these students. Their experience with books in the past would often have had very negative connotations. However, by creating an environment and atmosphere whereby reading is not just hoped for but expected then they quickly realise that reading can also be enjoyable for them. Once this has happened, reading becomes a habit and it is much easier to encourage these students to read in the future. (JCSP Librarian, School 8)

Schools were eager to send in reading test results to show the impact of this continuous reading activity. I believe if we can provide students with appropriate reading materials at the correct level and facilitate students to read for half an hour each day then significant progress would be made.

Reading age on DATE1 Sept 2010	Reading age on DATE 2 April 2011	OVERALL PROGRESS IN READING AGE
8 yr 10 mth	11 yr 1 mth	2 years + 3 months
6 yr 10 mth	11 yr 6 mth	4 years + 8 months
9 yr 5 mth	10 yr 4 mth	11 months
6 yr 4 mth	11 yr 4 mth	5 years
6 yr 6 mth	8 yr 10 mth	2 years + 4 months
8 yr 11 mth	12 yr 11 mth	4 years

Table 6.4 The pre and post implementation reading tests results from School One:

The success in school seventeen was put down to sustaining a relentless spotlight on time to read through the initiatives. This ensured consistency, supported by a reading homework policy and fairly precise matching of students with the correct reading materials. Reading Challenge and Word Millionaire ensured that students were reading consistently.

The main thing with whatever we do is that it is consistent. As soon as the kids get into the routine for the vast majority of children the 'I hate reading' the 'I can't read' the 'won't read' starts to dissipate. It's routine once it is normalised and everyone does it, you are no different from any other child in the school. Those barriers start and maybe for the first time for many of them they have a positive experience of reading because in this school they will not be reading things that are either too difficult for them or too easy for them because accelerated reading and the testing that we do generally allows us to match them up to the right book. (Librarian school 17)

Another interesting development is that reading homework is now in place for the first time in several schools.

Reading Homework

School nine put a great deal of energy into ensuring there was a great choice of reading materials and that all students brought the books home saying that there should never be an excuse for not having books to give students. (He was a believer in buying books at car boot sales!).



“So many kids,” according to him, “see themselves as failures” and he puts it down to the need for consistency. He reckoned that the consistent focus on literacy that the Medley ensured was a winner. His utter belief that he can succeed in making each student read was refreshing.



He experienced great success with the home reading programme. They were asked to read out loud to their parents/guardians for about ten minutes per night and then get their journals signed by their parents as evidence of the reading being done. “I’ll phone your Ma” he told the students and they knew that he would if they did not do their reading homework. He had two stamps - one says *Keep Reading* and the other says *Get Reading Signed*.

He trained the parents in how to read with their child. They choose their books carefully under his supervision.

Many students are happy and proud to display their signed journals and communication with many parents has improved through getting the journal signed every night. (Co-ordinator's online evaluation)

He also used the JCSP reading folders and the students record the books they have read with a comment in their JCSP reading journal.

A student came into the room while I was there to choose a homework book. Jim asked her



about the books she liked and it was clear that there was a very respectful relationship in place. Jim had already brought the student's reading age up from a starting point of 6.05 through using paired reading and then onto reading, reading, reading. Her reading age is now 8.05 at the end of first year. Two years improvement. Allington and Walmsley (2007) say that

all other research proves this too:

The time spent on skill and drill did not increase reading achievement - the time spent actually reading was the best instructional predictor of who read best. (Leinhardt, Zigmong & Cooley, 1981)

School Seventeen

School Seventeen also had a strict reading homework policy and found that if structure and consistency is applied that the effects are tremendous. Reading homework is meticulously followed up on, same as any homework. Parents are also effectively involved and are met in September. The consistent approach ensures that even the most reluctant reader is engaged to finish

we have a policy around reading homework and very regular reading homework. It's a tough one to enforce but over the last year I have had growing support from all the teachers around this and we work together. How it works is soon as the kids come in they take out their school journal and the first thing they write in is their reading homework for the week and we don't move. I don't take a question, I don't explain anything. That job is done at the beginning of every class and at the end of every class myself and the teacher will go around and we will check that it has been written in and it does need to be that structured ...by putting in that structure in the first couple of weeks we can ease off on it very soon. They know we are going to come looking. (Librarian, School 17)

The full interview with this teacher can be found on the JCSP website within the range of demonstration video clips at <http://www.mediaconcepts.ie/jcsp/page35.html> and <http://www.mediaconcepts.ie/jcsp/page36.html> where the detail of how the reading homework is monitored is outlined.

She engages with the students at lunchtime if she feels reading homework is not going so well.

I kept a couple of students back and I said to them it wasn't detention or anything ...and these kids you know they'd kick off and give out stink that they have to stay in at lunchtime ...and then they were not leaving the library when the ten minutes were up! You know they were still there and I have seen huge turn-arounds by following the policy ...they want to come in and have the chat about it and they want me to just spend the time with them picking out the book ...they made the shift and came with me and because I was fairly consistent about it they knew they weren't going to get away with it, they came around and the battle was over and they just got on with it. (Librarian, School 17)

The success that both schools have in engaging parents is also noteworthy.

Another aspect is getting the parents on board and having that early meeting in September and explaining that this is expected ...explaining that there will be follow up around this, that's crucial, because parent support make a huge difference ...it's been fantastic to see the kid that you are pushing and it's not happening, and then after the parent meeting they go home from the meeting and say now I want that reading homework done and next thing you know the kid is coming in "Miss can I have four books I'm going to get to go karting if I get five" ...that wouldn't happen as easily without that parental support so having a meeting at the beginning of the year, letting parents know that there is something different happening ...we expect a lot from your kids they need to be on board with us. (Librarian, School 17)

The trend for putting in place structures for reading homework is an indication of how reading and literacy is now on the agenda in these second level schools. It is worth putting effort and structures in place for. This sends clear signals to all stakeholders - we are facing up to the fact - students' literacy needs attention and we are now willingly and publicly doing something about it. Reading homework is very new at second level and a very public expression of how the JCSP *Literacy Medley* has facilitated such counter cultural activities to become part of the norm in JCSP schools.

Linking with connection and time to read it was clear from all interactions with schools that care was central to their success. Care was already highlighted in the case study school where there was so much physical evidence of care on display in the school. The next section examines the backgrounds of the students and the role that care plays in overcoming seemingly insurmountable problems.

10. Care

The critical awareness of the participating teachers has already been explored and the care position that these teachers adopt has emerged from this critical awareness of the context of the students' backgrounds. They are clear that these are students who do not come from luxury backgrounds, who have in many cases had to take on adult roles, have seen in some cases the worst side of adult life, and have endured poverty, hunger and abuse in some instances. And still they come to school. Hasslett (2005) recognised that the students viewed the JCSP libraries as safe havens. They often come to school for the structure, to be with their peers of course, and for the individual sense of connection already mentioned. A close-up with school seventeen illustrates the care that keeps these students coming to school and keeps them in school. It also illustrates how, despite the difficulties, there was progress with the majority (but not all) of the students.

School seventeen had forty six students in JCSP in 1st year with an average reading age of 8.08. They are fairly typical of the 1,010 students who participated in the Medley. They were students who needed a lot of support, emotionally, practically and from a learning point of view.

Background	Number of Students
Challenging family issues	7
Dyslexic, very engaged in programme	1
Traveller Community	8
Behaviour Support	11
EAL absent quite a lot	8
Lost Parent in the past year	1
School Refusal - attendance v poor	8
Took months to get students to read regularly but came around	2

Table 6. 5 The mix of student characteristics in one class group in school 17:

Despite this profile there was evidence of the relentless, consistent insistence on reading within the context of a very personal caring relationship. Here the librarian attempts to describe the impact of the medley on the students.

...evidence that I am talking about is not just the cold hard facts of, you know, a jump in reading age (and certainly we have seen a lot of that because we have taken a consistent approach) it's also change in attitude that we have seen that's very hard to put words on but you can see if you come in here at lunch time it will be the very children who kind of kicked against you and pushed against you at the beginning who felt, you know, I was asking them to do something that they find difficult. I am asking them to do something that means sitting still. It's a different experience. I'm asking them to do something on a very regular basis. These might be new things for a lot of them and they will kind of kick against that for a little while until they start to realise that this could be enjoyable – “she really wants me to do this” - as well as she's going to check up on me if she hasn't done it and the teachers as well and all of a sudden I'm getting As I can see I'm getting As and my word count is building up I'm not as bad at this as I thought I was I must be getting pretty good at this and next thing you're “Oh my God I've read ten books I'm up to 100,000 words!” First time ever that they will have experienced in many cases that level of success that quickly that easily and they're getting a lot of positive feedback not only from me but from a whole wide range of people... (Librarian school 17)

The librarian described how they cope with the range of reading ages in first year as they have a few non-readers each year.

When students come into our school they have a very wide range of reading ages so we cater for every ability of child from maybe reading age of 6 up to in some cases a reading age of maybe 14 but they are very very rare, very few and far between but maybe two thirds of our students have a reading age between 6 and 10 you know that's kind of typical. What do you do with a child with a reading age of 6? Well where do you start? I can't give them one-to-one attention, the kind of one-to-one attention that a child like that will need, in some cases they will get that if the resource is available to them but what can I do? (Librarian school 17)

I would start off with that child with a lot of very short maybe 24-25 page books that are on tape, and all of those children can just as easily take a quiz on that book as any other kid. They are not marked out or made to feel any different they just sit and listen to their book on the computer or where ever and they can do that in other rooms in the school as well so that is where I would start with that child and they are expected to do their reading homework as well. (Librarian school 17)

It is clear that there is no presumption that all students start on the same page of the textbook in this school. A programme infused with care, respect and acknowledgement of their level is evident in the context of a very close personal; relationship not only with the child but also with the parent:

I have a child with a reading age of six and he had a reading age of six at the beginning of first year and he had a reading age of six at the end of first year and he was very very dyslexic and attending a special school in Dublin for a while, not really moving, did not quite know why, even though he had read quite a bit... This year he found a range of books that he loved and now his Mam would be very supportive and would encourage the reading homework and he has come up two years ...but I have seen a huge improvement and I can hear it when I read with him, his word attack, his fluency, his commitment to reading have all developed along with that and when I commented on this he said will you ring my Mam, you know it was lovely and the next day when I came in I had a big chat with the Mam on the phone so I was walking in the door he just looked over and just goes thanks it was lovely that's a typical kind of thing. You're kind of despairing with him at the end of first year and next thing because we are so consistent it's so ongoing it will happen eventually you know it's rare that it does not happen eventually...(Librarian school 17)

Just looking at the standardised test results from the 46 students tested 41 improved and 5 reading ages regressed. Three of these students were chronic attenders, one lost a parent over the year and one was dyslexic. Looking at the average improvement of the 41 students who did improve the average improvement was 11 months.

1st Year JCSP Class Groups	Number of Students	Words read	Books read where Quiz passed	Total quizzes taken	Average Start Reading Age	Average Improvement in months
Group 1	10	706,249	175	205	8.04	14
Group 2	18	1,214,592	244	286	9.03	7
Group 3	18	1,116,065	231	287	9.08	7
Totals	46	3,036,906	650	778		

Table 6.6 :Summary of test results from school 17 using the GRT 2 reading test:

Care permeates all reports, interviews and evaluations. These teachers and librarians are passionate about their students' progress and personal development. This is why they choose praxis. This is why they implement the JCSP and the *Literacy Medley* with such enthusiasm. This is why they care little for the formal curriculum apart from ensuring their students are not disadvantaged within it. This is why they are willing to work so hard with these students, write their own textbooks, add layers of initiatives onto their brief, motivate and enthuse their colleagues. Ninety five per cent of these teachers were working in the context of supportive, proactive school leadership, a combination that produces promising

results; a combination that not only facilitates the students' literacy progress but their social and personal development too and their very real engagement with their education.

Summary

In section one above the factors that contributed to the success of the *Literacy Medley* were examined. Teachers with understanding, empathy and trust, who were experienced and skilled to integrate the medley into the culture of their school having an intuitive knowledge of what worked were central. These are teachers who clearly had a critical understanding that poor literacy was a direct product of poverty leading to restricted language, poor attendance patterns and poor access to resources all contributing to poor literacy at second level. This critical awareness led to responsive teaching styles taking on a socio culturally appropriate approach in the classroom. As praxis orientated teachers they focused on engagement and differentiation.

JCSP has become a site of curriculum integration as it facilitated a thematic mode of curriculum development to be evident in every school. Within this site possibilities are provided for a school-wide approach to literacy to develop as espoused by all new thinking on how best to improve literacy at second level (Shiel & Morgan, 1999, Shiel, Cosgrove, Sofroniou and Kelly, 2001 Basic Skills Agency, 1999 and ERC, 2011). The very idea of the JCSP Medley demanded a certain restructuring within schools. The thematic approach to the curriculum served to break down the subject domination and a team approach to tackling literacy problems emerged. This motivated and engaged the students. It also served to bring cohesion to the literacy plan and facilitated schools building on the impact of each initiative, allowing for a cumulative effect on the students' literacy levels.

A central part of the JCSP *Literacy Medley* is to support schools in creating a reading culture and re-engaging students in reading through challenges and excitement. Free access to interesting, relevant and accessible books often chosen by the students themselves in specially designed reading spaces also helped. Reading programmes such as Reading Challenge, paired reading, readalong, Word Millionaire, DEAR and accelerated reading all supported good reading habits and ongoing regular reading patterns. They also served to facilitate free reading, unspoiled by typical pressure to do follow up exercises. Motivation and engagement were maintained by the variety, success patterns, affirmation and energy

of the teaching staff. Everyone was involved, sending out clear signals to all students that reading was important.

Care permeated all reports, interviews and evaluations. These teachers and librarians were passionate about their students' progress and personal development. There was evidence of the consistent insistence on reading within the context of positive relationships so as to ensure improvement. Additionally, ninety-five per cent of these teachers were working in the context of supportive, proactive school leadership, a combination that produced results. A combination that not only facilitated the students' literacy progress but also their social and personal development and their very real engagement with education.

Section 2: Impact on Reading and Reading Ages

Impact of the *Literacy Medley* on reading ages

One clear message from the schools was that the variety of interventions ensured interest and even enthusiasm in reading is maintained and ensures that all student tastes are catered for. The positive impact on motivation, attitude, connection and engagement is clear.

Yes - students respond well to the variety of reading approaches, enjoying both the opportunity to interact with adults/older students during paired reading as well as the competition element of both Word Millionaire and Accelerated Reader. The variety gives a freshness to the reading classes and keeps students both focused and motivated. Yes, the repeated interventions increase the students' confidence in reading and stimulate their interest in the different types of text. Their self esteem and enjoyment in reading is also enhanced. (School 27)

The cumulative impact of running a series of reading interventions has impacted positively.

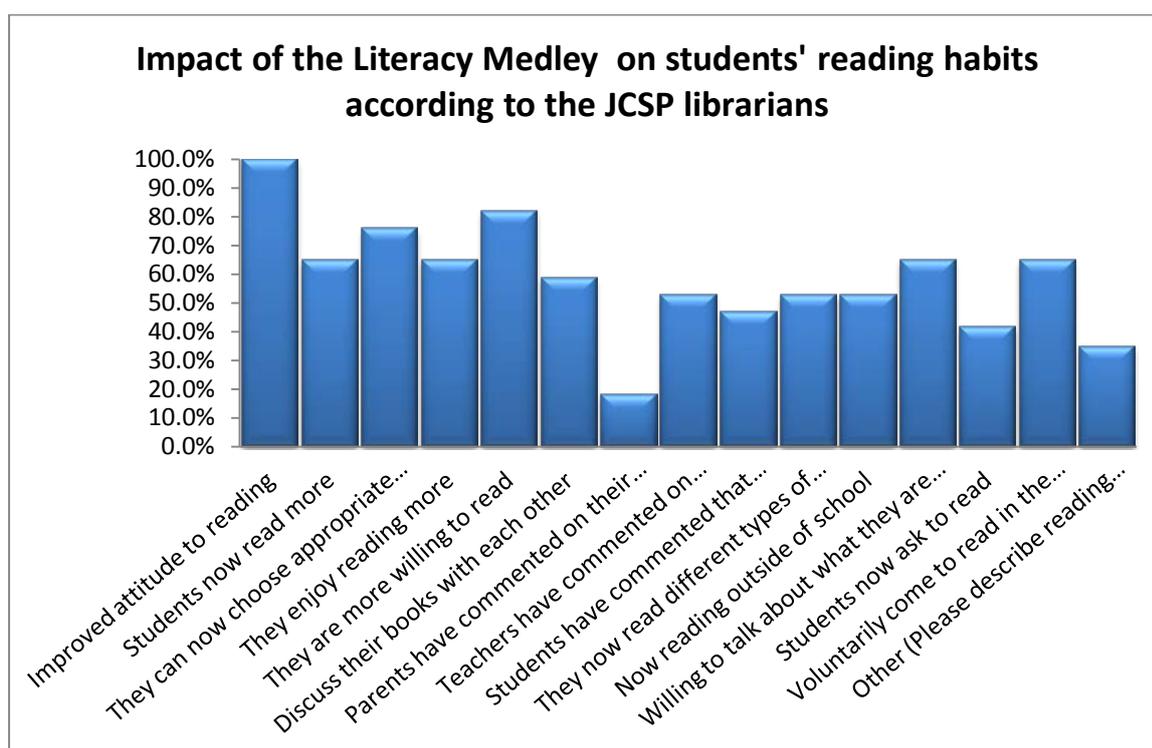


Figure 18: Impact of the *Literacy Medley* on students' reading habits according to JCSP librarians

Supports for the full range of Readers

All schools have students with particularly low levels of literacy, often with reading ages of six and seven, and so need specific strategies to support their literacy development. Schools have strategies to work with non-readers starting with readalong, and some series of books suitable for adolescent non-readers. Building confidence coupled with the mechanics of reading is crucial at this level. Many noted a specific phonic programme as being useful.

In schools who consistently have a significant number of students with low literacy levels I think that a particular focus should be given to literacy over the first term for 1st years, so that they have the best opportunity to benefit from the Junior programme. This needs the commitment of the whole staff and support from management to have a different focus to traditional subjects. (School 24)

Additionally, the better readers have to be catered for with fast lane students engaging in fluency reading, comprehension, vocabulary building, speed reading and recap work.

Classroom strategies and methodologies as outlined during in-service courses were viewed as crucial in the context of a school-wide approach. Overall, a variety of approach and technique allows schools to push their reading and understanding relentlessly upwards (School 31).

All agree that the fact that the interventions are short term is important to maintain the energy around reading in a school.

Under DEIS the Department now insist that students are tested using standardised tests and are re-tested in second year to chart progress. This is something that all participants admit is new. They were not in the habit of re-testing to see progress. The Junior Certificate examination was sufficient but, as already noted, this was not a check of literacy improvement. We all understand that the standardised tests are flawed and many of us are very suspicious of their increased use by the Department but they are an objective test, results of which we can reject or accept based on the overall observations.

Reading Test Results

Seven hundred and eighty five JCSP students were tested in September 2010 using the GRT2 standardised group reading test (1998) and 751 were retested in May 2011. A core group of 701 students were tested on both occasions. The average reading age in September 2010 of this core group was 09.07 and the average in May 2011 was 10.05. The average change across the schools was +10 months over a nine month period. Of the 70 per cent (489n) students who increased their reading ages the average reading age improvement was 19 months or 1 year 7 months.

Reading Test Results for Core Group of Students

	Number	Percentages
Number of Students whose reading ages increased	489	70 %
Number of Students who maintained the same reading age	41	6 %
Number of students whose reading ages decreased	171	24 %
Total Students Tested and Re-Tested	701	100 %

Table 6.7 Summary of the increases, maintenance and decreases in reading ages of the core group.

Level of increase in reading ages for those students whose reading age improved

Level of Increase	Number	Percentages
0.01-0.06 (1-6 months)	120	25%
0.07-0.12 (7-12 months)	103	21%
1.01-1.06 (13-18 months)	101	21%
1.07-2.00 (19-24 months)	66	13%
2.01-2.06 (25-30 months)	53	11%
2.07-3.00 (31-36 months)	6	1%
3.01-3.06 (37-42 months)	18	4%
More than 3.06 (42 + m)	22	4%
Total who increased	489	100%

Table 6.8 Level of increase in reading ages for those students whose reading age improved

Numbers of students who showed increase by monthly increment increases:

N.B. 1.01= 1 year, 1 month

Increase by month	No. of students						
0.01	16	1.04	19	2.07	-	3.10	1
0.02	12	1.05	18	2.08	2	3.11	-
0.03	24	1.06	9	2.09	1	4.00	2
0.04	26	1.07	14	2.1	1	4.01	2
0.05	24	1.08	19	2.11	-	4.02	1
0.06	18	1.09	2	3.00	2		
0.07	15	1.10	11	3.01	2	4.09	1
0.08	16	1.11	9	3.02	4		
0.09	26	2.00	11	3.03	8	4.11	1
0.10	20	2.01	4	3.04	1		
0.11	16	2.02	8	3.05	1	5.09	1
1.00	10	2.03	7	3.06	2		
1.01	28	2.04	11	3.07	1	5.11	1
1.02	11	2.05	8	3.08	1		
1.03	16	2.06	15	3.09	2	5.11 +	8

Table 6.9 Numbers of students who showed increase by monthly increment increases

Of the **489** Students who increased their reading ages the average reading age improvement was **18.80**

Students tested across all schools

School	Average reading age in months	Average reading age in months	Difference in months
School 1	105	134	+29
School 4	120	127	+7
School 5	120	126	+6
School 6 A	151	158	+7
School 6 B	121	137	+16
School 6 C	78	115	+37
School 6 D	149	158	+9
School 6 E	134	154	+20
School 6 F	97	120	+23
School 7 A	120	128	+8
School 7 B	114	122	+8
School 8	114	123	+9
School 9	109	119	+10
School 10	106	106	0
School 13	114	116	+2
School 14	120	136	+16
School 16	115	120	+5
School 17	110	118	+8
School 18	131	141	+10
School 19	105	111	+6
School 21	123	131	+8
School 22	113	123	+10
School 24	109	122	+13
School 25	135	142	+8
School 26	120	119	-1
School 27	109	119	+10

School 28	110	110	0
School 29	103	114	+11
School 30	103	108	+5
School 31	116	125	+9
School 32	119	134	+15
School 33	128	140	+12
School 34	97	101	+4

Table 6.10: Average change in reading ages in all schools that retested their students:

Twenty four per cent of students' reading scores decreased. Many co-ordinators added a note beside these students and the pattern is similar to that described above for school 16. Chronic attendance patterns is the number one reason, serious family breakdown, poor behaviour, dyslexia, special educational needs all contribute, but it is one element that needs further consideration. What can we do for this minority of students?

Even the most intensive [literacy] approaches fail to meet the needs of between 3 and 5 percent of the population. (Allington and Walmsley, 2007, p.254)

Allington and Walmsley (2007) consider the conventional wisdom that supports current instructional and organisational practice. They state that when a student is analysed we need to take the analysis and consider the intensity of support needed rather than damning the student to failure. They argue that success is dependent on the intensity of the intervention available over everything else. We need to believe that not all students learn on schedule. Not all students are on the same page on entering second level - and never will be. Schools recognise that some students are more difficult to move on than others. Sometimes their reading age remains stubbornly static. On a school visit to school seventeen they spoke of a student with a reading age of 6 on entry into the school who made very little progress throughout the year but all of a sudden made three months progress as a result of the intensive programme. It was also observed, however, that this students could well have slipped past everyone's attention if it were not for the focus on

literacy. It was recognised that this is the sort of student who can leave school illiterate if due regard to literacy was not being paid.

It is a simple fact that wealthy students will succeed. "Wealth predicts reading achievement" according to Allington and Walmsley (2007, p.6). It is not that they have higher aptitudes but rather "they have instructional resources" and options typically "unavailable to poor families." They emphasise that the likes of the findings above - 24 of students have decreased their reading scores - is an indication to predict how much and what kind of instruction will be needed to develop their literacy, rather than use the information to categorise and label the children (2007, p.7). There was uproar about the "Schools like ours" suggestion during the consultation process for the new national plan for literacy and numeracy in 2010. It was suggested that each school could compare standardised test results with similar schools. It brought with it an assumption that it is acceptable to have disadvantaged schools/students operating at a lower level of literacy than other schools. The 24 per cent in this study is unacceptable - just as unacceptable as the 30 per cent noted in the study of primary disadvantaged schools by the ERC in 1999. This is a serious challenge to the system - how do you decrease this number further? Teachers in the study knew that there is a group of 'hard core' students who have such socio economic as well as family difficulties that it is proving extraordinarily difficult to improve their literacy.

Improvement

The improvements in reading ages in this study are significant. The average change across the schools involved in the Medley was +10 months. Of the 70 per cent (489n) of students who increased their reading ages the average reading age improvement was 19 months or 1 year 7 months. For hesitant and reluctant readers, an increase of more than 1.06 years and above is regarded as very significant (Basic Skills Agency, 1998). The evidence from the ESRI study (Smith et al, 2004) on the experiences of first year students in post primary education is of particular interest. The study followed 900 students. Test scores in reading did not improve over the first year in post primary education with only one fifth (20 per cent) of students in first year experiencing a significant reading improvement, and with a small number declining. The lack of progress (according to the ESRI) in core competencies may be related to the fact that the first year curriculum focuses on the development of a broader

set of competencies across a great range of knowledge areas meaning that reading is neglected. This highlights the significance of the improvement in the Medley schools. A note of caution should however be made about relying solely on the results of standardised tests to gauge literacy improvement.

The teachers reported through the online final questionnaire (Appendix 2) that 100 per cent of the students improved their attitudes to reading as a result of their involvement in the *Literacy Medley*. Interestingly, all reported that the Medley impacted positively on 100 per cent of the students' behaviour. All schools stated in the survey that they would all run the initiative again next year-indeed many have their plans in place. Over 50 per cent of students, according to this questionnaire are now more interested in reading, are voluntarily reading, are enjoying reading more, can choose books, are more willing to read, discuss their books with each other and are reading outside of class time and school. Students were now more relaxed reading and talked to each other about their books as they read a wider variety of books and were found to be reading for longer periods of time. Overall teachers observed a shift in attitude to reading and a willingness to engage even among the 24 per cent who did not show improvement on the standardised tests. Many teachers expressed this in the interviews. Many were adamant that although improvement was not evident in the reading scores, positive improvements were in evidence and over time they felt that this improvement would be reflected in the reading scores. All students do not start at the same place and do not make progress at the same pace and again the system has to take this on board and accept that progress for some students can be very slow. These students need time and investment. Slow progress may be due to chronic attendance, dyslexia, chaotic lives or disengagement but no matter why they need a lot of time investment in order to make improvements.

In conclusion, the impact of the JCSP *Literacy Medley* initiatives proved to have a significant impact on reading improvement in the participating schools with an average improvement of ten months and of the 70 per cent who improved, they improved on average by nineteen months and all students improved their attitude to reading.

Conclusion

Centrally, it emerged through the data that praxis orientated teachers were involved in the co-ordination of the *Literacy Medley* in schools, who displayed a wealth of experience and understanding as well as critical awareness of the issues around educational disadvantage.

....middle class child will have so many thousands more words in their vocabulary from being read to as a small child before they ever start school even if they can't read. (Teacher School 2)

The teachers were all comfortable in their teaching roles, clear about what worked, confident that they were making a difference, very knowledgeable of the students they taught and keenly interested in improving literacy.

If people can manage in their lives without literacy you can understand if they are not too bothered to learn it. We know the difference it can make to their lives. It is our job to show them ways to improve that are enjoyable so they will come back for more - otherwise why would they - would you? (Teacher school 5)

They were clear minded about why JCSP students from disadvantaged background were underachieving in terms of literacy. They agreed that restricted vocabulary, a history of poor attendance at school, different cultural priorities, and parental interest were all part of the reason why so many students were behind in their literacy and these themes will be fully explored below.

Praxis Orientated Teachers

Experienced Teachers and the formative knowledge of Teachers

The focus group provided the opportunity to witness how each of these experienced teachers wove the provision for their students like an artist weaves a tapestry. They carried with them the successful interventions that they had implemented over the years, and wove this with their knowledge of their new first years. The manner in which they worked with the students was based firstly on knowledge of how they learn and how this is intricately bound up with the students' identity, relationship and class divide.

this is the way I talk miss ...this is who I am

They were keenly aware of how fragile all of their students were.

well I don't like it myself (teacher in focus group) because if you are put on the spot Jesus the first thing is that the anxiety levels go up which means that immediate corollary is that performance levels go down because it cuts across them and all the time the emotion is stronger than logic(Teacher 4 in focus group)

They can be compared to sensitive gardeners tending to each and every flower, some damaged by a severe winter and needing more care while others just prospered in the sunshine. These gardeners drew on years of experience and never took for granted that the new saplings would come to fruition as they continued to tend with care and sensitivity.

A Multifaceted Approach: Understanding of Complexity and experienced teachers

These teachers demonstrated understanding, empathy and trust of their students. Through this relationship of trust the teachers brought their students on a journey of building success patterns - slowly and steadily.

these kids respond to a little bit of care, just talking to them. they appreciate it and would do anything for you. (Teacher in focus group School 5)

They interwove the strategies they always had with some individualised programmes of support.

I must say I've found Toe by Toe great to supplement the SRA and the reading challenge if you have a student that needs a lot of individual work. (Teacher School 2)

Through their experience of running the JCSP interventions they intuitively knew which initiatives to choose for their new first years and when best to timetable them over the year. They picked up themes from the previous year, in some cases, while linking with other teachers that were involved in the past. The most experienced of co-ordinators implemented the Medley in an integrated fashion. They integrated the initiatives into the natural academic year, within the context of what already worked. This was evident from the descriptions they provided of the manner in which they implemented the initiatives. It was very clear from the focus group and the interviews that the schools had embraced the JCSP Literacy Strategy and although each implemented it in their own unique fashion, it enhanced the provision that they already had in place. It brought excitement and motivation to the manner in which students engaged with reading but also in the manner in which teachers engaged with teaching it.

I couldn't believe how much they loved it - the bell would go and not one would put down their books, they were so engrossed. (Teachers School 14)

Such expertise was noted by St Patrick's College (2011) highlighting how they are well placed to motivate their students:

Furthermore, exemplary literacy teachers possess the expertise to use their knowledge to tailor instruction to meet the needs and stages of development of particular children in particular classrooms in particular schools in ways that capitalise on childrens' motivation, engagement, and interests. (St. Patrick's College, 2011, p.10)

The experienced teachers brought this experience to the manner in which they implemented the initiatives. They had many years of checking out what worked and what didn't work. They now displayed an intuitive knowledge of what works. And what was it?

Sensitive implementation of a combination of interventions was based on a caring, knowledgeable understanding of their students. All had the following ingredients:

- the teachers based their plan on a knowledge of the students' learning styles and cultural background
- the teachers understood the difficulties that the students had in progressing due to their history of failure
- all provided the students with access to appropriate reading materials
- all provided their students with choice of reading materials
- all provided the students with time to read
- all successfully involved a team of teachers
- all ensured that there were motivational aspects to the interventions
- all celebrated the success of the intervention but also acknowledged the small successes along the way.

The intuitive knowledge of teachers was central as the teachers knew the best combinations of initiatives and strategies to work in their school.

the intuitive knowledge of experienced practitioners might calculate, refine, change, mould and implement an intervention. It is clear that teachers take the socio historical context of their school into account, the manner of social interactions. It is clear that they are involved in developing a motivation to read, acquiring a personal agency through texts and promoting socio cultural awareness. (Phelps, 2007)

Phelps (2007) concludes his study by echoing the policy statement commissioned by the International Reading Association (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw & Rycik, 1999). They stated that adolescents need teachers who understand the complexities among individual adolescent readers, a wide variety of reading material that appeals to their interests, instruction that builds students' skills and desire to read increasingly complex materials, assessment that reveals their strengths as well as their needs and expert teachers across the curriculum. He believes that there is no single 'quick fix' for complex reading problems and agrees with Allington & Walmsley (2007) who show that literacy instruction must, of necessity, be custom-tailored to localities, comprehensive and multi-faceted, and integrated within and across curricula. Hayes and Clay (2004) examined the progress that pupils make between Key Stage 2 and 3 in a London Local Education Authority (LEA) in 2003 of over two thousand students. They concluded that a multifaceted approach is necessary to combat the complexity of the reasons why students have poor literacy and the challenge is for schools to rise to this:

Underperformance is often complex and for the forty pupils in this study many factors have emerged as having a negative impact on their academic success and in the most difficult cases, it is often a combination of these factors. These factors include poor attendance and punctuality and on-site truancy. They include special educational needs and often very high level medical and social needs. They include difficult behaviour patterns and lack of parental involvement in their schooling. They include the high level of use of supply teachers and for some pupils an inappropriate curriculum offer. They include complex home lives; children who are in need or at risk of abuse and in some cases are in public care and living with foster parents or relatives. Some of the children are very disengaged or disillusioned with school and have low self worth and are being bullied or are into self-harm. There is no doubt that for some of the 40 children in the sample, their prospects of securing academic success and meaningful qualifications at age 16 are very low. The difficult question for schools is what can they do to combat the adverse impact of these complex aspects of some pupils' lives? This is the real test. (Hayes and Clay, 2004)

There is a clear message from the schools - across all of the schools - the JCSP *Literacy Medley* works. The reading initiatives motivate, engage and improve literacy attitudes as well as levels on the standardised tests. The improvements in reading ages in this study are significant. The average change across the schools involved in the Medley was +10 months. Of the 70 per cent (489n) of students who increased their reading ages the average reading age improvement was 19 months or 1 year 7 months. They were also clear how the

initiatives interact positively with each other while complementing and reinforcing each other.

Certain cornerstones were emphasised across all schools, namely ; time should be spent by the school choosing the appropriate books; and it is very important that the books are at the right level/interest. Students should be involved in the choice. There should be a focus on the 'mechanics' of reading but also time enough for leisure reading which tends to benefit comprehension. Students should be shown how to choose books at their correct level. Students should be encouraged to read fiction books for a certain period - and at least ten per year. Student should be given reading homework and parents should be brought into the school to learn the importance of reading in the home and reading with their child. JCSP positive postcards home, reading progress reports should regularly be sent home to keep parents informed of how well their child is doing.

The excitement of the teachers as they told me the stories of their interactions with students and the improvements that they noted reveal the intensity of the relationship that was found among the Medley teachers. They were willing their students to read, trying every trick in the book until they hit on the right one. And they reported that it worked. The teachers reported through the on line facility that 100 per cent of the students improved their attitudes to reading. Over 50 per cent of students are now more interested in reading, are voluntarily reading, are enjoying reading more, can choose books, are more willing to read, discuss their books with each other and are reading outside of class time and school. Students are now more relaxed reading and talk to each other about their books as they read a wider variety of books and are found to be reading for longer periods of time according to their teachers. There was a very positive response to this from librarians too, and in school visits they were so eager to tell the story of their students - to describe their reading journey from entry into first year to the end of the year. Descriptions proliferate of aggressively reluctant students gradually being drawn in through the initiatives, with storytellers capturing their hearts, the students learning how to sit steady and read and gradually to enjoy the stillness - and then to insist upon it.



Conclusions: 10 Steps to Success



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Conclusion:

Ten Steps to Success

Learners of every age need an environment that encourages them to read recreationally, think creatively, explore with curiosity, and revel in new knowledge (Pavonetti, Brimmer, and Cipilewski, 2002/2003; Krashen, 2004). Stefl-Mabry, J. (2011), believes that opportunities to read are crucial:

...this does not involve a simple decision to allocate funds for a technological book-keeping solution, but rather a philosophical commitment to provide learners (students and teachers alike) with an appropriate collection of reading materials (traditional and non-traditional), time to select, time to read, time to reflect, and time to share. If we want students who are readers we must provide them with the opportunity to read.

Perhaps it is the simplicity of the solution that has us baffled. (Stefl-Mabry, J., 2011)

Krashen concludes in *The Power of Reading* (2004), after providing a great range of evidence from a myriad of studies conducted all over the world, that free and voluntary reading is one of the most effective ways to increase reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development. Test scores indicate that free and voluntary reading is superior to explicit or direct (skill-based) grammar, spelling and reading skills instruction – “not to mention that free reading is a lot more fun” (p.18). Krashen states “the case against direct instruction is overwhelming” (p.18). “Teaching vocabulary lists is not efficient. The time is better spent reading” (p.19).

Teachers need to provide a regular time and a pleasant environment for reading (Krashen, 2004).

It is unnecessary to urge young people to read more and understand the importance of reading because, given the chance, they do in fact read quite a bit, and they certainly do understand the importance of reading. A number of studies confirm that given access to comprehensible and interesting reading material, children and adolescents take advantage of them. More access to reading results in more reading; this result applies to books in the home, classroom libraries, school libraries and public libraries. (Krashen, 2004)

In fact, sometimes a single, brief exposure to good reading material can result in a clear increase in enthusiasm for reading (Ramos and Krashen, 1998; Cho and Krashen, 2002). (Krashen 2007)

Krashen (2007) concludes that central to improving literacy is the provision of access to books in areas of poverty:

Perhaps the most serious problem with current literacy campaigns is that they ignore, and even divert attention from, the real problem: Lack of access to books for children of poverty. (Krashen 2007)

In the last chapter the factors that contributed to the success of the *Literacy Medley* were examined. Teachers with understanding, empathy and trust, who were experienced and skilled to integrate the *Literacy Medley* into the culture of their school, having an intuitive knowledge of what worked, were central. These were teachers who had a critical understanding that poor literacy was often a direct product of poverty in schools serving disadvantaged communities, leading to restricted language, poor attendance patterns and poor access to resources; all contributing to poor literacy at second level. This critical awareness led, in some cited incidents, to responsive teaching styles taking on a socio culturally appropriate approach in the classroom. As praxis-orientated teachers they focused on engagement and differentiation. A thematic approach was often evident which facilitated a reading culture to develop supported by continuous professional development, and certain cornerstones emerged as outlined below. It is intended in this chapter to summarise the main findings from this study under the headings of continuous professional development, thematic approach and reading culture before looking at certain cornerstones that emerged. Their potential implications for policy in Ireland will then be examined. The *Ten Steps To Success* will be outlined which are based on the key strategies that emerged from the identified themes.

Continuous Professional Development

The case study provided an insight into a literacy development process that one JCSP school was involved in. There was evidence of the development of an enduring professional reflective learning community in this school. All *Literacy Medley* schools had experienced a whole staff CPD programme over the last number of years and have engaged in a process of change, culminating in their applying to participate in the Literacy Medley. All had

implemented individual literacy initiatives and stated that they had gained a confidence through their experience of them. System change must impact in the classrooms according to Fullan, (2006) and indeed teachers in these schools are also implementing literacy strategies in their classrooms, complementing the work of the reading initiatives.

Thematic / Cross Curricular Approach

The case study illustrated that if there is adequate, ongoing CPD, tailored to the needs of a school, it is possible for a full staff to engage in a reflective process of change. Teachers who are open to learning new skills and classroom practice can incorporate new strategies, methodologies and resources to support literacy. All staff can engage, once they are provided with subject-appropriate strategies to support students accessing their curriculum. Subject departments, if facilitated by management, can take on common approaches and a cross curricular approach can emerge. The thematic approach to the curriculum, which was evident in many of the participating schools, serves to break down the subject domination at second level and begins to develop a team approach to tackling literacy problems. JCSP became a site of curriculum integration in these schools as it facilitated a thematic mode of curriculum delivery. Within this site possibilities were provided for a school-wide approach to literacy to develop as espoused so many thinkers on how best to improve literacy at second level, (Shiel & Morgan, 1999, Shiel, Cosgrove, Sofroniou and Kelly, 2001 Basic Skills Agency, 1999 and ERC, 2011). The ERC (2011) in their guide for teachers from PISA 2009 (2011) expressed concern that many teachers still view literacy as the job of the support and resource teachers and recommend that all teachers take responsibility. They go on to recommend that the JCSP resources are used to support this development:

In considering ways in which to improve students' literacy levels across the curriculum, it would seem important for teachers of English, as well as teachers of other subjects, to assume joint responsibility for literacy instruction. It is a matter of concern that over one-third of English teachers responding to our questionnaire agreed that 'support and resource teachers are mainly responsible for addressing the literacy problems of students'. There is a need for all teachers to take responsibility for addressing students' literacy difficulties, to ensure that all students reach their potential.

Work completed in the context of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) that identifies and describes ways in which to improve the teaching of literacy across subject areas may also be of relevance to schools that are not in the JCSP. For example, the booklet *Resources for Developing a School-wide Literacy Plan* (JCSP Support Service, 2008) provides a template that all schools can use as a basis for

developing a whole-school plan to integrate literacy instruction across the curriculum. (ERC, 2011, p. 75)

The very idea of the JCSP *Literacy Medley* demanded a certain restructuring within schools. The thematic approach motivated and engaged the students. It also served to bring cohesion to the literacy plan and facilitated schools building on the impact of each initiative, allowing for a cumulative effect on the students' literacy levels.

Reading Culture

A central part of the JCSP *Literacy Medley* is to support schools in creating a reading culture and re-engaging students in reading through challenges and excitement. Free access to interesting, relevant and accessible books, often chosen by the students themselves, in specially designed reading spaces also helped. Reading programmes such as Reading Challenge, paired reading, readalong, Word Millionaire, DEAR and accelerated reading all supported good reading habits and ongoing regular reading patterns. They also served to facilitate free reading, unspoiled by typical pressure to do follow up exercises. Motivation and engagement were maintained by the variety, success patterns, affirmation and energy of the teaching staff. Everyone was involved, sending out clear signals to all students that reading was important. The improvements in reading ages in this study are significant. The average change across the schools involved in the Medley was +10 months. Of the 70 per cent (489n) of students who increased their reading ages the average reading age improvement was 19 months.

A culture of reading can emerge in a severely disadvantaged school once students are trained into being able to settle to reading and are provided with a wide ranging choice of relevant, motivating reading materials. A combination of these factors change culture and reculturing is the 'name of the game' according to Fullan (2002):

reculturing is the name of the game. Much change is structural, and superficial. The change required is in the culture of what people value and how they work together to accomplish. (Fullan, 2002, p.6)

Such cultural change is key, according to Elmore too, as he believes that learning and change have to happen within the school first. Improvement is more a function of "learning to do the right things in the settings where you work" (Elmore, 2004, p.73). Change is facilitated,

not by mandate, but by modelling new values and behaviour that are expected in the future according to Elmore:

Cultures do not change by mandate; they change by the specific displacement of existing norms, structures, and processes by others; the process of cultural change depends fundamentally on modelling the new values and behaviour that you expect to displace the existing ones. (Elmore, 2004, p.11)

The Literacy medley facilitated a modelling of a new way forward.

Cornerstones

Certain cornerstones were emphasised across participating schools, namely; time should be spent by the school choosing the appropriate reading materials. The focus on the 'mechanics' of reading needs to remain but also time for leisure reading needs to be protected. Students should be shown how to choose books at their correct level in appropriate reading spaces. Students should be encouraged to read fiction books for a certain period - and at least ten per year. Parental involvement should be encouraged and supported with reading homework (which should be part of the literacy policy). Reading progress reports and JCSP postcards should regularly be sent home to keep parents informed of how well their child is doing.

The excitement of the teachers as they told the stories of their interactions with students and the improvements that they noted revealed the intensity of the relationship that was found among the Medley teachers. They were willing their students to read, trying every trick in the book until they hit on the right one. The teachers reported through the online final questionnaire (Appendix 2) that 100 per cent of the students improved their attitudes to reading. Over 50 per cent of students are now more interested in reading, are voluntarily reading, are enjoying reading more, can choose books, are more willing to read, discuss their books with each other and are reading outside of class time and school. Students were now more relaxed reading and talked to each other about their books as they read a wider variety of books and were found to be reading for longer periods of time.

Care permeated all reports, interviews and evaluations. These teachers and librarians were passionate about their students' progress and personal development. There was evidence of the consistent insistence on reading within the context of very personal caring relationships so as to ensure improvement.

Implications for policy and for second level schools: Ten Steps to Success

Clarity is emerging from the JCSP Literacy Strategy and specifically from the examination of the *Literacy Medley* as to what works at second level to improve literacy and to create a culture of reading. The data emerging from this research has pointed to a multifaceted approach being most effective.

The National Strategy to improve literacy (DES 2011) sets clearly out a commitment as an 'urgent national priority' to improve literacy and bring about a more equitable education system in the knowledge of the impact of poor literacy on lives:

We know too that children who do not learn to read, write and communicate effectively are more likely to leave school early and in later life to be unemployed or in low skilled jobs, to have poorer emotional and physical health, to have limited earning power, and are more likely to be imprisoned. This strategy is premised on the strong belief that developing good literacy and numeracy skills among all young people is fundamental to the life chances of each individual and essential to the quality and equity of Irish society. (DES, 2011, p. 11)

The National Literacy Strategy

A draft national literacy and numeracy plan *Better Literacy and Numeracy for Children and Young People* was published in 2010 by the Department of Education and Skills who invited responses before the national plan would be finalised. The fact that it brought a national focus onto literacy was seen as broadly positive. It was cautiously welcomed however by the education community who were acutely aware that it was a response to the PISA 2009 results and there was worry that it may be a knee jerk reaction:

A reactive or rushed response is risky and unnecessary. (TUI, 2011, p. 25)

Some felt that it did not reflect the Irish educational culture:

The draft plan treats literacy and numeracy in a reductive and aggressive manner, which does not reflect our education culture. (INTO 2011)

A great number of submissions to the Department outlined concerns about the potential over reliance on standardised testing and a restricted, impoverished curriculum with a thrust towards a back to basics approach resulting from the new approach. All such submissions supported the kind of approach adopted within the *Literacy Medley* which is

encouraging and indicates that the education system may well embrace some of the learnings from this research. Such comments could be seen in the submissions from the Reading Association of Ireland (RAI) , the Association of Secondary School Teachers (ASTI 2010), Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA, 2010) Teacher's Union of Ireland (TUI, 2011) Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO, 2011) Irish Association of Learning support teachers (ILSA 2011) and Bernardos 2011.

The TUI (2011) were concerned that the proposed testing regime would not positively impact on classroom practice:

It is reasonably well established that using assessment evidence effectively to promote student progress and change classroom practice is challenging. (TUI, 2011, p. 20)

The INTO (2011) were worried about the negative impact the approach would have on the holistic educational experience:

...we are concerned that the 'relentless focus' on literacy and numeracy may result in the diminution of a child's holistic educational experience as teach to the national standards. (INTO 2011)

The Irish Learning Support Association (2011) saw the reliance on standardised testing as having the potential to kill innovation and ultimately lower standards when creativity is smothered:

An education curriculum that is narrowly focused on particular areas of study and on a "standards" agenda makes it impossible for schools and teachers to develop students' creative abilities.....standardised testing, will literally kill innovation. This is because the focus of such standardisation and standardised testing by definition will narrow the focus of learning because it will introduce a climate of fear among teachers, parents and children. Risk will become something to be avoided rather than encouraged and we believe that any proposal that values the measurable results of any "standards model " , and values nothing else, will only succeed in lowering standards in the types of skills that will be needed in the future. We will not need "standardised employees" in the businesses and economies of the future, rather people who can adapt, think for themselves-be creative. (ILSA, 2011, p. 10)

Bernardos (2011) forecast the emergence of a testing industry which could have such a negative impact on DEIS schools:

The standardised testing on the scale suggested in the draft plan has been associated with the springing up of "testing" industries which focus on how best to teach children to the test, which becomes a huge drain on finances, instructional time, teaching expertise, and has the opposite of its intended effect on children's in-depth understanding of the concepts that are being tested. (Barnardos, 2011)

All of these commentators agree that literacy should be improved in the context of an enriched broad based curriculum where all teachers embrace their role within a whole school approach. It would be hoped that the outcomes of this research could inform schools as to how best to improve reading literacy as many commentators already saw the potential of the JCSP Literacy Strategy such as the ASTI (2011) in their response to the plan:

The vast literature on educational disadvantage tells us what these factors are. It also advises that responses must be holistic. Indeed, the DEIS programme is premised on such a holistic approach. This approach is well summarized in the 2009 JCSP Support Service paper on "*Literacy and Numeracy Strategy*":

"Literacy development can therefore never be seen in isolation. It has to be tackled in tandem with developing personal and social skills, developing self-esteem, offer a relevant and appropriate curriculum, providing emotional support where necessary...."(ASTI, 2011, p. 6)

Indeed the role of the JCSP literacy strategy is noted in the final version of the plan (DES 2011):

Literacy and numeracy development is a core element of the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) which has proven to be successful in flexibly catering for individual learners' needs within mainstream education. (DES, 2011, p.67)

Hammond, NCCA (2012) also referred to the JCSP as ' a font of knowledge for the education system' with regard to literacy at second level. Indeed the cross curricular, thematic approaches, as identified in so many Medley schools which fostered reading improvement, may also emerge as a successful JCSP approach that could enrich the education for a much broader range of junior cycle students within the Junior Cycle reform process.

The final national plan, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning for Life* (DES 2011) sets out clear commitment to the continued support of DEIS; ' we will continue to support students from socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds through existing DEIS provision' (DES, 2011, p. 64):

The experience that we have gained through the DEIS initiative to date provides some important guidance to us as we seek to continue to tackle concentrated social, economic and educational disadvantage in schools. (DES, 2011, p. 64)

There is a clear commitment to concentrate resources in DEIS schools and continue to allow access to specialised initiatives in literacy. (DES, 2011, p. 63)

The evidence emerging from the ERC evaluation suggests that the range of supports provided to schools is having a positive effect. The stories of eight schools in which different initiatives were used successfully to raise literacy and numeracy standards were published by the Inspectorate in *Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices in DEIS Schools* in 2009. However, the Inspectorate's evaluations showed that DEIS schools are not universally successful in raising standards of achievement, despite facing similar challenges and receiving similar supports. This makes it all the more important that best practice in the use of DEIS resources is disseminated and all schools are challenged to deliver the best outcomes for students according to the Department. (DES 2011)

The inspectorate also drew on the findings of their own DEIS evaluation (2009) for this national plan and they were clearly satisfied that JCSP strategies and resources were effective as they state:

Resources and strategies associated with JCSP were being used effectively in schools. JCSP libraries played a pivotal role in those schools that had them. (2009, p. 20)

The Inspectorate (2009) in their report on their evaluation of DEIS schools certainly found JCSP working in many schools and commended the following:

An extensive range of literacy initiatives is in place including Drop Everything and Read, which is school wide, the Reading Challenge, the Readathon, the celebration of world book week, book boxes, the use of dictionaries, thesauruses and key word notebooks in classrooms and the Spelling Challenge. In addition, the school has and will again introduce paired reading and Make a Book. A very attractive reading corner has recently been developed in the school library. It is commendable that the English department has improved this library and made it a welcoming and well-resourced space for students despite the absence of the JCSP library initiative. The behavioural support class partakes in a range of literacy programmes. Literacy is also timetabled for all JCSP classes. The whole-school approach to improving literacy can be seen from the widespread use of key words and very attractive learning environments and from the labelling of different rooms in different languages. ... Individual Education Plans have been developed for targeted students who are not in JCSP while JCSP students benefit from profiling. The commitment of the JCSP

coordinator and the special educational needs (SEN) team and their range of praiseworthy literacy and other strategies are commended. (2009, p. 20)

The final national plan, despite the continued focus on standardised testing, does however also focus on aspects that are encouraging, specifically motivational strategies as they recommend that the joy of reading is encouraged 'all learners should benefit from the opportunity to experience the joy and excitement of getting 'lost' in a book, (DES 2011, p. 43). This is the kind of focus that could would sit well with the JCSP Strategies and could be established by implementing the *Literacy Medley*:

The development of positive attitudes and motivation are vital for progression in literacy and numeracy and we have to ensure that the learning experience for all learners in these areas is enjoyable and satisfying. All learners should benefit from the opportunity to experience the joy and excitement of getting 'lost' in a book increase learners' in participation and enjoyment of the learning process. (DES, 2001, p. 43)

The learnings from the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* could help schools and teachers, not only to improve reading literacy but to experience the joy and excitement of reading that could truly be life changing. Ten elements from this research have been identified that could inform the implementation of the Department's National Plan and support reading improvement across all schools in Ireland. How were the ten elements identified?

Once all of the data was gathered and analysed, themes were identified that were emerging from different data sources and from several schools. This facilitated the discussion of the findings under thematic headings. Once this was complete a further analysis took place to identify the recurring strategies/activities that schools were advocating as contributing to the successes they achieved in the development of a reading culture that ultimately resulted in improving reading literacy.

Ten steps to success have emerged from this study following a close analysis of this data. The ten steps must however be considered within the context of a process of change management in participating schools where there is a culture of care and an emerging critical awareness of the reasons why students are behind. The ten steps to success in the

development of a reading culture involve implementing a range of reading interventions supported by bespoke CPD, access to books in attractive reading spaces, a reading training programme, helped by adult mentors, within a context of success being acknowledged. Success is also supported by a policy of reading homework across year groups and ensuring that there is success for all with an intensive programme for low readers, all in the context of a school-wide approach.



Figure 19: Developing A Reading Culture At Second Level: The Ten Steps To Success

Here is further detail on each of the ten steps:

1. **A variety of reading initiatives** should be planned in such a way as to ensure there is a focus on reading throughout the academic year. The initiatives should be chosen based on the needs of the students and variety should be ensured. Recreational reading should feature along with excitement, motivational strategies and challenges. Reading Challenges, Word Millionaire, DEAR, Readalong, paired reading and accelerated reading were found to be most effective in this study for motivating, encouraging and improving adolescents' reading. The initiatives should be implemented through a thematic, cross curricular curriculum delivery mode in the context of a school wide approach to literacy improvement. The initiatives should be used to ensure a consistency is maintained throughout the school year with an ongoing focus on reading. Schools should adopt the slogan *reading improves reading*, believe in it and invest in it.

2. **Access to books** and reading materials needs to be provided throughout schools. Students should be consulted and involved in the process and be part of the decisions as to what materials are purchased, taking into account there is no conclusive list of what adolescents like. Students in a rural area, for example, will have more interest in tractors than those in an urban area so we have to listen to their tastes. Light reading materials should be provided to facilitate free and voluntary reading and to encourage fun. Weekly subscriptions to magazines, newspapers and comics brings its own excitement and freshness. Access to books includes access to a range of curricular relevant materials too through such initiatives as the JCSP subject topic box in specialist classrooms. Quality, relevant and appealing adolescent literature will also help support the development of their imagination and creativity.

3. **Reading spaces**, reading zones, reading rooms need to be created in schools that are markedly different to formal classrooms, created in order to facilitate reading for pleasure and leisure. Light-filled spaces with soft furnishings surrounded by interesting, relevant, adolescent-influenced reading materials. These should be

spaces where students can feel comfortable and relaxed and that are conducive to the enjoyment of a good book - very different to our traditional classrooms.

4. A cross curricular and thematic approach should be adopted in order to facilitate reading being integrated across the whole curriculum. Boundaries of the currently constructed curriculum should be bypassed through a thematic approach facilitating an enriched cross curricular approach. This will also facilitate an integrated delivery of the JCSP reading initiatives as well as involving several subjects in the development of a reading culture across a school and provides a role for every teacher to impact positively on literacy improvement.

5. CPD for teachers should be provided where most current Irish and international research on literacy improvement is shared, the nature of adolescent literacy difficulties discussed and classroom strategies to support the curriculum outlined and modeled. A range of JCSP initiatives that can develop a reading culture should be shared along with any research on their impact to give confidence to the teachers in their value. Reading literacy needs to become everybody's responsibility. CPD can provide teachers with a research based context towards conceptualising a school-wide approach to literacy in their school and finding their role within it. The intention of the CPD should be to provide teachers with a potential toolbox of literacy strategies (suited to each subject discipline) that they can dip into. But much more, it needs to facilitate a new discourse to emerge in schools about disadvantage, its impact on student learning and the power schools and teachers have to make a difference. It needs to challenge the commonly held beliefs about disadvantaged teenagers and open the discussion about the impact of these inequalities on learning in the classroom. Fundamentally, is it about exploring the mismatch between working class students and the middle class institutions that schools are and exposing a moral imperative for schools to understand their students and put in place real supports and provide them with a truly enriched educational experience. Additionally, it needs to facilitate teachers to learn from each other and create professional communities of practice. The CPD programme must also enthuse and motivate teachers so as to provide a vehicle for sustained change where schools and

teachers are involved in a lengthy process of cultural change. The model of the JCSP literacy CPD should inform the development of such CPD.

6. Teachers should engage in **responsive teaching** through aligning classroom resources with students' interests and outside-of-school competencies by determining what forms of literacy students are practising at home and finding ways to apply them within the classroom. Incorporating strategies using blogs, LiveJournals, webpages, podcasts and digital pen pals etc. with ways of connecting the academic works of the school to the interests of the student should be considered. Teachers should draw on funds of knowledge learned from family, community, peers and popular culture to create a third space, a cultural space where students make connections across various knowledge sources. Teachers should gradually scaffold secondary students into academic discourses by using texts that utilise a sociocultural approach, drawing on personal topics or culturally relevant literature regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. Instruction should be responsive to the diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of adolescents.

7. **Time for Reading** must be prioritised if a reading culture is to be encouraged by the whole education system, school leadership and management by facilitating the structures to implement such programmes as the JCSP Literacy Medley. Every student should be allowed time for free reading for half an hour in school every day. This will improve reading and, in turn, all other learning in the school. Ultimately it has implications for curricular reform and organisational change. Students from very early on in first year need to be involved in a **reading training programme** whereby they are formally taught how to sit still and read in order to use this time for reading fruitfully. Persistence will be needed in many cases to ensure good habits are developed as some students find this the most challenging part of reading. Coupled with this they should be formally taught how to choose reading materials. **Reading Homework** with parental involvement should be introduced to all schools interested in improving reading literacy. A training programme should be put in place for the parents and the implementation of the policy should be persisted with in order to see gains. This should complement a national *Home Reading Campaign*.

8. Book Clubs, storytelling, paired reading and DEAR initiatives all facilitate students **engaging with reading mentors**. Students are often eager to discuss reading preferences with their same age as well as cross age peers. They are also keen to hear of adult preferences so all kinds of opportunities should be exploited to discuss reading in a school. Peer tutoring programmes should be in place in all schools, involving second years being trained as tutors for primary school pupils as well as senior students trained as reading tutors for juniors. Strong adult reading role models should also be fostered similar to the JCSP/GAA Stars Read campaign.

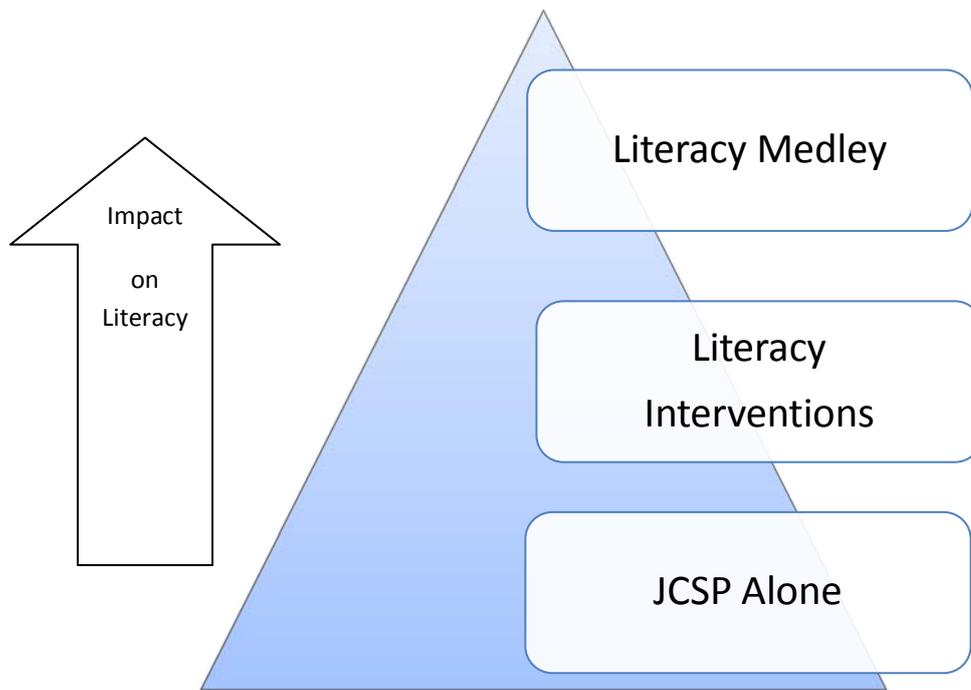
9. **Success for all** needs to be ensured, acknowledged, affirmed and publicly celebrated by the whole school community. Progress should be tracked and shared and outcomes should influence future strategies and interventions. Particular attention needs to be paid to the students who are not making progress, with more intensive programmes being introduced for them. It is important to realise that progress can take time and sustaining the focus on reading will eventually lead to improvement for the majority of students. Schools who consistently have a significant number of incoming students with low literacy levels should put in place an intensive programme over 1st years, so that they have the best opportunity to benefit from the Junior Cycle programme. The whole staff need to support a different structure to traditional subject teaching with a more cross curricular strategy using a themed approach based on the examples in this study. Low readers should be catered for with books on tape and the better readers should be catered for with fast lane students engaging in fluency reading, comprehension, vocabulary building and speed reading.

10. **A whole school approach** needs to be adopted where all teachers engage in a range of strategies appropriate to their subject to support literacy improvement within their classrooms. These strategies should incorporate a four pronged approach with strategies to develop reading fluency specific to the main genres of the subject, vocabulary building (using the keyword approach), comprehension development (using DARTS, graphic organisers, writing frames etc) and motivational strategies through the JCSP initiatives to actively encourage a reading culture across the school. Every teacher should play an active role in encouraging leisure reading

and allow time for reading in their classroom. Literacy can then be integrated within and across curricula.

Changing School Culture

We keep trying to drive change, when what we need to do is cultivate change.
(Peter Senge 1996)



This final section sets out to explore change in our schools and how best the learnings from this study can be part of long term sustainable change in our education culture. It is hoped that the *Literacy Medley* will become a lasting feature of our literacy provision in Irish schools.

The Junior Certificate School Programme has become well embedded into the school culture of the thirty five schools involved in this research. This has facilitated the success of the literacy medley. In the light of the recent publication of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2011) the JCSP approach should be closely examined in the context of Junior Cycle reform as there are now possibilities that all schools could build in a JCSP module to their programme. The JCSP Literacy Strategy should inform the developments at Junior Cycle. Despite the fact that attention to 'social justice issues is sparse in Irish curriculum debate, which has been dominated by various technical and political issues' (Gleeson 2004, p. 119), teachers have recognised the intrinsic value of the JCSP approach. Building confidence, self

esteem and capability takes time, structure and organisation. It was originally intended by the Department of Education and Skills that JCSP profiling would link closely with the Junior Certificate examination when it was introduced in 1996. They intended that profiling could take the place of some examinations that schools deemed appropriate. This never materialised. Now could be the opportunity to re-examine some learnings from the JCSP and inform the Junior Cycle reform process. Formative profiling should be, adopted, supported and recognised by the system, as part of the junior cycle menu of assessment modes in the new Junior Certificate. This would facilitate schools to take on the JCSP literacy strategy in the context of a whole school literacy programme. Funding for the strategy also needs to continue to support schools to provide access to books, reading spaces and interventions to support the development of a reading culture in schools and facilitate adolescent reading.

The JCSP Literacy Strategy is strengthened when a model like the *Literacy Medley* is employed as schools are asked to plan a series of at least three interventions for one group and are asked to evaluate its impact on literacy levels of the students. This model should be maintained within JCSP and recommended to all schools. A clear menu of interventions that are working well in schools has emerged including Reading Challenges, Word Millionaire, DEAR, Readalong and paired reading. All of the teachers that completed the online evaluation stated that all their students improved their literacy skills. The majority of students demonstrated positive attitudes and motivation during the course of the initiative, behaviour of all improved, according to the reports submitted by teachers. All schools stated that they would all run the initiative again next year - indeed many have their plans in place.

All participating teachers and librarians agreed that the sustained focus on literacy has not only improved the literacy scores and the students' attitude and motivation to read, but has also created a reading culture in schools. The Medley provided a consistency that in turn created a persistency among the teachers to keep this focus on reading. Regular reading of materials that were appropriate to the students, in environments conducive to enjoyment of reading and motivated by teachers who had a keen interest in progress yielded positive results.

Evidence suggests (Leithwood et al, 2007) that teacher quality is the most significant in-school variable affecting student outcomes. There was evidence of critical awareness by participating teachers of the impact of disadvantage on the educational experience of these students, many of whom come from deeply deprived, chaotic home lives. Experienced JCSP teachers have woven the *Literacy Medley* into their reading programme to great effect as they have such an intuitive knowledge of what works with their students. The students have therefore experienced a rich programme of support in the context of care. The hidden curriculum has been challenged with a thematic, cross curricular approach adopted in many schools. Students have learned the art of reading, have been taught how to be still long enough to begin to read and enjoy reading. This has been, in many cases, a difficult part of the journey but once learned, the students began to enjoy reading and actively looked for more time to read, being resentful of any disturbance to their reading time. Here particularly is evidence of persistence and flexibility, one of Fullan's (2006) seven premises for an effective change strategy, without which nothing is gained. Certainly there was evidence of persistence and flexibility in each and every one of the Medley schools.

Students have found reading pleasurable. They replaced their negative relationship with reading with a new positive connection. They enjoyed the engagement with different types of texts and genres and especially having access, in appropriate reading spaces, to good reading material. The results of the standardised tests also indicate that the JCSP *Literacy Medley* initiatives proved to have a significant impact on reading improvement in the participating schools with an average improvement of ten months and of the 70 per cent who improved, they improve on average by nineteen months.

There remains a stubborn 24 per cent of students within this study who are not improving, many with chronic attendance patterns, poor behaviour, challenging home environments and a very negative attitude to school. Here is the challenge. A research team needs to be put in place to examine how best the system can provide for these students. What can the system put in place to improve the literacy levels of these students who may face a life of illiteracy and exclusion? Just in this small study of 700 students there is evidence of 171 of these children not improving. 171 lives. One hundred and seventy one lives that may be very negative if the education system does not work for them before they leave school.

Nonetheless it worked for over 529 students whose reading levels improved by over 18 months on average. That give us hope.

In the case of these students their interest, enthusiasm and confidence in reading was improved with a positive knock-on effect on learning across the schools.

The students' interest and enthusiasm for reading time was nothing I would have imagined. (Teacher, School 12)

Can we have an extra ten minutes miss? (Student, School 12)

We notice now that students who once would never have picked up a book now have favourite authors and genres. (School 12)

...had a very positive impact on all classes. It provided a great impetus to the students to get reading and be involved in the whole project. (School 26)

The confidence levels of all students increased significantly as well as things like behaviour and punctuality. (School 26)

The highlight was the whole experience of the joy of books acquired by the students. (School 26)

System Change

Hargreaves and Fullan believe that one can observe democracy deteriorating every time the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged learner widens (2008 p. 15). Fullan (2001) sees it as a moral issue. Schools he believes have to become committed to the development of social and intellectual capital. Such change comes slowly however. He concluded that it takes three years to turn around an elementary school, six years to turn around a high school and about eight years a whole district (2001).

Fullan (2006) contends that there are seven premises that facilitate such change action to be successful: 1) focus on motivation, 2) capacity building, with a focus on results, 3) learning in context, 4) changing context 5) a bias for reflective action 6) tri-level engagement and 7) persistence and flexibility. In the case of motivation he believes that "moral purpose is a great potential motivator, but by itself won't go anywhere, unless other conditions conspire to mobilise several key aspects of motivation, including moral purpose; capacity; resources; peer and leadership support identity and so on Fullan (2006, p. 8)". It is, according to Fullan (2006), the combination that makes the motivational difference. Learning, in the context of the school, from each other leads in turn he believes to changing

that context but it is within the reflection that the learning takes place: "we learn by thinking about what we are doing (2006, p. 10). " This successful learning on site in a school needs to develop on a "tri-level engagement" as Principals engage in "permeable connectivity"; leading to the system itself changing according to Fullan, (2005). Finally "resilience – persistence plus flexibility" (Fullan 2006) is required, just to keep going despite implementation dips or inevitable barriers and indeed these themselves become sites of learning in a reflective change action theory. He contends that through these seven premises valuable results will emerge and real change will be experienced across education systems.

JCSP and Lasting Change

When Minister Quinn Launched National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in July 2011 he gave a commitment to improving literacy which gives those of us involved in this aspect of education great hope:

This is an issue of equality. Without the skills of literacy and numeracy, a young person or adult is often denied full participation in society. They may be condemned to poorly paid jobs or unemployment and a lifetime of poverty and exclusion. This is why I am convinced that ensuring all our young people acquire good literacy and numeracy skills is one of the greatest contributions that we can make towards achieving equality and social justice in our country. (DES July 2011)

The JCSP support service has always been regarded as a very different support service to others. This began long ago in the manner in which JCSP was developed and supported through the Curriculum Development Unit by the support service in a cohesive way. The support service not only supports schools in the implementation process but is also involved in a continuous process of curriculum development in collaboration with the participating teachers. The support service develops and produces all of the support materials for the programme and provides national as well as tailor-made whole staff in-service seminars. This service had a much wider brief than most in that it was charged with the ongoing development of the programme as well as its support. The literacy strategy, as well as the library project, was designed by the service within an on going collaborative dialogue with the schools.

The engagement of participants was marked by a strong sense of solidarity. The JCSP teachers and co-ordinators reported a considerable degree of appreciation for the work of the support service; this is consistently evident in the internal evaluation returns of participants in respect of such sessions. The role of the JCSP support service was seen as more than merely providing support: in many ways it assumes a role of programme leadership, defining the understanding and interpretation of the programme in schools, acting at times as agent of authority, at other times as resource-provider. (Granville, 2005 p. 21)

The programme was sensitive to the ever changing needs of the educationally disadvantaged students and evolved in order to support these needs. The profiling system is continually updated, based on feedback and input from teachers. The network of schools is facilitated by regular CPD and specifically co-ordinator meetings each term. Here co-ordinators have an opportunity to inform the programme's development as well as being supported by networking with teachers working within similar schools. This unique structure allowed for a very close relationship with the schools but most importantly it facilitated ownership and connection with the principles and objectives of the Programme. It engaged the teachers in ongoing curriculum development.

A second sampling of participants was undertaken with quite a different type of support provision: the support service for the Junior Certificate School Programme. The JCSP differs from the mainstream of SLSS provision. While JCSP personnel contribute to other SLSS activities, support for the JCSP operates essentially as a specialist programme support service, on the lines of the early generation of programme support services. The JCSP team is based in the CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit and operates within the developmental culture of that agency. School co-ordinators and teachers have a special relationship with the JCSP support team, of a different type from that which applies to the generality of the SLSS. Co-ordinators look to the JCSP team as the source of information and facilitation for curriculum development. (Granville, 2005, p. 20)

Such a context facilitated the *Literacy Medley* to be developed and it is hoped that the learnings from this study will be of particular interest to those involved in the formation of the new Junior Cycle curriculum. The changes that are ahead, spearheaded by the NCCA, could well embrace the findings of this study, particularly the integrated thematic cross curricular approach, and the initiatives that support time for reading Fullan (2006) 2emphasises that the change process is multidimensional in nature and is often 'messy' according to Allington and Walmsley (2007, p.198). They claim that we can learn a lot by looking at the phases of the change process -"how change is initiated, shared with school

personnel and others, implemented, supported through staff development, combined with other school elements and absorbed into school life” (2007, p.198). Having a good idea, even with impressive research findings, is not enough. They believe that it is the implementation process that can make or break an innovation.

Internal, local factors such as characteristics of teachers and Principals as well as those of district and communities are key elements contributing to success or failure of an innovation. (Allington and Walmsley, 2007, p.198)

The fact that all schools had engaged in a CPD programme on a school-wide approach to literacy, had already engaged in implementing single literacy initiatives and gained confidence from their success, facilitated the introduction of the concept of the *Literacy Medley*. This slow building of a pattern of success in schools has led to the success of this intervention, of the JCSP Literacy Strategy. There was evidence in the majority of the *Literacy Medley* schools of the initiatives becoming embedded into the school calendar and being absorbed into school life. The students enjoyed the positive and close interaction with the adults involved, engaged positively in the competitive side of the initiatives (especially the boys) and enjoyed the freshness that the variety provided. All agreed that the short term series of interventions brought energy, maintained interest and motivated all concerned. There is no quick fix solution but it can be seen from the implementation of the *Literacy Medley* that over time adolescent literacy can certainly be improved.

Continuing the programme of support put in place by the JCSP support service is a crucial element of the further development and strengthening of this Medley approach. Fullan (2001) proposes that change takes six years in second level schools and eight in districts. The JCSP Literacy Strategy has been in place now for twelve years and so for a varying number of years in each school setting. Fullan also notes however that although it takes hard work to produce improvement the results can be fragile. “One or two key people leave and success can be undone almost overnight” (Fullan 2001). Sustaining change needs a strong infrastructure. It is hoped that the evidence of improvement is such that the system will continue the support of the JCSP support service infrastructure for schools in a cohesively fashion. While there is no quick fix to school improvement according to Fullan, using change knowledge “we are now able to claim that by using this knowledge you should get discernible, valuable results” (Fullan, 2006, p.13).

This shared knowledge is now in place in the network of JCSP schools and needs to be supported in the form of communities of practice facilitated by the regional co-ordinators' meetings. This shared knowledge was evident in thirty five Medley schools. It is evident at JCSP co-ordinator and librarian meetings, which may indicate that sustainable change in approaches to literacy education in these JCSP schools is well underway.

For system change to occur on a larger scale we need schools learning from each other and districts learning from each other. My colleagues and I call this 'lateral capacity building' and see it as absolutely crucial for system reform. (Fullan, Hill and Crevola, 2006; Fullan, 2006)



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*We must not believe the many,
who say that only free people
ought to be educated, but we
should rather believe the
philosophers who say that only
the educated are free.*

Epictetus

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Appendices



*We must not believe the many,
who say that only free people
ought to be educated, but we
should rather believe the
philosophers who say that only
the educated are free.*

Epictetus

Appendix 1: Review of Surveys similar to those used in this study

Review of similar surveys

It is intended to utilise a reading survey of all first year JCSP students within the current study so it is worthwhile examining similar ones that have been used to explore adolescent involvement in reading. Its development was informed by a review of similar surveys.

Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) McKenna and Kear (1990) is a twenty item instrument designed for students in grades 1 through 6 in America. Building on this **The Reader Self Perception Scale (RSPS)** (1992) measured how grade 4 to 6 felt about themselves as readers – (Henk and Melnick, 1992 and 1995) and the **Writer Self Perception Scale (WSPS)** (1997) measured how upper elementary children felt about themselves as writers (Bottomley, Henk & Melnick, 1998). The WSPS and RSPS broke new ground by adapting Bandura's 1977 and 1982 theory of self efficacy to reading and writing. The **Motivation to Read Profile (MRP, 1996)** by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni was a well developed large scale effective literacy instrument, according to Henk & Melnick (1992) and deals with self concept and reading task value. **Motivation for Reading Questionnaire** (1997) by Wigfield and Guthrie examined motivation self efficacy, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and learning goals and social aspects. The **Motivation to Read Profile** (Pitcher et al, 2007) revised the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell et. al., 1996) for use with adolescents.

Attitudes to reading at ages nine and eleven NFER survey (Sainsbury & Clarkson, 2008) was a NFER survey of 4,477 English primary school pupils in summer 2007, responding to concerns raised by the PIRLS study of 2001 (Martin et al 2003).

Just Plain Reading: was a survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms in America. Ivey, G. & Broaddus, K. (2001).

Pupil Attitudes Questionnaire (third/sixth classes) is an Irish example of a reading survey and was part of the Education Research Centre research (Eivers et al, 2004). A Pupil Attitudes Questionnaire was developed for pupils in third and sixth classes.

In summer 2005, the National Literacy Trust conducted a survey for **Reading Connects**, a DfES funded National Reading Campaign initiative that supported schools in building communities that read, to collect evidence about children's and young people's reading preferences and reading behaviours (Clarke, and Foster 2005). The aim was to enable parents, teachers and other literacy professionals to promote wider reading.

The questionnaire was constructed to mirror many of the questions that have been asked in previous studies of children's and young people's reading habits, practices and attitudes (eg Hall and Coles, 1999; PIRLS, Martin et al 2003 OECD, Brooks et al, 1997). The items that were used in this survey particularly influenced the choice of items in the Reading Survey within this current study.

Appendix 2

Questions that form the JCSP on - line evaluation template 2010 to 2011 including the template for collecting Test information..

Question	Type
Initiative Organiser (s)	shorttext
Number of female 1st Year students involved (please use digits)	shorttext
Number of male 1st Year students involved (please use digits)	shorttext
Number of female 2nd Year students involved (please use digits)	shorttext
Number of male 2nd Year students involved (please use digits)	shorttext
Number of female 3rd Year students involved (please use digits)	shorttext
Number of male 3rd Year students involved (please use digits)	shorttext
Number of teachers involved (please use digits)	shorttext
Subject areas involved	shorttext
List the JCSP subject centered statements used in conjunction with this initiative	shorttext
List the JCSP cross curricular statements used in conjunction with this initiative	shorttext
How many statements were completed, on average, per student during this initiative? (please use digits)	shorttext
page break 1	pagebreak
What were your overall objectives in running this initiative?	longtext
How was this initiative planned and implemented in your school? Please give details	longtext
What aspects of the Junior Certificate Curriculum were supported by this initiative?	longtext
In what ways did this initiative impact on teaching and learning in your classroom?	longtext
In what other ways did the students benefit from participating in this initiative? Give examples .	longtext
Were the initiative objectives achieved in running this initiative	multichoice
Please outline any follow-up activities planned on completion of this initiative	longtext
What were the highlights of the Initiative? (Memorable quotes from students, teachers and parents)	longtext
page break 2	pagebreak
The majority of students demonstrated positive attitudes and motivation during the course of this initiative	multichoice
Student' attendance improved during the initiative.	multichoice
Students' behaviour improved during this initiative.	multichoice
Would you conduct the initiative again with other students?	multichoice
Outline how the initiative money was spent. Please keep all copies of receipts for audit purposes	longtext
Please give details of any useful resources you sourced in running this initiative.	longtext
The initiative contributed to the students' literacy skills?	multichoice
Please download Reading Test results template from co-ordinator's section, complete and upload and here	attachment
Please upload any relevant photographs of this initiative here	attachment

Reading-Test-Results¶

Initiative: _____ Test-Used _____ ¶

School: _____ Teacher: _____ ¶

Student¶ (no-names- required)¶	Pre-Test¶					Post-Test¶				
	Date¶	Raw- score¶	Percentile- rank¶	Reading-¶ Age¶		Date¶	Raw- Score¶	Percentile- Rank¶	Reading- Age¶	
				Yrs-¶	Mths¶				Yrs¶	Mths¶
¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
1¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
2¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
3¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
4¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
5¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
6¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
7¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
8¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶
9¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶	¶

Appendix 3

Questionnaire that was developed for the JCSP research projects in 2003.

Junior Certificate School Programme

Second Level Student Questionnaire

1. I like reading
- a lot
 a little
 not at all
2. I like to read
- every day
 never
 once a week
 once a month
3. I read
- at home
 at school
 in the library
 other
4. I like to read
- books about people
 comics
 magazines
 newspapers
 stories
 TV guides
 manuals

5. The best thing I read was _____

6. My reading is
- good
 - excellent
 - okay
 - not as good as I'd like
 - could be better

7. I would like to read more
- yes
 - no

8. When I have to read a word I don't know I
- skip it
 - guess
 - read all the sentence
 - ask for help
 - sound it out

9. I would like extra help with reading from
- teacher
 - family member
 - older student
 - other
-

10. I like being read to
- yes
 - no
11. In class I prefer reading
- silently
 - out loud
12. I know how to send email
- yes
 - no
13. I have an email address
- yes
 - no
14. I often send text messages
- yes
 - no
15. I have a pen-pal/e-pal
- yes
 - no

Appendix 4

Post Initiative Questionnaire that was developed for the JCSP research projects in 2003.

Junior Certificate School Programme

Senior Student Questionnaire

Post Peer Tutoring Project

School _____

1. What was your favourite part of the peer tutoring project

- Being trained
- Reading with the primary students
- Being a tutor
- Other _____

1. Did the training prepare you for the paired reading

- Yes
- More or less
- No**

Comments _____

2. Is there anything else you would have liked in the training?

3. Did you like being a tutor

- Yes
- Kind of
- No**

Comments _____

4. Tick the areas where you feel you yourself have made progress during the JCSP Peer Tutoring Project:

- Reading aloud
- Reading silently
- Understanding what you have read
- More confident about giving your views on what you have read

5. I now like reading
- a lot more
 - a little more
 - not at all

6. I now like to read
- every day
 - never
 - once a week
 - once a month

7. I now read
- at home more
 - at school more
 - in the library more

Other

8. I have now begun to read
- books about people
 - comics
 - magazines
 - newspapers
 - stories
 - TV guides
 - manuals

9. The best part of Project was:

10. My reading is now
- good
 - excellent
 - okay
 - not as good as I'd like
 - could be better

11. I would now like to read more

- yes
- no

12. When I now have to read a word I don't know I

- skip it
- guess
- read all the sentence
- ask for help
- sound it out

13. I would like extra help with reading from

- teacher
 - family member
 - older student
 - other
-

14. I now like being read to

- yes
- no

15. In class I now prefer reading

silently out loud

16. I now know how to send email

yes

no

17. I now have an email address

yes

no

18. I often send text messages now

yes

no

19. I now have a pen-pal / e-pal

yes

no

20. I found the Project

Helpful, because _____

Not Helpful, because _____

21. Would you like to take part in a similar Reading Project in the future?

yes

no

22. What part of the Reading Project should change next time?

Why?

23. What part of the Reading Project should stay the same next time?

Why?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this form.

Appendix 5 The First Draft of the Reading Survey

Junior Certificate School Programme Pre-Initiative Survey

1. Introduction

Dear Student

You have been chosen to take part in a JCSP Literacy Initiative. Along with your class you may be involved in 'Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire', Reading Challenge, Readalong, Paired Reading or a similar reading project.

This is a survey about reading. Don't worry, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Please tell us what you really think.

Please read each question carefully. The survey involves mostly tick boxes and should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. We will not tell anyone the answers to your questions

If you have any problems completing this survey please ask your teacher for help.

Thanks again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Junior Certificate School Programme

2. About You

1. What is your name? (Please write in the box)

2. Are you a girl or a boy? (Tick one box only)

Girl

Boy

3. What do you think about reading?

3. How much do you enjoy reading? (Tick one box only)

A lot A little Not at all

Page 1

Junior Certificate School Programme Pre-Initiative Survey

4. How good a reader do you think you are? (Tick one box only)

- Good
 Average
 Excellent
 Not as good as I would like

5. How often do you read each of the following? (Tick one box only in each line)

	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Never
TV guides	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Magazines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graphic novels/comics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Books about people (non-fiction)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stories (fiction)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. How often do you read each of the following (Tick one box only in each line)

	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Never
Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social networking sites (e.g. My Space, Bebo, Twitter, Facebook)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MSN Messenger	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Do you know how to send email? (Tick one box only)

- Yes No

8. Do you have an email address? (Tick one box only)

- Yes No

9. Where do you read? (Tick as many as you like)

- At home At school In the library

Junior Certificate School Programme Pre-Initiative Survey

10. Do you think you read enough? (Tick one box only)

- Yes, I read enough
- No, and I don't want to read more
- No, but I would like to read more

11. What do you think about reading? (Tick one box only in each line)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I enjoy reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like going to the library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading is hard for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I only read when I have to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading is important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a good reader	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I only read at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Your parents and reading

12. What do your parents think about your reading? (Tick one box only in each line)

	Always	Sometimes	Never
My parents think it is important to be good at reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My parents encourage me to improve my reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I would like extra help with my reading from (Tick as many as you like)

- Teacher
- Family member
- Older student

Other (please say who...)

THAT'S IT! THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY.

WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL ENJOY THE READING INITIATIVE

6. How often do you read each of the following (Tick one box only in each line)

	Every day	Once a week	Once a month	Never
Websites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My Space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bebo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MSN Messenger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Text messages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Do you know how to send email? (Tick one box only)

Yes No

8. Do you have an email address? (Tick one box only)

Yes No

9. Where do you read? (Tick as many as you like)

In the library At Home At School
Other (Please say where)

10. Do you think you read enough? (Tick one box only)

Yes, I read enough
No, and I don't want to read more
No, but I would like to read more

11. What do you think about reading? (Tick one box only in each line)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I enjoy reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like going to the library	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading is hard for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I only read when I have to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading is important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am a good reader	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I only read at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like being read to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I prefer reading silently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like reading out loud in Class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. When I have to read a word I don't know I

Skip it	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guess it	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read all the sentence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask for help	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sound it out	<input type="checkbox"/>



13. I would like extra help with my reading from (Tick as many as you like)

Teacher

Family Member

Nobody

Older Student

Other (Please say who)

14. What do your parents think about your reading? (Tick one box only in each line)

Always Sometimes Never

My parents think it is important to be good at reading

My parents encourage me to improve my reading

THAT'S IT! THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY.

**WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL ENJOY THE
READING INITIATIVE**



You have been chosen to take part in a JCSP Literacy Initiative. Along with your class you may be involved in 'Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire', Reading Challenge, Readalong, Paired Reading or a similar reading project.

This is a survey about reading. Don't worry, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. Please tell us what you really think. Please read each question carefully. The survey involves mostly tick boxes and should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. We will not tell anyone the answers to your questions.

We think it is important that you are consulted on the best ways to promote reading in schools so we are very grateful to you for your views. Your views will be included in a national research report.

If you have any problems completing this survey please ask your teacher for help. Thanks again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Junior Certificate School Programme Support Service

School:

Year: (Please Tick One)

1st Year

2nd Year

3rd Year

**Junior Certificate School Programme Reading Survey
Section 1 (About you: Name, Gender, Year group)**

1. What is your Name?

2. Are you a girl or a boy? (Please tick one box only)

Girl Boy

3. How much do you enjoy Reading? (Please tick one box only)

A lot A little Not at all

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Reading Survey



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Section 2

(You and your Reading: Enjoyment, Behaviour, Practice, Perceptions)

4. How much time do you spend watching TV each day?

(Please tick one box only)

- More than 4 hours daily 2-4 hours daily
 1-2 hours daily 0-1 hours daily

5. How much time do you spend reading each day?

(Please tick one box only)

- More than 4 hours daily 2-4 hours daily
 1-2 hours daily 0-1 hours daily

6. How much time do you spend playing computer games or other electronic games (e.g. Xbox) each day?

(Please tick one box only)

- More than 4 hours daily 2-4 hours daily
 1-2 hours daily 0-1 hours daily

7. About how many books do you own aside from school books?

(Please tick one answer)

- 1 - 10 Books 11 - 25 Books 26-100 Books
 101 - 250 Books More than 250 Books

8. About how many books are in your home?

(Do not count newspapers, magazines or comics)

- 1 - 10 Books 11 - 25 Books 26-100 Books
 101 - 250 Books 251 - 500 Books

Reading Survey



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9. How often do you read each of the following? (Tick one box only in each line)

Example

9. How often do you read each of the following?

Newspapers

At least
once a Day

Once a
Week

Once a
Month

Never



Graphic novels/comics



If you read newspapers at least once a day, you would put a tick in the appropriate box as shown above.

If you read stories once a week, you would put a tick in the appropriate box as shown above.

	At least once a Day	Once a Week	Once a Month	Never
Newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graphic novels/comics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stories (fiction)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catalogues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Factual books	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cookbooks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joke books	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. How often do you read each of the following? (Tick one box only in each line)

	At least once a Day	Once a Week	Once a Month	Never
Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My Space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer Game Instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bebo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MSN Messenger	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



11. Where do you like to read most? (Tick one box only)

In the library

At Home

At School

Other (please say where)

12. Do you think you read enough? (Tick one box only)

Yes, I read enough

I read enough, but I don't want to read more

I would like to read more

13. When I have to read a word I don't know I usually....

(please only tick one box and tick the one that you would usually do)

Skip it Ask for help

Guess it Sound it out

Read all the sentence Do nothing

Reading Survey



Section 3 (What do you Think about Reading: Attitudes, Parental Interest)

Look at the sentences below. We want you to read each one and then see whether you agree or not with what has been said. When you have decided, tick the box that is closest to what you feel.

Example

I like going to the library

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree



Reading is boring



In (a) I have ticked the strongly agree box to show that I agree with this sentence because I like going to the library very much.
In (b) I have ticked the strongly disagree box to show that I disagree with this sentence because reading is not boring.

14. What do you think about reading? (Tick one box only in each line)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Reading is hard for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading is important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I only read at school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like being read to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer reading silently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. What are your views on reading? (Tick one box only in each line)

I only read when I have to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading is important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like reading out loud in Class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading is boring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't like books	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading helps me relax	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I love reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Reading will help me to...? (Tick one box only in each line)

Reading will help get me good exam results	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading will help get me a good job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Reading Survey



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17. I would read more if ...

(Please Tick Yes or No)

Please also tell us your top 3 answers by writing in 1,2,3 beside your favourite answers)

	Yes	No	Top 3 Favourites
I enjoyed it more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was easier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends read more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone read aloud to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. What reading activities would you like to do?

(Please Tick Yes or No)

Please also tell us your top 3 answers by writing in 1,2,3 beside your favourite answers)

	Yes	No	Top 3 Favourites
Reading Challenges	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading Games	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening to books on MP3 Player	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going to the library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choosing my own books in the shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Someone reading with me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. What types of reading would you like to do?

(Please Tick Yes or No)

Please also tell us your top 3 answers by writing in 1,2,3 beside your favourite answers)

	Yes	No	Top 3 Favourites
Designing websites or magazines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping younger children to read	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting famous authors and celebrity readers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading on the internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading a book on the computer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Reading Survey



20. Now remember one time when you really enjoyed reading. Please tell us about the experience and what made it enjoyable.

21. Who would you like help from with your reading?
(Tick as many as apply)

Teacher

Family Member

Nobody

Librarian

Older Student

Other (Please say who)

22. What do your parents think about reading?
(Tick one box only in each line)

My parents think it is important to be good at reading

Always

Sometimes

Never

My parents encourage me to improve my reading

*That's it! Thank you for completing the survey.
We hope that you will enjoy the reading initiative*

APPENDIX 8 Considerations taken into account in deciding on the combinations of items within the reading survey

Reading Motivation and Self-efficacy

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) conceptualised eleven different dimensions of reading motivation, and Wigfield (1997) created a theoretical taxonomy consisting of three categories. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) developed a questionnaire called the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) to assess these eleven dimensions. Four of these categories (namely involvement, self-efficacy, importance and grade) were incorporated into the ten categories which also include the categories of reluctance, levels of ownership of reading materials, regularity of reading different types of reading materials, basic reading strategies, parental involvement and what and who could encourage reading.

One category of the dimensions is based on the competence and efficacy of belief constructs. This category includes *self-efficacy*, the belief that one can be successful at reading. When individuals believe they are successful at an activity they are more likely to engage in it (Bandura, 1997). A third dimension in this category is *work avoidance*, or the desire to avoid reading activities. When students lack a sense of efficacy, they are likely to wish to avoid challenging reading activities. However, the least endorsed dimensions were social and work avoidance according to Baker and Wigfield (1999). These were therefore not included in this survey.

The following is the list of areas covered in the final reading survey as well as an outline of the items themselves as a result of an examination of other similar surveys above.

Category	Items
1. Involvement	How much do you enjoy reading? Where do you like to read most?
2. Self-efficacy	Reading is important Reading helps me relax I like being read to I love reading

	<p>I like reading out loud in class</p> <p>I like being read aloud to</p> <p>I like to visit the library</p>
3. Importance	<p>Reading will help get me good exam results</p> <p>Reading will help get me a good job</p>
4. Grades	<p>Reading will help get me good exam results</p>
5. Reluctance	<p>I only read when I have to</p> <p>Reading is boring</p> <p>I don't like books</p>
6. Levels of ownership of reading materials	<p>About how many books do you own aside from school books?</p> <p>About how many books are in your home?</p> <p>(Do not count newspapers, magazines or comics)</p>
7. Regularity of reading different types of reading materials	<p>How often do you read each of the following? (Tick one box only in each line)</p> <p>Newspapers</p> <p>Graphic novels/comics</p> <p>Instructions</p> <p>Stories (fiction)</p> <p>Catalogues</p> <p>Factual books</p> <p>Cookbooks</p> <p>Joke books</p> <p>Websites</p>

	<p>Facebook</p> <p>My Space</p> <p>Computer Game Instructions</p> <p>Bebo</p> <p>MSN Messenger</p> <p>Text messages</p> <p>Emails</p>
8. Basic reading strategies	When I have to read a word I don't know I usually....
9. Encouragement for future reading	<p>I would read more if...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enjoyed it more • It was easier • My friends read more • Someone read aloud to me <p>Who would you like help from with your reading?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Family Member • Nobody • Older Student • Other (Please say who) <p>My parents</p> <p>What reading activities would you like to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Challenges • Reading Games • Listening to books on MP3 Player • Going to the library • Choosing my own books in the shop • Someone reading with me <p>What types of reading would you like to do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing websites or

	<p>magazines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping younger children to read • Meeting famous authors and celebrity readers • Reading on the internet • Reading a book on the computer
10. Parental Involvement	<p>What do your parents think about reading?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My parents think it is important to be good at reading • My parents encourage me to improve my reading
Open Ended Question: Critical Incident	<p>Now remember one time when you really enjoyed reading.</p> <p>Please tell us about the experience and what made it enjoyable.</p>

APPENDIX 9 Categories, Dimensions, and Items Included in the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire

Categories, Dimensions, and Items Included in the

Motivation for Reading Questionnaire from Wigfield, A. & Guthrie, J.T. (1997). Relations of children's motivation for reading to the

amount and breadth of their reading. *Journal*

of Educational Psychology, 89, 420–432.

Competence and efficacy beliefs

Self-efficacy

3. I know that I will do well in reading next year

9. I am a good reader

15. I learn more from reading than most students in the class

50. In comparison to my other school subjects I am best at reading

Challenge

2. I like hard, challenging books

7. I like it when the questions in books make me think

26. I usually learn difficult things by reading

44. If the project is interesting, I can read difficult material

48. If a book is interesting I don't care how hard it is to read

Work avoidance

23. I don't like reading something when the words are too difficult

27. I don't like vocabulary questions

28. Complicated stories are no fun to read

52. I don't like it when there are too many people in the story

Goals for reading

Curiosity

5. If the teacher discusses something interesting I might read more about it

- 8. I read about my hobbies to learn more about them
- 13. I read to learn new information about topics that interest me
- 16. I like to read about new things
- 35. If I am reading about an interesting topic I sometimes lose track of time
- 45. I enjoy reading books about people in different countries

Involvement

- 10. I read stories about fantasy and make-believe
- 24. I make pictures in my mind when I read
- 30. I feel like I make friends with people in good books
- 33. I like mysteries
- 41. I enjoy a long, involved story or fiction book
- 46. I read a lot of adventure stories

Importance

- 53. It is very important to me to be a good reader
- 54. In comparison to other activities I do, it is very important to me to be a good reader

Recognition

- 14. My friends sometimes tell me I am a good reader
- 17. I like hearing the teacher say I read well
- 29. I am happy when someone recognizes my reading
- 31. My parents often tell me what a good job I am doing in reading
- 36. I like to get compliments for my reading

Grades

- 19. I look forward to finding out my reading grade
- 37. Grades are a good way to see how well you are doing in reading
- 39. I read to improve my grades
- 40. My parents ask me about my reading grade

Competition

12. I like being the only one who knows an answer in something we read

*18. I like being the best at reading

*22. It is important for me to see my name on a list of good readers

43. I try to get more answers right than my friends

49. I like to finish my reading before other students

51. I am willing to work hard to read better than my friends

Social purposes of reading

Social

1. I visit the library often with my family

11. I often read to my brother or my sister

20. I sometimes read to my parents

21. My friends and I like to trade things to read

34. I talk to my friends about what I am reading

38. I like to help my friends with their schoolwork in reading

42. I like to tell my family about what I am reading

44

Compliance

*4. I do as little schoolwork as possible in reading

*6. I read because I have to

25. I always do my reading work exactly as the teacher wants it

32. Finishing every reading assignment is very important to me

47. I always try to finish my reading on time

Note. Numbers in front of the items indicate placement in the questionnaire.

*Asterisks indicate the items were not used in scale construction for that construct.

APPENDIX 10 Letter to accompany the Reading Survey

Letter to accompany the Reading Survey:

September 2010

Dear Co-ordinator

Please find enclosed a Reading Survey for first year JCSP students.

I know that it is a very busy time of year but hope that there is a possibility that you could administer this reading survey with your first year JCSP students. It will take about 10 to 15 minutes for the students to complete the survey. There are 25 surveys included. We hope that you have enough copies. Please just call the office if you need more. Please only administer the survey with your JCSP students, or only return to us the ones completed by JCSP students. I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope for your convenience in returning the completed surveys.

It is hoped that the information that we receive through this survey will further enhance our knowledge of the needs of the students and then how we can respond to those needs through the JCSP literacy strategy. Some of the results of the survey will also be incorporated into a piece of doctoral research that I am currently undertaking.

We hope that this survey format will form the basis of a national attitudinal reading survey that can be used to gauge improvement in attitude to reading as a result of participating in JCSP literacy initiatives.

Enclosed please also find guidelines for administering the survey. Please complete and return the attached reading survey template with the Surveys.

I would like to anticipate your support in this venture and thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely

Aideen Cassidy

National Co-ordinator

Junior Certificate School Programme Support Service

Appendix 11 Guidelines for Administering the JCSP Reading Survey

Guidelines for Administering the JCSP Reading Survey

Please distribute the survey and read out the introduction.

- Tell the students that there is very little writing involved in the survey
- Tell them that you will read out each question for them
- Ask them to answer as honestly as they can
- Tell them that their answers will be anonymous and confidential
- However tell them that their views are very important and will be taken very seriously
- If they are not absolutely sure about an answer tell them not to worry but to give the answer nearest to what they think is the case.
- Tell them that we are very eager to hear their views and if they think there is any way of making reading more interesting for them we want to hear about it
- Ask them to write any additions on the last page if they wish to make any suggestions or further comments

Thank you for taking the time to administer this Reading Survey.

Reading Survey Student information September 2010

School _____

Date that the surveys were administered: _____

Any JCSP literacy initiatives that the students will be involved in over the forthcoming academic year:

JCSP Initiative	Yes
Paired Reading	
Readalong	
Reading Challenge	
Word Millionaire	
Author in Residence	
Storyteller	
SRA	
ICT	
Accelerated Reading	
Film Making	
Primary Picture Books	
E Readers	
Other:	

Any Comments you would like to make

Teacher _____

Thank you so much for taking the time to administer this Survey.

Appendix 12 Sample of the International Reading Surveys that were examined as part of the preparation for the Reading Survey

1. Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) McKenna and Kear (1990)

The ERAS (McKenna & Kear, 1990) is a 20-item instrument designed for students in grades 1 through 6. The 20 items assess attitudes toward recreational and academic reading.

This was developed not only as a reading survey but as a standardised “public-domain instrument ... [that would] enable teachers to estimate attitude levels efficiently and reliably” in an attempt to increase research on attitudes toward reading. (McKenna and Kear, 1990, p.626).

2. The Reader Self Perception Scale (RSPS) (1992) measures how grade 4 to 6 feel about themselves as readers – (Henk and Melnick, 1992 and 1995).

Bean and Readence (1995) explored attitudes to reading through asking adults to reflect on their school experiences of reading.

3. Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (1996) by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzone (1996) – was a well-developed large-scale affective literacy instrument, according to Henk & Melnick (1992) and deals with self concept and reading task value.

4. Writer Self Perception Scale (WSPS) (1997) - how upper elementary children feel about themselves as writers - Bottomley, Henk & Melnick, 1998). The WSPS and RSPS broke new ground by adapting Bandura's 1977 and 1982 theory of self-efficacy to reading and writing.

5. Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (1997) by Wigfield and Guthrie - examines motivation self-efficacy, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and learning goals and social aspects. The effects of integrated instruction on motivation and strategy use in reading were also explored here.

6. Just Plain Reading: A Survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms, Ivey, G. & Broaddus, K. (2001) This study used students as primary informants about what motivates them to read in their middle school classrooms. 1,765 sixth-grade students in the US were surveyed in reading/language arts classrooms in 23 diverse schools.

There are also examples of reading surveys in Ireland.

7. Pupil Attitudes Questionnaire (Third/Sixth classes) as part of the Education Research Centre research (Eivers et al, 2004).

A Pupil Attitudes Questionnaire was developed for pupils in Third and Sixth classes in Ireland. Pupils were asked for background information, including gender, age, place of birth and language typically spoken in the home. Those who were born in another country were also asked to indicate what age they were when they came to live in Ireland. Items on academic self-perception included pupils' perceptions of how good they were at reading, writing and spelling, relative to their classmates, and whether or not they believed that reading was their best subject. Pupils were also asked about how

often they did homework, and the amount of time spent completing homework, as well as the activities engaged in as part of homework. Other items examined attitudes to reading, including reading for pleasure (frequency of library use, reading books, newspapers or magazines for pleasure at home) and perception of reading as interesting or boring (page 23).

The Questionnaire also asked about pupils' motivation to read, including willingness to discuss reading materials with others, as well as about the highest level of education they expected to attain, and would like to attain.

8. National Literacy Trust survey for Reading Connects (Clarke, and Foster 2005)

In 2005, the National Literacy Trust conducted a survey for Reading Connects, a DfES-funded National Reading Campaign initiative that supports schools in building communities that read (very similar to the JCSP Literacy Strategy) to collect evidence about children's and young people's reading preferences and reading behaviours. The aim was to enable parents, teachers and other literacy professionals to promote wider reading. 98 of the Reading Connects schools in 2005 were involved. The items were interesting and served to inform the items in my survey.

9. Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher et al, 2007)

A team of researchers according to Pitcher et al (2007) revised the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell et al 1996) for use with adolescents. Instruments to assess adolescents' in- and out-of-school reading motivations were administered. A survey adapted for adolescents was administered to 384 teens at eight sites throughout the United States and Trinidad, and 100 students were interviewed using a revised instrument designed to capture the real reading patterns of adolescents. The teens were asked questions about fiction, expository, and computer-based reading materials; about what instruction in school motivated them to read; and in which classes was the reading material most difficult.

10. Attitudes to reading at ages nine and eleven. NFER survey (Sainsbury & Clarkson, 2008)

This NFER survey of 4,477 English primary school pupils in summer 2007 responded to concerns raised by the PIRLS study of 2001 (Martin et al 2003) In this international survey of pupils' reading attainment and attitudes, pupils in England had recorded very low levels of reading enjoyment as compared to their international peers (Twist et al, 2003). The NFER survey sought to find out more about this, including whether there had been a decline since the survey in 1998. They investigated attitudes to reading – both enjoyment and confidence.

Central to their working definition of attitude to reading was the idea of intrinsic motivation in the form of a positive self-concept as a reader, a desire and tendency to read and a reported enjoyment of or interest in reading; and its opposite, a negative self-concept as a reader, a desire and tendency to avoid reading and a reported dislike of the activity.

Appendix 13

Rationale for selection of types of questions within the Reading Survey

Closed questions prescribe the range of responses from which the respondents may choose and 90 per cent of the questions are closed. Highly structured closed questions are useful according to Cohan et al (2007) in that they can generate frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis. Limitations are of course that they do not allow the participants to add any remarks, qualifications and explanations to the categories and there is a risk that the categories might not be exhaustive and that there might be a bias in them (Oppenheim, 1992, p.115). Nonetheless this format suited the target group.

Rank Order

It was desirable to ask the students their preferences of reading materials and chose rank order format for this. However, the inclusion of too long a list could be overwhelming. Wilson and McLean (1994, p.26) suggest that any more than five ranks is unrealistic. One can keep a longer list but only ask to prioritise their first five priorities. Rankings are useful in indicating degree of response according to Cohan (2007, p.325). This same advice was provided by Dr Peter Archer, Director of the Education Research Centre during the consultation process with regard to questions 15 and 16 which resulted in the rank order being reduced from eight to five.

Rating Scales

Rating Scales are widely used in research as they combine the flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies, correlations and forms of quantitative analysis - Cohan et al (2009, p.327). They allow the researcher the freedom to fuse measurement with opinion, quantity and quality. A Likert scale (1932) was chosen as they are useful in that they build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response while still generating numbers.

The even-numbered scale usually forces a respondent to choose while the odd-numbered scale provides an option for indecision or neutrality. An even number was chosen in the survey in this study being mindful of the adolescent who would perhaps appreciate its simplicity.

Scholars recommend using time-bound labels for frequency measures such as “once a week” so questions nine and ten are written with this advice in mind (although problems of correct recall are also an issue).

Open ended questions have the potential to provide “gems of information that otherwise might not be caught in a questionnaire” (Cohan et al, 2009, p.330). It is a window of opportunity for the respondent to shed light on an issue (p.331). **They** allow participants to

write a free account on their own terms, to explain and qualify their response and avoid the limitations of pre-set categories of response Cohan (2009, p.321). There are obvious problems in data handling if one tries to convert opinions into numbers. It also takes longer for the respondent to complete and they may not be fully capable of articulating their views. It was decided to only include one open ended question for this reason while recognising it to be an opportunity to gather rich information. Following the advice in Cohan et al (2007) care was taken in this survey that the language used and the choice of vocabulary was within the grasp of the students.

Appendix 14 Survey of Librarians conducted in May 2011

This was an online survey monkey format

1. School:

2. What reading interventions will the 1st Year JCSP students have participated in at the end of this year (2010/2011)?

Please refer to one group only if the JCSP students are in separate class groups.

Word Millionaire

Reading Challenge

Readalong

Paired Reading

Cross Age Peer Tutoring

Reading Classes in the Library

Silent Reading Programme

Fluency Reading

Primary Picture Book

SRA

Storytelling

DEAR

Accelerated Reading

Home Reading Programme

Book Review

Author in Residence (Focused on Reading)

Other (please describe any other reading intervention carried out with this group)

3. What problems, if any, have you encountered while running three or more reading interventions with one groups over an academic year?

4. Please indicate if you feel that the cumulative impact of running a series of reading interventions has impacted positively on any of the following?

Improved attitude to reading

Students now read more

They can now choose appropriate

reading material from Library

They enjoy reading more

They are more willing to read

Discuss their books with each other

Parents have commented on their

improved reading

Teachers have commented on their

improved reading

Students have commented that they are

now better readers

They now read different types of books

Now reading outside of school

Willing to talk about what they are

reading

Students now ask to read

Voluntarily come to read in the library

outside of class

Other (Please describe reading improvements that you have observed)

5. Do you think that the *Literacy Medley* (running three or more reading interventions) is a worthwhile model to incorporate into the literacy strategy in the future? Why/why not?

6. Please describe what, in your opinion, a first year literacy programme should include to ensure literacy levels are accelerated.

Appendix 15

Piloting of the Reading Survey

Ailish Larkin (St Aidan's Community School) returned eight completed surveys. Mairead Duggan (Galway Community College) returned 17 completed surveys. The feedback from the pilot surveys informed a range of recommendations. The feedback resulted in a review of the layout in order to put the survey into sections that would guide the students in their answering. Examples were also inserted to show students how to answer certain questions. Wording of questions was reviewed (for example, using closed rather than open questions in questions four to seven). It was seen to be better to use closed questions where students are asked to choose an option to ensure more reliable information is gathered. It was also recommended to limit the answer options for the questions on attitudes to reading.

2. The questions on attitudes to reading needed to be regrouped and re ordered.

This was supported by the recommendation that the wording of questions which go to make up a scale or index should be varied in such a way that people who say yes to everything (yeasayers) or no to everything (naysayers) do not end up with an extreme score. More of a balance was also achieved here between positive and negative statements.

In the data analysis, a **“Positive Attitudes Towards Reading Scale”** was created. This consisted of eight items, two negative (Reading is hard for me/Reading is boring) and six positive (Reading is important/I like being read to/I prefer reading silently/I enjoy reading/Reading is hard for me/Reading is boring). The reliability coefficient was 0.72. Internal reliability is particularly important in connection with multiple-item scales. It raises the question of whether each scale is measuring a single idea and hence whether the items that make up the scale were internally consistent. The currently widely-used Cronbach's alpha essentially calculates the average of all possible split-half reliability coefficients. Nunnally (1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient.

3. The question **When I have to read a word I don't know I ...**was ambiguous in that students in the pilot were unsure whether to tick only one answer or more than one answer. The majority of students only ticked one answer. New wording had to ensure clarity here.

4. It was also recommended to reduce the number involved in the rank order questions and they were reduced from eight to five.

5. It was recommended that the open-ended question be rephrased to include what is called a **“critical incident question”** (Flanagan, 1954). The critical incident technique is a qualitative method designed to draw out the most memorable aspects of an event or experience from the study's participants. It would also serve to rebalance the survey in

terms of the strong emphasis on closed questions. This free writing question was rewritten to ask:

Now remember one time when you really enjoyed reading. Please tell us about the experience and what made it enjoyable.

Nunnally, J. (1978). Psychometric theory. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Appendix 16- Template for Literacy Review May 2010 Subject Teacher: Literacy development

What strategies do you use effectively already and what strategies would you like to hear more about?

Strategies for reading development /extension:

Yes I use it fairly regularly / No I do not use it / I would to hear more on this idea

Readability of Text	Yes	No	More Info
Keywords	Yes	No	More Info
Skimming & Scanning	Yes	No	More Info
Writing Frames	Yes	No	More Info
Graphic Organisers	Yes	No	More Info

Other: (anything else that works well for you or something you would like to hear more about?)

Textbook Strategies

Cloze	Yes/	No	More Info
Sequencing	Yes/	No	More Info
Labelling	Yes/	No	More Info
Table Construction	Yes/	No	More Info
Prediction	Yes/	No	More Info
Diagram Completion	Yes/	No	More Info
Summarise information	Yes/	No	More Info

Other: (anything else that works well for you or something you would like to hear more about?)

What literacy problems cause the most difficulty for you in teaching your subject?

Have you been part of any literacy interventions in...

Paired reading / Reading Challenges / Make A Book / Drop Everything and Read/Library classes, etc?

What literacy strategies / supports / ideas would help you most as a teacher, do you think?

Do you have any ideas as to what should be put in place in the new academic year to improve literacy levels across the school? (Feel free to write on the back of the sheet!!)

Appendix 17 An outline of the Plan for the Full Staff In-service 26th August 2010

Literacy Across the Curriculum

School

26th August 2010

Preliminary Agenda

Why Literacy? Benefits of a Whole School Approach

Recent Research

Textbooks and Readability

DEIS Literacy Plan in St Michael's

KWL

What is already in Place? Post-its and feedback

Break

Strategies:

Keywords

Post Modernity

List Strategies

Activities;

1. Readability exercise – H. Economics
2. Postmodernity exercise + feedback Skim and Scan explanation and NEW with slide – Skim to find the section and scan to find specific information
3. Keyword exercises
4. Visual verbal squares

5. Show me board
6. matching visuals and words
7. Word Dominoes design and technology
8. matching definitions and keywords poetry
9. Geography categories
10. language of argument
11. word wheel in geography
12. Circle keywords – media

Pre reading activity

Prediction exercise

Activating prior knowledge – need slide and ask them to think about it

During Reading

Labelling

Text marking refer to – already done

Why do you mark text – how sentences are constructed – engaging with a text post-its / photocopy pages / jigsaw exercise

Bookmark to get around marking the text

Video of SQ3R

Post reading

Story grid able Mat

Planning session

How will you know that your interventions work?

A key person needs to ensure that the review will take place

We will come in to talk about the pilot

Literacy committee

Appendix 18 Subject Teacher Questionnaire on Literacy Development

Subject Teacher: Literacy development

What strategies (if any) have you tried since the in-service?

Yes I use it fairly regularly / No I do not use it / I

would like to hear more on this idea

Readability of Text	Yes	No	More Info
---------------------	-----	----	-----------

Vocabulary and Language Building exercises we tried out in groups

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|-----------|
| • Visual verbal squares | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Word wheel | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Colour Circle keywords | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Show me board | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Matching visuals and words | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Word Dominoes design and technology | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Matching definitions and keywords | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Geography categories | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Language of argument | Yes | No | More Info |

Other: (anything else that works well for you or something you would like to hear more about?)

Pre – reading:

Keywords	Yes	No	More Info
KWL	Yes	No	More Info
Prediction / Anticipation	Yes	No	More Info
Brainstorming	Yes	No	More Info

During Reading

Skim & Scan	Yes	No	More Info
NEW	Yes	No	More Info
SQ3R	Yes	No	More Info

Graphic Organisers	Yes	No	More Info
---------------------------	------------	-----------	------------------

DARTS

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------|
| • Bookmarks | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Labelling | Yes | No | More Info |
| • text marking | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Jigsaw | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Sequencing | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Transforming | Yes | No | More Info |
| • Table Construction | Yes | No | More Info |

Post Reading

3-2-1	Yes	No	More Info
--------------	------------	-----------	------------------

Other (anything else that works well for you or something you would like to hear more about?)

What else have you planned (if anything)?

What further in-service (if any) do you think could be useful?

Are you part of any literacy interventions in.....?

i.e. Paired reading / Reading Challenges / Make A Book / Drop Everything and Read/Library classes etc?

What DEIS Literacy targets do you think you can contribute to and in what way? Please be as specific as possible

What literacy supports would help you most as a teacher, do you think?

Do you have any ideas as to what should be put in place this year to improve literacy levels across the school?

Appendix 19 Presentation used for the Full Staff Literacy in September and Review November 2010

JCSP National Literacy Strategy
Classroom Strategies that Support Literacy Development

☆ 1

Every Student Is Capable of Success.



☆ 2

"For me the purpose of education is to enhance understanding."

- Howard Gardner

☆ 3

Why Literacy?

Literacy

- 5-8% of students cannot function at second level because of literacy demands of the school. *Morgen 1994*
- 30.7% of students in public schools had reading age of 2 years or more below their chronological age. *TUI Survey of Remedial Education 2000*

Literacy

- 6,500 students in 1st, 3rd and 6th Classes
- 25% significantly underachieving
- 25% had 0 – 10 books at home
- Minority read to at home
- Positive effects of being read to before starting school, still in place by 6th class (high attendance impacts strongly)

Reading Literacy in Disadvantaged Primary Schools. Elvers, Shiel, and Short, 2004



Studies show that middle class children enter first grade having experienced an average of 1,000-1,700 hours of storybook reading in the home, compared with 25 hours for children from very low-income homes

Let's Talk About Literacy, Literacy Partners of Manitoba, 1999.

☆ 7

National Literacy Strategy, UK

Literacy is important because it enables pupils to gain access to the subjects studied in school, to read for information and pleasure, and to communicate effectively. Poor levels of literacy impact negatively on what pupils can do and how they see themselves.

Secondary Literacy: A Survey (1997) HMI

☆ 8

Language is the principal medium of learning and every teacher needs to cultivate it as the tool for learning ...The challenge is to transfer the skills from one lesson to another by making literacy skills part of an explicit teaching agenda in all lessons

Introduction, NLS, 1997.

☆ 9

Essential elements of literacy initiative

- Time for change
- In-school professional development
- Teacher motivation
- Support system for teachers
- Support of parents

Dr. Carol Malaise
Institute of Studies in Education, University of Ontario – Study of Literacy

☆ 10

Super-accelerators

- Shared Leadership - management, literacy team/co-ordinator
- Developing teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions
- Opportunities for teacher co-operation for planning and working together
- Programme coherence – shared vision, clear goals based on needs

Dr. Carol Malaise, University of Ontario

☆ 11

Time to Read & Access to Books

Research shows that students who read for 30-40 minutes per day achieve higher grades in exams.

Pisa Report 2000
National Literacy Trust, UK

☆ 12

•the value they placed on bringing teams of teachers together to create effective literacy-based school change...

Welcoming, valuing and respecting the expertise and views of other educators ...maximises the use of in-school knowledge and capacity.

Dr Carol Hollibaugh, University of Ontario



13

"Many successes are achieved by implementing a whole school approach to literacy development."

(Wray 2004)
(The Win-Win-Win Scenario!)



14

Some Misconceptions:

- I have learned to write
- I can write in a range of genres
- I have learned to read
- I can read any complex text
e.g. tax form
e.g. instructions in a DIY manual

(Wray 2005)



15

JCSP Evaluation - "Building on Success"

"Each school providing JCSP should develop a whole-school literacy strategy"

"Subject teachers should be encouraged to give priority to literacy skills, leading to a culture of reading and library use among students."



16

What Works in Secondary Schools?



www.basicskills.co.uk
100 schools
14,000 students



17

Recommended Strategies

- Target first year students
- Focus on students with 8.00 - 10.00 R.A.
- Two track approach:
 - Specific individualised instruction provided
 - Follow up provided in OTHER SUBJECTS in mainstream classrooms
- Paired work (100%)
- ICT support
- Reading time: 20mins X 3times a week



18

**It's Not What Schools Do,
It's How They Do It**

(The schools were confident that they can make a difference)



19

Literacy in St Michael's

- Keywords
- Skimming and Scanning
- Close
- Labelling
- Table Construction
- Sequencing
- Prediction
- Diagram Completion
- Summarising



20

Difficult

- Read aloud
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Writing of answers
- Subject specific language
- Language of examinations
- Spelling
- Difficulty of the Text



21

Successful Interventions

Response

- More time and space for reading
- Whole School Literacy Policy
- Time for teachers to develop strategies
- Common approach - Strategies and Resources and Presentation of work
- Subject Specific
- Spelling
- Developing IT
- Drama
- Literacy day
- Library
- Time for teachers to plan

- Literacy is the responsibility of all teachers.



25

"Literacy is a shared responsibility - it is too important to leave to English teachers... There are new forms of literacy (on-screen and moving image media) alongside traditional print literacy."

Secondary Literacy: A Survey (1997) HMI



26

Identifying Readability of Text

Readability

- We use the term "reading age" to indicate the chronological age of a reader who can just understand the text.
- The term is also applied to the text itself; a text with a "readability level" of 14 years is one that can be read and just understood by a 14 year-old pupil having average reading ability.

Readability

The reading level predicted by a readability test is the "break-off" point for a reader of that reading age; a reading level measured as 14 years predicts that an average 14 year-old would be at the limit of his / her reading comprehension ability with that book.

Sentence structure

- This short sentence needs a reading age of less than nine years.
- This longer sentence, which contains an adjectival clause and polysyllabic words, has a reading age of more than sixteen years.

Analysing the Readability Level of a Text

SMOG Ready Reckoner

1. Select a text
2. Count 10 sentences
3. Count number of words which have three or more syllables
4. Multiply this by 3
5. Circle the number closest to your answer
6. Find the square root of the number you circled

4	9	16	25	36	49	64	81	100	121	144	169	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

Add 30 = = Readability Level

Readability of General Literature

Irish Times	18
The Irish Examiner	16
Times Educational Supplement	17
'A Tale of Two Cities' (Dickens)	13
'To Kill a Mocking Bird' (Lee)	11½
'Lord of the Flies' (Golding)	11
'Kestrel: A Kestrel for a Knave' (Hines)	10½

Wood Technology for the Junior Certificate (Eli Gallagher)	16.5
Door to the Past (Ray Quinn & Desmond O'Leary)	16.5
Discovering Science (Jaska Collins)	18
The Human Planet, Geography for Jun. Cert. (Patrick E. F. O'Dwyer)	16.5
Make a Difference, Civil Social and Political Education (Cesar Harrison & Maria Wilson)	15.5
Literacy, Home Economics for Junior Certificate (Ranville & Kenworthy)	16

Readability

Pupils prefer to read below their reading level, and research by Klare shows that they retain more in these circumstances. For a pupil to read independently (without help, but with comprehension), the reading level of the text should be **two years below** the pupil's reading level.



Navigating Textbooks

- Introducing
- Title page
- Illustrations
- Table of contents
- Chapter headings
- Chapter organisation
- Glossary
- Index



Reading Activity

Post Modernity Page 6

Strategies that Work

Classroom Strategies



Classroom Strategies



Vocabulary and Language Building

- Visual verbal squares
- Word wheel
- Colour Circle keywords
- Show me board
- Matching visuals and words
- Word Dominoes design and technology
- Matching definitions and keywords
- Geography categories
- Language of argument

Keywords



Website: ELSP



NAME: _____ DATE: _____
 CSPE: An introduction to democracy, elections and voting

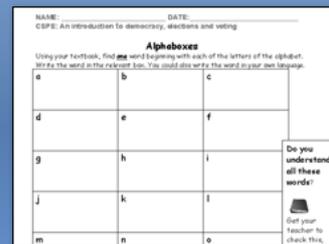
Keywords

The list of keywords for this unit is as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heart amendments ballot bullet paper ballots cabinet candidates/candidates candidate chairperson choice circus committee constituency constitution council councillor CSI (Euros) democracy deputative/deputations election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> party/parties politician polling polling booth polling card polling station post office preference Progressive Democrats register register to share to sort to spoil a vote to tally to transfer to vote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to eliminate to engage to fill out a ballot to involve to lobby to make a choice to make sure to march to register to share to sort to spoil a vote to tally to transfer to vote
--	--	--

Adjectives

- circ
- communal



Name: _____
Date: _____

3-2-1 Strategy

3	Things I Found Out
2	Interesting Things
1	Question I Still Have

☆ 61

Benefits of 3-2-1

- Flexible strategy that can be modified according to the subject/context/level or topic you are teaching
- Adaptable to various print media and can be used during or after reading to maximize students' comprehension
- Aids students in becoming purposeful readers
- Can be used to assess students' comprehension during a lesson

☆ 62

DARTs may be used at various stages of the learning process...

- Before / Introducing / Pre-teaching a topic
- During
- After
- Homework and revision
- Scaffolding learning
- Independent learning
- Revision
- Study



☆ 63



☆ 64

1800s and Today

Similarities	Differences	Evidence from story

☆ 65

Writing Frames

(Writing genres)

☆ 66

"Secondary school examinations demand the ability to write cogent arguments and discussions and, if the students have not been taught how to structure these forms of writing they will be disadvantaged."

Wray and Lewis 1998

☆ 67

A variety of Writing Genres

- Explanation (series of logical steps to explain something)
- Comparison
- Contrast
- Instruction (directives in sequence)
- Procedure (recipe/instructions/illustration)
- Recount (scene setting/re-telling events/closing)
- Persuasion (promote a point of view/argument)
- Discussion (different points of view/discussions from both sides/recommendations to close)
- Report (describe the way things are/were)

☆ 68

Merits of Writing Frames

- Provide a template, scaffolding, skeleton and structure for student writing in a variety of genres
- Provide a variety of prompts:
 - Sentence stems
 - Sentence starters
 - Connectives

☆ 69

Merits of Writing Frames

- Overcome the problem of the blank page
 - the difficulty of getting started
 - Something is already written on the page
 - the student is no longer overwhelmed
 - Useful in a range of subjects
 - Useful when writing in an unfamiliar genre

☆ 70

Merits of Writing Frames

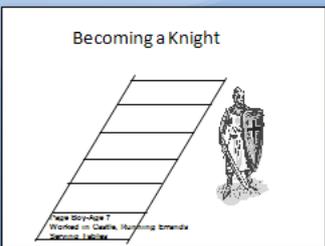
- Indicate how many details the writing should contain
- Place a limit on the number of tasks that the student has to perform simultaneously
- The level of prompts can be gradually decreased

☆ 71

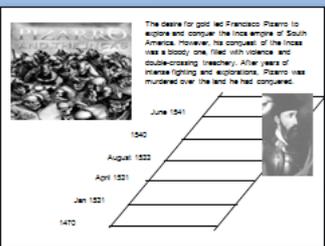
Using Writing Frames

- Steps
 - Teacher Demonstration
 - Teacher and student together
 - Student is supported by frame _
 - Students write in pairs
 - Scaffolding still available
 - The frame can be tailored to do topic in hand
 - Students produce a best copy as a result of collaborative work
- Student writes independently
- Example Page 33

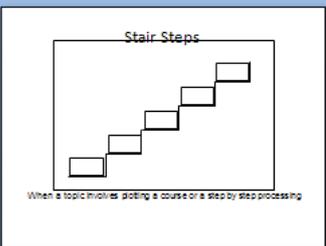
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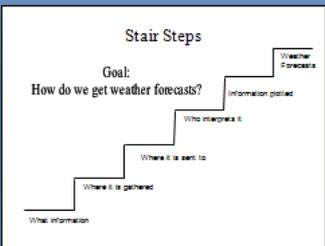
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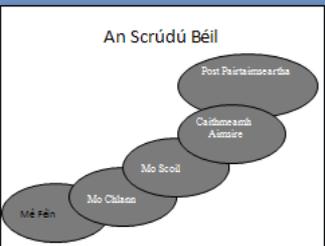
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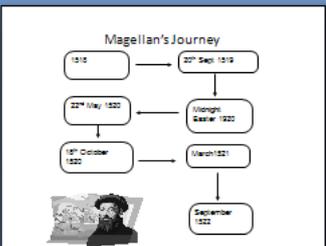
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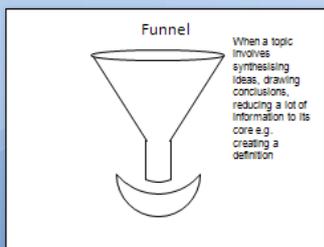
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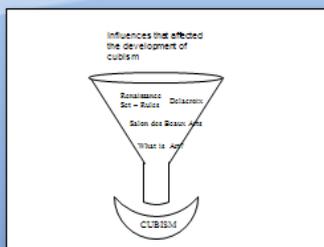
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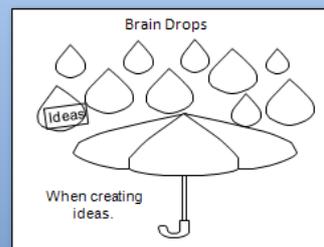
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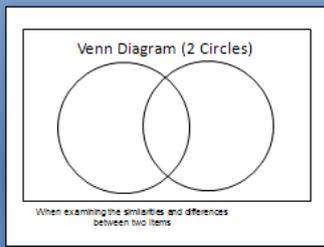
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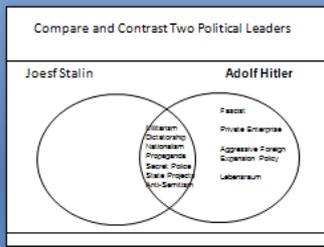
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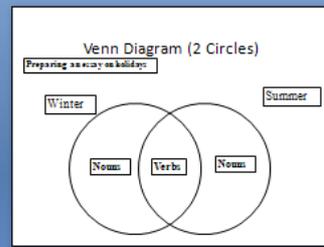
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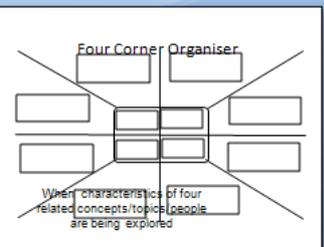
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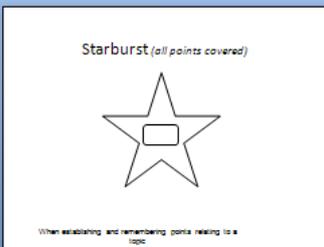
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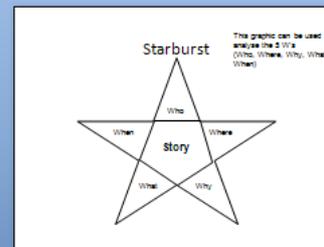
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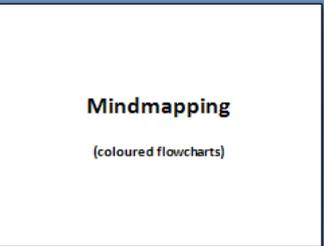
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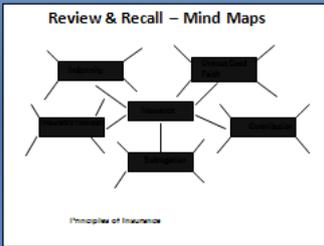
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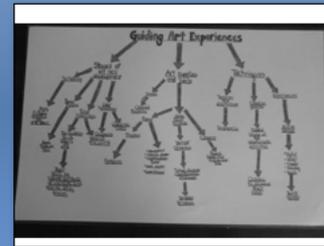
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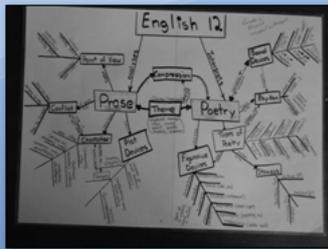
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☆ 89

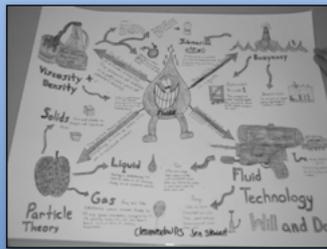


☆ 90



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Where to from Here?



92

Implementing

- Choosing a class/group/year
- Select a strategy
- How long?
- How often?
- What will you do in the classroom?
- Monitoring
- Evaluating

Summary of Literacy Strategies

- Readability
- Navigating Textbooks
- Work on Fluency
- Pre-Reading
 - Keywords
 - KWL
 - Anticipation and Prediction
- During Reading
 - CARS
 - Sift, Scan, NZW
 - Bookmark
 - SQ3R
 - Graphic Organizers
- Post-Reading
 - P-Q-I
 - Story Grid

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Review November 2010

JCSP National Literacy Strategy
Classroom Strategies that Support Literacy Development
 St
 Review November 2010

Time to Read & Access to Books

Research shows that students who read for 30-40 minutes per day achieve higher grades in exams.

Plus Report 2000
National Literacy Trust, UK

“Many successes are achieved by implementing a whole school approach to literacy development.”

(Wray 2004)
(The Win-Win-Win Scenario!)

Literacy in St Michael's

- Keywords
- Skimming and Scanning
- Close
- Labelling
- Table Construction
- Sequencing
- Prediction
- Diagram Completion
- Summarising

Difficulties

- Read aloud
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Writing of answers
- Subject specific language
- Language of examinations
- Spelling
- Difficulty of the Text

Successful Interventions

Response

- More time and space for reading
- Whole School Literacy Policy
- Time for teachers to develop strategies
- Common approach - Strategies and Resources and Presentation of work
- Subject Specific
- Spelling
- Developing IT
- Drama
- Literacy day
- Library
- Time for teachers to plan

- Literacy is the responsibility of all teachers.

Classroom Strategies

Fluency

Vocabulary

Comprehension

Motivation

Classroom Strategies

Fluency
 - Silent Reading
 - Repeated Reading

Vocabulary
 - Key words

Comprehension
 - Skim Scan MEN
 - Main Idea
 - DARTS
 - KWL
 - Summarising
 - Graphic Organisers

Motivation
 - Reading Initiative - Reading Challenge
 - Millionaire
 - Paired Reading
 - DEAR
 - Accelerated Reading
 - Variety
 - Student Choice
 - Excitement
 - Profiling

Vocabulary and Language Building

- Visual verbal squares
- Word wheel
- Colour Circle keywords
- Show me board
- Matching visuals and words
- Word Dominoes design and technology
- Matching definitions and keywords
- Geography categories
- Language of argument

Comprehension Skills

- Pre Reading
- During Reading
- Post Reading

☆ 13

Comprehension

Pre-reading:
 Keywords
 KWL
 Prediction / Anticipation Pages 16/17 &
 Pages 19, 20 & 21
 Brainstorming



☆ 14

Note Taking - KWL

What I know	What I want to find out	What I Learned

☆ 15

During reading:

Skim
 Scan
 NEW
 DARTS

☆ 16

DARTS

- Bookmarks – Page 22
- Labelling – Page 24
- text marking – Page 9
- Jigsaw – Page 26 & 27
- Sequencing – Page 28
- Transforming – Page 25
- Table Construction – Slide

☆ 17

SQ3R

Thinking before reading.....

- Survey
- Question
- Read
- Review
- Recall

☆ 18

Post Reading

- Table Grid
- 3-2-1

☆ 19

Name: _____
 Topic: _____

3-2-1 Strategy

3	Things I Found Out
2	Interesting Things
1	Question I Still Have

☆ 20

Mindmapping Writing Frames Graphic Organisers

☆ 21

Ideas!!

- 'High achievers' group
- Digital literacy initiatives
- www.elsp.ie
- www.elsa.ie (Resources)
- (Graphic organisers)
- Parents involved
- Communicate what we are doing using Intercom

☆ 22

Reading

What experienced readers do!

- Slowed down
- Read and re-read
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Keywords
- Prick knowledge
- Practical, concrete something familiar
- Work in pairs
- Text marking highlighting
- Visualising
- Dictionaries
- Paragraphs (Break up text)

☆ 23

Geography

- Keywords – e.g. JCSP Notebook
- Transforming text
- Note-taking system (Cornell)

☆ 24

<p style="text-align: center;">Maths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keywords – topic/exam • Skim and scan • Matching definitions • Ticket to leave! • Show-me-Boards • Visual Aids <p style="text-align: right;">25</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gaeilge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-W-L • Keywords • Transferring text • Role-playing • Skim and Scan • Bookmarks • Ticket to leave • Graphic organisers • Persuasion/discussion • Word Puzzles <p style="text-align: right;">26</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool box (Resources) • Keywords – Colour coded • Show me Boards • K-W-L • 3-2-1 • G. organisers • Exam Language • Definitions <p style="text-align: right;">27</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Book Boxes • Keyword/Notebook • Writing Frames • Card Board cut out <p style="text-align: right;">28</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">French</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonetics • Pair-work • Websites • Interactive Whiteboard • Video-conferences • Clues – headings /visuals etc. • Keywords • Vocabulary • Writing Frames • Mind Mapping • Idioms.....phases <p style="text-align: right;">29</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">German</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keywords • Questions focus • Text working • Book mark Sentences • 3-2-1 • Spelling copy • Mind Maps/Spider graph • Writing Frames <p style="text-align: right;">30</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Art</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keywords..... Technical terms etc. • Notebook • Displays <p style="text-align: right;">31</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visuals • Oral language • Keywords and lists (Displayed) • Listening • Show-me-Boards • Definitions (examples) • Spider grams • Pair work • Multiple choice questions practice <p style="text-align: right;">32</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home Economics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keyword posters laminated – kitchen • Graphic organisers • Show-me-Boards <p style="text-align: right;">33</p>
<p>“The school sees literacy as the key to improving learning and raising standards and has an approach which is relevant to all curriculum areas and pupils of all levels of attainment”.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Secondary Literacy: A Survey (1997) HMI</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">34</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keywords • Newspapers/Scrapbook • Dictionary <p style="text-align: right;">35</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Where to from Here?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">36</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Implementing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing a class/group/year • Select a strategy • How long? • How often? • What will you do in the classroom? • Monitoring • Evaluating <p style="text-align: right;">37</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What DEIS requires...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">38</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What does DEIS require?</p> <p>All schools required to produce 3 year plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Retention • Literacy • Numeracy • Achievement • Progression • Partnership with parents & organisations  <p style="text-align: right;">39</p>
<p>If someone came to your classroom looking for a literacy-rich classroom, what would they see/not see?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading comprehension strategy instruction • Opportunities for all students to access text • Opportunities for listening and viewing • Opportunities for discussion and presenting • Writing instruction • Instruction in use of higher-order thinking skills <p style="text-align: right;">40</p>	<p>“The teacher may need to model the process several times before the students actually take ownership of the literacy strategy.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Fuentes 1998)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">41</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Summary of Literacy Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readability • Navigating Textbooks • Work on Summary Pre Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keywords – • KWL • Anticipation and Prediction During Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DARTS • Skim, Scan, NEW • Bookmarks • SQAR • Graphic Organisers Post Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-2-1 • Story Grid <p style="text-align: right;">42</p>

Appendix 20 Letters to successful schools November 25th 2010

Dear Principal

Just a note to wish you the very best with the implementation of our New JCSP Literacy Initiative *The JCSP Literacy Medley* that your school was successful in applying for this year. We were delighted with the level of interest in the initiative and look forward to supporting you in its implementation.

In order to ensure sustained interest in reading, enhanced funding was provided for this initiative to support the purchase of age appropriate reading materials. This may supplement your JCSP Reading Corner if you have one or help to put one in place if you do not have one yet.

As you know this is a very important development within the JCSP Literacy Strategy. Our research to date has indicated that the students who participate in the JCSP literacy initiatives are making good progress as a result with gains in reading ages being observed. The last research indicated that participating students are improving by, on average, 9 months in their reading ages. There seemed to be even more significant improvement for the students who were involved in multiple initiatives with up to 13 months improvement being noted in two schools. This prompted us to offer a combination of reading literacy initiatives to schools as it may afford us the opportunity to further explore the positive impact on the learning experiences of our JCSP Students.

Researching the impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy goes hand in hand with its implementation. The results to date have been so positive and have provided the system with a great confidence that we can make a difference to adolescent literacy levels in our disadvantaged and DEIS schools. The results of this research will be written up and become part of the suite of JCSP studies on the impact of the initiatives on student learning. Part of the research will also be included in EdD

research - where I am exploring the impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy nationally. All standardized tests and reading survey materials will be provided to the school and if useful, can also be corrected centrally.

The most important aspect, of course, is that your students improve their literacy levels and I have every confidence that they will. If you have any observations we would be most appreciative if you would email them to jcspaideen@gmail.com. If you have any suggestions for improving the JCSP Literacy Strategy or if there is any way we could further support your school in improving literacy levels please email jcspaideen@gmail.com.

Thank you for your huge support to date. Your support of this work is invaluable and in itself could well make the difference to so many students in making significant strides in their literacy.

Yours sincerely

Aideen Cassidy

National Co-ordinator Junior Certificate School Programme

November 2010

Dear Co-ordinator

Just a note to wish you the very best with the implementation of our New JCSP Literacy Initiative ***The Literacy Medley***. We were delighted with the level of interest in the initiative and look forward to supporting you in its implementation.

As you know this is a very important development within the JCSP Literacy Strategy. Our research to date has indicated that the students who participate in the literacy initiatives are making good progress as a result with gains in their reading ages observed. The last research indicated that students are improving by, on average, 9 months in their reading ages. There seemed to be even more significant improvement for the students who were involved in multiple literacy initiatives with up to 13 months improvement being noted in two schools. This prompted us to offer a combination of reading literacy initiatives to schools as it may afford us the opportunity to further explore the impact on the learning experiences of our JCSP Students.

As you know, you are being asked to offer a range of reading initiatives to one set of students to capture the cumulative impact. Researching the impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy goes hand in hand with its implementation. The results to date have been so positive and have provided the system with a great confidence that we can make a difference to adolescent literacy levels in our disadvantaged and DEIS schools. The findings from this research will also become part of the suite of JCSP studies on the impact of the initiatives on student learning. Additionally, part of the research will be included in EDd research - where I am exploring the impact of the JCSP Literacy Strategy nationally. All standardized tests and reading survey materials will be provided to the school and, if useful, can also be corrected centrally.

We are asking that you provide us with pre and post reading test results using the GRT2 NFER Nelson test. Part of the grant provided for implementing this initiative could be used for towards the costs of this testing activity. Also if you need a supply of these tests please contact Dorota in the JCSP office but beforehand please

consider if it is the A/B or the X/Y series that most suits your students' level. Just let Dorota know the quantities that you require.

We are well aware that it is as flawed a test as any available at the moment while we await a new Irish normed test but at least if everyone involved in this initiative uses it, then we can compare and hopefully see some improvements. Additionally, if you have any other reading test information regarding these students we would be very grateful if you could provide us with it. Please refer to test template information sheet included with this letter.

Thank you for carrying out the reading surveys - they make tremendously useful research material and already interesting patterns are emerging.

The most important aspect, of course, is that your students improve their literacy levels and I have every confidence that they will. If you have any observations we would be most appreciative if you would email them to jcspaideen@gmail.com. If you have any suggestions for improving the JCSP Literacy Strategy or if there is any way we could further support your school in improving literacy levels please email jcspaideen@gmail.com.

Thank you for your commitment to the JCSP students. There is no doubt that your work is having an enormously positive impact on the lives of these students as well as their literacy levels.

Yours sincerely

Aideen Cassidy

National Co-ordinator

Junior Certificate School Programme

**Appendix 21 Letter inviting Co-ordinators to a
consultative meeting on 28th January**

January 20th

Dear Co-ordinator

We hope that your year is going well so far.

We are delighted that you are running the new JCSP Medley and I am writing to invite you to a consultative meeting about this new initiative. As you know this is a research initiative. We established it because we saw the added value that the students experienced by being engaged in a number of JCSP literacy initiatives. We are keen to establish the impact of running multiple initiatives and so we hope that things are going well for you. Even if they are not we hope that you can come to the meeting on:

Friday 28th

at 10.30 in the

Curriculum Development Unit

Captain's Road Crumlin Dublin 12

Your substitution costs will be covered for the meeting as well as your travel and subsistence. Please note the change of time from the in-service calendar to facilitate those of you travelling.

We hope that this will provide an opportunity to hear how other schools are running the initiatives and what impact that they may be having. It will be interesting to hear

of the different combinations of interventions and how they complement each other.

We would appreciate it if you could bring the reading test information with you of the students involved as well as any useful resources that you have found to work with these students.

We would also like to use this consultative meeting as an opportunity to seek your advice on the new national literacy plan as we are making a submission to the group responsible for it and you are well placed to advise as to how literacy should be supported into the future. This part of the meeting will take place in the afternoon. Lunch will be provided.

We are really looking forward to meeting with you and hearing how things are going with this very special new initiative where your advice will shape its future.

Yours sincerely

Aideen Cassidy

Appendix 22 Questionnaire: Interim questionnaire for teachers involved in the literacy Medley

Literacy Medley 2011

School

Number of students: boys: girls:

Year Group

Combination of reading initiatives being implemented with the first year students:

Plan for implementation

Have you collected the reading level information

What is the level of literacy of the students coming into your school in first year

Include the percentage approximately of the number of students that are 4 years behind or more

Why do you think they are coming into schools with such poor literacy?

Do you think it is getting better?

What works best for you?

Are there a proportion that do not really improve? - why do you think?

What could be put in place in an ideal world for these?

What of the JCSP interventions have worked for you?

What classroom strategies work?

Are your teachers using literacy strategies such as pre reading activities during and post reading?

What are the barriers to literacy improvement?

Do you believe DEIS is making any difference?

If improvement did not occur between Pre and Post Testing, can you suggest any factors that contributed to this?

Appendix 23 JCSP Literacy Medley 2010 Initiative: Summary of Reading Tests

JCSP Literacy Medley 2010 Initiative: Summary of Reading Tests

Where improvement has occurred between Pre and Post Testing, can you suggest any factors that contributed to this improvement?

Please feel free to send the GRT2 Tests to the office for correction

Name of school: _____

Name of teacher(s) involved in Initiative: _____

Name of test used: _____ Year group: _____

Class group (if applicable): _____

come on board as so many students are presented awards at a major night in school calendar.

Appendix 24: Focus group Agenda: The agenda

Focus group Agenda

The agenda

- 1) The draft National Literacy and Numeracy plan (2011) - consultation as to what recommendations should be included in the submission from the JCSP team to that consultative process
- 2) Why are students failing in literacy?
- 3) The background to the *Literacy Medley* (slides outlining the findings from the JCSP research enriching the classroom (2011) that indicate enhanced reading age improvement among students exposed to multiple reading interventions). The purpose of the *Literacy Medley* initiative was discussed.
- 4) The *Literacy Medley* in your school - description of what has been happening to date and plans for the rest of the year.

Appendix 25: School 17 : Survey of student improvement in Reading

Student A

Rated reading ability Sept at 4 and in May at 7. Read 13 books.

I am learning harder words so I am getting to read harder books

Reading age increased from 7:01 to 9:06 - increase of 2 years 5 months

Student B

Rated reading ability in Sept at 7 and in May at 9. Read 9 books.

I am listening more and it is easy when you listen.

This year I think I changed big time.

I would like to be a policewoman when I'm older

Reading age increased from 7:08 to 8:08 - increase of one year.

Student C

Rated reading ability/interest at 8 in Sept and at 9 in May. Read 5 books.

My vocabulary has improved and I know new words such as flail. The word means flap your arms around. In maths I can add and multiply fractions.

I know I have changed this year because I have learned new things in Tech Graphics.

The best thing about school this year was that everything was new and woodwork and all the different subjects.

Reading Age 11:06 to 11+ no change however the teacher recognises a very confident reader now.

Student D

Rated reading ability/interest at 6 in Sept and at 8 in May. Read 10 books.

I know I improved this year because I got good notes in my journal saying that my work improved and that I was doing excellent in class.

I think I changed very much with my reading.

The best thing about school this year was all the subjects, the trips and the reading challenge.

Reading age increased from 10:08 to 11+

According to the teacher this student 'took months to get xxxx to read regularly but came around'

Student E

Rated reading ability/interest at 8 in Sept and at 9 in May. Read 14 books.

I am concentrating more of the time and also answering questions.

I think I changed a good bit in behaviour.

Reading Age increased from 9:04 to 11 - up 1 year 8 months.

Student F

Rated reading ability/interest in Sept at 4 and in May at 9. Completed 3 weeks Better Reading Partnership and in addition finished 21 books

I can read faster and I now know what the words I'm reading mean.

I think I have changed a lot

Reading age increased from 9.07-12.06 up 2.11years

Student G

Rated reading ability/interest in Sept at 5 and in May at 8. Read 12 books.

I'm reading more because it's not so hard for me. I used to feel I couldn't read anything and this school made me feel that I can read.

I think I changed because I feel I've learned a lot more than at primary school.

The best thing about school this year was the musical.

They make it seem easier for you.

Reading Age decreased from 11:06 to 11:00 Decrease by 6 months

Student H

Rated reading ability/interest in Sept at 5 and by May at 7. Read 4 books.

I am a lot faster at reading books and a lot faster at answering sums.

I am a better reader and I enjoy school a lot more this year.

Reading Age 11:06 to 11:06 - no change

Student I

Rated reading ability/interest in Sept at 6 and in May at 10. Read 12 books.

I am trying harder at learning more every night at maths and reading and I hope I am going to get better every day.

I think that I changed because I am more responsible and I know some things that I didn't know last year.

The results I got in my tests proved all the learning I did.

Reading Age increased from 8:06 to 11years, an increase of 2 years 6 months

EAL student and absent quite a lot all year according to teachers.

Appendix 26: School 17 : Summary of Reading Test Improvement across all Literacy medley schools

Reading Test Results

1. Number of JCSP Students Tested in September 2010 - **785**
2. Number of JCSP Students Tested in May 2011 - **751**
3. Core Group of Students Tested on both occasions - **701**
4. Average reading age:
 - September 2010: **09.07**
 - May 2011: **10.05**

Number of JCSP students tested in	785
Number of JCSP students tested in	751
Core group of students tested on both occasions	701

Reading Test Results for Core Group of Students

Table: Summary of the increases, maintenance and decreases in reading ages of the core group

	Number	Percentages
Number of Students whose reading ages increased	489	70 %
Number of Students who maintained the same reading age	41	6 %
Number of students whose reading ages decreased	171	24 %
Total Students Tested and Re-Tested	701	100 %

Table: Average increases in reading ages for students tested across all schools

Table: Numbers of students who showed increase by monthly increment increases

N.B. 1.01= 1 year, 1 month

Increase by month	No. of students						
0.01		1.04	9	0.07		1.10	1
0.02		1.05	8	0.08		1.11	-
0.03		1.06		0.09		2.00	2
0.04		1.07	4	0.1		2.01	2
0.05		1.08	9	0.11		2.02	1
0.06		1.09		0.00			
0.07		1.10	1	0.01		2.09	1
0.08		1.11		0.02			
0.09		2.00	1	0.03		2.11	1
0.10		2.01		0.04			
0.11		2.02		0.05		2.09	1
1.00		2.03		0.06			
1.01		2.04	1	0.07		2.11	1
1.02		2.05		0.08			
1.03		2.06	5	0.09		11 +	8

Appendix 27: Consent Letters and information forms for participants

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: Investigating the impact of the JCSP literacy Strategy with particular reference to the impact of the new Literacy Medley initiative across schools.

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Aideen Cassidy

National Co-ordinator JCSP

Curriculum Development Unit

Captain's Road

Crumlin

Dublin 12

jcspaideen@gmail.com

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Study title

*Full title of Project: **Investigating the impact of the JCSP literacy Strategy***

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study through being interviewed on film. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of the JCSP literacy Strategy through examining the returned reading surveys from 1st year students participating in the JCSP, by examining the implementation of the JCSP *Literacy Medley* in 34 schools and by carrying out two case studies in two DEIS schools that have implemented multiple initiatives as well as taken part in CPD provided by the JCSP support service on a school wide approach to literacy. The methodology will be mixed methods including surveys, interviews, focus groups observations as well as examination of the information returned using the JCSP on line initiative evaluation.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been chosen because of your role as a school/teacher/librarian/ Principal/ Deputy Principal/ learning support/ Special Education Needs teacher/Guidance teacher involved in the implementation of the JCSP literacy strategy.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in an interview on film

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

In taking part in this research you will have an opportunity to articulate your views on literacy education in Ireland and the possible future shape of the JCSP literacy strategy as well as contributing your views on the *Literacy Medley* specifically and how it should be reviewed for future implementation.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

The film of your interview will be used art JCSP /PDST in-service and the film will be put on the website.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You will be asked to participate in an interview. You will be asked to contribute your views on the implementation of the JCSP literacy strategy.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research is being conducted as part of the research programme within the JCSP support service and is also being conducted as part of the ED. D programme in NUI Maynooth. The results of the research will be used as part of the thesis for the ED D. and will be published as part of the research reports within the JCSP support service and, as the study is being part funded by the teaching council, the study will also be published in part by the Teaching Council.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting the study as a member of the JCSP support service and as a student of the education Department of NUI Maynooth. Additionally the study is being part funded by the Teaching Council.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by NUI Maynooth.

Contact for Further Information

Aideen Cassidy
JCSP Support Service
jcspaideen@gmail.com Mobile 087 2333839

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

Date

April 2011

Study title

Full title of Project: Investigating the impact of the JCSP literacy Strategy with particular reference to the impact of the new Literacy Medley initiative across schools.

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of the JCSP literacy Strategy through examining the returned reading surveys from 1st year students participating in the JCSP, by examining the implementation of the JCSP *Literacy Medley* in 16 schools and by carrying out one case study in one DEIS school that has implemented multiple initiatives as well as taken part in CPD provided by the JCSP support service on a school wide approach to literacy. The methodology will be mixed methods including surveys, interviews, focus groups observations as well as examination of the information returned using the JCSP on line initiative evaluation.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been chosen because of your role as a school/teacher/librarian/ Principal/ Deputy Principal/ learning support/ Special Education Needs teacher/Guidance teacher involved in the implementation of the JCSP literacy strategy.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in an interview in person or over the phone / in a focus group discussion and you may be asked to complete a questionnaire.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

In taking part in this research you will have an opportunity to articulate your views on literacy education in Ireland and the possible future shape of the JCSP literacy strategy as well as contributing your views on the *Literacy Medley* specifically and how it should be reviewed for future implementation.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and names of individuals or any schools will not be divulged at any point and every effort will be used to ensure confidentiality, privacy

and anonymity in the collection, storage and publication of research material. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

What should I do if I want to take part?

You will be asked to participate in an interview in person or over the phone / in a focus group discussion and you may be asked to complete a questionnaire. You will be asked to contribute your views on the implementation of the JCSP literacy strategy.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research is being conducted as part of the research programme within the JCSP support service and is also being conducted as part of the ED. D programme in NUI Maynooth. The results of the research will be used as part of the thesis for the ED D. and will be published as part of the research reports within the JCSP support service and, as the study is being part funded by the teaching council, the study will also be published in part by the Teaching Council.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting the study as a member of the JCSP support service and as a student of the education Department of NUI Maynooth. Additionally the study is being part funded by the Teaching Council.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by NUI Maynooth.

Contact for Further Information

Aideen Cassidy
JCSP Support Service
jcspaideen@gmail.com Mobile 087 2333839

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

Date

January 2010

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Aideen Cassidy as part of the ED. D programme in NUI Maynooth and the research programme for the JCSP Literacy Strategy .

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I was informed that the school may withdraw consent at any time by advising Aideen Cassidy.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date _____

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Aideen Cassidy as part of the ED. D programme in NUI Maynooth.

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the course project paper to come from this research. Quotations will / will not be kept anonymous. I do/do not give permission for my identity to be revealed in research reports.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the student researcher.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Interviewer Name: _____

Interviewer Signature: _____

Date

Addressee

Dear xxxxxxxxxxxx

This letter is to give you information in the hope that you will agree for your school to participate in a study for a project as part of my Ed D Programme in the Education Department NUI Maynooth. This study will inform my project on the JCSP Literacy Strategy.

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of the JCSP literacy Strategy through examining the returned reading surveys from 1st year students participating in the JCSP, by examining the implementation of the JCSP *Literacy Medley* in 34 schools and by carrying out two case study in two DEIS schools that have implemented multiple initiatives as well as taken part in CPD provided by the JCSP support service on a school wide approach to literacy. The methodology will be mixed methods including surveys, interviews, focus groups observations as well as examination of the information returned using the JCSP on line initiative evaluation.

The research is being conducted as part of the research programme within the JCSP support service and is also being conducted as part of the ED. D programme in NUI Maynooth. The results of the research will be used as part of the thesis for the ED D. and will be published as part of the research reports within the JCSP support service and as the study is being part funded by the teaching council the study will also be published in part by the Teaching Council.

I am requesting that I carry out the case study aspect of my study on xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx. The case study will outline the input the JCSP support service has in your school regarding the literacy work in your school from an outline of the initiatives that the school has implemented over the years, the CPD that the support service has provided and an analysis of the feedback from teachers in your school about these inputs. It is also hoped to interview teachers in your school and individual consent will be sought from each teacher in this regard.

The discussions that will take place with teachers will be so that I can:

- Gain knowledge of the strategies and methodologies that are successfully in place in the school
- Gain knowledge of what strategies and methodologies that are least effective
- gain knowledge of the plans that are in place in the school for further enhancement of your literacy work with the students
- to gain knowledge of the impact of the literacy work on the student learning.
- I also hope to learn more about how the JCSP literacy strategy should be developed to best meet the needs of schools.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

A small number of interviews will be requested that will last approximately 20 to 30 minutes in person or over the phone / in a focus group discussion. Any teacher may decide not to participate or answer any of the interview questions if they wish. You may also decide to withdraw from this study at any time by advising me of same. I may ask for clarification of some points some time after the interview, but you or any teacher will not be obliged in any way to clarify or participate further.

You will be asked to contribute your views on the implementation of the JCSP literacy strategy if you so wish. In taking part in this research you will have an opportunity to articulate your views on literacy education in Ireland and the possible future shape of the JCSP literacy strategy as well as contributing your views on the *Literacy Medley* specifically and how it should be reviewed for future implementation.

If you request, the information you provide can be considered confidential, except that, with your permission, anonymised quotes may be used. If you request confidentiality, beyond anonymised quotes, information you provide will be treated only as a source of background research, alongside book and web-based research [and interviews with others].

Every effort will be made to ensure that the school is not identifiable and teacher names or any other personal identifying information will not appear in the report/thesis resulting from this study.

All information collected will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and names of individuals or any schools will not be divulged at any point and every effort will be used to ensure confidentiality and privacy in the collection, storage and publication of research material. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of ten years after the completion of a research project.

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study (unless you mention issues of illegality).

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information please do not hesitate to ask.

Looking forward to your reply and do hope that you agree to allowing St Michael's participate in this important study.

Yours Sincerely,

Aideen Cassidy

087 2333839

jcspaideen@gmail.com

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Aideen Cassidy as part of the ED. D programme in NUI Maynooth and the research programme for the JCSP Literacy Strategy .

I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I was informed that the school may withdraw consent at any time by advising Aideen Cassidy.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree to participate in this study.

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date _____

CONSENT FORM

Full title of Project: *Investigating the impact of the JCSP literacy and numeracy Strategy*

Name, position and contact address of Researcher:

Aideen Cassidy National Co-ordinator JCSP Curriculum Development Unit Captain's Road Crumlin

Dublin 12 jcspaideen@gmail.com

Please initial box

2. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please tick x

- | | Yes | No |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4. I agree to the interview being filmed | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree to the film being used at PDST / JCSP in-service and being put as a training video on the website | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I agree to the use of quotes in publications | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 28: Background to the Junior Certificate School Programme

The Early School –Leavers Project (ESLP) was established in 1979 as part of the European Community Action Programme ‘Transition from Education to working Life’. It was based in the CDVEC Curriculum Development Unit Trinity College Dublin. The brief given to the project team was to identify educational dropouts and to design, implement and evaluate a curriculum suitable to the needs of the students. The development of the ESLP can be divided into three stages

A feasibility stage (1979 – 1980)

A consolidation stage (1980 –1981)

Implementation stage (1981-1982).

At that point, in the late 1970s, up to 60 per cent failed to complete the junior cycle in some Dublin inner city schools. The aims of the programme were to encourage students to get the most out of their schooling by providing a course, which would be stimulating and directed to their needs. To prepare students for the world of work and adult responsibility and to provide them with a record of achievement. The team also concerned themselves with those students who left school at fifteen and who would benefit from further educational provision.

Early School Leavers

The feasibility year was used to explore possible channels for the development of school-based approaches to the problem of early school leaving. Some limited interventions were piloted in schools. More important, however, than the individual interventions however was the information and experience gathered by the project team in discussing and working out with teachers suitable strategies for an integrated approach to the students. It was out of this process of dialogue that the Student Profile System emerged. The Student Profile System was developed to meet the particular needs of that group of students who leave school with, at best, a poor examination certificate and a vague school reference, but more commonly with nothing at all. The proposed scheme aimed to ensure that every student on leaving school would be entitled to a positive record of his or her talents and achievement. It further aided that the mechanism for this process would, in its own right, develop and reinforce those skills possessed by the students which were not encouraged to manifest themselves in the regular Junior Cycle programme. Thus from the start, it was seen as particularly important that confidence and competences in personal, social and vocational

skills be nurtured. The school year 1980 – 81 was used to test a scheme in the field and the results were such as to encourage a more refined and integrated approach in the following year.

Schools offered different programmes to their student as appropriate but common to all was the team of teachers working with a coordinator with high input in terms of commitment focusing on basic skills and personal and social development highlighted by the student Profiling system. The student profiling system was in operation in a network of six schools in Dublin since 1980. The summer of 1982 saw the first cohort presented with Junior Cycle School Certificates. The scheme was changed and adapted in the light of teacher reactions but the core remains the same since this first profiling system.

The profile system aimed to

- ❖ provide valid recognition of every student's performance achievements and progress through their years in schooling
- ❖ provide parents with a more complete and accurate picture of their child's progress and achievement in school
- ❖ provide outside agencies, employers, trainers and educational institutions with meaningful, accurate and as far as possible, objective profile of the early school leaver.
- ❖ encourage students to develop positive attributes, to recognise areas of talent within themselves and to appreciate the worth of certain behavioural attitudinal and personal features as well as curricular performance.
- ❖ emphasise the importance of basic communication and numerical skills.

At this stage the profile comprised three sections:

- ✓ basic skills
- ✓ general competencies and
- ✓ personal achievement.

Performance was recorded three times a year.

The final student profile was a systematically compiled document which aimed to provide the reader with as accurate and rounded picture of a particular student, based on observations over a period of time and referring to a wide range of qualities, not solely academic skills.

The following areas were profiled in the original profiling system:

Communication studies

Reading

Written presentation

Oral Expression

Use of numbers

Use of graphs maps etc

Personal and vocational development

Working with others

Working alone

Punctuality

Reliability

Perseverance

Initiative

Practical skills

Listening and following instructions

Handling equipment

Physical coordination

Activities and personal achievements were also listed separately.

Student was awarded a mark between 1 –10 for each areas of competence. One being the highest mark. Certificates of participation was also awarded.

This student profiling system was introduced in six Dublin schools. The procedures were developed following a period of consultation with teachers along with three general meetings in 1980 moderated by the Curriculum Development Unit. The final format was also influenced by the recommendations of the ICE report, Department of Education 1975, and

the experiences of the CDVEC pre-employment courses coordinated by the Curriculum Development Unit where students were awarded a folder.

Six schools began the process namely

- ✓ Caritas Secondary School Ballyfermot
- ✓ Liberties Vocational School
- ✓ Marino Vocational School
- ✓ Rosary College Crumlin
- ✓ Scoil Íde Finglas
- ✓ Vocational School Parnell Square.

A series of meetings took place and at this early stage there were six points of profiling during the year and a framework for feedback to students in each participating school was being explored as well as a form of student self-assessment Facilitating time for co-ordination and for teachers to profile however was an issue.

Dublin Inner City Education Project 1986

The Dublin Inner City Education Project built on the learnings of the ESLP 1979 to 1982 with the work maintained by the Curriculum Development Unit's Junior Cycle Development Programme and DICE 1983.

The programme was founded on 2 premises:

Each student has the right to expect that on leaving school at the age of 15 or more he or she will have mastered the basic skills and competences necessary to cope adequately with the demands of adult life.

Each has a right on leaving school to a record of his or her positive achievements while in school and accordingly that school programmes should consciously elicit, encourage and recognise those specific talents and achievements latent in each individual'. 1990 P. 2 *Junior Cycle school Certificate Course* Dublin Inner City Education Project Curriculum Development Unit.

There were three types of school programmes to choose from

- ✓ Non examination

- ✓ Limited exam
- ✓ Intervention with normal exam which would incorporate a number of significant interventions.

Each school would offer a unique programme while all had three common elements. Each school offered a

- ✓ Communication programme that reinforced basic skills and had an emphasis on practical skills and developed a familiarity with basics technology.
- ✓ Combinations of the following subjects were offered: English, Gaeilge humanities, maths, social maths, home economics, art, media studies, and Irish Studies.
- ✓ Personal and Social development was emphasised in each school.
- ✓ CDVEC CDU Social and Health programme or other such guidance and counselling
- ✓ Religion civics humanities science home economics Physical Education
Practical Project Programme
 - ✓ Module activity based on as much out of school as possible subjects include
 - ✓ Wood metal art home economics science crafts and horticulture.
- ✓ Enrichment programme
Drama music Irish studies non-exam science sports video

Each student received a

- ✓ Certificate of participation
- ✓ A concise student profile
- ✓ Details of activities engaged in by the student and a note on any personal achievements recorded by the school
- ✓ An explanatory note on the student profiling system
- ✓ The folder would be open ended in order to allow inclusion of further documents as deemed appropriate by the school.

Profiling 1986

The profiling system was adapted following consultations with teachers and 'listening', 'following instructions' and 'perseverance' was removed and 'attendance' added to the student profile system. At this point the students were awarded a mark between one to ten being the highest one could be awarded in an area of competency.

Manual dexterity and physical coordination were moved to the practical skills section under dexterity and coordination.

Junior Cycle School Certificate April 1987

This new programme was still part of DICE, which was one of a number of EEC transition projects.

A bank of statements for the basic skills section of the student profile system was developed between 1986 and 1987. Ten statements were written for each of the six skills areas. Each statement was worded to summarise the students' ability up to the point of the scale reached. The statements were framed from an agreed list of objectives. In the personal and social skills area there were five statements given in each skill area. Now, for the first time, the students were awarded a statement rather than a grade in the final profile. This system known in schools as the 'Yellow Card' though modified on foot of ongoing consultations with teachers over the years remained in place up to 1996. Between 1987 and 1996 the number of schools continued to grow despite the lack of funding for the programme. Teachers recognised the value of such a profiling system and although were given no time allocation or resources continued to implement the programme in their own time.

Workshops for school co-ordinators in 1993 and 1994 highlighted some problems of the profiling system where, although easily administered there were problems in how the statements were worded.

Some features of the existing profile system hinder teachers in arriving at a consensus on students' level of attainment. It was also felt that there were certain assumptions about teaching and the nature of learning being made.

Statements were set out in what is considered an ascending order difficulty. These were tied to a 1-10 rating scale, which suggests that the awarding of one item indicates competence in all those, which precede it. Experience of operating the system indicates that this is not always the case. Students may demonstrate that they can perform the task, which corresponds, for example, to the number 8; but are unable to cope with those lower down on the scale.

It may not always be helpful, therefore, to assume that students acquire skills sequentially, or that competence in a domain requires acquisition of sub-skills, which follow on in an ascending order difficulty.

Statements, which describe detailed sub-skills, may have appeared to some other audiences, to be trivial or excessively simple. On the other hand these short-term targets had proved useful in motivating the students. Co-ordinators felt that it was essential to maintain the profiling system's usefulness as a process as well as a product. This was particularly emphasised in the profiling of personal and social skills where the formative element should be distinguished from the summative. Monitoring social and personal skills was seen to be an important part of the teaching process and the profile provides a framework within which students may be motivated and rewarded. It was felt therefore, that, if inappropriate, final statements of personal, skills should not appear on the final Certificate.

Following these consultations and in the context of preparing the programme for national implementation in the mid 90s, draft revised profile statements were devised.

The Programme began its national implementation on a phased basis in September 1996 with the number of schools increasing from 33 to 45 following an application procedure.

The programme was briefly called the Junior Certificate Elementary Programme. The name was to be rapidly changed on foot of representation because of its inappropriateness and was soon re titled the Junior Certificate School Programme. A draft revised profile system was examined by teachers at a series of in-service April/May 1996 and piloted in approximately six schools for May 1996 certification. The profiling system comprised eight areas English Irish, Mathematics Social political and environmental awareness, arts education, physical education, religious education and personal and social development. After Christmas 1996 there were a series of consultative meetings with groups of teachers from every subject area and they were asked to review the preliminary work of developing statements based on the Junior Certificate syllabus and how they would interpret its delivery to JCSP students. It was now a requirement that students at least followed the foundation level English maths and followed a suitable programme in Irish.

The draft profiling system was piloted in schools at that point and continues to be reviewed.