



Wellbeing Research for Education Conference 2026

“Well how? Practical wellbeing
in action across the education
continuum”

Conference Book of Abstracts
Friday June 5th 2026

Contents

Keynote Presentation 1	1
Keynote Presentation 2	2
Parallel Session 1a	2
Parallel Session 1b	5
Parallel Sessions 1c: Workshops	8
Poster Alley	9
Parallel Session 2a	17
Parallel Session 2b	19
Parallel Session 2c: Workshops	22
Wellbeing Tasters / Workshops	24
Parallel Session 3a	25
Parallel Session 3b	27
Parallel Session 3c: Workshops	31

Keynote Presentation 1

Venue: T118

Chair: Maria Varvarigou

Title	The Imperative of a Values Ecosystem for Education: Recognising and Reflecting on the Power of Our Values for Child and Teacher Wellbeing
Presenter	Professor Emer Ring (MIC)
Biography	Prof Emer Ring is Dean of Education, (Early Childhood and Teacher Education) at Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick. Emer previously worked as a primary mainstream teacher, a special education teacher, and a senior inspector with the Department of Education and Skills. Prior to her role as Dean, Emer was Head of Department of Reflective Pedagogy and Early Childhood Studies at MIC. Emer's research interests include education law; inclusion; early childhood; child voice; autism; play and pedagogy and she has researched and published widely in these areas. Emer's most recent publications include Special Education in an Independent Ireland 1922-2022: Insights from a Journey Through the Century, for the National Council for Special Education; an Academic Review Paper for the Purposes of the Review of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2024 Review for the Department of Education and Youth and Play, Learning and Teaching in a Redeveloped Primary Curriculum for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Together with her colleague Dr Lisha O'Sullivan, Emer has co-authored <i>Play from the Inside Out: Theory, Research and Practice Perspectives</i> due for publication by Peter Lang in early 2026. Emer is also a member of the extended Steering Committee for the project, Fostering Inclusive Quality Education in Finland and in Ireland being supported by the European Commission. Emer is currently editing and contributing to a publication with colleagues across the US; Africa; Asia and Europe on realising children's rights in a global context.
Abstract	In <i>Democracy and Education</i> (1916), John Dewey reminded us that schools are microcosms of society and that education is in essence a values-laden pursuit. In suggesting a values ecosystem for education, recognising and reflecting on the power of our values for child and teacher wellbeing is presented as an imperative for our times. Drawing on a wide range of research focused on building inclusive education systems and reflecting the conference theme, "Wellbeing: Well how?", the implications for early childhood settings and schools in a value ecosystem will be explored. Emer will draw in particular on her recent involvement in the project Fostering Inclusive Quality Education in Finland and in Ireland . The project, implemented by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASNIE) and supported by the European Commission, is designed to support the Department of Education in Ireland and Finland to craft a road map that identifies key objectives and actions to promote equitable learning opportunities, improve educational outcomes and increase access to mainstream education for all. Emer will also share her insights from her involvement in a publication she is currently editing and contributing to with colleagues across the US; Africa; Asia and Europe, including Ireland, focused on realising children's rights in a global context.

Keynote Presentation 2

Venue: T118

Chair: Gerard Farrelly

Title	Supporting Wellbeing in Irish Schools: Learning from the evidence
Presenter	Professor Selina McCoy, Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College
Biography	Professor Selina McCoy leads education research at the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and is Adjunct Professor of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin. Her research, spanning 25 years, focuses on education systems, social inequality, student engagement and wellbeing, and inclusive education. She has extensive experience leading national and European research projects that inform education policy and practice.
Abstract	International and Irish studies have indicated negative trends in the mental health and wellbeing of young people over recent years. Indeed, the most recent wave of the Health Behaviour of School-Aged Children study shows that Ireland ranked 24 out of 36 countries on overall adolescent mental health. This is in stark contrast to Ireland's high rankings on adolescent academic and social skills (1st) and physical health (11th) within the study. Prevention and wellbeing promotion are increasingly prioritised, with school-based programmes highlighted as an important way of promoting youth wellbeing. However, many school-based programmes remain poorly described and there is evidence of potential risk from some programmes. This presentation discusses how school-based programmes need to be rooted in evidence and appropriately mitigate risk. International evidence-based wellbeing promotion approaches in secondary schools are informative and can provide useful guidance for Irish policy in this sphere. The presentation then considers which students are at risk of poorer wellbeing and why. It considers recent evidence on the role of school culture and ethos in supporting positive wellbeing, including research on the role of student voice and belonging in nurturing positive wellbeing, particularly for students with additional needs and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Parallel Session 1a

Venue: T206

Theme: Wellbeing Conceptualization

Chair: Margaret Nohilly

PAPER 1	
Title	Wellbeing Across the Education Continuum: Supporting Continuity from Early Childhood to Primary Education
Presenter(s)	Dr Jacinta Regan & Donna Carolan
Abstract	The transition from early childhood education to primary school represents a significant moment in children's educational journeys. Increasingly, Irish policy and curriculum frameworks emphasise the importance of supporting children's wellbeing and learning across this transition. This paper explores how wellbeing is conceptualised and enacted across the education continuum from early childhood to primary school, drawing on

	Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (GoI, 2024), the Primary Curriculum Framework (DE, 2023) and the Wellbeing specification (GoI, 2025). The paper examines how these frameworks articulate a shared vision of the child as a competent learner whose wellbeing is closely connected to relationships, active participation and meaningful learning experiences. Particular attention is given to how curriculum design and pedagogy can support continuity of experience for children as they move between settings. Research on the transition to primary school highlights that this transition involves significant changes in children’s social relationships, learning environments and expectations, and that effective transitions, characterised by strong relationships, communication between settings and recognition of children’s prior experiences, can positively support children’s wellbeing and adjustment to primary school (O’Kane, 2016; NCCA, 2018, Sloan et al., 2022). Drawing on national research (O’Kane, 2016, NCCA, 2018) and longitudinal research on children’s school experiences (Sloan et al., 2022, Smyth, 2018), the paper considers how alignment in pedagogical approaches, relational practices and learning experiences across early childhood and primary education can support children’s sense of belonging, agency and engagement. The discussion highlights the importance of collaborative practices between early years educators, primary teachers and families, alongside practical approaches such as shared transition activities and the transfer of information about children’s learning and development. The paper argues that supporting children’s wellbeing across the education continuum requires more than preparing children for school; it requires creating ‘ready schools’ that recognise and build on children’s prior experiences.
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PAPER 2	
Title	Well-Being Across the University Ecosystem: The EUniWell Model
Presenter(s)	Prof. Dr. Beatrix Busse, EUniWell Chief Development Officer
Abstract	European Universities Initiative. Now with twelve diverse member institutions across Europe, EUniWell has a unique academic focus on well-being. According to our Mission Statement, the Alliance seeks ‘to understand, improve, measure, and rebalance the Well-Being of individuals, our own community, and society as a whole.’ The EUniWell 2030 Strategy provides a common Framework for the Alliance and its member institutions to work together to become: 1. A/the Voice for Well-Being 2. A European University 3. Communities for Well-Being. These focus areas guide our common ambitions. They ensure that we pursue a science-based approach to well-being, and that we share research results among our institutions, with the broader higher education sector, and with broader society. They ensure that the way in which our institutions work and our students learn is aligned with this well-being centred vision. In this presentation, we discuss how EUniWell delivers on its well-being agenda across the university ecosystem. Examples include: the EUniWell Training Academy offering training in transversal skills; a Leadership Fellowship Scheme to provide emerging academic leaders with well-being centred skills; establishing an Alliance-wide Well-Being Quality culture through initiatives such as Well-Being Offices on campus, Mental Health

	Weeks, and alignment of Sustainable Campus initiatives; a Seed Funding Initiative for innovative cooperative well-being focused initiatives; an Open Lecture Series; and transdisciplinary, multi-institutional Thematic Arenas to identify and develop well-being academic endeavours in health, social equality, environmental change, culture and multilingualism and teacher education.
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PAPER 3	
Title	The potential and the pitfalls of pinning down a cloud: Conceptualising meaningful assessment of Wellbeing in the Redeveloped Primary Curriculum
Presenter(s)	Dr Fionnuala Tynan
Abstract	The Redeveloped Primary Curriculum has introduced Wellbeing as a curriculum area comprising PE and SPHE, which is a welcome evolution of Irish education. Wellbeing is conceptualised as both learning about wellbeing and learning for wellbeing. While all teachers are encouraged to promote the triad of teaching-learning-assessment in all subject areas, Wellbeing poses the question of how it can be meaningfully assessed. While assessment of PE and SPHE learning outcomes can be undertaken in terms of learner outcomes vis-à-vis curriculum objectives (i.e., learning about Wellbeing), this is not assessing the essence of Wellbeing because it misses the assessment of learning for Wellbeing. This presentation examines the potential and the possible pitfalls of assessing a curriculum area that is taught as much through relationships and school culture as it is about content and pedagogical approaches. It highlights possible avenues for exploration to reflect different philosophical conceptualisations of Wellbeing, and presents approaches used in other jurisdictions. It also identifies a range of challenges in assessing Wellbeing in a meaningful way and in reporting Wellbeing outcomes to parents. It suggests a range of practical strategies for educators to assess Wellbeing in both its forms: teaching about Wellbeing (curriculum) and teaching for Wellbeing (experience). While this paper centres on the Primary Curriculum, the discussion is relevant to educators at all levels of the education continuum who wish to consider the assessment of Wellbeing in a meaningful and practical way. Keywords: assessment, philosophy of wellbeing, conceptualisation of wellbeing, wellbeing strategies.

PAPER 4	
Title	Embracing Diversity Nurturing Integration Project (EDNIP) Supporting Wellbeing in Schools through Connection and Belonging
Presenter(s)	Dr. Ruth Bourke, Lisa Martin and Áine Lyne
Abstract	The Embracing Diversity Nurturing Integration Project (EDNIP) is a collaboration between five DEIS band 1 primary schools, Mary Immaculate College and stakeholder organisations. EDNIP aims to support integration and build inclusive school environments through a holistic intervention model that responds to increasing societal diversity in terms of nationality, ethnicity, culture, language and religion. Our changing society and demographics have enriched schools around the country with students from diverse backgrounds. Across the 1,020 students in the five schools participating in EDNIP, there are currently 72 nationalities, 67 languages and 16 religions. EDNIP acknowledges the role the schools can play in creating awareness and nurturing

empathy and solidarity so that all children, families and communities might live together in respect and so thrive (Pacino 2008, p. 16).

This paper presents findings from the second phase of EDNIP (2021-2024). A multiple case study approach (Stake 1995; Yin 2009, Creswell, 2014) was employed and the data is primarily qualitative in nature. Perspectives were gathered through focus groups with children, parents and school staff, surveys with school staff to evaluate CPD, interviews with principals and partner stakeholders and surveys with ITE students who supported EDNIP activity.

Findings indicate that EDNIP has resulted in an increased sense of belonging for children and families, positively impacted children's emotional wellbeing and reduced parent isolation. This paper will demonstrate that inclusive practices that value identity, language, and lived experience play a critical role in fostering wellbeing and belonging in schools and present EDNIP as a model which offers a practical and successful application of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Primary Curriculum Framework's (2023, p. 3) aspirations for schools and teachers to develop inclusive learning environments as they 'face a growing challenge to recognize and respond to rapidly changing diverse contexts'.

Parallel Session 1b

Venue: T207

Theme: Wellbeing within Curriculum

Chair: Brighid Golden

Paper 1	
Title	Spark: Igniting teacher and parent confidence and competency levels in delivering quality Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)
Presenter(s)	Seline Keating, Mags Nohilly, Gerard Farrelly and Paul Knox
Abstract	Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is widely recognised as central to promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people, yet teacher and parent confidence remain persistent barriers to its effective implementation. Research highlights the importance of engaging parents early, prior to adolescence, to support positive sexual health outcomes. Alongside schools, families play a crucial role in shaping children's developing understanding of relationships, identity, and sexuality. Contemporary conceptualisations of CSE extend beyond health-focused outcomes to include broader developmental benefits such as decision-making, self-efficacy, empathy, assertiveness, and critical thinking, as well as values of equality, respect, and tolerance. The Spark project responds to these challenges by seeking to enhance the confidence and capacity of whole-school communities to deliver meaningful and inclusive CSE. Funded under Erasmus+ and led by Dublin City University, the project brings together eight partner organisations across five European countries. It aims to develop and implement a suite of training initiatives for school leaders, teachers, preservice teachers, and parents, grounded in a collaborative, cross-national approach to knowledge exchange. This research paper presents the findings from primary school Principals in the Irish context in relation to the implementation of CSE and the resources and supports that are required to assist them in ensuring a holistic educational experience for pupils that is

shared between school and home. This is particularly significant in light of curricular reform at primary level in Ireland. These findings underpin the creation of three training modules, two micro-credential courses, a MOOC, and a comprehensive CSE resource bank. Training will be delivered to target groups and evaluated for impact, with all outputs subject to ongoing quality assurance processes.

Paper 2	
Title	Wellbeing and Global Citizenship Education: A symbiotic relationship
Presenter(s)	Dr Brigid Golden
Abstract	This paper explores the intersection between wellbeing and global citizenship in education and proposes a symbiotic relationship between the two fields. UNESCO (2015) conceptualises Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as developing learners who are empathetic, ethically responsible, and able to live together peacefully, across diversity and difference. These dispositions closely mirror widely accepted multidimensional models of wellbeing that include social connectedness, purpose, agency, and belonging, alongside mental and emotional health. Within Irish educational policy Wellbeing and GCE have been connected multiple times within Aistear, the redeveloped primary curriculum, the CSPE curriculum at Junior Cycle, and the Ceim standards for initial teacher education. Using Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, this paper outlines how GCE can inherently promote wellbeing in action, offering practical examples of GCE in action and its impact on both teacher and student wellbeing within initial teacher education (ITE). This paper draws on findings from a three-cycle self-study action research project which focused on teacher educator professional practice and identity in the context of GCE. Data sources were broad and included data collected from and with students such as surveys, focus groups, 'most significant change' stories, and evidence from coursework and in-class tasks, alongside ongoing written reflections and regular conversations with critical friends who observed sessions, provided feedback, and helped interrogate emerging findings. Findings highlight the impact which GCE can have on both teacher and student wellbeing. This paper will map the outcomes for both teacher and student against the five components of Seligman's (2012) PERMA model demonstrating how engaging in authentic GCE promoted and enabled positive emotions, engagement, relationship building, meaning making, and provided opportunities to build a sense of accomplishment.

Paper 3	
Title	Exploring Children's Wellbeing through Movement-Based Outdoor Mathematics: Insights from the Active School Walkway
Presenter(s)	Davina Fenton
Abstract	Wellbeing is recognised as a central priority within Irish education, with policy and curriculum developments emphasising holistic development. Within this context, movement-based learning and outdoor education are valuable approaches for supporting wellbeing and engagement. However, limited research has explored how such approaches are experienced by children within classroom practice, particularly in

	outdoor, curriculum-linked contexts like the Active School Walkway. This study represents one of the first empirical explorations of the Active School Walkway within an Irish primary school context. This study examines children’s experiences of outdoor Mathematics learning through the Active School Walkway initiative in an Irish primary school. Using a qualitative case study design, two second-class groups (n=48) participated in a six-week programme integrating physical activity with Mathematics lessons. Data were generated through pupil journals, drawings, focus groups and teacher reflections, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Findings highlight three interconnected dimensions of wellbeing: emotional experience, active engagement and relational interaction. Children reported enjoyment, excitement and a sense of calm associated with outdoor learning. Movement-based tasks supported engagement and participation, including pupils who typically expressed low interest in Mathematics. Peer collaboration emerged as a central feature of the learning experience, contributing to belonging, inclusion and confidence, supporting learning relationships. The study suggests that movement-integrated outdoor Mathematics can function as a holistic pedagogical approach, where wellbeing and learning are mutually reinforced. By foregrounding children’s perspectives, this research contributes to understanding how initiatives such as the Active School Walkway can support wellbeing, participation and engagement within classroom practice. The presentation will also share practical examples of the programme and child-centred methods used to capture pupil voice. Target Audience: Primary school teachers, school leaders, wellbeing coordinators, and educational researchers interested in curriculum-linked physical activity and pupil voice.
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Paper 4	
Title	Relationships and Play: Foundations for Wellbeing in the Early Years and Beyond
Presenter(s)	Lisha O’Sullivan and Emer Ring
Abstract	Aistear: the early childhood curriculum framework (NCCA 2009; GoI 2024) identifies relationships and play as key contexts through which young children develop as agentic, competent and confident learners. The Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools (DoE 2023) articulates relationships as a core principle and play and playful approaches are recognised as key elements of learning and teaching. Furthermore, there is a discernible relationship between a playful approach and the principles and key skills of the Framework for Junior Cycle (DES 2015) which also includes ‘engagement and participation’ as a core principle. These curriculum priorities, chime with research affirming the contribution of relationships and play, to wellbeing and holistic development (Melhuish 2015; Zosh et al. 2017; Ring et al. 2018; Parker, Thomsen, and Berry 2022; O’Sullivan and Ring 2026). Honouring the vision of the agentic child in our curriculum frameworks and children’s rights to have their opinions taken into account and their views respected in decision making that affects them (United Nations, 1989), the authors have been committed to adopting a playful participatory approach in their extensive research with children across early years, primary and post-primary contexts. Drawing on several research projects, this paper will explore the methodological affordances of playful participatory methods in supporting children to authentically express their views on the inclusiveness of their learning experience, using the 100 Languages articulated in the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman 2011).

Taken together, the findings from these research projects illustrate that the priority given to relationships, play and playful approaches, cross curriculum frameworks, is endorsed by children themselves. Moreover, findings suggest that when children are supported to express their views and opinions, they are capable of positively contributing to educational change at macro, meso and micro policy and practice levels.

Parallel Sessions 1c: Workshops

Venue: T205

Chair: Mary-Jo Kennedy

Title	Introducing ‘Emotion Explorers’ a whole class initiative that focuses on supporting children to understand and express emotions in healthy and constructive ways
Presenter(s)	Lauryn Boyle and Anna Leonard
Abstract	The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2025 was developed with the aim of supporting schools to embed wellbeing across the school setting. It places a key emphasis on preventative and whole-school approaches to wellbeing. In June 2023, the Department of Education and Youth launched the Counselling and Mental Health Pilots in Primary Schools. Strand 2 of the pilot saw the introduction of Education Wellbeing Practitioner into schools (EWP). Working under the supervision of NEPS psychologists, EWPs offer a range of evidence-based and evidenced informed supports to school staff, parents and pupils in line with the Department of Education and Youths Continuum of Support framework. Part of the Strand 2 menu of offerings for schools, is a NEPS developed six 40-minute psychoeducational programme called Emotion Explorers, which is based on the principles of Emotion Coaching. Emotion Coaching offers a trauma-informed relational framework that helps to build children’s emotional literacy, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills. This enables children to understand and express emotions in healthy and constructive ways. The Emotion Explorers programme focuses on supporting children to learn these skills in a fun and interactive way in the classroom. Across the six sessions, children explore the connection between their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours through engaging activities. A core element of the programme involves noticing body sensations and using body mapping to identify where different emotions are felt physically. This helps children tune into their internal signals, building self-awareness and laying the foundation for self-regulation. Another key part of the programme is the child friendly introduction to the brain. Pupils meet the Guard Dog (amygdala), Wise Owl (prefrontal cortex), and Elephant Brain (hippocampus). Through this analogy, children learn how these areas of the brain work together as a team, and how sometimes, the Guard Dog can take over. Children explore a range of self-regulation strategies to assist with bringing the Wise Owl back into action and are supported to identify the strategies that work best for them. Pupils also explore the importance of empathy, recognising other people’s feelings, and understanding other’s perspectives. This, in turn, equips pupils with the tools to strengthen relationships. It is hoped that Emotion Explorers will foster emotionally attuned, compassionate environments where all children can thrive, within the school setting and beyond.
Title	The Importance of Wellbeing in NCSE Relate
Presenter(s)	Sharon Healy

Abstract	This interactive workshop explores the central role of wellbeing within NCSE Relate, highlighting its significance for staff and students through the Relate principle, 'Staff and Student Wellbeing'. Working in educational environments requires the unique role of being a co-regulator. This valuable role is dependent on good staff wellbeing and regulation. Sustaining personal and professional wellbeing is therefore essential not only for individual resilience, but also for ethical, reflective, and effective practice. The workshop will situate wellbeing as a core professional competency rather than an optional add-on, drawing on the values and ethos underpinning NCSE Relate. Participants will be invited to consider how wellbeing influences decision-making, collaboration, boundaries, and capacity to engage meaningfully with others. Attention will be given to both individual and systemic factors that support or hinder wellbeing in professional roles, recognising the shared responsibility between practitioners, teams, and organisations. Through guided reflection, small-group discussion, and practical activities, participants will explore common wellbeing challenges experienced within education contexts, alongside protective factors that foster sustainability and balance. The workshop will also introduce practical, evidence-informed strategies that can be integrated into everyday work, including reflective practice, peer support, regulation exercises, and self-compassion approaches. Participants will leave with an enhanced understanding of how prioritising wellbeing within NCSE Relate contributes to professional effectiveness, role satisfaction, and positive outcomes for the educational communities served. The workshop aims to create a supportive, reflective space where wellbeing is acknowledged as both a personal and collective priority, aligning with the broader goals of the MIC Wellbeing Conference.
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Poster Alley

Venue: An tSlí

Poster 1	
Title	Does Animal Assisted Pedagogy involving Canines facilitate the Establishment of Inclusive Learning Environments for Autistic Children?
Presenter(s)	Sinead Morgan
Abstract	Article 24 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) (UN 2006) explicitly recognises the right of persons not to be excluded from the general education system. However, challenges remain in creating a system where all children meaningfully belong (Ring 2024). In this context, animal assisted education (AAE), involving canines, presents possibilities to support inclusion for autistic children in schools (Morgan 2024). To address the gap in the research currently available, this study investigates if animal assisted pedagogy (AAP) involving canines facilitates the establishment of inclusive learning environments for autistic children. The experiences of autistic children aged between 4 to 12 years in two primary schools in Ireland together with teachers and canine handlers are considered.
Poster 2	
Title	Wellbeing in the Early Years: Exploring Young Children's Perspectives of Love Using the Mosaic Approach
Presenter(s)	Delfina D'Amore

Abstract	This presentation argues that practical wellbeing in ECE begins with attuned listening and responsive pedagogy. Understanding what children love and why provides educators with meaningful insight into children's emotional worlds, with significant implications for how wellbeing is nurtured and sustained in early years settings. By recognising children as active meaning-makers, educators can foster emotionally supportive environments that nurture social competence and a sense of belonging (Denham et al., 2007). In response to the conference theme "Well how? Practical wellbeing in action across the education continuum," this presentation offers a grounded, child-centred model of wellbeing that is both theoretically informed and practically relevant for early years educators, student teachers, and researchers seeking to translate wellbeing theory into meaningful, everyday practice.
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Poster 3	
Title	Neart: Building Strength and Belonging through a Whole-School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing
Presenter(s)	Tara Mulhern, Siobhán McGrory, Dr Siobhán O'Brien, Dr Kim Lombard, Deirdre McHugh, Sarah McGillicuddy and Dr Jeff Moore
Abstract	Over recent decades, evidence shows sustained decline in youth mental health, reflected in rising rates of psychological distress, self-harm, depression, and suicide among adolescents and emerging adults (McGorry et al., 2024). Prevention and mental health promotion are increasingly prioritised and school-based programmes have been consistently highlighted as an optimal way of promoting and supporting youth mental health (Darling et al., 2021). However, despite increased attention on prevention, many school-based programmes remain poorly described and evaluated.

Poster 4	
Title	The validation of an assessment tool to recognise early signs of burnout in the workplace.
Presenter(s)	Alan Dovey
Abstract	Humanitarian employees are routinely exposed to high-pressure and potentially hazardous environments that can contribute to elevated levels of psychological distress, burnout, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Burnout is increasingly recognised in services where human connection is needed such as teaching and emergency services. Contrary to what people think, the first stage of burnout is flourishing, where people are engaged, feeling flow and getting high reward from their job. Then the flourishing starts to diminish into the burnout spiral. This assessment tool aims to identify that crucial stage from flourishing to burnout and Dr Swift and Alan Dovey have now published their assessment tool in Occupational Health at Work 2026 (Swift, M and Dovey, A) and it is being used in police services and NHS services.

Poster 5	
Title	Embedding skills-based Mental Health Promotion in Irish primary schools with the A Lust for Life Primary Schools Programme
Presenter(s)	Ciara O'Connor

Abstract	Across Europe and globally, emotional distress among children and young people is increasing, with earlier onset of anxiety, self-harm and other mental health challenges. In Ireland, policy increasingly recognises the importance of whole-school wellbeing and early intervention, yet funding and implementation remain weighted toward downstream services. Children as young as four and five are already navigating emotional dysregulation, peer conflict, social comparison and digital exposure, often without structured, universal mental health skill-building embedded in their school experience. This presentation draws on the practice-based learning of A Lust for Life, a national youth mental health charity delivering a universal, teacher-led primary school programme that reaches over 80,000 pupils annually. Beginning in Junior Infants, the programme supports emotional literacy, empathy, help-seeking, resilience and self-awareness through developmentally appropriate classroom lessons and activities. The presentation will share implementation learnings from national delivery at scale, demonstrate why early prevention is both developmentally appropriate and systemically necessary, and highlight the policy and funding shifts needed to rebalance youth mental health systems toward prevention. The programme is delivered by classroom teachers using structured lesson plans aligned with SPHE and whole-school wellbeing frameworks. A digitally supported, low-burden model enables scale while maintaining quality, with ongoing feedback from teachers, school leaders and pupils informing continuous improvement. Key practice insights include strong engagement from children aged four to five with emotional language and self-expression, reduced stigma through universal classroom delivery, and increased teacher confidence when supported by structured, age-appropriate materials. Early skill-building also contributes to a stronger school climate and may help reduce escalation of difficulties later in adolescence. The presentation argues that prevention is foundational infrastructure in education. Embedding structured, skills-based mental health education from age four is feasible, scalable and essential to lifelong wellbeing.
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Poster 6	
Title	Just Like Me and Us: Disability identity as wellbeing in action
Presenter(s)	Adam Stapleton
Abstract	Identity and self-perception are important aspect of wellbeing across the lifespan, however research in identity often excludes people with disabilities, especially children with disabilities. Disability identity is an important aspect of the identity profile of adults and children with disabilities, with a strong disability identity being associated with a wide variety of positive developmental outcomes. This research aimed to explore disability identity in young children with Williams Syndrome (WS), a rare neurodevelopmental condition. Secondary Data Analysis was conducted on data arising from group facilitated discussions using puppetry and story facilitation methods. Eight children with WS (aged 5-10) took part in the discussions about their perception of WS. Braun and Clarke's method of Reflexive Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the data and four themes were generated abductively. The findings suggest that children with WS identify closely with their disability and that this identity is significantly influenced by their social world, including a family acceptance of their condition and meeting others with WS. The negotiation of this identity is individualised, constant, and multifaceted. Awareness of disability identity among this cohort can be enabling and enhance wellbeing through a sense of belonging to the disability group. Practical strategies for supporting the wellbeing of children with WS are also proposed. These findings may also offer insights into disability identity among a wider cohort of children with disabilities. The paper is

aimed at primary-school teachers and those working with children with a disability, although it has relevance for practitioners in early-years settings and for those teaching at Junior Cycle of post-primary school.

Poster 7

Title **From Wellbeing to Trauma Informed Practice: Supporting Learners and Teachers through a Whole School Approach**

Presenter(s) Ciara Tyrrell

Abstract The proposed poster is based on research conducted by Ciara Tyrrell for the MA in Family support at University of Galway in relation to trauma informed schools with a focus on children's lived experience of domestic abuse. Schools are increasingly expected to respond to complex wellbeing needs linked to trauma, adversity, and family stress, including domestic violence and abuse. For many children and young people, school represents the most consistent and accessible setting for support. However, educators frequently report feeling under prepared to recognise and respond to trauma related behaviours and learning difficulties, often relying on traditional behaviour management approaches that may unintentionally increase stress and exclusion. The research explores how a Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) approach, aligned with Ireland's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice and the Continuum of Support, can enhance learning, inclusion, and wellbeing for both pupils and staff. Drawing on a scoping review of Irish and international literature alongside qualitative interviews with experts in education and trauma, the poster explores how trauma impacts children's neurobiological development, emotional regulation, and capacity to learn. Particular attention is given to domestic violence and abuse as a form of trauma that may present in diverse and often hidden ways in classrooms, including withdrawal, perfectionism, disengagement, and behavioural dysregulation. The research positions trauma informed practice not as an additional programme, but as a relational and pedagogical lens that strengthens existing wellbeing structures. It demonstrates how trauma informed principles such as safety, predictability, connection, and collaboration can be embedded across universal, targeted, and intensive levels of support, leading to improved engagement, reduced behavioural escalation, and more inclusive school cultures. The research also addresses teacher wellbeing, highlighting evidence that trauma informed approaches reduce stress, enhance professional confidence, and support staff sustainability when implemented at a whole school level. Practical examples of classroom practice, school self-evaluation, and leadership approaches will be shared, linking theory to everyday realities in Irish schools. This session is relevant to teachers, school leaders, student teachers, and wellbeing professionals. It argues that trauma informed education represents a natural and necessary progression of wellbeing practice, enabling schools to become environments where all learners feel safe enough to learn and all educators feel supported enough to teach well.

Poster 8

Title **The impact of an interprofessional Mental Health First Aid training in a private healthcare organisation: A Qualitative study**

Presenter(s) Zoe McCormack

Abstract	Introduction: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an evidence-based early intervention programme designed to improve mental health literacy and equip individuals with practical skills to support others experiencing mental health challenges. While MHFA has been widely implemented across diverse populations, limited research has explored its impact within interprofessional healthcare settings, particularly regarding its influence on participants' own wellbeing and their capacity to support patients, colleagues, and personal networks. This study evaluates the impact of interprofessional MHFA training on patient-facing healthcare staff, focusing on mental health literacy, perceived confidence, and application of skills across professional and personal contexts. Methods: An exploratory single-site case study design was employed, involving patient-facing staff across Vhi Health and Wellbeing service lines. Data were collected using three qualitative approaches: (1) post-training focus groups, (2) longitudinal follow-up interviews conducted three months after training, and (3) retrospective interviews with prior MHFA participants. Data were analysed thematically to identify key patterns in participant experiences. Results: Four interrelated themes were identified. Mental health presentations were perceived as inherently uncertain and high-stakes, with ambiguity in assessment, communication, and responsibility. Participants described emotional labour pre-training, including anxiety about managing risk, concerns regarding patient safety, and structural constraints such as time pressure and unclear escalation pathways. Psychologically safe learning environments enabled engagement with challenging content and supported open reflection through shared experience and peer validation. ALGEE action plan functioned as a cognitive and relational scaffold, structuring responses to mental health presentations. This reduced uncertainty, legitimised direct questioning, clarified role boundaries, and redistributed responsibility, with increased confidence emerging as an outcome. Discussion: MHFA training appears to reshape how HCPs manage uncertainty and emotional labour. By providing structured scaffolding within psychologically safe environments, it supports decision-making and reduces individual burden, with implications for workforce wellbeing and patient care.
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Poster 9 Title Presenter(s) Abstract	Well how? Enacting wellbeing through arts-based intergenerational learning Maria Varvarigou, Maeve Liston and Patricia O'Sullivan There is increasing recognition that engagement with the arts supports wellbeing, social connectedness, and lifelong learning. Addressing the conference theme 'Well how?', this poster demonstrates how arts-based, intergenerational learning can be enacted in practice to enhance wellbeing across the education continuum. The study explores a half-day conference and workshop at MIC that integrated academic scholarship, creative practice, and collaborative reflective engagement. Participants included MIC students, older adults from the Limerick community, and academic and professional staff. Guided by a constructivist paradigm and design-based research methodology, data were generated through a visual map created by a live illustrator, and participants feedback. Findings show that intergenerational arts engagement fostered cognitive, emotional, and creative growth, while strengthening participants' sense of purpose, resilience, and connection. The project illustrates how structured opportunities for shared creativity, dialogue, and reflection, can translate wellbeing principles into practice. We offer
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practical recommendations for designing intergenerational arts-based initiatives that meaningfully support wellbeing across educational contexts.

Poster 10	
Title	Silent Struggles: Exploring Teacher Awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences in DEIS Primary Schools and their Perception of the Impact on Teaching, Pupil Learning and Wellbeing
Presenter(s)	Adam Ashraf
Abstract	The poster provides an overview of my Masters Dissertation which explored teacher awareness and understanding of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) primary schools in Ireland and examined teachers' perceptions of how these experiences influence teaching, pupil learning and wellbeing. ACEs refer to potentially traumatic events occurring during childhood, including abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction, which research has shown can significantly affect children's cognitive, emotional, and educational development (Felitti et al. 1998). While international literature increasingly emphasises trauma-informed approaches within education, limited research exists on how Irish primary teachers, particularly those working in disadvantaged contexts, understand and respond to childhood adversity. Using a qualitative approach, this study investigated the perspectives and experiences of teachers and school leaders working within DEIS primary schools. The research explored participants' levels of awareness of ACEs, their confidence in identifying and supporting pupils affected by adversity, and the challenges they encounter in responding to these complex needs. It also examined teachers' views regarding the professional supports and training required to strengthen trauma-informed practices in schools.
Poster 11	
Title	Life Skill Development in Primary Physical Education (PE): Opportunities and Challenges
Presenter(s)	Oisín Ryan
Abstract	Physical education (PE) is an opportunity for development of life skills (Opstoel et al., 2020) but guidance on how to effectively support this learning in primary PE remains limited. Therefore, the broad objectives of this study were to explore what can be learned from primary school teachers' current experiences of life skills development in PE? This qualitative research involved semi-structured interviews (averaging 50 minutes) with 13 primary teachers to learn from their current experiences of life skills teaching in PE. A reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) of interview transcripts generated three themes: (1) Primary PE as a unique context for life skills development; (2) Developing life skills in primary PE using an implicit-explicit continuum; and (3) Contextual constraints shaping life skills development practice in primary PE. The findings provide insight into how teachers value life skills as key prerequisites for children to progress through second and third level education as well as their working careers; why they consider primary PE a unique context for life skills development in comparison to other curriculum subjects due to its interactive, embodied, and social nature; and how they caution that supports are needed for effective implementation of life skills in primary PE. Findings provide practical direction on areas where additional support is needed to ensure that teachers can capitalise on opportunities for life skills development in PE.

Poster 12 Title Presenter(s) Abstract	Paradoxical Solutions for distress in the classroom Marian Bruen Student distress in our primary schools is a real and often daily challenge for educators. Conventional responses often focus on reducing or eliminating discomfort; however, these approaches can unintentionally reinforce avoidance and anxiety and as our children grow, they become very proficient at hiding their emotions. Drawing on the invaluable wisdom of ‘Focusing’, this poster explores the concept of paradoxical responses to distress in the classroom. The project examines practical and simple applications of Eugene Gendlin’s technique of ‘Focusing’ to help students engage relationally with their emotional distress in our classrooms. These include the educator completely stepping back and not needing to ‘solve’ their pupils’ challenges. Instead, the teacher is required to simply be present for the child, holding a safe space for gentle exploration. In those moments of distress, the teacher can learn how to listen with a deep curiosity, offering acceptance and encouraging the child to ‘be with’ their own feelings of distress. The poster presents examples from teaching practice alongside relevant research. It highlights how small shifts in educator responses can reduce escalation of distress while supporting and ultimately, teaching the child how to self-manage his/her own emotional experiences and most importantly, entrusting the child with the responsibility of finding his/her own next right action by listening to their own inner knowing. The aim is to offer practical insights for educators seeking constructive, simple ways to respond to student distress while also providing children with lifelong skills to navigate their own emotional journey through life. As educators we can show our children how to listen to their body and mind with awareness and curiosity and thus, become confident enough to remain with intense emotions, knowing that they have the necessary skills to fully experience distress and still prevail. This is what our children need most today.
Poster 13 Title Presenter(s) Abstract	An interpretivist study on how peers influence the mathematical identity and self-concept of post-primary students Marilyn O’Riordan Research has consistently demonstrated that parents, teachers, and curriculum structures influence students’ attitudes towards mathematics (Clerkin & Gilligan, 2018; Quaye & Pomeroy, 2021). Comparatively little attention has been paid to the role of peer interactions in shaping students’ mathematical identities and self-concept as the curriculum is enacted in Irish classrooms. Amid new Senior Cycle Redevelopment, exploring peer influences on mathematical identity becomes imperative as we move towards a more student-centred learning approach. The aim of this study is to capture student voice on how peers interact during mathematical tasks and discussions, how these interactions influence students’ mathematical identities and self-concept, and how peer discourse shapes students’ confidence and belonging in mathematics classrooms. This study contributes to the conference’s critical exploration of wellbeing by examining how students’ attitudes towards mathematics are shaped within their social contexts, thereby questioning what it truly means to support learners’ wellbeing in everyday educational practice. Adopting a qualitative ethnographic case study approach, underpinned by an interpretivist-pragmatic stance, this study will be conducted in an Irish post-primary school with eight focal students aged 12-14 years. Data will be collected through classroom observations capturing peer interactions, focus groups including student engagement on mathematical tasks, and semi-structured individual

interviews exploring students' mathematical experiences and identities. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) informs the analysis of belonging, comparison, and group positioning alongside Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis with elements of Narrative Inquiry.

Poster 14

Title

One-to-One Skills Building Intervention

Presenter(s)

Sarah Delea

Abstract

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2025 places a strong emphasis on preventative, whole-school approaches to supporting wellbeing. In June 2023, the Department of Education and Youth introduced the Counselling and Mental Health Pilots in Primary Schools to further enhance wellbeing provision within schools. As part of this pilot initiative, Education Wellbeing Teams were established in four regions across the country: Dublin 7, Dublin 16, Carlow and Cork. Each team consists of Education Wellbeing Practitioners (EWPs) who work under the supervision of NEPS psychologists to deliver a range of evidence informed supports and programmes to school staff, parents and pupils, aligned with the Department of Education and Youth's Continuum of Support framework. As part of their work in schools, EWPs provide one to one, skills building sessions for children who are experiencing mild or emerging wellbeing needs. This intervention is designed to offer early, targeted support within the school setting, with the aim of strengthening resilience by equipping children with key psychoeducational skills.

The 6-week intervention adopts a cognitive behavioural-informed framework, equipping children with practical strategies to recognise and manage body responses, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. Pupils are encouraged to embed regulation strategies between weekly sessions. Each session is delivered individually, typically lasting up to 30 minutes, once a week for 6 weeks, and takes place in a calm, supportive space during the school day to ensure accessibility and minimal disruption to learning.

The structure and content of the sessions include goal setting, skills development (such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, and coping strategies), and reflective practice. The sessions are child-centred and are tailored to individual needs and developmental stages. Feedback from pupils, parents and teachers indicate positive engagement from participants, with improvements noted in emotional awareness, confidence, and self-regulation. The initiative demonstrates the value of early intervention and the role of school-based practitioners in supporting pupil wellbeing through brief, evidence-informed approaches.

Poster 15

Title

Scaffolding Evidence-Informed Practice for Wellbeing in Education Settings: The T-REX Digital Badge in Wellbeing

Presenter(s)

Tonya Pell, Barbara Mulvihill, Marek McGann, Karen Orr, Marie Ryan and Jennifer McMahon

Abstract

The "research practice gap" is a perennial challenge for effective integration of insights from research into real-world actions in teaching and education. Where researchers perceive the gap as a difficulty of implementation (research needs to be communicated

and applied more effectively), practitioners perceive it as research outcomes being ill-suited for practical settings. In this presentation we introduce a programme of professional learning in wellbeing – the T-REX Digital Badge - that supports educational practitioners through a process of reflective practice and evidence evaluation, to form concrete, evidence-informed action plans for a wellbeing intervention in their own professional setting. The programme provides a means of closing the research-practice gap through an interim step of scaffolded reflective, evidence-informed practice. Reporting on several iterative implementations of the digital badge programme, we identify potentially effective supports by which research can be translated, contextualised, and made more effective for practising educators.

Parallel Session 2a

Venue: T206

Theme: Teaching and Learning

Chair: Gerard Farrelly

Paper 1	
Title	Learning “about” and Learning “for” Wellbeing: Unpacking the “for”
Presenter(s)	Margaret Nohilly
Abstract	The concept of wellbeing has received much attention in recent years from myriad perspectives, including education. Naturally, schools are regarded as having an influential role in developing and enhancing young people’s wellbeing, given the large proportion of time that children and young people spend in school (DES and Department of Health (DoH) 2013; 2015). Furthermore, the relationship between learning and wellbeing has become firmly established in research (Miller et al. 2013; NCCA 2017; Nohilly and Tynan 2019; Roffey 2009). In both the Junior Cycle Wellbeing guidelines in the Irish context and the recently published Wellbeing specification for primary schools, wellbeing in education is conceptualised as learning ‘about’ wellbeing and learning ‘for’ wellbeing (NCCA 2021; Department of Education and Youth, 2025). While learning ‘about’ wellbeing focuses on the learning that takes place through curriculum, learning ‘for’ wellbeing occurs when students’ experience of school life and their interactions both within and beyond the classroom are respectful and caring (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 2021). This paper explores the concept of learning ‘for’ wellbeing within education. While there is a very strong focus on learning ‘for’ wellbeing in the vision and competencies of the primary school curriculum, this paper argues for an increased emphasis in policy and practice on learning ‘for’ wellbeing in education, in parallel with learning ‘about’ wellbeing. In line with the theme of this conference, practical strategies for ‘how’ learning ‘for’ wellbeing becomes integral to pupil experience are proposed. These include a focus on the culture and climate of the school and classroom and the importance of ensuring each pupil experiences a sense of belonging in school.
Paper 2	
Title	Restorative Practices in Primary Physical Education: Exploring one teacher’s experiences of Wellbeing promotion in action

Presenter(s)	Grainne Regan, Richard Bowles and Michelle Dillon
Abstract	This paper explores the enactment of restorative practices (RP) within primary physical education (PE), focusing on one teacher's lived experiences of promoting wellbeing through restorative approaches. Through an autoethnographic self-study conducted in a DEIS1 school, Grainne, the teacher and lead researcher, reflects on her two-year journey of wellbeing promotion in which she assumed the role of Special Education Teacher, working closely with assigned class groups through both in-class support and individual withdrawal, and the sole deliverer of PE to these groups. Focusing on 3rd and 6th class children across separate academic years, this presentation examines how restorative approaches were embedded in everyday practice through the intentional use of restorative language, conversations, and meetings. It critically considers the teachers' unique experiences and both the possibilities and challenges of implementing RP within PE to promote child wellbeing.

Paper 3	
Title	Subjective Wellbeing and Educational Experience of Irish Traveller Children in Primary Schools: From Research to Practice
Presenter(s)	Sarah Halligan
Abstract	This paper explores the key challenges influencing the subjective wellbeing and educational experiences of Irish Traveller children in primary school settings, with a focus on translating research into practical strategies for educators. Grounded in a qualitative study conducted in a DEIS primary school with a significant Traveller pupil population, the research draws on seven semi-structured teacher interviews and a focus group with Traveller pupils to provide rich, context-sensitive insights.

Paper 4	
Title	Well how? Understanding teacher roles in supporting the wellbeing of children born preterm: Insights from a systematic review
Presenter(s)	Annette Cregan
Abstract	This paper responds to the conference theme, 'Well how?', by examining the role of teachers in supporting the wellbeing of children born preterm, a group of learners whose needs are often not explicitly recognised within educational discourse. Children born preterm are at increased risk of a range of developmental, cognitive, and socio-emotional differences which may impact their experiences of schooling. While these differences are well documented within medical and psychological literature, their translation into educational practice-and particularly into teachers' everyday decision-making-remains less visible. This paper draws on an ongoing systematic literature review which explores how teachers are positioned within research relating to children born preterm in educational settings. Preliminary screening and analysis suggest that teachers are frequently represented as informants, providing data on children's performance and behaviour, rather than as active agents in supporting learning and wellbeing. This raises important questions about

how teacher knowledge, agency, and professional learning are conceptualised within this field.

By bringing these emerging insights into dialogue with the concept of wellbeing, the paper argues for a reframing of teacher roles as central to the enactment of wellbeing in practice. It highlights the need to move beyond descriptive accounts of difficulty towards a more practice-oriented understanding of how teachers can recognise and respond to the needs of preterm learners.

Parallel Session 2b

Venue: T207

Theme: Partnerships for wellbeing

Chair: Maria Varvarigou

Paper 1

Title

Enacting Wellbeing Through Parental School Partnership

Presenter(s)

Dr Brigid Teevan

Abstract

This paper presents a research-informed, participatory methodology for engaging educators in complex and sensitive areas of wellbeing education, with a focus on pornography education in the post-primary context. Drawing on doctoral research exploring adolescents', parents', and teachers' perspectives on early adolescents' engagement with online pornography, the paper demonstrates how structured, capacity-building approaches support critical reflection, empathy, and informed educational responses.

Aligned with the conference theme 'Well how? Practical wellbeing in action across the education continuum', this paper offers a practical, classroom-transferable framework enabling educators to navigate challenging topics through reflective and dialogical processes. Central to the paper is vignette-based learning, specifically the activity 'Standing in the Other Person's Shoes', which invites participants to explore multiple perspectives within realistic scenarios involving young people, parents, and educators. Participants articulate perceived feelings, concerns, and needs from different viewpoints, fostering deeper understanding of the relational and contextual dimensions of wellbeing. This activity represents the initial stage of a broader 'funnelling' methodology employed in the research; whereby successive activities deepen participants' critical consciousness. Grounded in Freirean pedagogy, the approach encourages movement from individual interpretations towards critical awareness of the social, cultural, and structural factors shaping young people's experiences. Through collaborative dialogue and reflection, participants engage in the co-construction of knowledge, recognising themselves as active agents within systems of power and meaning-making.

A key aim of the paper is to support participants in reflecting on their roles and capacities as educators, whether teachers or parents in addressing sensitive topics such as pornography. Participants will consider their own emotional responses, concerns, and perceived limitations, alongside those of young people. This reflective process highlights the importance of educator self-awareness in creating safe, supportive learning environments. Emphasis is placed on developing skills to facilitate open communication, active listening, respectful discussion, and appropriate emotional support, essential for effective wellbeing education.

The paper will provide participants with an experiential understanding of how such methodologies support discussions on pornography and its potential impact on young people's relationships, expectations, and wellbeing. It will also highlight the importance of a holistic, collaborative approach, recognising the interconnected roles of schools and

parents in supporting young people’s learning. Findings from the research emphasise the need for capacity building across all stakeholder groups to enable meaningful engagement with sensitive topics and to support effective communication between home and school contexts.

Paper 2	
Title	Navigating the Perfect Storm: Listening to Young People and Translating Wellbeing Research into Practice
Presenter(s)	Tammy Darcy and Laura McEntee
Abstract	Across education systems, the importance of wellbeing is widely recognised. However, educators often struggle with the practical question at the centre of this conference theme: if wellbeing matters, how do we support it in meaningful ways in everyday educational settings? This presentation draws on emerging findings from the Perfect Storm research conducted by The Shona Project, which explores the experiences of young people aged 12 to 19 across Ireland. The research examines the multiple pressures shaping young people’s lives today, including social expectations, academic stress, social media and influence. Taken together, these forces create a ‘perfect storm’ of challenges that impact confidence, wellbeing and sense of belonging. The presentation will explore how The Shona Projects’ national research can inform practical wellbeing responses within educational contexts. It will outline how insights gathered through the Perfect Storm research are translated into programmes and workshops delivered by The Shona Project in schools across Ireland. These initiatives focus on creating structured spaces where young people can reflect on identity, confidence, relationships and social pressures, while developing language and strategies that support wellbeing and resilience. By connecting research on the experiences of young people in Ireland with practical educational engagement, the presentation demonstrates one way of responding to the conference’s central question of ‘Well how?’. It argues that effective wellbeing practice begins with listening to young people and using their experiences to shape interventions grounded in the realities of their lives.

Paper 3	
Title	How Wellbeing is Made Practical through Educational Networks
Presenter(s)	Aishling Boylan
Abstract	Promoting wellbeing is a national priority in Irish primary schools, outlined in The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice and reinforced by recent Children’s School Lives data, showing declining positive emotions and increased anxiety in students between 2019 and 2023. Simultaneously, Irish and international policy encourage education networks as platforms for reflection, collaboration and improvement. While both wellbeing enactment and networks are promoted in Irish education, practical guidance on network development and function is limited. Critically, literature lacks principals and teachers’ perspectives on the opportunities and

	challenges networks pose for supporting wellbeing enactment. This paper addresses this gap by exploring educators’ needs and wants from wellbeing networks. The paper examines how primary school educators understand and enact wellbeing in their school contexts, the potential role of networks and external partnerships in supporting wellbeing enactment and the challenges, design and sustainability factors of these networks. A qualitative methodology employed semi-structured interviews with 16 primary educators from diverse contexts to capture their lived experiences regarding network support for wellbeing. Findings indicate wellbeing is prioritised across all school contexts, yet enactment and whole-school understanding vary. Disparities in accessing student wellbeing support highlight the need for stronger, consistent intersectoral relationships between health and education. A multi-disciplinary network approach was identified as key to equitably delivering services and resources, involving all stakeholders in a child's life. Findings highlighted that existing networks lacked coherence and structure, limiting their potential. Sustainable network activity requires strong relationships, a shared purpose, and essential structural supports. This paper enhances understanding of how network structures can support collective problem-solving in wellbeing enactment. It will be of interest to teachers, school leaders, and educators who are seeking to understand how wellbeing can be meaningfully realised in practice. It also offers insights for policymakers and those involved in educational networks on the opportunities and challenges of collaborative approaches to supporting wellbeing.
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Paper 4	
Title	Older Adult and Student Wellbeing Outcomes from Engagement in an Age Friendly Campus Programmes
Presenter(s)	Maeve Liston and Patrica O’Sullivan
Abstract	This presentation examines how participation in Mary Immaculate College (MIC) Age Friendly Campus initiatives influences both older adults’ and students’ wellbeing and sense of belonging within the campus community. The programme forms part of a wider commitment within higher education to respond proactively to demographic ageing and to promote inclusive, intergenerational learning environments. Ireland’s demographic profile is changing rapidly, with 15.7% of the population now aged 65 years and older, a figure projected to exceed the population of children aged 0-14 by 2028. In response, the MIC Age Friendly Campus programme was established in 2022 to support the meaningful inclusion of older adults in the core activities of the college. Its aim is to foster wellbeing, expand access to lifelong learning, and enhance students’ learning through purposeful intergenerational engagement (Andreoletti & Howard, 2018; Dunne et al., 2025; O’Kelly, 2024; Pstross et al., 2016). Since its establishment, the programme has engaged over 1,500 older adults in a wide range of lifelong learning, social, cultural, health, and wellbeing activities. Data from surveys of members of the MIC Age Friendly Network (n = 94), and two different Intergenerational Learning Programmes (n = 37), explored participants’ experiences and perspectives providing insight into the personal, social, and educational impacts of engagement with age-friendly initiatives.

Findings indicate that participants highly value opportunities for social connection, continued learning, and intergenerational interaction. Engagement is associated with enhanced wellbeing, a strengthened sense of belonging to the college community, and a sustained motivation to acquire new skills and knowledge. The presentation will explore the potential of Age Friendly Campus initiatives to enhance wellbeing and support inclusive, intergenerational learning environments across higher education.

Parallel Session 2c: Workshops

Venue: T205

Chair: Lisha O' Sullivan

Title	A Roadmap to Sustainable School Leadership
Presenter(s)	Deirdre Kelly
Abstract	School leaders in Ireland are operating in an increasingly complex and demanding environment, where professional responsibilities continue to expand alongside heightened expectations from policy, communities, and school stakeholders. We will explore the wellbeing of school leaders through the lens of the Irish Primary Principals' Network Sustainable Leadership research project, highlighting both the challenges faced and the systemic supports required to sustain effective leadership. The IPPN's Sustainable Leadership research provides a timely and evidence-based insight into the lived experiences of school leaders. Its findings indicate that while principals and deputy principals remain deeply committed to their roles, many are experiencing significant levels of stress, workload pressure, and professional isolation. The research identifies key stressors including administrative burden, staffing shortages, increasing compliance demands, and the growing complexity of student needs. These factors contribute to a working environment that can undermine both personal wellbeing and long-term leadership sustainability. A central theme emerging from the report is the concept of 'role overload'. School leaders are required to act not only as educational leaders but also as managers, counsellors, mediators, and community liaisons. This multifaceted role often results in long working hours and limited opportunities for rest, reflection, or professional collaboration. The research also highlights concerns around succession planning, with fewer teachers expressing interest in pursuing leadership roles due to the perceived intensity and unsustainability of the position. This presentation will provide participants with an opportunity to engage critically with these findings and reflect on their implications for practice. We will explore how systemic factors' rather than individual resilience alone, shape wellbeing outcomes. The session will challenge the narrative that wellbeing is solely the responsibility of the individual leader and instead emphasise the importance of organisational and policy-level supports. We will also examine practical strategies emerging from both the IPPN research and wider wellbeing frameworks. These include fostering distributed leadership models, strengthening professional networks, and prioritising protected time for collaboration and reflection. The role of peer support, mentoring, and leadership coaching will be discussed as key enablers of sustainable practice. Additionally, we will consider how schools can create cultures that value wellbeing, not only for leaders but for the entire school community.

Importantly, the workshop will connect research findings to actionable steps. Participants will be invited to identify small but meaningful changes that can be implemented within their own contexts, as well as to consider how collective advocacy can influence broader systemic reform. By situating individual experiences within a wider structural context, the session aims to empower school leaders to engage with wellbeing in a more sustainable and strategic way.

In conclusion, this workshop responds to an urgent need within Irish education to address the wellbeing of school leaders as a cornerstone of effective and sustainable school leadership. By drawing on the insights of the IPPN Sustainable Leadership research it is intended that participants will leave with a deeper understanding of the challenges facing school leaders in Ireland, along with concrete strategies to support both their own wellbeing and that of their colleagues.

Title	The Wellbeing Ambassador Programme in Practice: A Whole-School, Peer Advocate Approach to Wellbeing Promotion
Presenter(s)	Amy Looney and Isabel Williams
Abstract	Aligned with the conference theme ‘Well how? Practical wellbeing in action across the education continuum’, this interactive workshop explores how student voice can be meaningfully embedded within a whole-school approach to wellbeing through the Wellbeing Ambassadors programme. Drawing on our experience as Educational Wellbeing Practitioners working within Strand 2 of the Department of Education and Youth’s Counselling and Mental Health Pilot, we will share practice-based insights into how this initiative is implemented across diverse primary school settings. The Department of Education and Youth’s Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice provides schools with a whole school, multicomponent and preventative approach to wellbeing promotion, based on international research and best practice. Situated within this national policy context, Strand 2 of the Counselling and Mental Health Pilot, now in its third year, focuses on strengthening preventative and early intervention approaches at primary school level. Education Wellbeing Practitioners collaborate with clusters of schools to embed sustainable, whole-school promotion of wellbeing through psycho-educational supports, consultation, and capacity building. Within participating schools, the pilot is operationalised through a continuum of supports that integrate wellbeing across school culture, curriculum, policy, and relationships. The Wellbeing Ambassador programme represents a practical and scalable intervention within this framework. Adapted from established UK models supported by research evidence, this is a peer-led initiative in which pupils are trained to act as advocates for wellbeing. Through structured training in areas such as active listening, emotional literacy, and peer support, pupils are empowered to promote positive relationships, foster inclusion, reduce stigma, and encourage help-seeking behaviours among their peers. Ambassadors contribute to initiatives such as wellbeing campaigns, peer support activities, and school-wide events, supporting both individual and collective wellbeing. While not a replacement for adult-led supports, it complements existing provisions by addressing lower-level needs and promoting a preventative, universal approach along the Continuum of Support.

This workshop will move beyond conceptual discussion to demonstrate how wellbeing can be promoted in everyday practice in primary school settings. Participants will engage in a sample Wellbeing Ambassadors training activity, providing a direct experience of the peer-led approaches used with pupils. The session will also include a concise overview of the programme's implementation, including pupil recruitment, training structures, and integration within a whole-school approach. Opportunities for reflection and dialogue will be embedded throughout.

Wellbeing Tasters / Workshops

Wellbeing Workshop

Venue: T205

Chair: Emer Ring

Title	Structured Reflective Journaling for Adolescents: A Practical Framework to Foster Wellbeing through Emotional Regulation and Promotion of Gratitude, Growth Mindset, and Optimism
Presenter(s)	Siobhan Connolly Hogan
Abstract	Adolescence represents a critical developmental stage in which reflective practices can support emotional regulation, resilience, and overall well-being. Despite these benefits, many young people struggle to establish and maintain consistent habits such as journaling. This workshop presents a structured journaling framework designed to help adolescents develop a sustainable reflective practice, drawing on principles from positive psychology, well-being research, and reflective learning. The proposed approach offers a simple, repeatable method that encourages balanced reflection on weekly experiences. It is organised into three concise stages. First, participants identify three positive experiences from their week, a practice shown to counteract negativity bias and promote gratitude and positive attention. Second, participants reflect on a challenge or difficulty, reframing it as an opportunity for learning. This stage is guided by two prompts: What did I learn? And who or what helped? encouraging the development of a growth mindset and greater awareness of personal and social supports. Finally, participants identify something they are looking forward to, fostering a sense of optimism associated with enhanced well-being and life satisfaction. Grounded in research on gratitude, growth mindset, optimism, and reflective practice, this framework demonstrates how structured journaling can support adolescents in building consistent and meaningful reflection habits. The workshop will outline the theoretical foundations of the model and demonstrate its application in educational settings. Participants will engage in a brief experiential journaling activity and discuss the practical strategies for integrating this structured reflection. The session highlights demonstrate 'The How,' where participants witness firsthand the benefits of this practice, which can be implemented for individuals across the education continuum.

Wellbeing Taster

Venue: T118

Title	Intergenerational Sing Along
Presenter(s)	Marie Edmonds

Abstract	This taster session explores how intergenerational group singing and drumming can support wellbeing, belonging, and mindful engagement across educational and community settings. Drawing on Ghanaian Ewe music in promotes participatory music making for fostering connection, confidence, and emotional wellbeing.
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Parallel Session 3a

Venue: T206

Theme: Emotional Wellbeing

Chair: Maria Varvarigou

Paper 1	
Title	Intergenerational Music-Making for Wellbeing: Preliminary Insights from a Community-Engaged Drumming Practice
Presenter(s)	Marie Edmonds
Abstract	Participatory music-making is increasingly recognised in contemporary research as an accessible practice that can support wellbeing across educational and community contexts. Intergenerational spaces, in particular, have been shown to foster mutual learning and a sense of belonging across age groups. This paper presents a practice-based qualitative study of community-engaged drumming and its impact in intergenerational educational contexts. The study is informed by ongoing facilitation of Ghanaian Ewe music and dance classes, developed in collaboration with culture bearers and grounded in key principles of applied ethnomusicology. Data sources include reflective observations and semi-structured interviews with higher education students, teachers, and community members. The study draws on relevant scholarship and preliminary qualitative data gathered across two academic semesters. Initial findings provide an emerging picture of how collective music-making is experienced by participants of diverse backgrounds in community contexts. Sustained engagement in group drumming is found to support participants in moving between states of focus and release, a balance frequently associated with stress reduction and emotional regulation. Participants commonly describe a heightened sense of presence during the workshops, echoing research that frames rhythmic repetition as a mindful practice. Regular participation is also associated with developing a sense of belonging and growing confidence. Moreover, participants experience a sense of personal accomplishment as their musical skills are progressively scaffolded. Positioned as an early report on current research, this interactive presentation shares emerging insights and invites reflection on its potential as a meaningful, non-clinical approach to cultivating wellbeing. It offers educators practical perspectives on how intergenerational music-making can be enacted to support wellbeing across the education continuum.

Paper 2	
Title	Lasting Legacies of Lockdowns: Primary Teachers' Perspectives on Post-Pandemic Impacts and Challenges to Well-Being for children
Presenter(s)	Jennifer Pope

Abstract	International research shows that the pandemic had negative effects and that school closures were associated with a number of difficulties during that time. However, the question arises as to whether effects may still be present for children, both in terms of their academic learning, and their socioemotional development. In order to address this question, primary school teachers in Ireland were invited to complete an online survey during March and April 2025. Over 200 teachers responded (including teachers from junior infants to 6th class, school principals and special education teachers) working in schools across a mix of urban, suburban and rural locations. and in terms of their DEIS status, with school sizes ranging from fewer than 20 pupils to over 900 pupils. The majority of teachers who responded had over 10 years teaching experience. The findings highlight potential ongoing challenges both with academic learning but also with socioemotional development. Teachers indicated many issues facing the pupils now, that make the educational environment more challenging. For example, 82% of teachers indicated they have more pupils now with emotional and behavioural issues compared with before the pandemic. Beyond academic learning loss, it seems some pupils have had their necessary social, emotional and cognitive skills negatively affected, changing the educational landscape for teachers. Teachers described classroom circumstances that pose challenges for their own well-being and strategies they have adopted in the classroom. The findings are considered from a bioecological perspective.
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Paper 3	
Title	The role of cognitive reappraisal in how well Irish primary school teachers and principals managed burnout
Presenter(s)	Veronica O'Toole, Margaret Nohilly and Bernie Collins
Abstract	The fifth anniversary of the Covid-19 lockdowns prompted the Irish Central Statistics Office (2025) to survey parents and students on their perceived impacts of the lockdowns on education and social development, obtaining overwhelmingly negative responses. Teachers were not surveyed, yet teachers were at the forefront of educational delivery at that time and were amongst the most vulnerable groups for contracting Covid-19, alongside high rates of burnout both nationally and internationally. This paper reports quantitative and qualitative findings from a longitudinal mixed methods investigation into the wellbeing impacts of the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown on a small sample of Irish primary school teachers and principals (n=15), during lockdown (Time 1) and upon return to school (Time 2). Quantitative data from the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory Adapted for Teachers (Milfont et al., 2008) and the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Gross & John, 2003) on both occasions, were analysed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test, applicable for the sample size. Findings revealed a significant increase in participants' cognitive reappraisal, correlating with and predicting a significant reduction in their student-related burnout, contrary to some other international research. Semi-structured interviews yielded qualitative insights and real-life examples of the contexts, content and processes of individual participants' cognitive reappraisals. In sharing their thinking and re-thinking (reappraisals) the participating Irish teachers and principals inadvertently address one important question posed by another pandemic-related study, as to whether teachers have the necessary cognitive reappraisal skills. Our participants appear to have these skills and used them well. These findings contribute to our understandings of how cognitive reappraisal mitigates pandemic-related burnout and provide examples that can be built upon and utilised more

consciously in practice. There is still much more to be done to support teachers' wellbeing towards reducing their burnout, as they continue at the forefront in leading the educational recovery from the pandemic.

Paper 4	
Title	Acting Out: Promoting emotional regulation of senior infant pupils through drama
Presenter(s)	Nóra Burke
Abstract	‘Acting out’: This term is often used to describe emotional reactions and disruptive behaviours from children. The ability to engage in socially appropriate ways and to regulate emotionally are key wellbeing skills. In the US, social-emotional learning (SEL) is the main philosophical conceptualisation of wellbeing in schools. In Ireland, infant primary school classrooms can be stressful and dysregulating environments for children, with a busy curriculum, more structured approaches to teaching and learning and higher behavioural expectations than those of an early-years setting. As a drama facilitator, this action research study aimed to answer the question, ‘How can I use drama as a tool to aid self-regulation and support emotional-behavioural development in an Irish primary school context?’ This qualitative study consisted of a classroom-based drama intervention of six weekly sessions with a class of senior infants led by an external facilitator, but with the class teacher present. The research includes perspectives from the researcher/facilitator, class teacher and pupils. Thematic analysis was employed to explore if and how drama can be used to provide children with tools for self-regulation. This analysis highlighted the performance of emotions as a valuable tool, as were grounding and mindfulness exercises carried out through a dramatic lens. The importance of consistency, and of the children’s agency over the work in order for self-regulation to occur, was also highlighted. The barriers to facilitating work of this nature in the classroom became apparent as did the challenges of an external facilitation model. Though the study highlighted challenges, it produced encouraging findings about the positive potential for the practical use of drama to support subsets of wellbeing, namely social-emotional learning. This paper shares strategies for class teachers to use as a way of embedding such practice in the classroom culture as well as in classroom practices. Key words: emotional regulation, drama for wellbeing, social-emotional learning, drama strategies, drama intervention.

Parallel Session 3b

Venue: T206

Theme: Emotional Wellbeing

Chair: Lisha O’Sullivan

Paper 1	
Title	Wellbeing and empowerment: exploring child agency in practice in Early Childhood Care and Education settings
Presenter(s)	Michelle Lehane
Abstract	This proposal stems from research into the lived experiences of the agentic child in ECCE preschool settings in Ireland, funded by Research Ireland under Grant number 8501. Sairanen et al. (2022, p.113) defined child agency as ‘an interaction process’ between the

child, other people and their environment. Within the context of an updated Aistear (Gol 2024, p.10) and the child as ‘agentic’, this mixed methods and case study research, examines how child agency is embedded in preschools that participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) preschool programme in Ireland. Ethical approval was granted by MIC to undertake an online survey of Early Childhood Educators with experience of the ECCE programme (reference number: A25-001) and an in-depth case study of 2 preschools operating the ECCE programme (reference JFREC2025-053). Preliminary findings from the mixed methods online survey indicate that while 86% of respondents (n=70) frequently prioritise the entire ECCE session as a time for shared thinking and decision-making with children, this did not necessarily follow through in the adult-led structure, routine or control over time spent on activities. Preliminary findings from the case study of 2 preschools indicate the importance of agency to children over their time in preschool. Agency in both settings was defined by how children managed their own time; the speed of their play and their speed or slow engagement with friends, educators and resources. Child agency was evident in the child-led interactions which allowed children to drift in and out of their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky 1978) and lead their learning at their own pace in child-led time.

Wellbeing (Hayes and Filipovia, 2018; Fane et al. 2020) and empowerment (Moloney et al. 2025) were benefits of child agency in the online survey: ‘they enjoy learning and have a joyful experience overall, Children ... become leaders and problem solvers when they have choice’.

Wellbeing was evident in the case study when children expressed their preferences in materials for an art activity, ‘love chalk’, ‘Me too’, and empowerment during the activity when their chosen chalk which was grated into powder and then mixed to a paste. The paper will present preliminary findings from the online survey and from the case study research. The paper will ask participants in groups, or individually to think about how power can be shared through an adult-suggested and child chosen approach within routines and planned activities. The participants will be asked to share their views and questions about this practical application of child agency with the room. Based on the analysis of findings from the online survey the paper will end with a guide to understanding child agency in practice outlining the different levels of agency that children experience: child-led child agency, adult-led child agency and barriers to child agency. A user-friendly handout which explains the different levels of agency in practice will be distributed to participants in the presentation.

Paper 2

Title

Developing a child friendly Seven Point Model of Wellbeing to support children’s understanding of Wellbeing and how to improve one’s wellbeing.

Presenter(s)

Noel O’Sullivan

Abstract

Wellbeing is an evolving concept, with an increasingly significant place in the Irish primary curriculum. However, defining Wellbeing has been challenging, even described as a ‘wicked’ problem (Bache et al, 2015). A School Self Evaluation in the school the researcher teaches in revealed that children’s vocabulary around Wellbeing was vague and limited, as was their understanding of how to improve one’s wellbeing. The researcher looked at answering the research question ‘Does supporting children’s vocabulary about Wellbeing, using child-friendly visual and kinaesthetic strategies, increase their understanding of Wellbeing?’

The VARK model (Fleming & Mills, 1992) which incorporates Visual, Aural, Reading/Writing and Kinaesthetic methods of learning was employed. A Seven Point

	Model that is rooted in current academic theory was developed by the researcher that incorporated the various core aspects of Wellbeing that could be represented in the body, and represented by a particular action e.g. thinking the student points to their head. This model was developed from theories such as Seligman's 2012 PERMA model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Dodge et al.'s 2012 resources and challenges model, and various definitions of Wellbeing such as the WHO definition of 1997 which was further developed by the DES in 2018. In a Mixed Methods study, employing both quantitative and qualitative data, three 5th classes participated for six weeks in the Seven Point Wellbeing programme designed to cover the core areas of Wellbeing. A pragmatic paradigm was chosen, the ontology being a non-singular reality, with a relational epistemology. A pragmatic approach enabled the researcher to explore in a quantifiable way the effectiveness of a vocabulary-based Wellbeing programme, while also using qualitative information to understand why such a programme is effective. Data from questionnaires and focus groups were analysed in a descriptive form, illustrated through graphs, percentage increase, and descriptive statistics. Results showed a significant increase in students' vocabulary around Wellbeing, both in quantity and in the breadth of their vocabulary. Student feedback was very positive about the lessons and learning about Wellbeing in a focused way. Implications for future practice are that a child friendly definition of Wellbeing will remove the vagueness currently associated with the term Wellbeing, resulting in better vocabulary and understanding around Wellbeing and ultimately, providing tools to children to help improve one's Wellbeing.
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Paper 3	
Title	Turning Student Voice into Wellbeing in Practice in a Post-Primary context
Presenter(s)	Louise Judge
Abstract	Bringing student voice into practice means engaging with how students experience wellbeing supports in their school context. The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (DES, 2019) promotes a whole-school approach to wellbeing in post-primary schools. However, research suggests that the translation of policy into practice can vary across contexts, often prioritising institutional 'assumed needs' over the 'expressed needs' and perspectives of the students themselves (Noddings, 2012). This raises questions about how wellbeing provision is understood and enacted in schools, and how student voice can meaningfully inform that process (Lundy, 2007). This paper draws on recent research completed as part of a Masters in the Leadership of Wellbeing in Education, where a mixed methods study explored students' perspectives on wellbeing supports in an Irish post-primary school. A sequential explanatory design was used, with survey data collected from 132 students, followed by focus groups to further explore student experiences. The study was grounded in an interpretivist paradigm and informed by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and Noddings' ethic of care (Noddings, 2005). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) identified three key findings, which highlight a narrow understanding of wellbeing, limited awareness of available supports, and the central importance of trusting relationships with staff. Structural and cultural factors, including stigma, also influence how students engage with school-based support. These findings point to a gap between policy intentions and students' lived experiences. While national frameworks emphasise a holistic approach, students most often

associated wellbeing with mental and emotional health and reported limited awareness of formal supports. Relationships with staff were central to students' experiences, particularly feeling known, heard, and supported.

Paper 4	
Title	Well How? Bringing Wellbeing to Life Through Whole-School Action, Agency and Practice
Presenter(s)	Noel Loftus and Ciana Callanan
Abstract	St. Attracta's National School, Ballaghaderreen is an urban DEIS 1 PLUS primary school serving just under 300 pupils. Our school reflects a diverse population with 23 nationalities represented. We are enacting the Primary Curriculum Framework (PCF) and are recognised as an innovative learning community. Since 2025-2026, revised time allocations have been implemented with wellbeing established as a discrete curricular area within classroom timetables. Our recent Teaching Council bursary project focused on developing teacher agency, supporting teachers, in collaboration with another school, to become curriculum leaders. This has strengthened distributed leadership and enabled teachers to lead wellbeing initiatives. We have been welcomed into the DCU Changemaker Schools Network and shared aspects of our wellbeing practice at the national conference. Our work is also informing system-level developments; Tusla engaged with our school as part of a national scoping exercise for a new Code of Behaviour. Staff design and deliver wellbeing professional development for the INTO and ESCI. Participation Rationale As an innovative school, we are eager to share our practices while learning from others. This conference comes at a significant time. In the coming year, we will enact wellbeing as a curricular area in line with the PCF. As a DEIS 1 PLUS school, we will also appoint a full-time wellbeing coordinator, strengthening our whole-school approach. Wellbeing in Practice Our paper will share how wellbeing is enacted through a whole-school approach, grounded in the National Wellbeing Framework and the Primary School Curriculum Wellbeing Specification. We are guided by a shared definition of wellbeing as the realisation of potential, resilience, and a sense of connection and belonging. This is enacted across four key areas: culture, curriculum, policy and partnerships. Central to our approach is a dynamic Wellbeing in Action Framework, devised within our school and customised to our context. Structured around monthly themes such as kindness and belonging, it includes coordinated actions for pupils, staff and parents/guardians. A strong emphasis is placed on teacher and pupil agency, empowering teachers as leaders of practice and pupils as active contributors to a positive school environment. The development of our Bí Cineálta Policy strengthened this work by promoting positive behaviour and contributing to our wellbeing culture. A key outcome was the creation of a Wellbeing Walkway, making wellbeing visible across the school. Our practices are cross-curricular and reflect relational, dialogic and playful pedagogies, underpinned by inclusive education, diversity, partnership and the key competency of 'being well'.

Impact, Evaluation and Engagement

As a DEIS 1 PLUS school, our work is evidence-informed through our School Improvement Plan. We gather data annually through pupil and parent surveys and focus groups. Findings indicate high levels of pupil wellbeing alongside areas requiring targeted support.

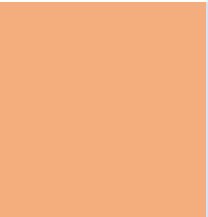
Parallel Session 3c: Workshops

Venue: T205

Chair: Fionnuala Tynan

Title	Well how? Making wellbeing visible in practice through reflection, structure and ethical AI
Presenter(s)	Shane Maguire
Abstract	This interactive workshop, aligned with the 'Well, how? The conference theme 'Practical Wellbeing in action across the education continuum' demonstrates how to embed practical wellbeing into everyday teaching. Using Skilly as a reflective framework, the session will demonstrate integration through structured reflection, learner voice, guided discussion, and ethical use of digital tools. It focuses on wellbeing as a "lived practice," not an initiative, using simple methods like reflective prompts to boost engagement and learner agency across all sectors. A key segment will address the responsible, ethical use of AI to support reflection and to identify engagement patterns, emphasising transparency, safeguarding, and maintaining teacher oversight, ensuring that AI complements human judgment. The participative format includes sample activities to provide concrete, relational, structured, and ethically grounded ideas for supporting wellbeing.

Title	Exploration of mindfulness strategies and self-compassion practices to reduce teacher overwhelm
Presenter(s)	Bernie Woods
Abstract	Exploration of mindfulness strategies and self-compassion practices to reduce teacher overwhelm Background and experience: primary school teacher with eighteen years teaching experience, author of Meaningful Mindful Poetry, Creative Mindfulness Practitioner and mindfulness coach and teacher. According to the recent Dublin City University (DCU) study on teacher occupational wellbeing in Ireland, 86% of the respondents were experiencing moderate to high personal burnout while 85% of respondents were experiencing moderate to high work related burnout. Reflecting on these statistics, the importance of providing teachers and staff members with the opportunity to explore strategies and ways they can manage and alleviate work stress is evident. Mindfulness enhances physical, emotional and mental well-being. During this workshop, the participants will be given the opportunity to explore mindfulness and self-compassion practices that they can use in their daily life to manage stress and improve their overall well-being.



Research shows that 47% of the time, our minds are not in the present moment. Mindfulness is purposeful present moment awareness without judgement (this is based on Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition). Through meditations, mindfulness strategies and discussions, participants have the opportunity to explore ways that can incorporate mindful practices into their daily life.



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