

Consultation with SW Dublin School Communities
in Preparing
Department of Education 'Statement of Strategy' 2023-25

15 May 2023



Coláiste Bríde



*Kingswood Community
College*



*Old Bawn Community
School*



Scoil Mhuire SNS



St Thomas' SNS



St Kevin's BNS



Host - Dublin West Education Centre

Facilitated by Chris Chapman and Martin Hawkes

INDEX

	Page
Introduction & Background	1
Executive Summary	
What’s bubbling?	2
Vision I – What would an excellent Education look like?	
Vision II – School if our Suggestions were heard?	3
Focus on Priorities	4
Parting Advice to the Department	5
 ANNEXES	
I What word needs to be in the Conversation?	6
II Themes from an excellent Education System	7
III What School could look like	12
IV Open space Topics	16
V Parting advice to the Department	26

Consultation with School Communities

Department of Education 'Statement of Strategy' 2023-25

15 May 2023

Introduction & Background

In preparing its [Strategy Statement 2023 - 25](#) the Department of Education decided to innovate its consultation process by engaging with teachers, students and parents simultaneously using a process derived from the [BEACONS](#) model developed by the Teaching Council. The first consultation at the Dublin West Education Centre included parents, teachers and students from three post-primary schools - Kingswood Community College, Coláiste Bríde and Old Bawn Community School and three primary schools – St Thomas' SNS, Scoil Mhuire SNS and St Kevin's BNS. Thanks are due to all who participated with special thanks to Ultan Mac Mathúna and his team at Dublin West Education Centre for both arranging the attendance of school communities in the area (south west Dublin) and for hosting the event.

A group of thirty-eight participated in the event: 13 students and parents from the three post-primary schools; 18, including two parents, from the three primary schools, four from the Department of Education, two facilitators and one observer.

The below represents the distillation of the primary themes/messages emerging from the event. The comments of the participants are reproduced faithfully in the annexes, the only editorial input being the arrangement of some material in thematic form to facilitate ease of assimilation.



Executive Summary

The event, stretching over three hours with a break in the middle, allowed the participants to surface what was important for them in relation to education, what their vision of an excellent education system would look like and what their priorities were for the future of education. This, and another engagement event planned by the Department, will inform the preparation of its Statement of Strategy 2023 – 2025.

What was remarkable about the engagement was the coherence of the themes that recurred over the four discrete exercises in which participants took part. The following preoccupations recurred in each session:

- giving substance to inclusion and equality;
- having joined up services (educational and HSE) - to support students particularly in domain of special needs education;
- the call for a system of education that was tailored to individual needs vs 'one size fits all' - with valued options for the non-academic student from an early age;
- curriculum and assessment that was less academic and points-focused with more continuous assessment;
- less and more varied and creative homework options and
- more attention to wellbeing and PE/sport as integral concerns of education.

Finally, there was recognition that at a time when the world was in a state of flux the education system needed to be in a state of continuous learning and evolution paying attention to the knowledge that was present at the coal-face from teachers and students. There should be more events like this.

Introductions – What’s bubbling? *(Annex I)*

As participants introduced themselves and named a word that needed to be in the conversation, initial attention was on:

- ❖ **inclusion** and hearing all voices;
- ❖ access to **special needs supports** with better integration of HSE/education supports;
- ❖ questioning the **role of homework**;
- ❖ questioning the pressure of the leaving cert, CBA’s and **assessment in general**;
- ❖ the need for differentiated provision and **life-relevant curriculum** and skills;
- ❖ resourcing equality of infrastructure, **wellbeing**, and creating responsible citizens.

These initial preoccupations which were elaborated in open forum carried over faithfully into all the conversations that followed.

Vision I: What would an excellent Education System look like? *(Annex II)*

The major themes that emerged from this exercise in imagining what an excellent education system might look like were:

- **inclusion** and equality;
- questioning of **assessment system** – its purpose and efficacy;

- a system that provides wrap-around **holistic support** for those with special needs;
- more imaginative **homework protocols** – active/healthy/project-based;
- a focus on **wellbeing**;
- a **curriculum** that is more **individual** in focus and more **relevant** to life;
- greater attention to physical education – **PE and sport**;
- schools designed for **sustainability** and service supports.

Invited in plenary to consider what participants would like **more of**:

- **primary pupils** wanted more opportunity to speak, more safety, more social opportunities, more sport/PE, and more RSE;
- **post-primary pupils** were looking for more diversity of provision for those with different academic abilities, more health and safety education, mental health supports, more scope for creativity, more oral vs written examinations and more continuous assessments;
- **parents** wanted greater understanding for children with special needs, more focus on sports and life skills, education for body consciousness and greater supports available within the school (the child's community);
- **teachers** wanted more multi-disciplinary teams within the school, more focus on life skills and resilience for less-academic students who should have apprentice-style education from a young age, making inclusion and equality of funding/resourcing irrespective of social background a reality, improving the student/teacher ratio, better integration with HSE services and less bureaucratic process for accessing SNA's.

Participants wanted **less of**: paperwork, less attention to the academically able, less exams and exam pressure on students, appropriate assessment for students of different abilities, a less packed curriculum.



Vision II: What would your School look like if your Suggestions were listened to? *(Annex III)*

Following an opportunity to sketch and doodle their vision for their own schools based on the department listening to their suggestion – see the broad canvasses at annex III – there was an invitation to share what additional insights were emerging:

- **Primary schools**: more playgrounds and music classes; more classes for migrants; more flexible subject options; more mental health supports and support rooms;

more working together with the HSE so that children don't fall through the cracks;
more support for the covid cohort;

- **Secondary schools:** better communication between schools and DE re CBA's; more information on where to find resources; addressing teacher turn-over which is disruptive to students; more games and sports leagues with credits and scholarships in the system for those pursuing sport.

Focus on Priorities *(Annex IV)*

In the second half of the event the initiative was transferred to the participants to decide on what should be prioritised for discussion.

Over two rounds of conversation in mixed groups (primary/post primary etc) the subjects emerging were:

- ❖ **The Curriculum:** The call was for a curriculum that incorporated more life skills, providing options for non-academic students and calling time on college being the only further education worth aspiring to;
- ❖ **Assessment:** Assessment is not achieving its objectives while causing stress and anxiety. CBA's are good but not properly valued in assessment system. LC causes pressure and stigma;
- ❖ **Health & Wellbeing:** Wellbeing should be integral to curriculum with training for teachers, especially post-covid. SPHE is sacrificed to exam subjects. CBA's are great but cause stress – sport should be valued for its own sake and should not be purely competitive;
- ❖ **Sport and PE:** 'If you are good at a sport, play it a lot if it makes you happy and if you're happy playing it you'll get better.' Can we have more complex sports such as tennis and more than just an 'A' team. Let's have PE every day.
- ❖ **Homework:** There are better things to be doing such as being active. Home should be personal time for relaxing, socialising, colouring, cooking, time with family and friends and sports. Homework should provide opportunity for greater variety of active and creative pursuits separate from core subjects;
- ❖ **Special Needs:** A whole-school approach is needed to create a conducive environment – there is need to nurture emotional intelligence; siblings should be consulted about what's needed;
- ❖ **Multidisciplinary Teams:** There needs to be integration of teams and services (HSE) with more guidance counsellors and more on the job training;
- ❖ **Business:** Students need to be immersed from a young age with work experience and visits from those active in the business world;
- ❖ **LCA's:** Introduce LCA approach from an early age and de-stigmatise – they are crucial for non-academic students who may otherwise drop out and be deprived of educational opportunity.

Parting Advice to the Department *(Annex V)*

“Evolve with the ever-changing World”

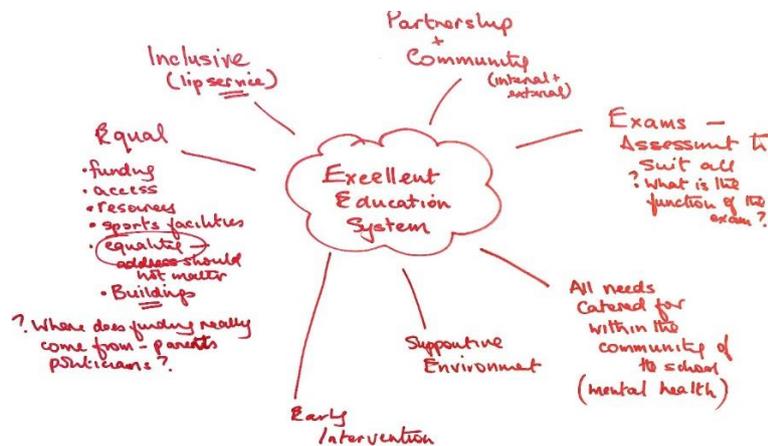
As a final exercise, participants were invited to share their parting advice with the Department. Not surprisingly, the themes that emerged during the day were rehearsed again with calls for:

- ❖ a system that is more inclusive and tailored to **individual needs**;
- ❖ a curriculum more adapted to wellbeing, the needs of **less-academic students** and the realities of **life beyond the school walls**;
- ❖ **assessment** that is less LC-focused and with more continuous assessment;
- ❖ a more **joined-up approach to special needs** encompassing the HSE and the wider school community and
- ❖ a greater focus on **PE and sport**.

A fresh insight, surfaced in this parting advice, was a recognition that the world is in a state of flux and education needed to be in a state of constant learning/updating. It was essential to listen to the voices of teachers and students. The department needs more of this on-the-ground research. ‘Thanks for listening.’



Themes from 'An Excellent Education System'



Asked to imagine what an excellent education system might look like participants provided the material reproduced in next annex (II-B below). Here the material has been collated into themes to facilitate its integration.

- Inclusion & Equality:** in practice vs lip-service; including students/teachers from abroad by studying their culture; equality of funding, access, resources, buildings, sports facilities, socially and not reliant on resources of parents or ability to command political support; more accessibility; equality; mix of mainstream school/SEN school in same building; value students and teachers the same.
- Assessment:** exams and assessment to suit all – and what is the function of the exam? Exam system/points system needs overhaul – apprenticeship options particularly for early school leavers; more support regarding LC points; points to be more accessible; less reliance on single exams; reform of the leaving cert; continuous assessment rather than tests; different forms of testing – oral/collaborative tests/multiple choice; more student information and clarity re CBA's and options; quick assessments; be able to pick the best out of both CBA's; CBA timeline is too short; more time for CBA's; orals – picture sequences; more oral vs written work;
- Homework:** less homework and workload deadline coming up to exams; less homework (or none); less importance and more regulated; interesting homework at primary level; no homework – more socialising; be social;
- Special Needs Supports:** supportive environment with early intervention and all needs including mental health being catered for within the school community; Multi-disciplinary teams – access for all schools – central hubs; mental health supports;

sufficient staffing (SNA's); (teaching assistant roles? TA's as subs?); access to resources/SNA's – SNA allocation is stretched; better understanding and knowledge of children within the classroom with additional needs; a higher ratio of support spaces such as ASD and sensory rooms; better inclusivity/acceptance within special needs; less special treatment for academically gifted; special needs inclusions and suitable space and equipment; supports; external clinicians – external resources; mental health services; appropriated supports for autistic classes; special classes;

- **Individualised Relevant Curriculum:** basic life skills; meeting the needs of all individuals in the school community; resources and services for each individual child's needs; better range of subject choice – engineering and woodwork in girls' schools; better language choice; diversity, different level work for different academic levels; allow students to be creative and allow them to express their learning in different ways; more college course choice e.g. business + maths together; a relevant, manageable curriculum; alternative avenues for children who are not academic – a focus on character education – life skills, resilience, mental health, wellbeing, confidence, responsible citizens; more focus on life skills rather than class skills; learn about different cultures and languages; more scope in RSE for education/communication – safe place to talk and ask questions; more subjects within schools; learn about life; learning about money, technology, science experiment.
- **Wellbeing:** less stress; mental health supports; health and safety education to learn how to properly take care of ourselves; understanding their emotions and knowing how to deal with them; more awareness of their bodies i.e. different shapes, sizes etc. less stress on students and more mental health support; more breaks during school day; more socialising; be social; make work fun so people are motivated to learn;
- **PE & Sport:** PE more than once a week; sports/activities – more involvement with different clubs, not just football;
- **Class-size/Resourcing:** smaller class size; teacher/student ration of 1:24; More heating in schools; have more grant supports.
- **Sustainable modern buildings** – solar; rainwater harvesting; PE Hall; spaces for parents; library; hub for students with additional needs; kitchen for hot lunches; facilities for staff; admin facilities; **Outdoors:** forest spaces; ponds for wildlife; outdoors learning;
- **Other:** Integration between schools – jnr – snr and snr – secondary.

An Excellent Education System (Raw Material for II-A above)

The articulation of what an excellent education system might look like were many and varied, some operating as collective school voices and others giving their singular vision:

1.

- **Inclusion** in practice vs lip-service;
- **Supportive environment** with early intervention and all needs including mental health being catered for within the school community;
- **Partnership** with the community, internal and external;
- **Equality:** funding, access, resources, buildings, sports facilities, socially and not reliant on resources of parents or ability to command political support;
- **Exams:** exams and assessment to suit all – and what is the function of the exam?

2.

- More specialised classes;
- Mix of mainstream school/SEN school in same building;
- More inclusive;
- Quick assessments;
- More support
- Smaller class size; teacher/student ration of 1:24.

3.

- Better range of subject choice – engineering and woodwork in girls schools; better language choice;
- PE more than once a week;
- More insight into college careers at junior level;
- Less stress;
- Be able to pick the best out of both CBA's; CBA timeline is too short; more time for CBA's;
- Less homework and workload deadline coming up to exams;
- More heating in schools;
- Mental health supports;
- More accessibility;
- More college course choice e.g. business + maths together;
- More support regarding LC points; points to be more accessible;
- Orals – picture sequences;
- Have more grant supports.

4.

- Diversity, different level work for different academic levels;
- Including students/teachers from abroad by studying their culture;
- Supporting students and student creations;
- Health and safety education to learn how to properly take care of ourselves;
- Allow students to be creative and allow them to express their learning in different ways;
- Value students and teachers the same.

5.

- Meeting the needs of all individuals in the school community;
- Sufficient staffing (SNA's); (Teaching assistant roles? TA's as subs?);
- Alternative avenues for children who are not academic – a focus on character education – life skills, resilience, mental healthy, wellbeing, confidence, responsible citizens;
- A relevant, manageable curriculum;
- Multi-disciplinary teams – access for all schools – central hubs;
- Access to resources/SNA's – SNA allocation is stretched; too much focus on paperwork – E.A.L./behaviour;
- Exam system/points system needs overhaul – apprenticeship options particularly for early school leavers.

6.

- Equality;
- Resources and services for each individual child's needs;
- Basic life skills;
- Better understanding and knowledge of children within the classroom with additional needs;
- Understanding their emotions and knowing how to deal with them;
- More awareness of their bodies i.e. different shapes, sizes etc.
- Sports/Activities – more involvement with different clubs, not just football;
- Integration between schools – jnr – snr and snr – secondary.

7.

- **Sustainable modern buildings** – solar; rainwater harvesting; PE Hall; spaces for parents; library; hub for students with additional needs; kitchen for hot lunches; facilities for staff; admin facilities;
- **Infrastructure:** external clinicians – external resources; mental health services; appropriated supports for autistic classes; special classes;
- **Outdoors:** forest spaces; ponds for wildlife; outdoors learning.

8.



9.

For these two students an excellent school system would be characterised by:

- **More** – trips, breaks, learning about money, technology, science experiments, 5-minute breaks, projects/presentations, special needs attention, socialising; learning about drugs, sports vs exercise in PE, Irish history, book reading project with prizes and religion;
- **Less** – Irish, homework (or none), learning about other countries.

10.

- For a St Kevin's student an excellent school system would be safer and more fun, with the day punctuated by breaks with more oral vs written work

What might Schools look like after Two/Three Years if the Department listened to our Suggestions?

Working in school groups participants were asked to imagine what school might be like in two/three years if the the department took their suggestions on board – their ideas were captured on sheets of brown paper:

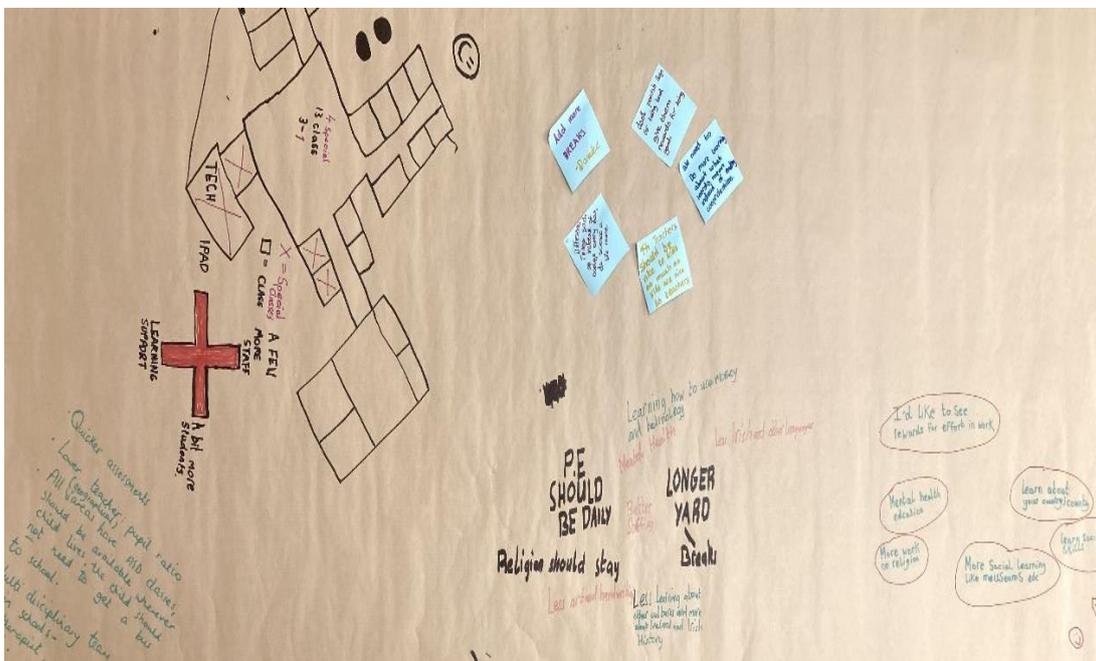
School 1

- More mental health supports/understanding of emotions etc.;
- Sports/activities, more clubs involved, not just football – keep it fun;
- Transition from junior to senior, sharing more information, giving child a taste of each subject;
- Educating children on the needs of other in their environment;
- Relevant manageable curriculum; introduction of apprenticeship-style education for non-academic pupils/early school leavers;
- Specialist teachers; adequate staffing of teachers/SNA's;
- Pilot rollout of teaching assistant in schools – higher-level SNA's/TA's;
- Multidisciplinary teams – more pilot schemes;
- Staff retention particularly in Dublin with cost of rent, pay gap and permanent contracts;
- Catch-up support for covid cohort of pupils will be needed for many years to come;
- Buildings fit for purpose;
- More variety of tasks; more investment in technology;
- Introduce design technology because it's a great way for pupils to creatively learn life skills; have banking lessons on how to handle money, taxes etc.



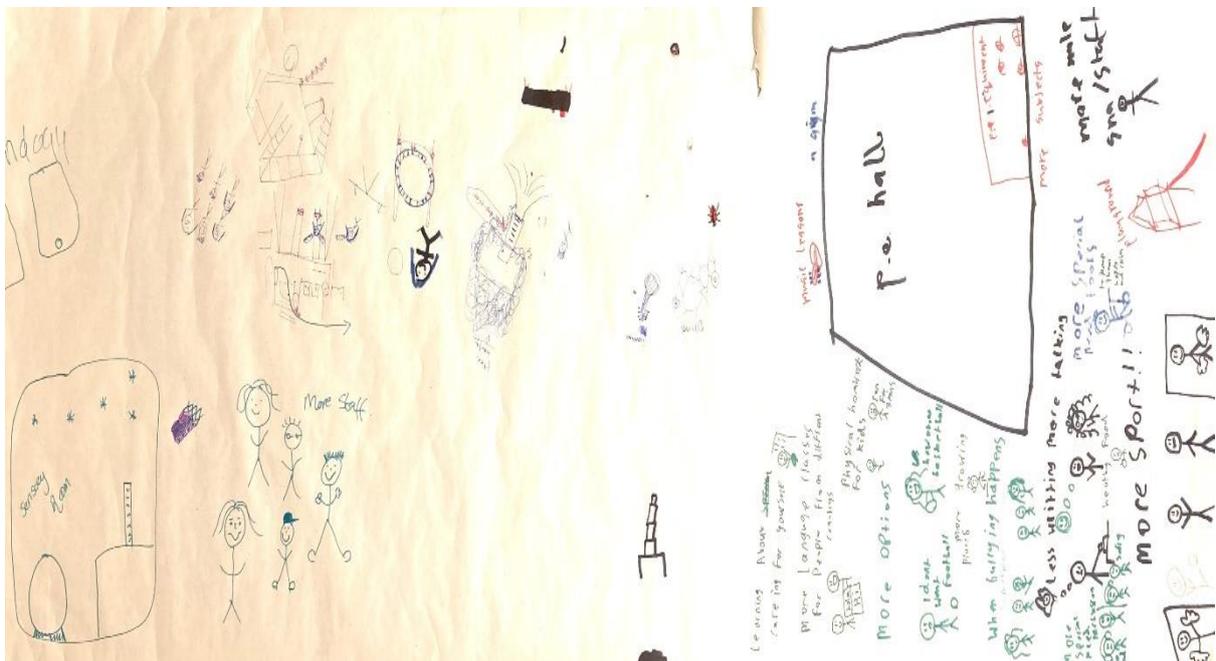
School 2

- School constructed with adequate support spaces with 3:1 ratio of classes to specialist room and more staff and learning support;
- PE daily with more and longer yard breaks;
- Quicker assessment, lower student teacher ratio,
- All geographical areas have ASD classes – available wherever the child lives rather than child getting bus to school;
- Multi-disciplinary team within schools e.g. play therapist, SLT;
- 'I'd like to see reward for effort'; mental health education; more work on religion;
- More social learning like museums etc. learn social skills
- Holistic approach to education; learning how to use money and technology; less learning about other cultures and more about Ireland and Irish history; learn about your country and county;
- Teachers should be nice to kids as much as kids are nice to teachers;
- Instead of Gaelige every day do science a bit more;
- We need to do more learning about what words mean instead of reading comprehension;
- Don't punish boys for being bad; give them rewards for being good.



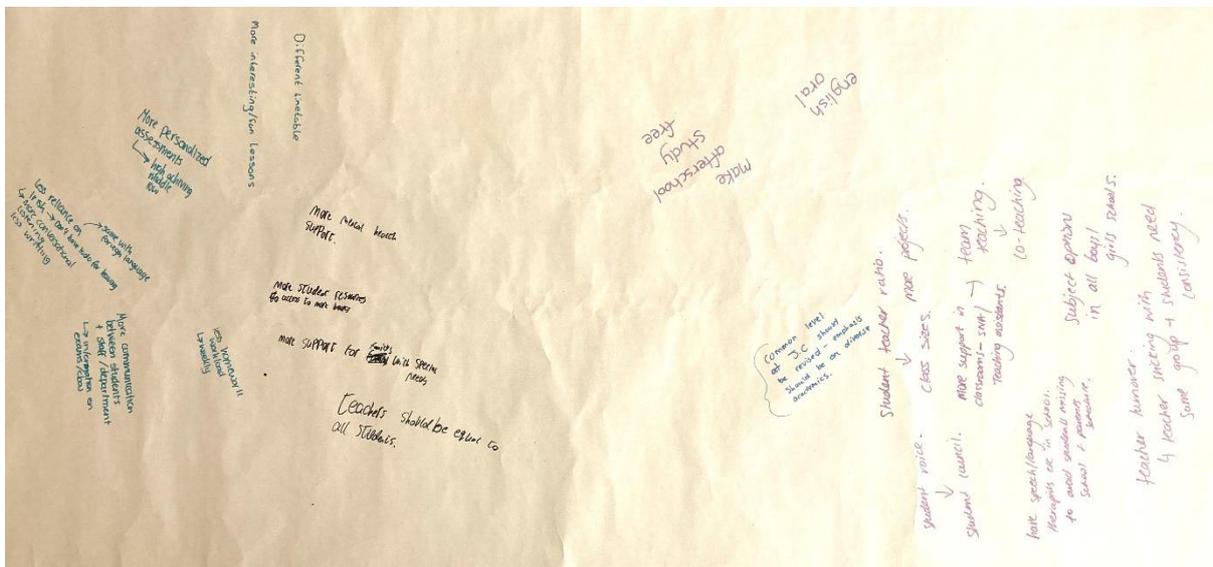
School 3

- More staff and sensory rooms;
- More special needs in classroom; more male SNA's;
- Learning about caring for yourself;
- More language classes for people from different countries;
- Physical homework for kids – run three miles;
- 'I don't like foot ball how about basket ball; more sport;
- When bullying happens, complain; less bullying more talking; more special needs tools to keep them happy and calm;



School 5

- Teachers are equal to all students;
- More mental health supports;
- More student resources and access to more books;
- More support for families with special needs;
- Less homework load weekly;
- More communications between students, staff and department re exams, CBA's and results;
- Less focus on Irish and other languages - don't have to do for leaving; more conversational listening and less writing;
- More personalized assessment – High/Middle/Low;
- Different timetable - more interesting/fun lessons;
- Common level at JC should be revised – emphasis on divers academics;
- Improve student/teacher ratio; more support in classroom with SNA's/TA's – team teaching and co-teaching;
- Speech and language therapy in school avoids student missing class and upsetting parents' schedule;
- There is student voice through the student council;
- Reduced teacher turnover allows consistency for school group;
- After-school study is free.



Open Space Topics

Over two rounds of conversation participants had the opportunity to choose the topics they wanted to explore in greater depth. In the first round they chose: (i) *the Curriculum*; (ii) *Assessment*; (iii) *Health and wellbeing*; (iv) *Sport and* (v) *Homework*. In a second round the topics were: (vi) *Homework (again)*; (vii) *Special Needs*; (viii) *Multi-disciplinary Teams*; (ix) *Business and* (x) *LCA's*.

Curriculum

The call was for a curriculum that incorporated more life skills, providing options for non-academic students and calling time on college being the only further education worth aspiring to:

- Update content;
- Cover more life skills – mortgage, budgeting, banking, saving;
- Alternative options for non-academic from earlier – rather than in senior level in secondary;
- Time – quality over quantity?
- Work experience? For juniors/5th+6th class, not just TY;
- More career guidance regarding paths to courses.

- Update content
- Cover more life skills
 ↳ mortgage → Budgeting
 ↳ Banking etc. → saving.
- Alternative options for non academic.
 ↳ Earlier (rather than senior level in secondary)
- Time!! Quality over Quantity?
- Work experience? for juniors/5th+6th class
 not just TY.
- More career guidance regarding paths to courses

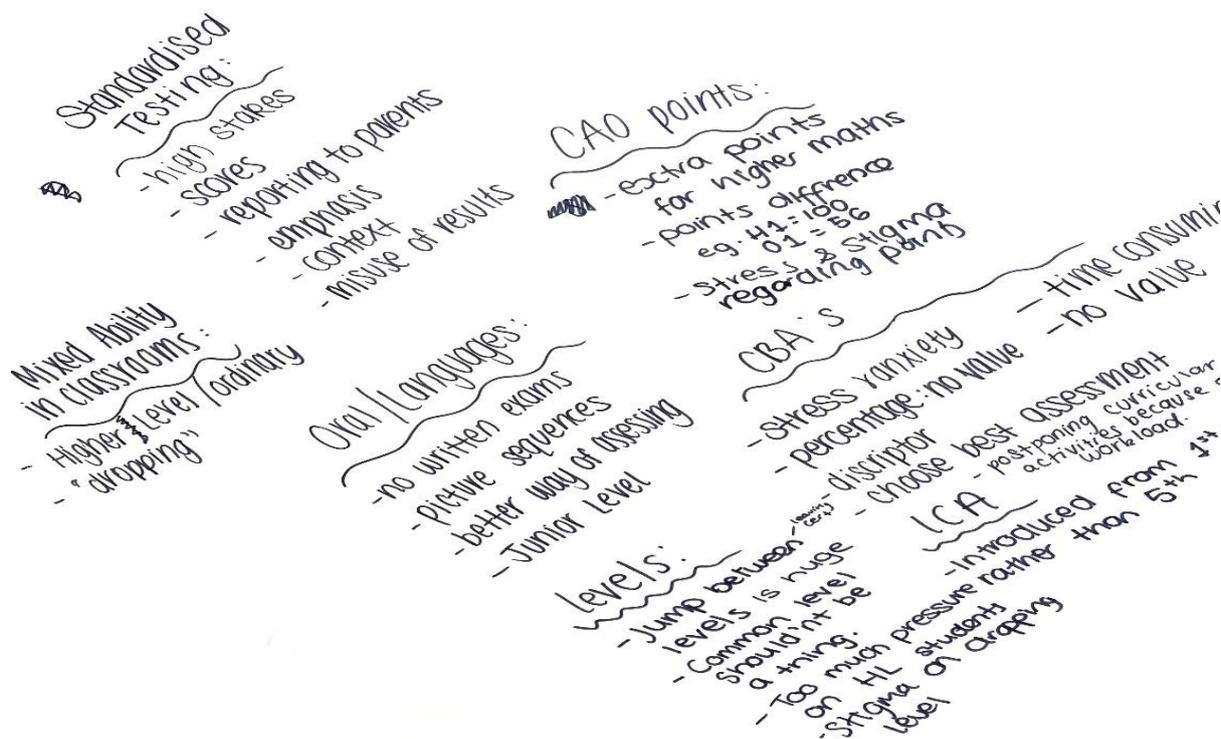
CURRICULUM

Assessment

Assessment is not achieving its objectives while causing stress and anxiety. BCA's are good but not properly valued in assessment system. LC causes pressure and stigma:

- Standardised testing is high stress with scores, reporting to parents and misuse of results;
- CAO points entail stress and stigma with points differentials for higher maths and large points differences between H1 = 100 and O1 = 56;
- Mixed abilities in classroom – higher level and ordinary; there is stigma attached to dropping a level;
- Orals/Languages: replacing written exams with picture sequences would be a better way of assessing at junior level;
- Levels: the jump between levels at leaving cert is huge with too much pressure on higher level students and stigma attached to dropping a level; common level shouldn't be a thing;
- CBA's: causing stress and anxiety and time consuming; descriptor vs percentage - no value ;need to choose the best assessment;
- Postponing curricular activities because of workload;
- LCA's: should be introduced from 1st year rather than 5th.

Assessment



Health & Wellbeing

Wellbeing should be integral to curriculum with training for teachers, especially post-covid. SPHE is sacrificed to exam subjects. BCA's are great but cause stress – sport for its own sake:

- Wellbeing class once a week – time-tables;
- Wellbeing class after school – meditation, walk, body scan;
- Wellbeing week and brain-break:
- Awareness over your own and other peoples health to help self-esteem; being able to talk confidently about yourself; to know yourself; physical health, PE or physio if you don't have much control over your own body which you should;
- Making everyone feel on the same level;
- SPHE: 30 mns wellbeing should have separate time - should be part of the curriculum;
- Circles – first thing in the morning; zones colour-coded;
- Mental health day;
- Teacher training around wellbeing;
- Make it more frequent;
- Sports can be stressful – made too competitive; let everyone enjoy at their own level;
- Active homework;
- Making activities fun – enjoy them without feeling it's a competition;
- Dietary wellbeing – knowing right foods to help physical/mental health.

Health & Wellbeing

- Wellbeing class once a week - time tabled.

- Wellbeing class after school = meditation
= walk
= body scan

- Wellbeing wk.

- Brain break

- making everyone feel on the same level

• Awareness over your own and other people's health because to help self esteem

• Being able to talk confidently about yourself to know yourself more

• Physical Health (Scrabble)
PE or physio if you don't have much control over your own body which you should.

SPHE 30mins - Wellbeing should have separate time - should be part of curriculum

Circles - first thing in mornings

Zones - Colour coded

- mental health day

- teacher training around wellbeing

make it more frequent

- Sports - can be stressful - made too competitive - let everyone enjoy at their own level.

- Active homework

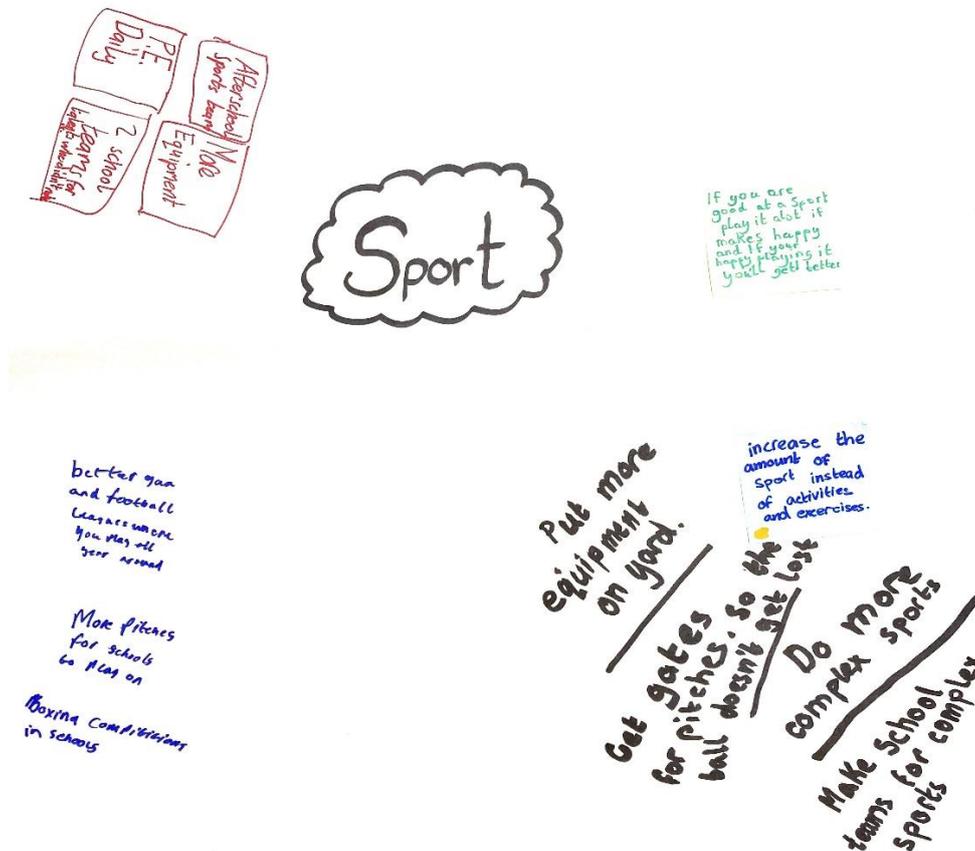
- making activities fun - enjoy them without feeling its a competition

- Dietary - knowing right foods to help physical/mental health.

Sport

Can we have more complex sports such as tennis and more than just an 'A' team:

- If you are good at a sport, play it a lot if it makes you happy and if you're happy playing it you'll get better;
- Increase the amount of sport instead of activities and exercises;
- Put more equipment in the yard and install gates for pitches so the ball doesn't get lost;
- Do more complex sports (e.g. basketball) and make teams for these sports;
- Better GAA and football leagues will make you play all year round;
- More pitches for schools to play on;
- More than one team for those who don't make the first team
- Boxing competitions in schools;
- After-school sports teams;
- PE daily;



Homework I

There are better things to be doing such as being active:

- Active homework i.e. jogging, wlkng 1 km;
- Community help/work;
- More exciting art/experiments/science;
- Spelling + tables;
- Group – mini companies;
- Environmental walk;
- Having a break from work.

NOT like food you get bored of eating the same thing every day:

- Too long to do; too much writing;
- Carrying all books home for many subjects;
- Don't learn anything new;
- Too much in a school day - unhealthy.

Need: Home personal time, relaxing time; socialising, colouring, shower, cooking, eating, time with family and friends, sports.

Homework.

active Homework. ie Jogging Walk 1 km
 Community help/work.
 More exciting Art / Experiments / science.
 Spellings + tables
 group → mini companies.
 Environmental work.

example

this is what we could be doing instead

Its like Food you get bored of eating the same thing every day

cooking

Socializing

Sports

Spending time with Friends / family

not To long to do
 To much writing
 Carrying all books home for to many Subjects.
 dont learn anything new.
 To much work in a day in school.

Points

- Home personal time
- relaxing time.
- Socializing
- Colouring
- Shower, Eating
- Family time

healthy

un healthy

* example *

Home work socializing

Homework II

Provide great variety outside core subjects such as being creative:

- Less homework;
- More variety;
- Active homework;
- Partner work;
- More practical homework – project based;
- Creative subjects;
- Prizes for good homework;
- Active or creative; religion or SPHE.

spellings or English
Active or creativity
religion or SPHE
Project.

Homework

Active Homework.

More variety.

Partner work.

Less Homework

Creative subjects

More practical homework

Prizes for Good Homework.

Special Needs

Needs whole school approach; siblings should be consulted about what's needed:

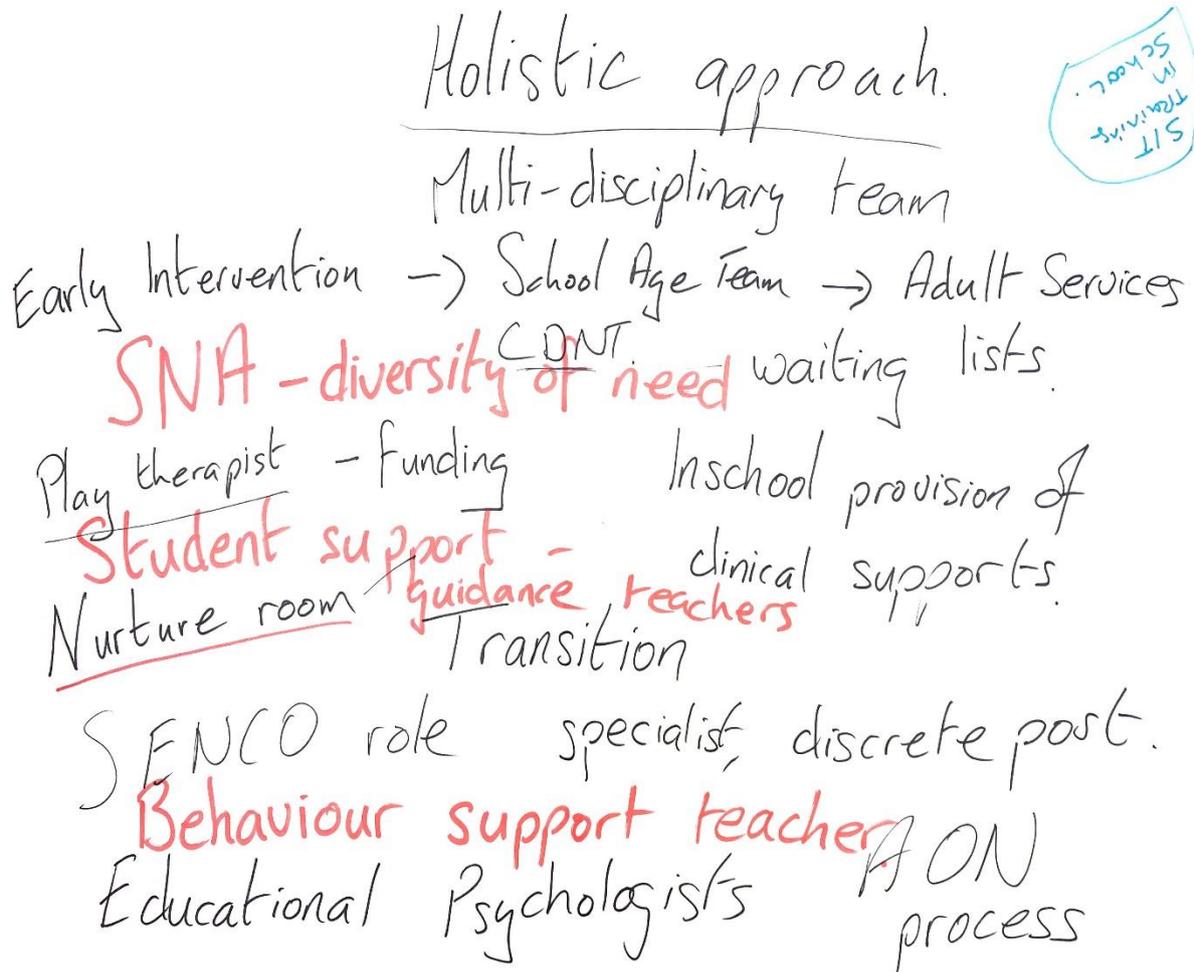
- Students should be more accommodating to other students with additional needs; how can we educate the children to understand others needs?
- Good to have everyone in the same class – where appropriate;
- Inclusiveness: not all children are getting the same treatment or resources/equipment;
- Children with additional needs should be given same opportunities for summer camps etc.;
- More communication between SNA's and families, especially siblings, regarding their home routines/likes/dislikes etc.;
- More places for ASD units;
- Giving children the right environment to learn at their level - each child's individual needs should be met within the right/safe environment.

- ### Special Needs
- Students should be more accommodating to students with additional needs.
 - How can we educate the children to understand others needs?
 - Good to have everyone in same class - where appropriate
 - ~~Child~~
 - Inclusiveness - not all children are getting same treatment or resources/equipment
 - Children with additional needs should be given same opportunities for summer camps etc.
 - More communication between SNA's & families, esp siblings regarding their home routines/likes/dislikes etc.
 - more places for ASD units
 - Giving children the right environment to learn at their level in - Each child's individual needs should be met with the right/safe environment.

Multi-disciplinary Teams

There needs to be integration of teams and services (HSE) with more guidance counsellors and more on the job training:

- Holistic approach with integration of SLT's, guidance counsellors, HSE etc.;
- Early intervention – school age team CDNT (Childrens Disability Network Team) – adult services have waiting lists;
- SNA – diversity of need;
- Play therapist – funding of;
- In-school provision of clinical supports;
- Student support – guidance teachers;
- Nurture room – transition;
- SENCO role specialist, discrete post;
- Behaviour support teacher;
- Educational psychologists – AON(assessment of need) process



Business

Get them young!

- Business should be taught from a young age;
- Setting up business;
- Working from young work experience;
- Marketing: business owners come to speak in class.

* Business should be taught
from young age.

* Setting up business

* Working from young work experience

* marketing.

Speakers \wedge to come talk in class
Business owners

LCA's

Introduce LCA's from early age and de-stigmatise – crucial for non-academic who may otherwise drop out:

- There's a high drop-out rate if LCA is not available;
- Start in 2nd year, with experience from 1st year;
- Educate students about LCA's;
- There's a stigma around the name – should the name be changed?
- Recognize the ways people learn;
- More practical subjects – work on useful subjects;
- Denying people a right to education if we can't cater for them;
- Curriculum needs to be constantly evolving and updated;
 - Outdated curriculum, language and resources;
- Update and expand the LCVP model;
- Educate parents about it;

NOTE: Science is not a compulsory subject; there are no trial runs and no changing subjects.

LCA'S

- high drop out rate if they don't get LCA
- compulsory subjects
- start in 2nd Year so they can experience 1st year.
- educate people about LCA
- stigma around the name
- should the name be changed?
- recognising the ways people learn
- more practical subjects
- work on useful subjects
- denying people a right to education if we can't cater for them
- curriculum needs to be constantly evolving + updated
- outdated curriculum, language and resources
- LCVP model update and expand
- educate parents about it

-
- ### compulsary subjects
- science not compulsory
 - no changing subjects
 - no trial runs

Parting Advice to the Department

'Make learning fun'

A Learning System

- Everything needs to be **constantly updating**;
- Schools need to be updating – more teachers and SNA's;
- Everything needs to be constantly updated. Times are changing and we have to evolve with it;
- **Listen to the teachers!** We know what's needed. Update the curriculum. Think of all the learners (not just academic);
- People in practice know – and their input is invaluable. Best!
- Take **our voices** into consideration when deciding on things that affect us as students. We and the teachers suffer most from bad choices;
- More of this **on the ground research** from the department about what schools need;
- Evolve with the everchanging world;
- **Thanks for listening** to us and I hope anything I said you listed it and thanks.

Curriculum & Assessment

- Update the curriculum, add new topics such as wellbeing, design, technology etc.;
- **Wellbeing** as part of the curriculum; 30 minutes of SPHE is not enough if the area of wellbeing is expected to be taught during that time. Children need to feel happy, safe, supported to learn meaningfully;
- Please change the **CAO/CAS system**. Education should be holistic, not teaching towards an exam. Foundations courses for yr.1 at university/apprenticeships before specialized vocations;
- Re-evaluate the current **JC assessment** – CBA + common level need a change;
- Give more time for **CBA's**, have more wellbeing classes;
- Leaving cert **points systems** needs to change and be more accessible to achieve points. Have more places available in popular courses;
- More types of homework in primary;
- Make learning fun.

SNE

- More **mental health resources** + more special needs, accesasbility (wheelchair ramps etc.);
- Integration of services (HSE/School);

- **Multi-disciplinary teams** i.e. more specialist support/people working more closely together;
- **Staffing** – teaching assistant per class; SENCO non-teaching role in school; EBD teacher role restored;
- Please make it easier for students/teachers to access support like psychologists, speech and language therapists, OT, when it is needed and in a timely manner. **Early intervention** is the key!
- Not all children with autism are the same;
- **Respect autism people the same as normal people** and be kind to everyone. If they are rude be nice and they might be nice back;
- Support (financially and verbally) to schools that have ASD units. All ASD classes should have the same facilities (sensory room, spaces etc.)
- The inclusion of SEN children in schools is not just the business of schools – there is **huge scope for work with parents and the community at large.**

Inclusion/Tailored Provision

- More inclusivity for all kinds of students – **tailored assessments** for different abilities;
- Not every person learns the same way. (You can't judge a fish based on its ability to climb a tree.)
- **One size does not fit all;**
- Allow each child have an **education based on their individual needs.** Support teachers and provide the resources they need to support the children on their learning/education journeys;
- It's mainly about other pupils' way of seeing things, that others can't and being able to understand and that all (opinion based).

PE/Sport

- Instead of exercises for PE we should do sports;
- PE equipment should be improved like goals, hoops, balls etc. should be better for the future of Irish sport. Exercise is very important and all kids should be able to take part;
- Make **PE daily** and get better equipment.

Resourcing Education

- **Invest in education;**
- New school buildings – many schools are too small and too old.

More mental health resources
more special needs accessibility (wheelchair ramp etc.)

INTERGRATION OF SERVICES
(HSE | School)

Multi-disciplinary teams i.e. more specialist support/people working more closely together
offing - Teaching Assistant per class.
SENCO non-teaching role in school.

Please make it easier for students/teachers to access supports like psychologists, speech + lang. therapists, O.T. when it is needed and in a timely manner. Early intervention is key!

Not all children with autism are the same.

respect autism people the same as normal people and be kind to every one if they are rude to you and then might be nice back

Support (financially + verbally) to schools that have ASD units. all ASD classes should have the same facilities (sensory room, spaces)

The inclusion of SEN children in schools is not just the business of schools - there is huge scope for work with parents - the community at large.

Re-evaluate the current J.C assessment -> CBA + Common level need a change

Give more time for CBAs,
Have more wellbeing classes

Leaving Cert Point system needs to change and be more accessible to achieve points.

Please change the CAO/CAS System. Education should be holistic, not tracking towards an exam. Foundation courses for J.C. of University / Apprenticeship before Specialised Vocational.

More types of Homework in Primary.

Wellbeing as part of the curriculum. PTO ->

Update the curriculum, add new topics such as wellbeing design technology etc.

Make P.E. Daily and get better equipment

Instead of exercises for P.E we should do sports.

PE equipment should be improved like goals, hoops balls etc. should be better for Irish sports future. Exercise is very important and all kids should be able to take part.

More inclusivity for all kinds of students
-> tailored assessments for different abilities

not every person learns the same way. (you can't judge a fish based on its ability to climb a tree)

Allow each child have an education based on their individual needs, support teachers and provide the resources they need to support the children on their learning/education journeys

One size does not fit all.

• Mainly about other pupil's way of seeing things, that others can't, and being able to understand and that all.
Copinion based

everything needs to be constantly updating

Everything needs to be constantly updated. Times are changing and we have to evolve with it!

* Schools need to be updated.
* more teachers + staff

Listen to the teachers!! We know what's needed.
-> Update the curriculum
-> Think of all learners (Not just academic)

evolve with the everchanging world.

People in practice know (and their input is invaluable) best :)

more of this on the ground research from the dept about what schools need.

take our voices into consideration when deciding on things that affect us as students, us and the teachers suffer the most from bad ideas

Thanks for listening to us and I hope anything I said you liked it and thanks.

New school builds.. Many schools too small too old

Invest in education

Make learning fun