



BEACONS Inclusive Education Event Ennis

27/28 February 2020



BEACONS

Bringing Education Alive for our
Communities On a National Scale

Welcome - The Old Ground Hotel Ennis

This, the first BEACONS of 2020, returned to Co. Clare, this time in Ennis with a particular focus on the question of inclusion. While inclusion was implicit in previous BEACONS, it was made explicit on this occasion. Primary and secondary schools participated including St. Anne's and St. Clare's Special Schools, Mol an Óige (Steiner School), Ennis Educate Together, Gaelscoil Mhichíl Cíosóg, Scoil Mhuire Ennistymon, St Joseph's Christian Brothers School Ennistymon, North West Clare Family Resource Centre as well as observers from relevant bodies such as the NCSE, NCCA, Ombudsman for Children, NABMSE, NPC-P and JCT. Under the aegis of the Teaching Council, administration was provided by Máirín Ní Chéilleachair of DWEC with facilitation by Chris Chapman for Burren College of Art.

**Report written by Martin Hawkes
from the Burren College of Art.**



BEACONS

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Emerging Themes

With inclusion as the central axis of this BEACONS event, themes emerged that addressed inclusion in particular while many of the themes reflected cross-cutting concerns:

Inclusion

- **Culture change:** Inclusion needs to be the new 'normal' – a world with no 'others'; our cultural tradition is of exclusion – middle-class values informed by church with teachers coming from and formed by this tradition;
- **Teacher diversity:** There is need for much greater cultural diversity in the pool from which teachers are drawn;
- **Reform of competitive/judgmental System:** Our tradition is of a competitive, subject-based system in which judgment is a central feature based on the leaving certificate – this focus needs to be reformed;
- **Stress of conflicting Demands:** The demands of attending to special needs in mainstream can leave teachers feeling guilty, conflicted and stressed as they seek to mediate between the needs of different students;
- **Needs focus:** We need to attend to individual needs – whether special needs or specially gifted; there is 'no one-size fits all'.
- **Gate-keepers:** Who are the gate-keepers who determine who gets into particular schools whether mainstream or special needs? We need greater transparency;
- **School Design:** School physical design needs to facilitate inclusion, not separation; there should be more connection between special and mainstream.
- **Friends:** How do I make friends – a simple but profound agenda from a student with SEN?

Cross-cutting Themes

- **Relationships are Key:** A recurring theme was the importance of the quality of relationships, in particular between teachers and students – kindness, friendship, respect, being called by one's name, being really listened to, fun; a more positive tone and balance in the relationship between students, teachers and parents.
- **Safe Spaces & Conversation:** creating safe spaces in school is vital to making visible what's unseen – distress, bullying etc; we need conversational processes such as BEACONS in schools;
- **Purpose of Education/System:** We need to look at inclusion and reform from the perspective of what education needs to be about. At a time of climate crisis, it needs to be about making the world a better place, about building life skills, about building resilience in dealing with bullying, about cultivating creativity and imagination, about exploring subjects in greater depth. It needs to relax control and trust schools to do what is right for their students in their contexts. There needs to be portfolio approach to terminal exams with continuous creative assessment possibilities. There must be space for risk-taking, innovation and making mistakes.
- **Spreading the word:** Let's use all available channels – FÉILTE, Education Conferences, Wellbeing website etc – to share the amazing examples of 'good practice' we're hearing about.

Thursday Evening 27th – Getting to Know & Setting Course

Introduction & Framing

Chris set the tone by reminding participants that there is much goodwill – most people are trying to do their best - nobody has all the answers, there is a need to slow down so that people feel heard and possibilities open up when we have good conversations. Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director of the Teaching Council, extended a warm welcome to all participants and reiterated the importance of feeling heard as central to what was needed in the inclusive education debate. The Teaching Council and other statutory and interested bodies were present to listen.



What we want in the conversation

The words evoked by participants as they each introduced themselves were:



What we want others to understand about our experience of Education

Breaking into constituent groups - students, parents, teachers, etc. – participants reported on what they felt was important to share with others:

Teachers

Kids may be socially isolated in special schools from their communities (GAA/music) and may be socially isolated even with similar others. Our hearts are in the right place – we are trying. But when our attention focuses on one student having a meltdown, we are stressed that others are losing out. Even in mainstream schooling we have the challenge of ‘specially gifted’ and we can be pulled in many directions. We are not being enabled; we have a tradition of excluding in our system – special schools, deaf/hearing impaired, ‘an Ghaeilge’, visually impaired etc. We have come a long way on gender but being inclusive is a huge challenge with students being turned down for autism classes and given how vast the domain is in peoples’ perceptions. There is no clear definition – it is multi-layered.

Primary-school students

There shouldn’t be one-size fits all – more a focus on individual talents; treating girls and boys differently creates pressures on both; we need more diverse and inspiring role models than white males; there should be wider range of after-school activities; teachers need to listen more so that students have opportunity to be heard. We feel included; energy/buzz from extra-curricular activities; kindness/openness/dignity; relationships and friendships; flexibility – moving between classes and older students helping younger students; conscientious teachers – positive teaching allows children to develop oral and communications skills; small changes make a big difference – awareness of hidden as well as visible needs; acceptance of difference – all normal, equal; need continuity of education through Irish into 2nd level; encouraging individuality and recognition of talent; engage through play; good to have all types of schools invited; mixing ages avoids keeping immaturity together; by mixing people up we learn to respect others; it’s the little things that count; finding something you love helps you love; you can’t change the situation, only the way you deal with it;



Parents

Integration/twinning should be actively encouraged; lack of transparency on access to second level is stressful for parents and engenders suspicion of the system; there is a strong need for teachers from diverse backgrounds; why is imagination not encouraged more? What is the purpose of education – to serve the economy or to develop personally?

Second-level students

We need more outlets for use of imagination – storytelling, poetry and creative writing vs textbooks which can be boring; more accessibility to organisations such as the 'Dulick' centre where one can learn life skills; more adaptability in special units and schools; there is need for greater understanding of the individual needs of students – their story, opinions, dispositions. Make learning more fun and have patience with both students and teachers; have anti-discrimination rules for dealing with students with special difficulties and disabilities.



Principals

We feel guilty that we have spent a lot of our careers teaching one way for students who could learn one way; we are expanding our thinking and breaking the rules – meeting the needs of students, not the system; this might mean bucking the system and levelling the playing field – how might we do this? – crossing boundaries and sectors, sharing expertise; creative clusters; using art as a platform; conversations among teachers, students and parents. Inclusion is a bigger challenge than we think given our legacy of ‘exclusive’ in our beliefs and practices; it is complicated and misunderstood – inclusion within special school setting? How do we include our communities? What we are being challenged to include may not sit well with traditional values; it is easier to keep the gate closed. We must enable and design for inclusion – how the school and campus is designed and the gatekeepers. ‘How can I help you’ vs child protection; be seen and be about the place but don’t jump in. Schools evolved as religious schools and modern inclusivity does not fit with this tradition. As teachers are not representative of society we are challenged as to what inclusivity means.



We are expanding our thinking and breaking the rules – meeting the needs of students, not the system.

Observers (What are we curious about?)

Some big questions about parents and teachers feeling included; have all students with special needs been heard; what ‘fora’ are there? What good things are happening? What do we want inclusive education to mean and look like - a world with no ‘others’; being adaptable – meeting students whether gifted or disadvantaged where they are at; equity – to each according to need; how to know each child so as to attend to his/her needs – no teacher can know thirty students but a team can; there is a lot to learn from special schools and spread good practice; can we facilitate the spread of good practice through the TC (‘FÉILTE’ and Communications unit), through NCCA, through teacher union education conferences; why is it so tough to be inclusive – why are we having this conversation? Some middle-class don’t want class disrupted by special needs – we say we favour special needs, but reality doesn’t always reflect this.



What's surprising us from what we're hearing?

- With climate change people need to come together instead of being competitive and this needs to be reflected in education through group projects and cooperation vs competition;
- The amount of guilt teachers feel about the things they can't get to do seems pervasive;
- Everyone needing to be appreciated for who they are;
- The need to make inclusivity the new normal;
- Surprised the Leaving Cert hasn't been mentioned up to now – are there not more avenues than eight years in primary and five year in secondary that are more inclusive and attentive to students' needs?
- In second level everyone is judged for everything they do;
- Kids are saying that all gifts should be valued – imagination, story-telling - and the importance of relationships – both/and vs either/or;
- Kids are fundamentally the same but with different needs, but teaching is fixed and children feel unheard;
- Education follows the same mould as in the 18th century – put up your hand, answer the exam question – it should focus on making the world a better place;
- As a second-level student I'm surprised at articulation of primary-school students – they should be listened to.

Questions we might explore tomorrow?

- How could creativity be emphasised in education;
- If the pupil were to start from scratch what would they invent as an education system and how would we implement it?
- Creativity and imagination in education;
- Why do we treat people differently because of how we perceive them;
- Why do some kids get access to special schools and others don't;
- How to make friends;
- How do we include education for life – confidence, cooperation etc.;
- Cultivating better relationships across the school community;
- How can we ensure more teachers from diverse backgrounds to reflect society;
- Why do we feel under so much pressure;
- How do teachers and schools cope with inclusive education and do teachers feel included;
- What do we mean by inclusive?

Tomorrow: so what – what can we do to make progress?



What can we do to make progress?

Friday 28th February

Welcome and recap

Chris welcomed the newcomers who were joining this morning, recalled the words participants wanted in the conversation and the questions being raised for further discussion – making friends, teachers feeling OK, need for diversity of teaching backgrounds, creativity and imagination, why we treat people differently based on how we perceive them, the role of the church and gate-keepers maintaining the status-quo and much more.

Assumptions

- People often don't feel heard;
- There is a lot of goodwill (most people want to do their best);
- More things become possible when we talk together well;
- If an issue is difficult, the first step is to make sure you understand it.

New words for the conversation

The new arrivals introduced themselves and added their words to what they wanted in the conversation: together; safe; fun; positive discipline; understanding; inclusion; independence; kindness, action; respect; acceptance; girls are needed in STEM; voice; welcome; accessible; equality; drawing is thinking.



Sharing stories about good experiences in education

Breaking into disparate groups of three or four, participants exchanged quick stories of good experiences in education and then moved to larger groups to share their stories. Sharing words that surprised them most, participants reported back on:

- The conscientiousness of teachers doing courses after school and participating in after-school activities;
- The kindness in stories – the Scottish Government is promoting kindness;
- The need for safe spaces to share stories of what's not visible in students' lives;
- Kindness and smiling vs staring – smile for a smile;
- Magic happens in classrooms every day;
- Youth-clubs – being who we are;
- Things we like – woodwork, cookery, horse-riding, choir, basketball, PE, soccer = fun;
- Flexibility – moving between classes when teacher has particular gift to share;
- The power of being called by name and being recognised;
- Buns!

What might we do to enhance the good things – 'easy wins'

- Going to different places more often;
- Teachers listening more;
- Student voice;
- Simplicity = happiness; we often over-complicate;
- Structuring safe activities that allow students to open up and find solutions;
- Enabling/empowering students – teaching confidence;
- Curriculum flexibility to test and do good things;
- Sensory breaks – time for play and more events such as BEACONS;
- Drawing;
- More respect for teachers and between teachers and parents; more time to connect;
- Drop everything and relax; smile; use first name of teacher;
- Happy week; being friendly and doing random acts of kindness; buns for free;
- Smiling can be transformative;
- Everyone deserves a voice.



Chris calling time for a 'sos beag'



Fintan capturing proceedings graphically

Subjects we want to discuss

Participants choose the subjects they want to discuss and, over two rounds of thirty minutes, get to discuss fifteen topics with others who are drawn to the same themes:

- 1 Religions + how we teach them.
- 2 Discrimination.
- 3 Animation.
- 4 Safe space.
- 5 School subjects.
- 6 School tours.
- 7 The ways we judge people.
- 8 Education.

- 1 Discrimination.
- 2 Experience of St Clare's.
- 3 Creative assessments.
- 4 Accessibility.
- 5 Friendship.
- 6 Bullying.
- 7 Strengthening bridges across sectors.
- 8 Purpose of education.



Round One

1. Religions and how we teach them

There are 3 different parts, faith formation, teaching about religion and morals and ethics; difference in primary and secondary teaching; 'opt out' can exclude students; questioning your faith encourages conversation and can strengthen faith.

What next

Learn about all religions; distinguish between faith formation and learning about religion; conversation needs to be ongoing – if it goes wrong it can exclude; balance is required.

2. Discrimination (2 x conversations)

Teachers need to be diverse, reflecting students and society; difference has to be embraced and celebrated rather than seen as an obstacle; inclusion is essential – removal of kids from core groups can isolate them; building community is essential; ensure student has right to have voice heard; DES needs to remove church from schools – religious discrimination; safe space for people to raise their issues and express problems; teacher training must have mandatory diversity awareness training/respect vs judging students based on ethnic backgrounds; school days should be longer – afterschool should be free and homework done within the supported system, creating a level playing field for those who can't do homework at home – direct provision, homeless, parents who don't speak English or have second level education and parents who have other social or health pressures. How to address stereotyping of difference – yellow flag in all schools; parents need to be educated; teachers from diverse communities need to be proactively encouraged.

What next

Mandatory training in diversity education; positive discrimination to get teachers from different backgrounds; removal of church/religion from schools; safe space in schools to raise issues; transparency in enrolment and central application process to avoid cherry picking; identifying good practice in hearing children's voices/views; design a BEACONS-style event to address the issue; break the cycle of discrimination – befriend every type of person; do more awareness training.

3. Animation

More space needed within the curriculum to allow for animation; you need to think creatively to draw; link to music and other creative areas; direct link to happiness; it doesn't have to be good; it brings happiness to the people watching it; it's under-appreciated as a whole – kids often told 'stop drawing'.

What next

The school system should allow more creative assessment for student animation, singing, writing, art and more room for creative assessment in, say, history. All our styles are a direct link to happiness – either watching or making.

4. Safe Space

Have a culture of using safe spaces such that the student having problem doesn't stand out and where student has choice to use or not – gardens, quiet areas, sensory areas; a person can be your safe space; guidance counsellors; importance of relationships between teacher and student and how we treat each other; mindfulness activities; there should be guidelines on more listening; students find their voice when they feel safe; it's OK not to know things or to not understand or to not decide things.

What next

Having all the good things available for all; schools need more autonomy to do what's needed.

5. Subject Choice

Teach religion as a wider subject – culture, philosophy, whole world – in primary school; more computer classes especially in girls' schools; subject options in boys vs girls schools is old-fashioned e.g. art not always available to boys; 'STEM signs' not same as STEM opportunities has real impact on career options; career guidance in 5th or 6th classes before choosing school; more flexibility; more choice in exams e.g. senior cycle English does not reward ability to compose a poem; continuous assessment.

What next

Credit system for collecting credits for modules done; college courses ask for credits for entry requirements; equal opportunities for boys and girls; courses at a primary-friendly level; greater choice between and within subjects; continuous assessment for final exam.

6. School tours:

Sail and rail; Paris/Berlin or discover all that's to be discovered locally – Dublin and Cork; Galway and Limerick; reopening rail lines; the wild Atlantic way, the Aran islands, Monivea, the Burren, Lough Derg, Glanteenassig (Kerry) – look around and enjoy what's available.

What next

Follow your passion and enjoy what's around you; be kind to the environment and use public transport; enjoy the journey.

7. The ways we judge people

By clothes; appearance; the way they behave; how they walk; how they articulate themselves.

What next

The power of one; conversations about acceptance and diversity; challenge and ask questions; be realistic; don't back down; it's OK to try and OK to fail; assertiveness skills.

8. Education

Education vs schooling; choice/flexibility in the curriculum; life skills vs exams; respect and equality in the classroom; sharing the expertise of students; improve social skills; creativity; transition year activities – one day/morning/week.

What next

Gradual change to leaving cert – add subjects of interest; in primary teachers expertise shared through the school (class swops); research skills need to be taught earlier; more equal relationships between teachers and students – first name; not perfect; no hands up?! Build respect.



Round two

1. St. Clare's Experience

We enjoy school because of: friends; choir; woodwork; cookery; lights room; soft-play outings; social outings – café; surfing in June; sensory activities through learning; assembly; horse-riding; cookery; art; drama; soccer; basketball; swimming. We feel happy; sometimes we feel sad. We feel included.

What next

Activities together e.g. fun day; sharing experiences.

2. Creative Assessment

Holistic approach and creative assessment are the forte of St Anne's and many special needs schools; it allows students learn in their own way vs learning and forgetting immediately after the exam; CBAs seem more flexible but the structure is not good because they fall at the same time and there is still a lot of homework given; 'minecraft' education could be a way of assessing maths.

What next

There can be pressure from parents to assess traditionally; creative assessments are student-centric; can be challenging for teachers; need to ensure they prepare students for leaving cert.

3. Accessibility

ISL (Irish Sign Language) should be taught in schools; the barriers for accessibility – building (wheelchair); safe spaces; some need mental safe space; should be making schools accessible instead of prioritising classroom availability; transport restricts choices for schools, is not available in rural areas and needs to be flexible; autism units separate from main building.

What next

ISL and 'lámh' taught in primary and post-primary; every school needs suite of rooms for children needing to unwind or time to help them focus; accessible buildings; flexible transport for children with special needs.

4. Friendship

It's good to talk to someone and play with someone; listen; sharing; difference between friends and those you just hang out with; commonality = difficult to relate without disability – who is really your friend? Courage to make friends; relationships – vulnerability, appearance of perfection.

What next

It's difficult to force – needs group work; shared activities; project work; setting outside the classroom; dialogue café – chit chat.

5. Bullying

Raise awareness; open up if it's happening to you; bullies don't always realise or intend to bully; it can be subtle – you're my friend and not my friend – a friend is someone who stands up for you; two wrongs don't make a right; we need someone to go to – safe person, one good adult; safe space – therapist/therapy session; often scared to tell; upskilling parents; forgiveness sets you free; why is it happening?;

What next

Build trusting relationships; have safe space to calm down; resilience training - role play what to do e.g. STOP and walk away.

6. Strengthening bridges between schools

Community ventures – facilities, space and place for all; in future schools should be designed according to universal design for learning principles; clusters – teachers + projects; importance of these experiences; two-way experience, not us-and-them; collaborative as with BEACONS, equal and meaningful; post-primary students talk to 6th class; projects/reading buddies etc; challenging assumptions in boys/girls schools; naming respect and inviting it – impact of this experience later in life;

What next

Acknowledge similarities and differences across different sectors; take the best of both/all – 2nd year mentors talking to 6th class; recognising support is not negative; looking, visiting and learning from each other – building opportunities for this; the way forward = access; not this or that but 'both/and'.

7. Subject Choice

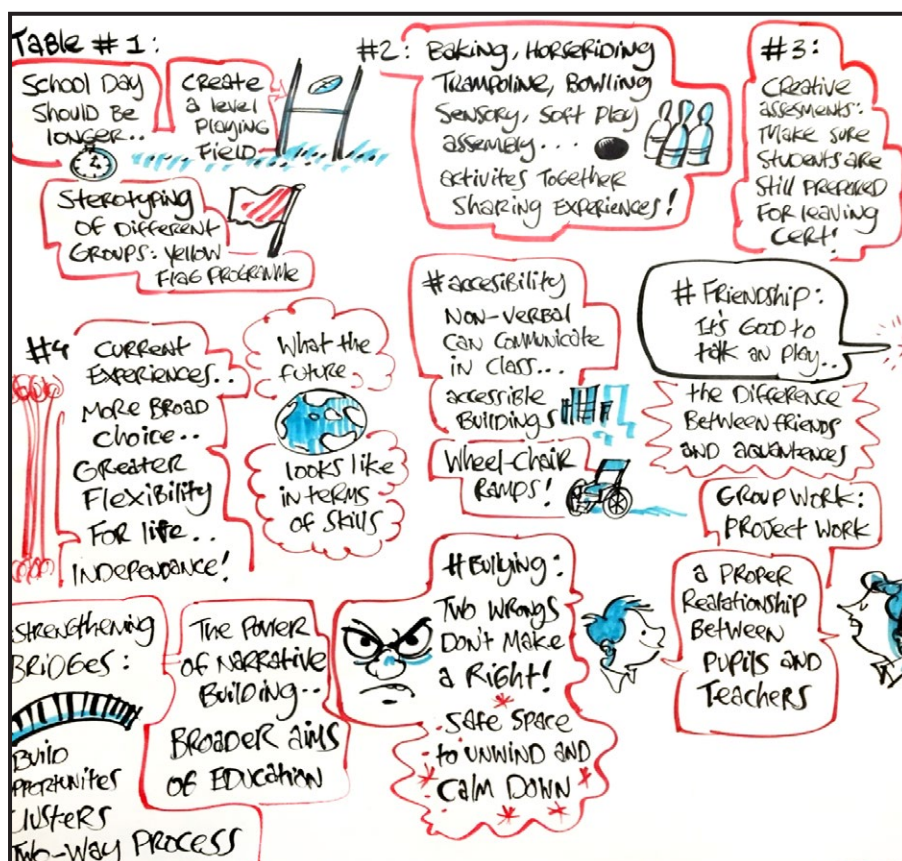
“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. You should walk confidently towards your dream. What you find at the end will not always be a fancy destination, but beautiful footsteps you made along the way”. We need to talk about today; have more subjects/methods – coding/typing, coder dojo, safe space, adults to talk to, physical space, wind-down space, sensory space, relationships, young people voicing ideas, knowing students and teachers as individuals, space and time, communication between year groups, BEACONS meets student council, idea of teachers meeting with students to see how they are doing separately in the subjects they teach.

8. Purpose of Education

Education is outdated in primary school; rotate teachers to promote individual learning; education is not targeted at individual child in primary school; education to achieve individual goals; post-primary gets too narrow – want more choice over broader range of subjects, more modular; should provide a broader foundation for life; education should support independence and responsibility; effect of structures of school day for getting to talk to teachers and engage with school subjects.

What next

Narrative building on the broader aims of education; look at system from perspective of the broader purpose of education.



Reflection Time - what messages for ourselves and national system?



Clare Youth Action (CYA)

Messages for ourselves

Focus on discrimination; we need help to design our own event like BEACONS; teach sign language at the family resource centre; make a TikTok account to teach people sign language; use our Instagram again.

Message to wider system

Break the cycle – befriend every type of person; do more awareness raising.

Scoil Mhuire

Messages for ourselves

We need to report back about this event; more subjects; safe space and adult to talk to; student council; students and teachers meeting as individuals;

Messages to national system

We need to have more subject choice, breaking down each subject; more staff/teacher cultural diversity; more value placed on life-skills in subjects; better student/teacher relationships; longer classes with less classes each day.

St Anne's

Student voice – Individual Education Plan (IEP) targets; options and choices (pupils); more kindness – lollipop sticks idea; allowing time for fun; functional communication – making friends; twinning with secondary school – youth club.

Gaelscoil Michíl Cíosóg (GMC)

Lessons for ourselves

Have BEACONS group in school; debating group/ student council with parents/teachers/students etc; stronger links between GMC and St Clare's; safe space/ place/person; specialist teachers for different subjects; learning about a more diverse group of people in history; happy day/week – anti-bullying week; more creative assessment in the classroom.

Messages for larger system

Encouraging younger children to break down gender boundaries; more creative assessments; create relationships between younger and older children because they might feel more comfortable about sharing their problems in senior classes; mainstream and special education mixing more e.g. day trips, school concerts.

CBS

Messages for ourselves

Communicate the human side of teaching; encourage relatability – through choir, golf, music, friendship week; more positive communication with home, not just when there is a problem; mini-BEACONS in our school; follow your passion, enjoy the journey.

Messages to the national system

There is too much control from the centre; need more trust in schools to make decisions which suit the needs of their students in their local context.

Observers Group

Reflections

What is the goal/shared vision of the key focus of education? What is good and what are the cultural expectations and barriers and boundaries to sharing good practice – there are amazing things happening as reported by the kids? Slowing down, giving more time and space to hearing other voices and creating a new balance between stakeholders such as parents, young people and other stakeholders; we need to have challenging conversations and it needs to be OK for teacher to ‘not know’; for innovation to happen it’s got to be OK to fail.

Message to wider system

Sharing best practice in exploring culture and relationships; use the wellbeing framework (website of inspectorate) to access examples of practice to share with schools; spread the word through meetings of stakeholders; Teaching Council joining the dots between initiatives and projects such as BEACONS, FÉILTE, Cosán highlighting the benefits to all; use education conferences and other safe spaces to share. Keep it real.

Others 1

It all comes back to relationships, partnerships and the culture of teacher as expert; creating space and nurturing and embodying what emerges, giving space for relationships with parents etc; tension between ‘core business’ of curriculum and innovative ‘under the radar’ practices currently happening – remove the barriers to this.

Others 2

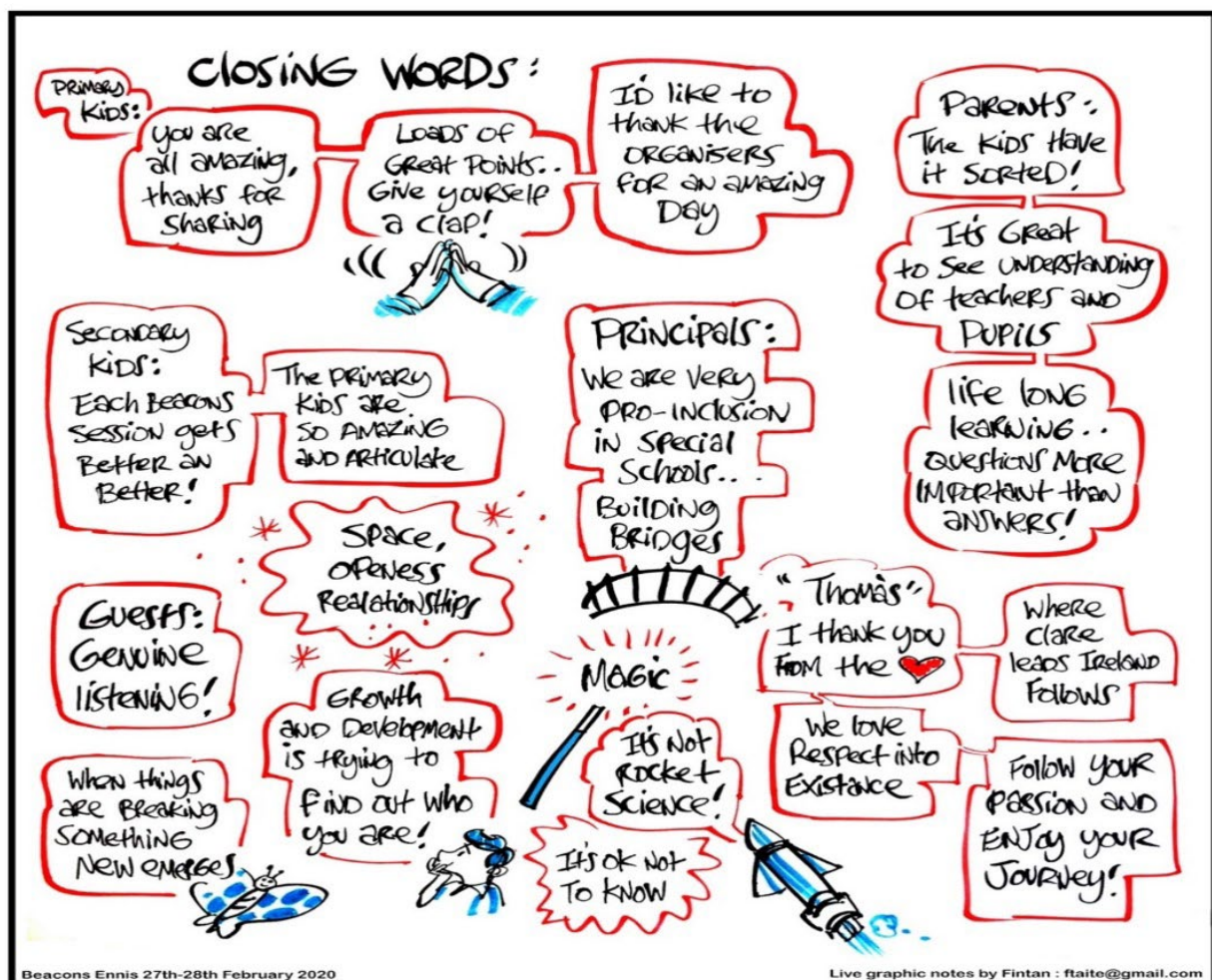
Look at Finnish model; revise time allocations for subject to include fun; look at school building design and make special education spaces woven into the main flow of the school – not units attached to a building. Special schools are for inclusion too! Work on a credit system instead of final exams.

Closing Comments

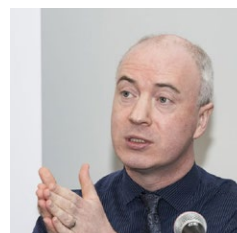
- National school student:** thanks for sharing, thanks to Chris for facilitating and to Tomás and team for organising;
- Parent:** it's a privilege to be here – the kids have it sorted; great to see teachers understanding children and vice-versa; great to see compassion; thanks to all involved;
- Secondary school student:** thanks for open minds and including more people – getting better with each event; still surprised at primary school children speaking with such knowledge;
- Principal:** great experience; we are very pro-inclusion vs worrying in isolation; this is a very important conversation – meeting St Anne's and St Clare's; the important words are space, openness and relationships;
- Tomás:** There is magic in the process; respect is love that is not mandated; special schools have the same issues as other schools; it's OK not to know; it's a big journey; it's important to have safe space where things can be said; 'breaking the system without breaking those in the system'; the quality of the conversation is in allowing you, in the words of John O'Donohue, 'to hear yourself say something you didn't know you knew'.

MH

8 March 2020



Reflection from the Director of the Teaching Council



Tomás Ó Ruairc
Director of the Teaching Council

BEACONS Ennis seems like a whole world and forever ago. Yet as I look back on it now, it brought the process to a new and secure resting place before our world was put into hibernation.

One of the comments which stands out for me from the day was the principal of a special school who spoke quietly and clearly about how for her, the most significant thing was that they were invited to be part of a conversation with other schools. The fact that there was a thematic focus on inclusive education was almost incidental for her. She and the teachers, parents and students from her school were simply glad to be asked and included in all sorts of conversations about education.

In many ways, BEACONS on inclusive education was BEACONS. We responded to a request to have a thematic focus but adhered to the central principles of BEACONS. And so the school communities of Ennis and Ennistymon made their own of it.

Bhí BEACONS na hInse stairiúil ar chúis eile. B'shin an chead uair gur fhreastail pobal gaeilscoile ar an bpróiseas. Mar thuismitheoir a thógann mo pháistí trí Ghaeilge, ba chúis áthais ar leith dom é seo.

Our intention after the event was to offer the model to other communities which have special schools, and that remains our goal. We are exploring how BEACONS could be hosted online, in part or in whole. And while such an event would not be the same as a fully face-to-face on-site event, we must respond to people's worlds as they are, not as we would like them to be. This has been another core guiding principle of BEACONS from the start. We will also be ready to host BEACONS in partnership with communities and national organisations in on-site settings, as and when it is safe to do so.

One of the themes that a student chose for a breakout group at BEACONS Ennis was school tours. And he concluded his report on the group's discussion with the following sentences:

Follow your passion and enjoy what's [sic] around you. Enjoy your journey.

As we look forward to our school communities reconnecting with each other in these anxious times, I cannot think of a more powerful and empowering motto to guide us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tomás Ó Ruairc'.

Tomás Ó Ruairc
8 July 2020

ANNEX

Harvest of Material from BEACONS – Inclusive Education

The Graphic Harvest





Table #1:

School Day Should be longer... Create a level playing field... Stretching of different groups: yellow flag procedure

#2: Baking, Horse riding, Trampoline, Bowling, Sausage, Soft Play, Assembly... activities together sharing experiences!

#3: Creative assignments: Make sure students are still prepared for leaving cert!

#4: Current experiences... More broad choice... Greater flexibility for life... Independence!

What the future looks like in terms of skills

Accessibility: Non-verbal can communicate in class... accessible buildings... Wheel-chair ramps!

Friendship: It's good to talk on play... the difference between friends and acquaintances... Group work: Project work

Strengthening resilience: The power of narrative building... Braver aims of education

Two wrongs don't make a right! Safe space to unwind and calm down

A proper relationship between pupils and teachers

Strengthening resilience: Braver aims of education

Two wrongs don't make a right! Safe space to unwind and calm down

A proper relationship between pupils and teachers

Personal Reflection:

What do I take from this?

Wander around this art gallery

Communicating from side of teacher... Friendship week... Too much control of kids...

Messages you want to give the people nationally

Shout voice, functional communication, more kindness, friends, different methods... more success!

Safe place... Make creative assessment... Student Council... Beacons Group... Students and teachers getting to know each other... Life skills... Focus on discrimination, event planning, sign language

It's all about Beacons!

Link special education and mainstream schools together... Break the cycle... Bullying video

Keep the focus on Beacons... Framework...

Beacons Ennis 27th-28th February 2020

Live graphic notes by Fintan: ffinan@gmail.com

CLOSING WORDS:

Primary Kids: you are all amazing, thanks for sharing

Loads of great points... Give yourself a clap!

I'd like to thank the organisers for an amazing day

Parents: The kids have it sorted!

It's great to see understanding of teachers and pupils

Secondary Kids: Each Beacons session gets better and better!

The primary kids are so awesome and articulate

Principals: We are very pro-inclusion in special schools... Building bridges

Life long learning... excellent more important than anything!

Guests: Genuine listening!

Space, offers relationship

Growth and development is trying to find out who you are!

Thanks! I thank you from the heart

Where does your shadow follow?

When things are breaking something new emerges!

It's not rocket science! It's ok not to know

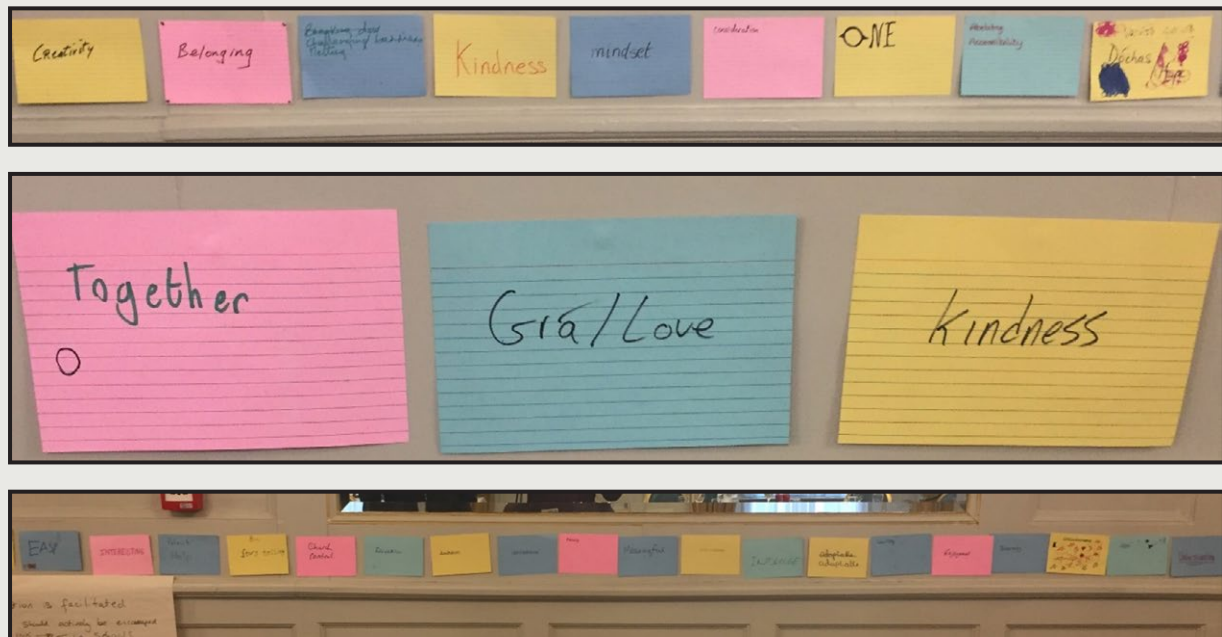
We love respect into existence

Follow your passion and enjoy your journey!

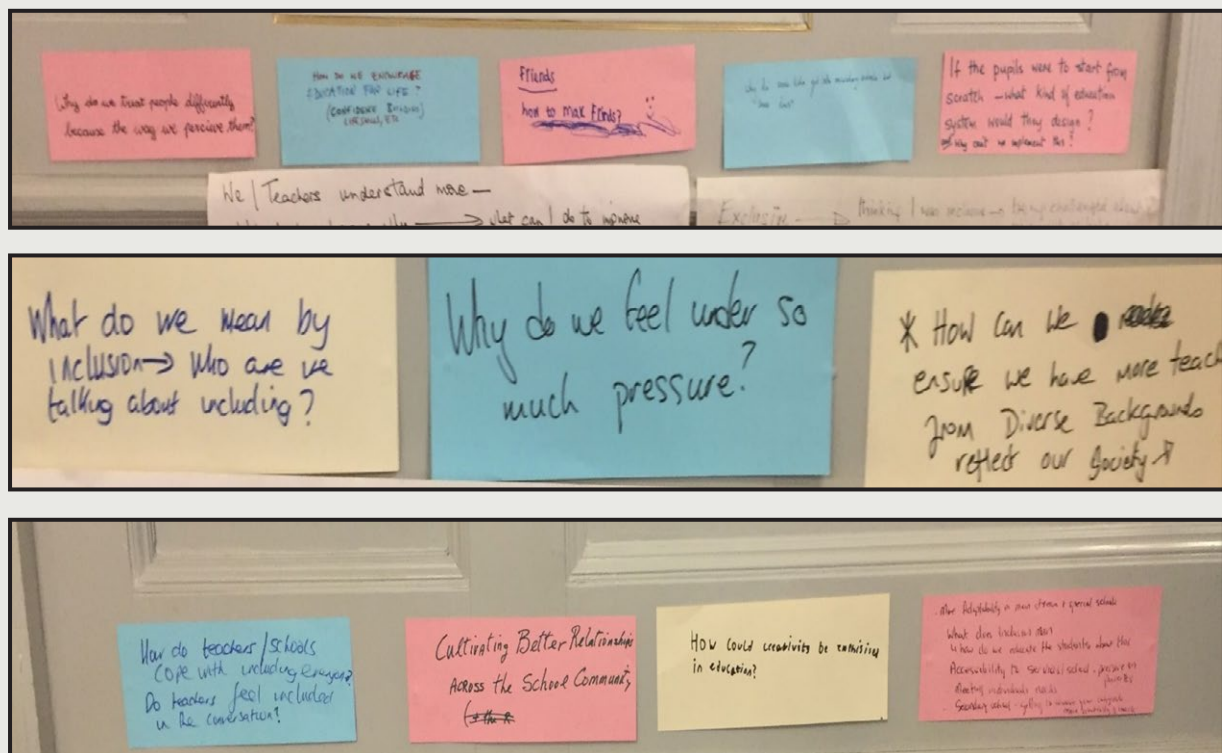
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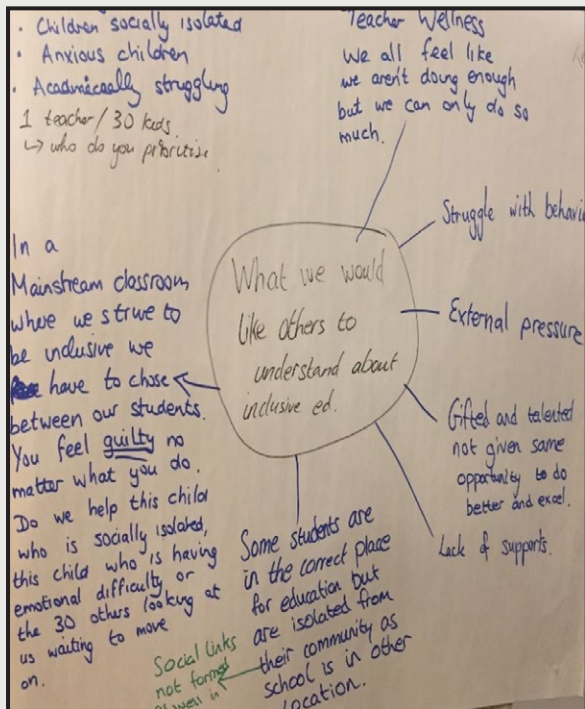
What we want in the Conversation



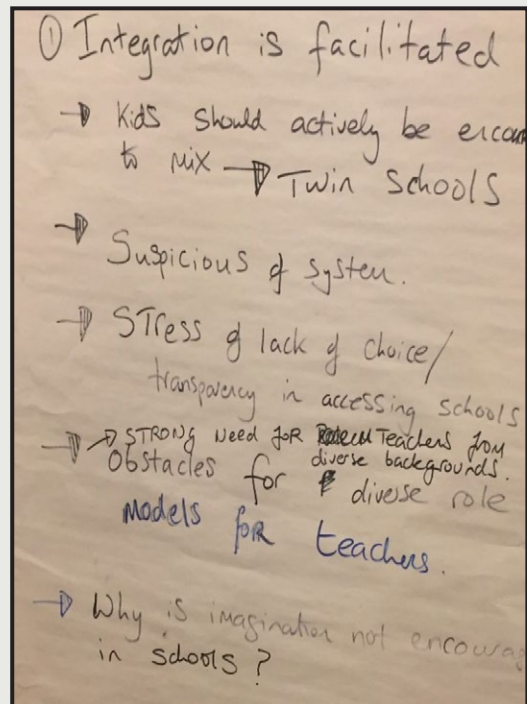
What we want others to understand and what questions are arising



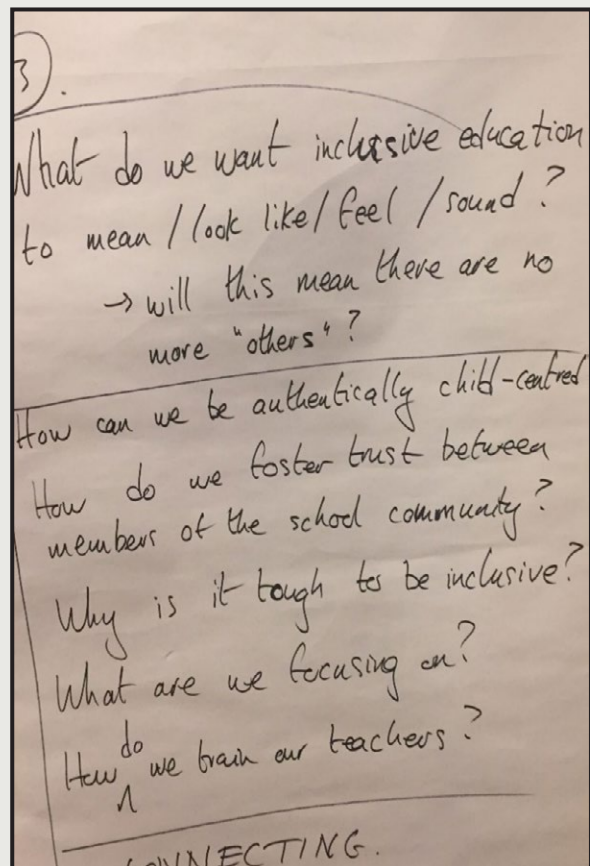
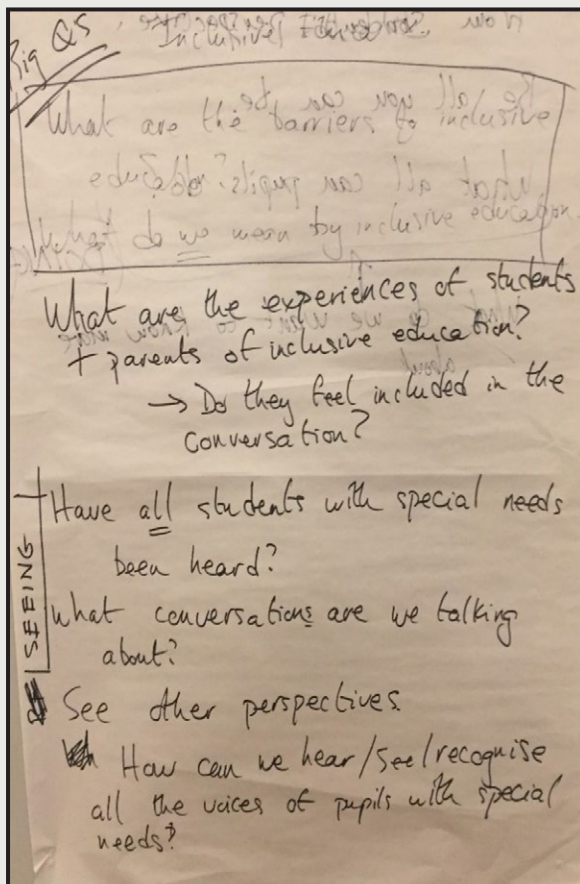
Teachers' Perspective



Parents' Perspective



Observers' Perspective



Subjects we chose for Discussion - & what needs to happen

Creative Assessment

Creative Assessment

Holistic approach
+ creative assessment forte of St. Ann's + many special schools.

CBA's seem more flexible but The structure is not good because They fall at The same time, and There is still a lot of homework given.

Minecraft education could be a way of assessing maths

Creative assessments?
What next?

- * There can be pressure from parents to assess traditionally
- * Creative assessments are student-centric.
- * Can be challenging for teachers.
- * Need to ensure They prepare students for leaving cert.

Accessibility

Accessibility

- ISL (Irish Sign language) should be taught in schools
- The Barriers For accessibility
 - Building (wheelchair)
 - Safe spaces
 - Some need mental safe space

Prioritising classroom availability

↓

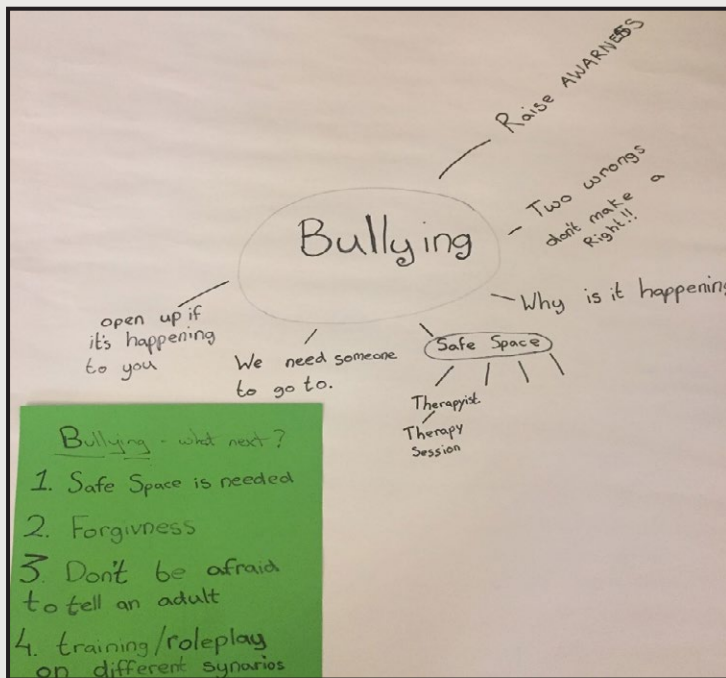
Instead we should be making schools @ emotionally and mentally accessible

- Transport
 - Restricts choices for schools
 - Not available in rural areas
 - Flexibility
- Autism Units
 - Separate from main building

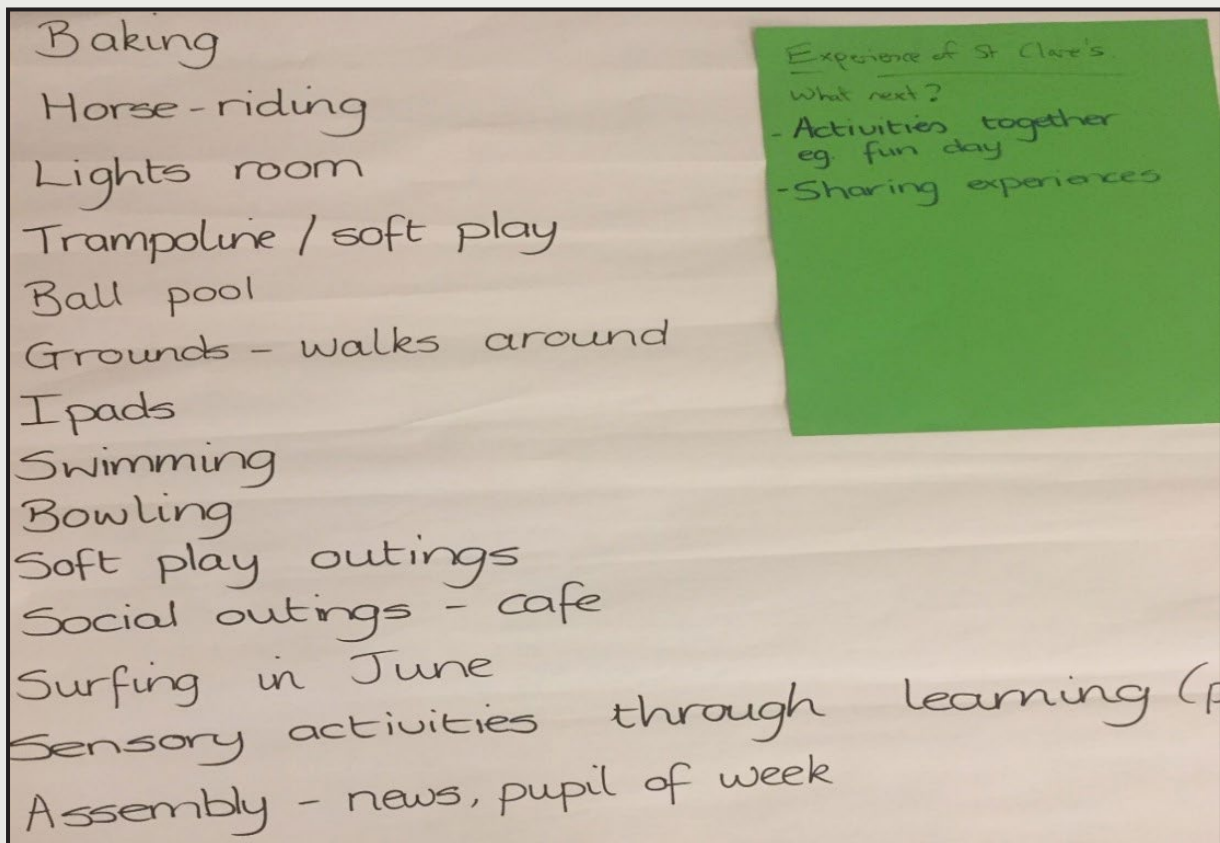
Accessibility - what next?

- ISL and Lámh taught in primary and post-pr. Mary
- Every school needs Suite of rooms for children needing to unwind or time to help them focus
- Accessible buildings
- Flexible transport for children with special needs
eg. operational areas, wheel chair ramps

Bullying



Enjoyment of St Clare's



Friendship

Friendship

- Good to talk to someone.
- ~~Talk~~ and
- Play with someone.

- Listen
- Sharing
- Difference between friends and those who you just hang out with.
- Commonality = Difficult to relate with our ~~school~~ ^{reliability}.
- ↳ Who is really your friend?
- Courage
- Relationships
 - ↳ Vulnerability
 - ↳ Appearance of Perfection.

Friendship - what next?

- Group work
- Shared activities
- Project Work.
- Setting outside the classroom.
- Dialogue Cafe - Chit chat.

Discrimination

* Teachers need to be diverse - represent students & society

* Difference has to be embraced and celebrated rather than seen as an obstacle.

* Inclusion is essential → removal of kids from core group can isolate them → Building community is essential.

* Ensure the student has right to have their voice heard.

* Dept. of Education needs to removed church from schools. — Religious Discrimination.

* SAFE SPACE for people to raise their issues - express problems.

* Teacher training must have mandatory Diversity awareness training. / Respect.

↳ Judging ~~teachers~~ pupils based on ethnic background.

Discrimination. (cont'd.)

① School day should be longer — after schools should be free.

allow H/W or equivalent to be done within supported system.

→ Credo level playing field for kids who cannot do H/W at home.

→ Direct provision.

→ homeless.

→ Parents who don't speak English / Irish don't have second level education.

→ Parents have other social / health pressures.

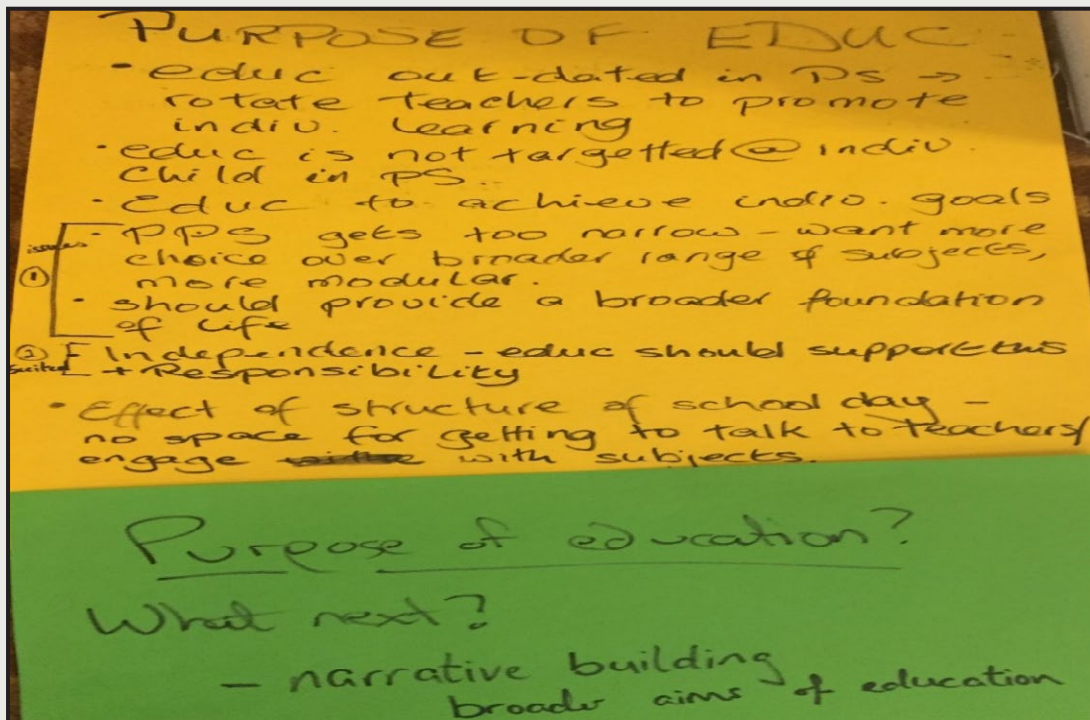
Discrimination: what next?

- Mandatory training in diversity education
- Positive discrimination to get teachers from different background.
- Removal of Church/Religion from schools
- Safe Space in schools to raise issues
- Transparency in enrolment + central application process to avoid cherry picking
- Identify good practice in schools

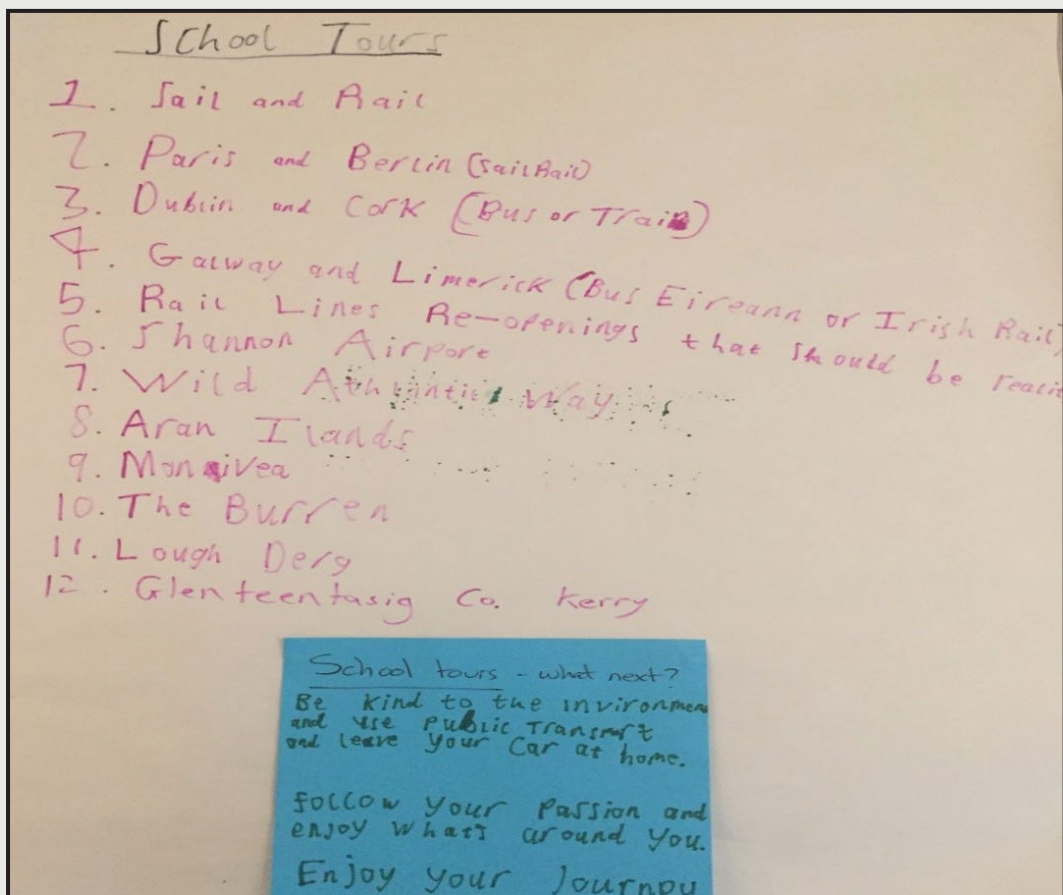
Stereotyping of differences — How to Address

- ↳ yellow flag in all schools.
- ↳ parents need to be educated
- ↳ Parents Teachers need to be for diverse communities → Should be proactively encouraged

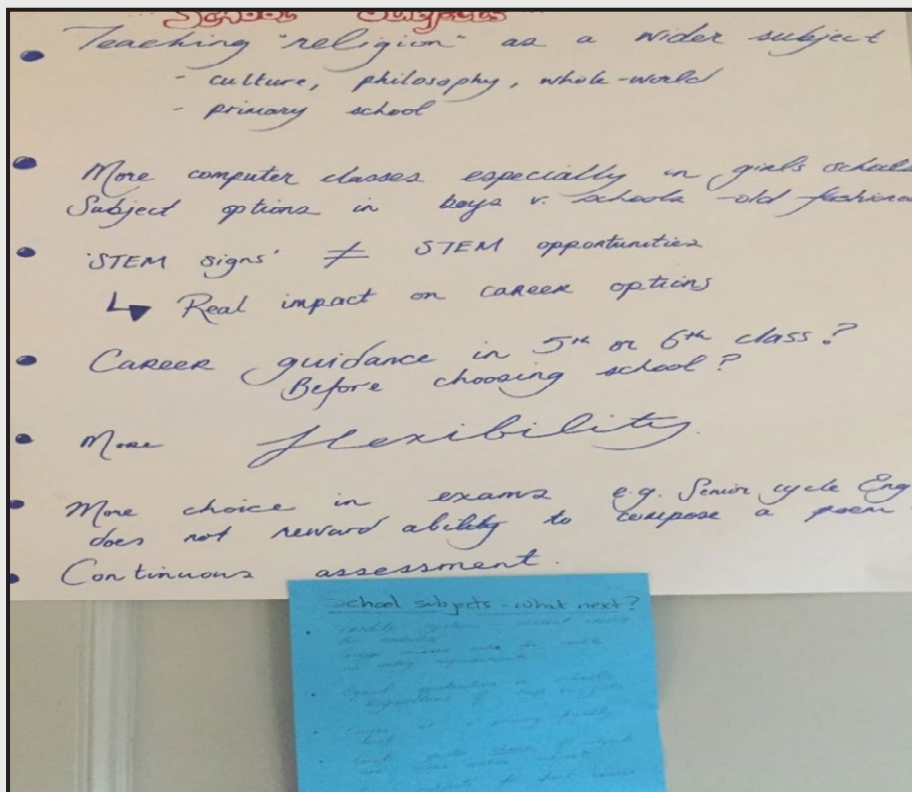
Purpose of Education



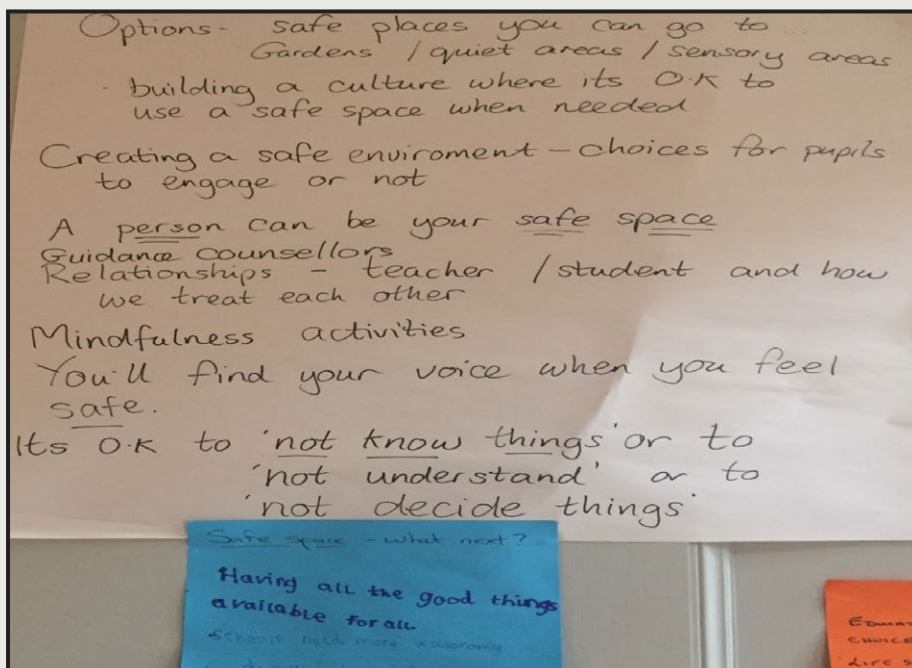
School Tour



School Subjects



Safe Spaces



Animation

Animation

link to music
+ other creative
areas.

More space needed
within the curriculum
to allow for animation.


Direct link to happiness.
↓
It doesn't have to be
"good".
It brings happiness to the
people watching it.

You need to think
creatively to draw.

Action
Can there be room created in the
assessment for students to show
their acquired knowledge via animation
or other means? More creativity in
the system.
In art classes, allow for other styles,
which currently are not covered.

It's underappreciated as a
whole. Kids after the told
"stop drawing".

Animation - What next?
- The school system should allow
more creative assessments for students
animation, song, writing, art, games, etc.
- More room for different art styles.
- All art styles are a direct
link to happiness - either watching
or making.



Education

EDUCATION.

EDUCATION VS SCHOOLING.


| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| CHOICE / FLEXIBILITY | CURRICULUM. |
| LIFE SKILLS. | EXAMS. |

RESPECT & EQUALITY IN CLASSROOM.

- SHARING THE EXPERTISE OF STUDENTS
- IMPROVE SOCIAL SKILLS.
- CREATIVITY &
- TRANSITION YEAR TYPE ACTIVITIES
ONE DAY / MORNING / WEEK.

Education - what next?

- GRADUAL CHANGE TO L.C.
- ADD TOPIC OF INTEREST.
- IN PRIMARY. -
- TEACHERS EXPERTISE SHARED
THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.
(CLASS SWOPS)
- RESEARCH SKILLS NEEDED TO BE
TAUGHT EARLIER.
- RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHERS
& STUDENTS SHOULD BE MORE
EQUAL — 1st Name
— NOT PERFECT
— NO HANDS UP ?!
- BUILD RESPECT.



Religion in Schools

Religion in schools

- faith formation
- teaching about religion
- morals + ethics

} 3 very different parts

Differences in primary + secondary teachings

'Opt out' can exclude students

questioning your faith encourages conversation
+ can strengthen faith

Balance

Religions + How we teach them +
What next?

- Learning ALL Religions at
- Primary level
- Distinction between faith + facts
- Learning about religion.
- Conversation needs to continue
- If it goes wrong it can exclude
- Balance

The Ways we Judge People

The ways we judge people.

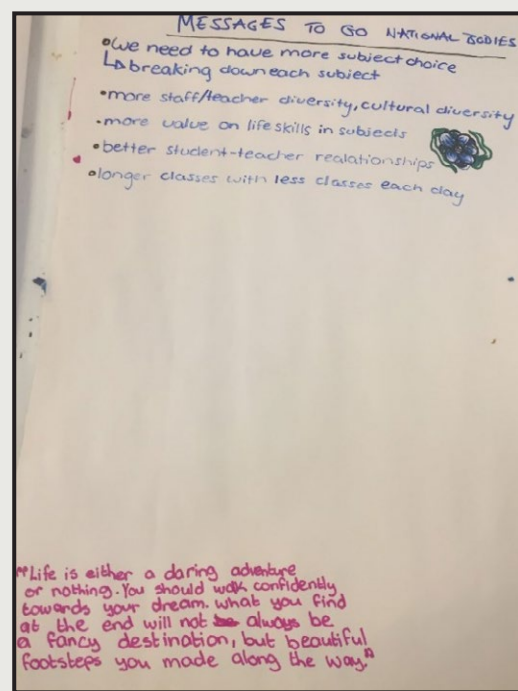
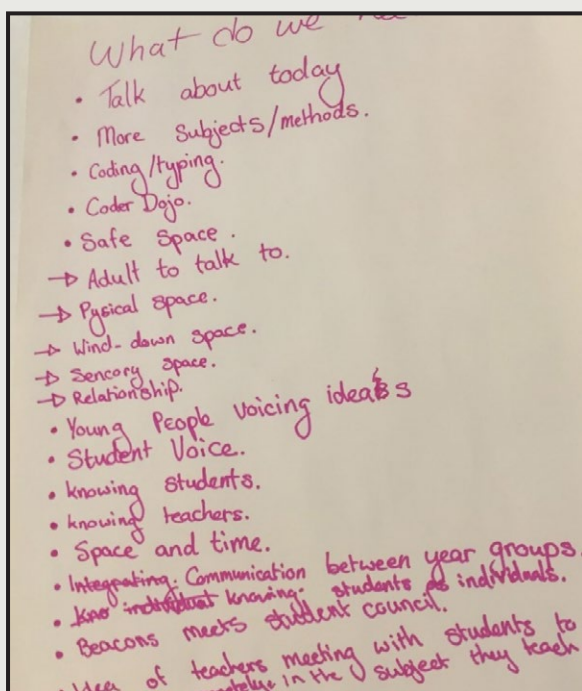
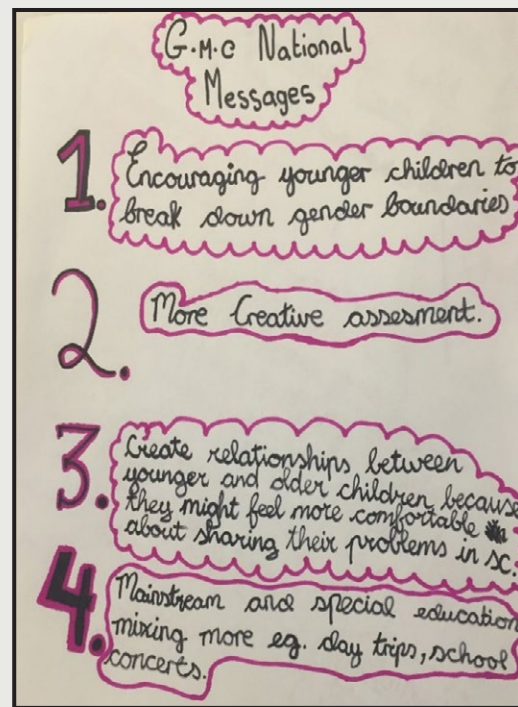
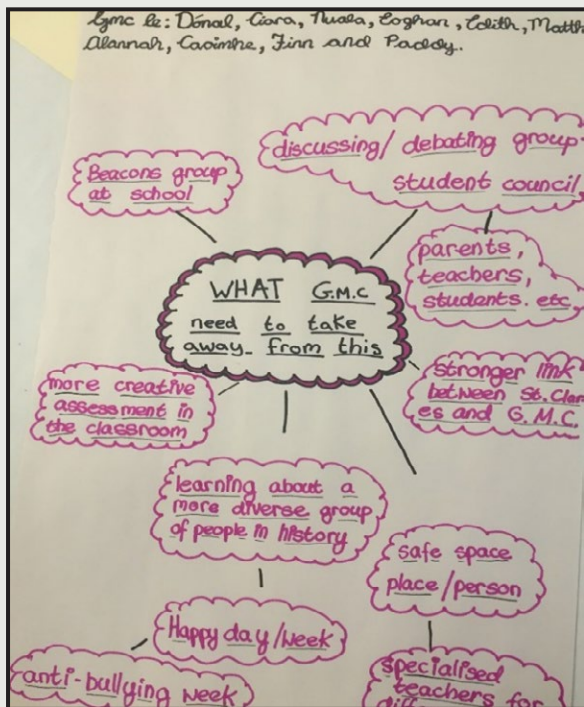
What next? The power of our
Conversations about acceptance
and diversity.

Challenge and ask questions.
Be realistic. Don't back down.
It's ok to try and ok to fail
Assertiveness Skills - need to
be taught, experienced + learned
We need to learn about people
like us and not like us.
Walk the talk - Be positive role
models

Clothes
Their appearance
The way they behave
The way they walk
How they articulate themselves

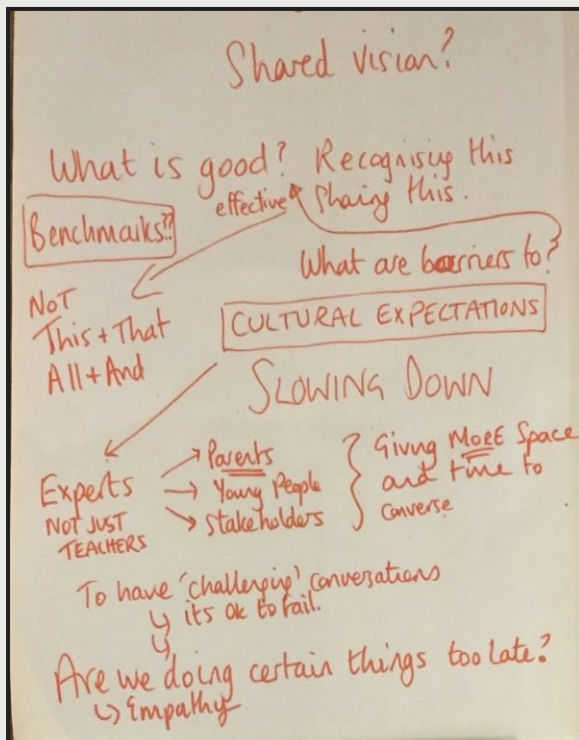
Messages for Ourselves & the Wider System

Gaelscoil Mhichíl Chiosóg



Observers

Clare Youth Action

Action Plan.*Sharing Best Practice of Exploring Culture/Religion etc.*

- * Use the WB Framework Website (Inspectorate) to access examples of practice to share with schools
- * ^{More} Regular gatherings of stakeholders
- * Teaching Council joining the dots between initiatives/projects such as BEACONS, FEILTE ^{COJAN} etc (Highlighting benefits to all).
- * Education Conferences / FEILTE etc. to be used as a format/ space to share
- * keep it real

Cya

~ Discrimination

- ~ to have a meeting with Chris Orlórnas to help us design our event like beacons.

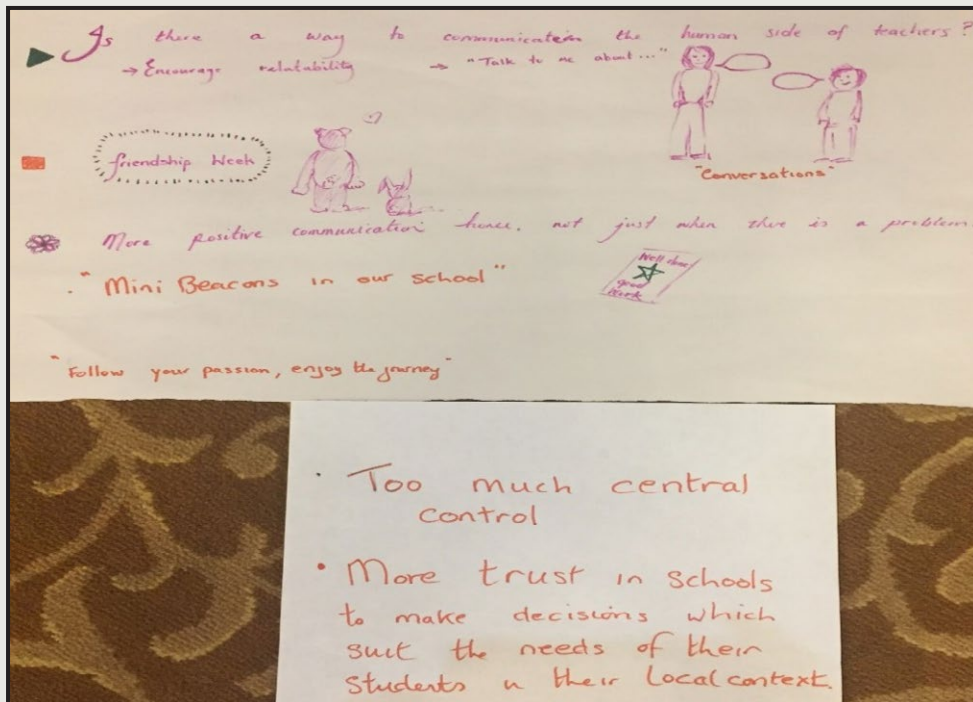
~ Accessibility

- teach Sign language at the Family Resource center.
- Make a tik-tok account to teach people Sign language
- use our Instagram again.

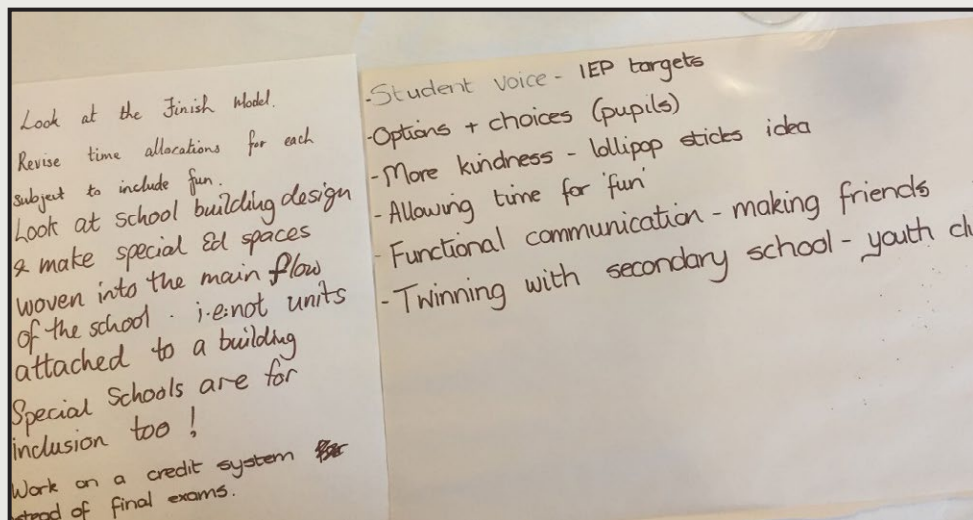
• Break the cycle - befriend every type of person

• Do more awareness raising

CBS Ennistymon



Others



Others

MESSAGES RECEIVED

- IT ALL COMES BACK TO RELATIONSHIPS, PARTNERSHIPS, THE CULTURE OF 'TEACHER AS EXPERT'.
- CREATING SPACE + ~~NURTURING~~ ~~WHAT~~ EMBEDDING WHAT EMERGES, GIVING SPACE FOR RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS ETC.
- TENSION BETWEEN 'CORE BUSINESS' OF CURRICULUM + INNOVATIVE 'UNDER THE RADAR' PRACTICES CURRENTLY HAPPENING. REMOVE THE BARRIERS TO THIS.

SPACE, OPENNESS, RELATIONSHIPS

Notes





BEACONS

Bringing Education Alive for our
Communities On a National Scale

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An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta



The Teaching Council