

Implementation Report Lifelong Readers LiRe



Implementation Report from LiRe Partner: Meath VEC

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Introduction(max. 300 words):

The guiding premise for this project is the assertion that "a lifelong learner is first and foremost a lifelong reader". It is well established that the early childhood years serve as an important foundation for subsequent literacy development. The degree to which children acquire literacy skills is known to be a strong predictor of future academic success and has long-term social and economic implications for families and societies. In a statement issued by the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, they stress "one of the best predictors of whether a child will function competently in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level to which the child progresses in reading and writing" (IRA/NAEYC, 1998, p. 30).

Reading for pleasure is an important concept to the success of lifelongreaders. Reading for pleasure refers to reading that we do of our own free will anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else's request we continue because we are interested in it. It typically involves materials that reflect our own choice, at a time and place that suits us.

The following report describes the implementation of the Lifelong Readers Project in St. Patrick's Boys National School from October 2012 to June 2013. The report provides a context of implementation, providing background information on St. Patrick's BNS and a snap shot of their school community. A short description of the teacher training modules and reading promotion plan follows. The data collection methods implemented and their findings are then presented. The final part of the report deals with recommendations and conclusions of the implementation process of lifelongreaders project in St. Patrick's BNS.

Context of Implementation (max. 400 words):

It was important that Lifelong Readers be robustly piloted to ensure validation and reliability of the programme. Traditionally in Irish schools there have been barriers to the successful implementation of reading promotion programmes. These include schools from disadvantaged areas, boy's participation in reading and the engagement of parents. To pilot Lifelong Readers effectively it was decided to choose a boy's school in a disadvantaged urban area, with limited parental involvement. St. Patrick's Boy's National School was chosen, as it met the criteria outlined above.

St. Patrick's BNS is a Catholic primary school, under the patronage of Cardinal Sean Brady of the diocese of Armagh in Ireland. St. Patrick's is a junior boy's primary school, catering for boys from Junior Infants to Second class. The school opened in September 1954. Originally the school catered for all classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. The school served the community in the immediate area of Bóthar Brugha and surrounding streets, but later served larger estates such as Yellowbatter, Brookville, Newfield etc. It continues to provide education for pupils in the burgeoning area of North Drogheda. The school became a Junior School in 1974, when it amalgamated with the Junior School (known locally as "The Sisters") run by the Daughters of Charity. Today St. Patrick's BNS has 341 pupils, 23 teachers and 5 Special Needs Assitstances.

St. Patrick's ethos is as follows:

As a Catholic school we, at St. Patrick's BNS, believe that we provide a welcoming, positive and enjoyable atmosphere where each individual is valued, respected and included. We promote equality of treatment and are supportive of individual difference, while working collectively to support each other in a caring, safe environment. The spirit of our school is nurturing and warm and it promotes fairness and forgiveness.

St. Patrick's BNS is a part of the "Delivering Equality Opportunities in Schools" (DEIS) programme. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion, was launched in May 2005 and remains the Department of Education and Skills policy instrument to address educational disadvantage. The action plan focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). DEIS provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and an integrated School Support Programme (SSP). 860 schools are included in the programme. These comprise 665 primary schools (341 urban/town schools and 324 rural primary schools) and 195 second level schools. As part of the DEIS initiative schools have access to literacy/numeracy support such as Reading Recovery, Maths Recovery, First Steps, Ready Steady Go Maths.

With access to such supports St. Patrick's BNS have been pro-active in regards to their reading promotion prior to the implementation of Lifelong Readers. There is a designated reading support team in the school who implement the Reading Recovery Programme. Each class has a well-resourced classroom library. There is a history of introducing reading promotion activities in the past however there is little evidence of sustained change within the school community in regards to the promotion of reading.

The initial contact meeting took place with principal Rose Sullivan, in St. Patrick's BNS at the end of September 2012. The principal was enthusiastic about the programme however she made it clear that certain parts of the implementation process would have to be adapted according to the school context. At her suggestion a core reading promotion team was established. The core reading promotion team composed of the principal, deputy principal and reading recovery team (2 teachers) was given the task to pilot the LiRe framework.

Description of Training Modules (max. 600 words):

St. Patrick's BNS was chosen because as a school it presents a number of challenges for reading promotion programmes. St. Patrick's is designated as a school of disadvantage. Within the catchment area for the school there are serious socioeconomic issues. Unemployment is high, depression and mental health issues are prominent and anti-social behavior is on the rise. The educational expectations of the family for the child would tend to be quite low. The school has previously expressed concern at the lack of parental support in educational matters concerning the child.

As a junior boys school St. Patrick's is very aware of the challenges boys face in relation to their enjoyment of reading. They have previously introduced reading promotion initiatives, to varying degrees of success. Concern at the lack of continuity of such initiatives was expressed at the first meeting of the core group.

The initial meeting with St. Patrick's BNS principal, Rose Sullivan, took place on Thursday 20th September. The Lifelong Readers programme was outlined to Mrs. Sullivan and seeing the benefits of the programme agreed to set up a group meeting comprising of 5 members which included the reading recovery team, principal and deputy principal. The meeting took place in St. Patrick's BNS on Thursday 27th September. During the meeting the programme was outlined, actions required to pilot the programme were explained and a time frame for teacher training modules agreed upon. It was

agreed to conduct the training modules following completion the pupil reading habits evaluation in the first week of December. Due to local constraints within the school, the pupil reading habits evaluation were not conducted until December 14th. It was agreed to revise our time frame and arrange the training workshops to begin on Wednesday 9th January in St. Patrick's BNS. Fourteen teachers attended the first training workshop. The results of the reading habits survey were outlined and discussed. Teachers expressed their surprise with many of the findings, outlined under data analysis below. Professional dialogue and the collaborative sharing of ideas on effective reading promotion in schools were positive features of the workshop.

At the request of the school principal the second training workshop took place exclusively with the School Self Evaluation team and the Reading Promotion team, as the main focus of the workshop would be drafting the reading promotion action plan. A group of eight teachers attended the workshop. The group worked together to draft the school reading promotion plan. It was decided that this plan would be presented to the teaching staff at the next training workshop.

The final training workshop was attended by all teaching staff members of the school. A short overview of the evaluation results was once again given and the action plan to meet the needs outlined was launched. Some of the more creative activities from the lifelongreaders programme were met with apprehension and unease from the teaching staff. Concern was expressed by teachers of the issue of lack of parental support in school activities. These concerns were eased by the principal and the action plan was accepted by the teaching staff.

Description of Reading Promotion Plans (max. 300 words):

The reading promotion plan formed part of a wider School Self Evaluation Plan for Literacy, which was being conducted nationwide as a directive from the Department of Education and Skills in Ireland. Data was collected using an adapted version of the Reading Habits Evaluation Tool and Reading Promotion Evaluation Tool from the lifelongreaders framework. A School Self Evaluation Team was established to draft a reading promotion plan based on the evidence gathered. The plan was then presented to the teaching staff of the school and consultation sought. The final draft of the action plan is attached as appendix 1 of this report.

Objective 1: To engage parents with reading promotion activities to link home and school reading. Two actions were proposed to address this need. The Bedtime Stories Activity would be used in a selection of older classes to encourage parental involvement. Classroom teachers along with the reading promotion team would be responsible for organising the events in the Spring and Summer term of 2013. The Family Writing Workshop would also be used to encourage parental involvement. It is proposed that this activity take place in June 2013 and will be organised by the reading promotion team.

Objective 2: To engage mature males in reading activities of school. The Lads and Dads Reading Promotion Activity was planned on a monthly basis to address this objective. It is hoped that through engagement with mature males that the boys of the school will take more of an interest in reading. The activity will take place throughout the Spring and Summer terms.

Objective 3: To encourage families to use their local library. The school will actively promote events held in the library. The school will also organise trips to the library for 1st and 2nd classes. These activities will run throughout the Summer term of 2013 and will be led by the Principal of the school. It is hoped that families will avail of the services of the library as a result.

Objective 4: To involve parents in their child's reading within a classroom setting. The Shared Reading Activity is to be used to promote involvement of parents within the school. The activity will continue throughout the Spring and Summer terms.

Description of Data Collection Activities (max. 300 words):

In order to reduce invalidity when collecting data for the project a mixed methods approach was adopted. Quantitative research methods such as questionnaires and surveys were used to collect data from large audiences within the school community. While qualitative methods of individual and group interviews were conducted to collect data from important stakeholders within the school community.

Pupil Reading Habits:

Before proceeding with the lifelongreaders programme St. Patrick's were eager to understand the needs of their pupils. The pupils reading habits evaluation tool was used to elicit data from the pupils in regards to their reading habits and their disposition towards reading. The first collection of data was took place on the 14th December 2012. A random selection of one class in each year group was sampled. A total of 101 pupils were surveyed using an adapted version of the Pupil Reading Habits Evaluation Tool. For the purpose of data analysis and organization it was decided to organize the pupils into two groups. The Junior and Senior Infants classes were surveyed as group 1 (ages 4-7) and the 1st and 2nd classes were surveyed as group 2 (ages 7-9). A second collection of data on the reading habits of pupils was conducted on 24th June after the implementation of the lifelongreaders framework.

Reading Promotion Evaluation:

An audit to the current reading promotion activities in St. Patrick's was conducted after the first training workshop. Teachers were asked to reflect on the reading promotion activities in the school and to determine if reading promotion was at an initial stage, developed stage or enhanced stage. All members of the teaching staff completed the audit.

Individual Interviews:

School Staff-Due to the involvement of management in the promotion of the Lifelongreaders programme it was agreed to interview the two most active members: the school principal and the literacy support teacher.

Parents-Single interviews with two parents were also conducted in order to assess the impact lifelongreaders has in the home.

Group Interview:

A single group interview of four teachers from across the school year groups was also conducted. The group interview served to gain insights into the perspective of teachers implementing lifelongreaders.

All interviews followed the framework devise by LiRe partners. The interviews were recorder and later transcribed.

Data Analysis (max. 400 words):

Reading Habits Evaluation:

Part 1:

The pupils reading habits evaluation tool was used to elicit data from the pupils in regards to their disposition towards reading and their reading habits. The first collection of data took place on the 14th December. A random selection of one class in each year group was sampled. A total of 101 pupils were surveyed using the quantitative method. For the purpose of data analysis and organization it was decided to organize the pupils into two groups. The Junior and Senior Infants classes were surveyed as group 1 (ages 4-7) and the 1st and 2nd classes were surveyed as group 2 (ages 7-9). Comparisons between the results from the two groups were made and are presented in findings section below.

Part 2:

A second collection of data on the reading habits of pupils was conducted on 24th June after the implementation of the lifelongreaders framework. The same pupils were sampled, allowing the use comparative and longitude (changes over time) methods of data analysis.

The data collected from Group 1 (ages 4-7) outlined the following:

- * Infants find reading Fun and Important.
- * Infants read mostly books, comics and magazines.
- * Infants read mostly at home and with mum and dad.
- * Mum read most to Infants.
- * Infants enjoy visiting the library, bookshop and getting books as a present.

The data collected from Group 2 (ages 7-9) outlined the following:

- * 1st and 2nd Class pupils indicate that reading is Important, Fun and Hard.
- * They read mostly books, comics, magazines and some websites.
- * They read mostly in school.
- * 1st and 2nd Class pupils enjoy visiting the library, bookshop and getting books as a present.

Interviews:

Individual Interview with teaching staff members/Group Interview with teaching staff/Individual interview with parents:

The following process was used to analyse the qualitative data collected from the above interviews: All interviews were transcribed.

All interviews were listened to in full to get a sense of the whole.

Noting units of general meaning using both verbal and non-verbal gestures to elicit the participant's meaning.

Noting units of meaning relevant to the research question.

Clustering units of relevant meaning.

Determining themes from clusters of meaning.

Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews.

This process resulted in the emergence of the following themes:

- Training in reading promotion
- Whole school approach to reading promotion
- Parental involvement
- Attitude to reading promotion
- Reading culture in school
- Enjoyment of reading

Findings (max. 300 words):

Reading Habits Evaluation:

Part 1: Taken on December 14th 2012

The data collected from Group 1 (ages 4-7) outlined the following:

- * Infants find reading Fun and Important.
- * Infants read mostly books, comics and magazines.
- * Infants read mostly at home and with mum and dad.
- * Mum read most to Infants.
- * Infants enjoy visiting the library, bookshop and getting books as a present.

The data collected from Group 2 (ages 7-9) outlined the following:

- * 1st and 2nd Class pupils indicate that reading is Important, Fun and Hard.
- * They read mostly books, comics, magazines and some websites.
- * They read mostly in school.

- * 1st and 2nd Class pupils enjoy visiting the library, bookshop and getting books as a present.

The comparison in regards to reading habits between the Groups 1 and 2 presents:

- * Increase in Boring and Hard responses as pupils get older.
- * Reading from websites not as prevalent as could be.
- * Reading at home decreases as pupils get older. Reading at school increases as pupils get older.
- * Teacher not seen as role model for reading, rather as a teacher for reading.
- * Barriers to reading: more books needed, more time, accessibility to age appropriate books, quiet area to read, parents reading child.

Individual Interview with teaching staff members/Group Interview with teaching staff/Individual interview with parents:

The following themes emerged from analysis of interviews:

- Training in reading promotion
- Whole school approach to reading promotion
- Parental involvement
- Attitude to reading promotion
- Reading culture in school
- Enjoyment of reading

Training in Reading Promotion:

Throughout the course of the interviews both teachers and parents expressed their desire for further training in how to promote reading for pleasure for their children and that they have learned a lot from the experience of implementing lifelongreaders in their school. Teacher: *“learning not to take it for granted that children are reading, are readers and just because you’re teaching them how to read doesn’t mean that they are readers so that’s a whole other area that has to be taken into account.”*

Whole School Approach to Reading Promotion:

Parental Involvement:

Parental involvement was a concern of teachers prior to implementing lifelongreaders, as they had negative experiences in the past. However in the implementation of lifelongreaders the contribution of parents was seen as very positive. A teacher remarking on the participation of the Bedtime Stories activity remarked *“it (the room) was packed to the gills with parents”*. A parent remarked on the programme *“the LiRe programme can create social skills and have a great impact on a child’s development. Reading to a child is very rewarding as the child loves to hear stories and will hang on your every word”*.

Attitudes to Reading Promotion:

An important development during the implementation of lifelongreaders was the change of dispositions towards reading promotion activities on behalf of the teachers. One teacher remarked *“And I think that even the parents and the teachers are more aware of themselves as model.”*

Reading Culture in School:

Both teachers and parents remarked on the change of reading culture in the school. This was seen as a positive development. Many remarks echo the following *“it’s great to hear kids talking about books and saying “oh have you read this one?” and “try this one” and “oh I like that bit” .”*

Enjoyment of Reading:

All respondents indicated that there has been evidence of more children reading for pleasure than prior to the implementation of the lifelongreaders programme. A teacher remarked “we’ve also had a few mention that they are going to buy Kindles with their First Communion money so that’s a good thing too”.

Recommendations (max. 600 words):

Practitioners:

1. **Start Small:** teaching professionals should familiarize themselves with the lifelongreaders framework and website. It is recommended to start small. Begin by testing out one or two of the reading promotion activities in the classroom. At this time it is important to keep notes of how the activities went, what worked well and what could be improved.
2. **Gathering Data:** to understand what the needs of the pupils are in relation to reading promotion it is important to gather relevant data. The lifelongreaders pupil reading habit evaluation is quite lengthy and difficult to administer. Adapting and shortening the questionnaire is a sensible option. It is also recommended that a fair sample of pupil be taken. There is no need to survey all pupils, a fair selection is adequate to get an overall picture of the pupil’s needs.
3. **Awareness Spreading:** it is important that awareness of reading promotion is kept high on the agendas of the teaching staff. If there is to be sustainable culture change relentless awareness dissemination is required. Posters highlighting reading for pleasure, having it as an item on the staff meeting agendas and talking to fellow professionals about it are all effective ways of spreading awareness.
4. **Parental Involvement:** in our findings parental involvement was seen as a key success. Practitioners are recommended to involvement parents in their reading promotion activities.
5. **Outside the School Community:** the use of the local library is a great way of enhancing reading promotion activities. Often libraries run community events and initiatives to promote reading. Practitioners are recommended to investigate how the library and school can work together to promote reading among young people.

Policy Makers:

1. **Organic policy making:** it is recommended that policy makers should not impose the lifelongreaders programme in a directive manner to their practitioners. It is recommended that leaders of schools should provide teachers with the tools to research the need of reading promotion programmes in their school. Once findings have been made the leaders can endorse the lifelongreaders programme as a possible solution. Responsibility for drafting and implementing the action plan for reading promotion should be given to teachers. It is important to empower practitioners at an early stage, if they are to become active contributors to the programme.
2. **Spreading Awareness:** it is important to place emphasis on the dissemination of awareness. It is recommended that digital media be used to articulate the message to the wider school community.
3. **Reading Promotion Team:** it is recommended that a reading promotion team be established to oversee the implementation of the lifelongreaders programme. It is important that this group is not part of a larger School Evaluation Team, as reading promotion must be a priority one team of practitioners.
4. **Teacher Training:** it is recommended that policy-makers invest in teacher training n the area of reading promotion. Many teachers identified this as a need in their professional development. All efforts should be made to encourage teachers to up skill in this area.

