



# STER

STUDENT TEACHER  
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH



## Overview

**17:30 Opening**

**17:50 Session 1**

**18:45 Launch**

**19:00 Session 2**

**19:30 Closing**

#STER2021

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## Book of Abstracts Conference 2021

This year the STER Conference is moving online. We are delighted to be able to support education students across the country to share their research in various creative ways. The STER Conference is a space for us to discuss the value and impact of research for practice. We have presentations from 22 students from MIE, TCD, DCU, NUIG, UL, MIC Limerick & Thurles. We hope you enjoy the presentations. All presentations are based on students' dissertation research and cover a range of themes including; inclusive education, climate change, gender, ability grouping, digital technology and more!



## **‘Irish Post-Primary School Teachers’ Self-Efficacy and Inclusive Education: How convinced are Irish post-primary school teachers that they have the requisite skills to teach for inclusion?’**

### **Vanessa Murray**

Professional Master of Education (PME), Trinity College Dublin

Vanessa Murray graduated from University College Dublin in 2013 with an undergraduate degree in English and History. In 2020, she completed a Professional Master of Education (P.M.E) at Trinity College Dublin. She is currently teaching English and History at an Educate Together secondary school in Wicklow. Here, she has had the opportunity to co-manage the schools ASD unit. The meaningful inclusion of students with SEN into mainstream classes drives much of her research, professional development and, practice.



### **Abstract**

In recent years, a growing number of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are receiving education in mainstream secondary school classrooms. Through the lens of behavioural psychologist Alfred Bandura’s theory of “self-efficacy” (1977), this systematic literature review analyses how teachers’ efficacy regarding inclusive education is being measured, observed and discussed in international literature, with a view to, interpret and inform Irish Post-Primary School Teachers’ (PPST) instructional behaviour. A key-word database search generated relevant articles. Peer-reviewed articles, in English, from Irish and international education publications underwent a PRISMA checklist. Results yielded no research into Irish PPST's self-efficacy regarding inclusive education. It was also found that there was much scope to investigate the cross-cultural validity of these scales; as well as, for the application of longitudinal and observational data. Recommendations generated by this research indicate that research into Irish PPST's self-efficacy regarding inclusive education would complement current international studies. Such data would enrich current methods of evaluating initial teacher education (ITE), teaching practice and, continuous professional development (CPD) courses.

## An Exploration into the Experiences of LGBTQ+ Primary School Teachers in Ireland

**Fiona O'Reilly**

BSc Education Studies, Marino Institute of Education

Fiona O'Reilly graduated from the BSc in Education Studies at Marino Institute in 2020. She completed her research on the experiences of LGBTQ+ primary school teachers as she is passionate about LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion in Irish education.



### Abstract

LGBTQ+ identities exist everywhere. The heteronormativity that exists in school culture has always created an environment of silence and fear for LGBTQ+ teachers. While legislation and society have evolved over the years, LGBTQ+ teachers continue to experience feelings of isolation and uncertainty in educational environments. This study sought to explore the experiences of LGBTQ+ primary teachers working in schools across Dublin. A focus was placed on the impact school culture can have on LGBTQ+ pupils and teachers. An interpretivist worldview was adopted, and a basic interpretive study was carried out. Interviews were conducted with five LGBTQ+ primary school teachers. The findings indicated that parts of school culture such as heteronormativity, ethos and bullying all contribute to the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers. The findings indicated that all teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and tools to be active allies to LGBTQ+ teachers, staff, pupils and parents. This knowledge could be introduced to teachers at third level, promoting an inclusive college environment for pre-service teachers. LGBTQ+ teachers and pupils deserve the inclusion and celebration of their identities in education.

# 'Exploring the Inclusion of LGBTQI+ Information in Relationships and Sexuality Education in Irish Primary Schools'

**Laura Curtis**

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed), Marino Institute of Education

I am a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Education in Marino Institute of Education. I chose this research topic as my excitement to become a qualified primary teacher was contrasted with the realisation that I would soon have a considerable impact on the way students perceive the world around them. As teachers, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves on how to include all children in our classes equally. The concept that the national curriculum or the ethos of a school could prevent me from providing my class with unbiased information challenged this professional responsibility.



## Abstract

This dissertation investigated how the Irish RSE programme implemented in primary schools can impact children's perception of sexuality. The focus of this research study was based on three main objectives. Firstly, to identify the impact the representation of LGBTQI+ information can have on children's perception of sexuality. Secondly, to analyse the RSE programme in Irish primary schools, focusing on the inclusion of heterosexually and homosexually focused information. Finally, to investigate the impact a school's ethos has on the inclusion of LGBTQI+ information. The key findings of this research indicated a significant relationship between primary children's perception of sexuality and the information included in the RSE programme. This was highlighted by increased levels of homophobic/transphobic bullying and mental health difficulties attributed to a lack of understanding surrounding homosexuality. An analysis of the compulsory Irish RSE programme in conjunction with recent sexuality focused educational programmes emphasised the biased contents of the national RSE programme in primary schools. Children's awareness of heterosexuality compared to their minimal knowledge of the LGBTQI+ community was associated with this heterosexually focused national RSE programme. It was concluded that although the creation of a more inclusive RSE programme would benefit children's development, it would also provide schools with more opportunities to omit information based on their ethos.

## 'Dyslexia, the person and the practice'

### **Róisín Lowe**

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed), Marino Institute of Education

Róisín Lowe, final year of teacher training in Marino. The reason I selected teachers with dyslexia as my research topic is that I myself am dyslexic and wanted to research the benefits and challenges facing educators with learning difficulties in classrooms today.



### **Abstract**

This dissertation seeks to investigate how being a teacher with dyslexia might impact the teacher-pupil relationship. There are three main objectives for this dissertation: to define dyslexia and investigate its prevalence on a national and international level, to examine the impact both positive and negative teacher-pupil relationships have on the pupil's academic engagement and achievement levels and finally, to explore the challenges currently facing teachers with dyslexia and the strategies they employ.

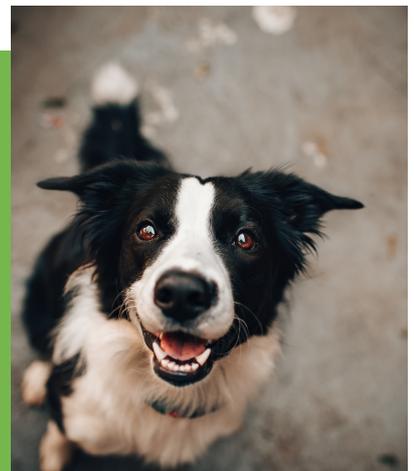
This research also subsequently investigated the positive effect inclusive education is having on higher education and the professional workforce in terms of people with learning difficulties. Research has shown that early identification of learning disabilities and supported learning of pupils, can have a major impact on their educational achievements. By carrying out documentary research, this dissertation discovered a multitude of benefits to having a teacher with dyslexia. The resulting conclusions and recommendations are discussed and analysed with the aim of inspiring future educators to disclose their learning difficulties and for policy makers to support and care for all teachers regardless of learning difficulties.

## 'Autism Assistance Dogs as Social Catalysts.'

### **Aoife Munroe**

Master of Education (M.Ed.), Mary Immaculate College

Aoife Munroe is a qualified primary school teacher. She is a graduate of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, having undertaken the Bachelor of Education, Master of Education and Postgraduate Certificate in Autism Studies degree programmes. Aoife is currently a Lecturer in Special Education at St. Angela's College, Sligo, while also completing a Postgraduate Certificate in Specific Learning Difficulties. Aoife's research was inspired by her interest in unique and flexible ways to support individuals with autism and the emerging interest into the use of dogs as a therapeutic intervention.



### **Abstract**

This poster is a snapshot of some of the findings of my M.Ed. Thesis entitled 'An Investigation into the Impact of Assistance and Therapy Dogs on Child Development and Functioning for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder'. This poster draws on findings from the larger study to present the social impact of Autism Assistance Dogs (AADs) and the perceived support they can offer individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families. The findings of the study revealed a positive domino effect with regards to the social impact experienced by different parties. It appeared that the social benefits connected to the children and the public played a significant role in improving family functioning.

# 'How can Anti-Racism Pedagogies and Initiatives be Implemented in Schools to Support Children Seeking Refuge and Living in Direct Provision in Ireland?'

## Róisín Keohane

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) Marino Institute of Education

Róisín Keohane is a final year student of the Bachelor of Education programme in Marino Institute of Education. Discussions about race and racism and the role of education in preventing racism, led her to want to investigate the systems in place in schools to combat racism. She is passionate about catering for all students in the classroom and this stimulated her interest into the challenges that face children living in direct provision, and the way in which they can be supported. The research was thought provoking, challenging and provided Róisín with the necessary skills to have an anti-racist inclusive classroom in the future.



## Abstract

Racism is a pressing issue in today's society. Yet, how does one teach about racism and how to be anti-racist? In this presentation, anti-racism education and the strategies promoting being anti-racist will be explored. Anti-racism education in the Irish context will also be examined. Direct provision is the temporary accommodation provided by the State for those whose applications for refugee status are being processed (UCC Child Law Clinic, 2017). This is a contested topic both politically and socially. There were 6,405 people living in DP, 'including 1,778 children' (Faculty of Paediatrics, 2019, p. 7). The challenges and barriers that exist for these children are a direct consequence of living in direct provision and this research will be examined in this presentation. Migrant and refugee children have a right to education that recognises their identity and protects them from discrimination (Article 8; Article 2, United Nations, 1989). In order to achieve this, government influence will be examined in relation to the relevant supports that must be put in place for children living in direct provision. They must also provide the necessary training for teachers so that all children receive anti-racism education.

## **“It’s all about what happens on the ground”: Teachers and School Leaders' Interpretations and Applications of Intercultural Education in the West of Ireland.’**

### **Greg Harris**

Master of Education (M.Ed.), NUI Galway

Greg Harris has worked as a Religious Education teacher for 14 years. He spent most of this time working in diverse, inner-city schools in the United Kingdom. This developed his interest in intercultural education. After moving to Ireland, he completed a Masters in Education at NUI Galway (2018).



### **Abstract**

Despite the importance of intercultural education, there is relatively little research on the way school leaders understand it. In the Irish context, much of the research in this area has focused on the attitudes of trainee teachers. This study aimed to examine the understandings of intercultural education held by serving teachers and school leaders. It also examined some of the factors that influenced these understandings. Research was conducted in two schools using a mixed-methods approach. An online questionnaire was completed by 22 teachers and two semi-structured interviews were conducted with school leaders. These found that the participants’ understandings of intercultural education were mainly focused on celebrating and recognising diversity. Some teachers showed little understanding of intercultural education. The celebratory attitudes found amongst teachers align with current government intercultural policies. Despite this, the research found some evidence that suggests policy has little influence over the way schools enact intercultural education. Instead, this is driven by teachers and school leaders’ personal views on diversity and interculturalism. The research suggests greater efforts need to be made to ensure all teachers understand the concept of intercultural education. It also suggests that further research should be conducted to examine how school leaders understand intercultural education.

## 'We are mainstream teachers trying to teach kids who don't learn in a 'mainstream' way": Teacher perceptions of autism education and support in Ireland.'

### **Peter Whelton**

Bachelor of Science with Education, University College Limerick

My name is Peter Whelton I am a final year Science Education student in the University of Limerick. The title of my presentation is "We are mainstream teachers trying to teach kids who do not learn in a mainstream way": Teacher perceptions of autism education and support in Ireland.' I decided to research this topic as I saw first-hand the struggles teachers of students with autism faced to provide adequate support for students with autism while on school placement.



### **Abstract**

Up to two thirds of students with autism are educated in mainstream classrooms alongside neurotypical peers. This move towards inclusive education necessitates that teachers can tailor educational strategies to suit all learners. However, research demonstrated teachers lack confidence when teaching students with autism, and training and support for implementing autism strategies can benefit teachers. Teachers' perspectives of the training and support they receive is crucial to informing our understanding of teachers needs within Irish autism education. This research aimed to address this gap by gaining insight on teachers' perspectives on autism education and the support they receive. 276 teachers who completed a survey exploring teachers use of evidence-based practices, answered open-ended qualitative questions regarding their experiences of support for educating students with autism. Results indicated teachers lacked knowledge in autism and evidence-based strategies, teachers struggle to access timely support from external professionals and have issues helping students with autism to integrate into mainstream classrooms and access the curriculum. They indicated that when professional support is received it is of benefit to the student. This research highlights some difficulties Irish teachers face when accessing supports to help students with autism and highlights a need for developing support systems for teachers.

## Primary school teacher's attitudes towards and experiences of climate change education in an Irish context.'

### Ailbhe Coleman

Professional Master of Education (PME), Marino Institute of Education

My name is Ailbhe Coleman and I am a PME 2 student in Marino Institute of Education. I have chosen to write my dissertation on the topic of climate change education because I love and care for this planet that we live on and I am afraid of the threat that climate change poses to it. I feel that climate change is not adequately addressed in Initial Teacher Education and in the primary school curriculum and that this needs to change before it is too late.



### Abstract

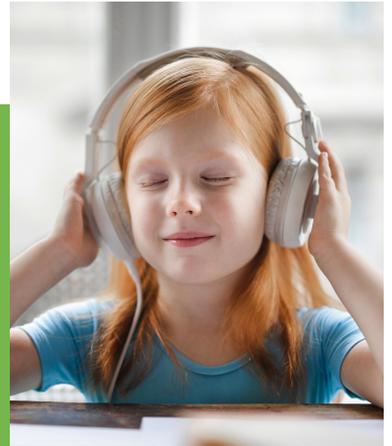
Climate change is one of, if not the most, pressing issues of our time and it is destroying the planet and the lives and livelihoods of those of who inhabit it. Grappling with rising temperatures, widespread bio-diversity loss and an increase in dangerous weather events, many children and young people around the world have woken up to this harsh truth, but is their education system responding? In an attempt to answer that question, this research project aims to investigate primary school teachers attitudes towards and experiences of climate change education with the hope of better understanding the reality of climate change education in an Irish context. A qualitative research method was used to carry out semi-structured interviews with 8 teachers, qualified to teach in Irish primary schools, from varied school type and with varied years of experience. Participants were identified and selected purposefully due to their engagement with different types of climate change education. Analysis of the data has not commenced at this point, however the most significant themes emerging from the data seem to be the lack of coherence in relation to the most suitable pedagogical approach, the absence of climate change in the 1999 Curriculum and the failure to address the issue of climate change education adequately in initial teacher education.

## 'How can teachers use music therapy strategies to support the social and emotional challenges facing a child with ASD integrating into a mainstream classroom?'

### Niamh O'Neill

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Marino Institute of Education

My name is Niamh O' Neill. I am in my final year of the B.Ed in Marino Institute of Education. I decided to focus my thesis research on music therapy as I have played violin, viola, and piano from the age of four and I continue to be involved in choirs and have a huge interest in music. I was on my SEN placement in second year and noticed that the children in the ASD unit were particularly enthusiastic and focused when it came time for them to dance/sing or participate in any musical activity. I wanted to explore this further. I found that there was a model of music therapy already established in the United Kingdom, where each school would have a designated music therapist. I decided to see how this might apply to the Irish context. I also wanted to find out how music therapy might help children diagnosed with ASD to self-regulate and address any social/emotional challenges they may encounter in mainstream classrooms.



### Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to establish how teachers can use music therapy to support the emotional and social challenges facing a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) integrating into a mainstream classroom. There are three main objectives to this research: to examine how children with ASD communicate their emotional and social responses in a classroom to examine how teachers can use music therapy to strengthen these responses; to discover the current approaches used to help children with ASD integrate into a mainstream classroom; finally, to investigate how music therapy strategies are implemented for children with ASD in Ireland in relation to the challenges and benefits discussed in current research on comparative international approaches. There were several key findings from the research conducted that indicated there is a clear correlation between the improvement in social and emotional responses in children with ASD and the use of music therapy. IMT was found to be the most successful form of music therapy in improving the responses to the social and emotional challenges that children with ASD encounter. Collaborative approaches were found to allow teachers and music therapists to collaborate on the treatment of a child. These findings illustrate that music therapy provides a strategy in which children with ASD can improve their emotional and social responses.

# 'The Influences of Digital Technologies on the Mental Health and Well-Being of School-Aged Children in Ireland Today: The Findings and the Process'

## Emer Doyle

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Marino Institute of Education

My name is Emer Doyle. I am 21 years old and live in Co. Kildare. I am a 4th year B.Ed. student in Marino Institute of Education. I love teaching, and two areas that I am especially passionate about are digital technologies and mental health and well-being education. These passions laid the foundation for my research project, where I examined the influences digital technologies can have on the mental health and well-being of school aged children. As well as working with children, I love dancing, aerial arts, baking and reading.



## Abstract

This dissertation seeks to investigate how the use of digital technologies influences the mental health and well-being of school-aged children (8 to 14 years) in Ireland today. There are three main objectives to this research. Firstly, it will investigate how school-aged children use technology, analysing factors such as their habits and the current age of consent. Secondly, it will explore a variety of mental health and well-being disorders, and how they are influenced by the use of digital technologies. The third section will review the current support systems in place for mental health and well-being disorders. This dissertation concludes with a summary of the research discussed throughout, and a short list of recommendations for the improvement of research in this area. This dissertation has found connections between the increased use of digital technologies, and the increasing number of young people suffering from mental health and well-being disorders today.

## 'Planning to Teach Controversial and Emotive History in the Primary Classroom.'

### David Ayers

Professional Master of Education, Dublin City University

My name is David Ayres, I am 26 years old and I am from Ballycumber, Co. Offaly. I am a final year PME student at the Institution of Education, DCU. I decided to research this topic because of my own interest in this type of history and gain insight into how I can improve my own practice as a future primary school teacher. Exposure to this type of history is an important part of our democratic citizenship and is essential to our capability to filter and critically interpret a variety of information & sources.



### Abstract

Dealing with controversial and emotive issues as stated by President Higgins is intrinsic to democratic citizenship, and to ignore this aspect of history education leaves children desperately “ill-equipped to confront a world in which information is increasingly disseminated without historical perspective”. This action research project examines the teaching of controversial and emotive history in the primary classroom and the implications it has on teachers planning. This desk-based research project examines my own planning and identifies approaches and activities that could be beneficial in teaching emotive and controversial topics in the classroom. While the curriculum supports a child centred approach to history education through the use of procedural skills, research indicates an avoidance in using the enquiry-based model when it comes to teaching such topics which evoke emotional and controversial responses. With time restraints to cover appropriate curricular content with effective resources, some teachers subsequently opt for a single narrative or textbook approach to teaching history. This research project addresses key considerations when teaching controversial and emotive history in the primary classroom and encapsulates a lot of the current issues around teaching such topics and emphasises the need for further research at primary level in the Irish context.

## 'The Role of Ability Grouping in Perpetuating Educational Inequality in Mathematics.'

### Ciara Frayne

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Marino Institute of Education

Ciara's research centers on collaborative learning and group work, which are consistently praised and encouraged as an effective teaching methodology that benefits children's learning. However, there is a level of ambiguity around the formation of groups, which leads to many teachers, including pre-service teachers, employing the grouping strategy widely used across classrooms in Ireland, of ability grouping. This lack of clarity and knowledge surrounding the effectiveness of ability grouping sparked an interest in her to investigate further the positive and negative effects that ability grouping has on children's academic achievement and emotional development.



### Abstract

This qualitative research dissertation investigates the impact of ability grouping on primary school children's mathematical outcomes and emotional development. To complete this investigation, the researcher first reviews the literature pertinent to ability grouping, providing a comprehensive overview of the practice of ability grouping both in Ireland and internationally. The researcher also considers the Department of Education and Skill's (DES) recommendations in relation to this practice of grouping children based on their perceived ability. Results of this research indicate that ability grouping has a definitive and profound negative impact on children's outcome in mathematics, often preventing the children from experiencing the diversity of mathematical content necessary to achieve their maths potential. Furthermore, the negative emotional effects of ability grouping include the fostering of a fixed mindset, a sense of maths anxiety being instilled in children across all ability group levels, self-doubt, frustration and disengagement. In light of these results, recommendations are made by the researcher to discontinue the use of ability grouping in primary school classrooms, in favour of a more inclusive grouping methodology. The researcher further highlights the effective and inclusive nature of flexible grouping.

# 'An Exploration of the Factors that Influence the Inclusion of Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Primary Schools.'

**Catherine White**

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Marino Institute of Education

I am a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Education programme in Marino Institute of Education. I chose to research this topic as I am passionate about inclusive education for children with special educational needs (SEN) and working towards making mainstream schools more inclusive environments for all pupils. As a final year student and future NQT, I was eager to further my knowledge in this area and to improve my future practice in teaching to facilitate inclusion in my classroom in the future. This research provided me with many answers to my initial research question and a deeper insight into inclusive education for children with SEN.



## **Abstract**

This dissertation examined the factors that influence the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools. The move towards inclusion and the facilitating factors of inclusion, with a focus on the legislation and policies in place for inclusion in education in Ireland are investigated. This research also explores the challenges and barriers that exist in the implementation of this inclusion. Through extensive documentary research, the author consulted a range of primary and secondary literature which produced some key findings. Factors such as leadership, teachers, and the physical structure of a school have a fundamental influence on the inclusion of pupils with SEN. The findings of this dissertation revealed the training, knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education significantly influence how much children with SEN are included in mainstream classrooms. These factors, combined with a conceptual understanding of inclusive education, have the power to impact inclusion on a whole school level. The research concludes that improvements need to be made in areas such as the policy and practice of inclusion and training in inclusion.

## 'Attachment Theory; The pupil-teacher relationship and academic achievement'

**Aisling O'Sullivan**

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Marino Institute of Education

My dissertation is entitled 'Attachment Theory: The pupil-teacher relationship and academic achievement.' When deciding on an area of research for my final year dissertation, it became clear to me very quickly that I should follow my area of interest and passion. Therefore, I completed my research in the area of psychology, specifically attachment theory. I combined this interest with my passion for learning and effective teaching. I gained a wealth of knowledge and experience when completing this research and thoroughly enjoyed learning more about my specific areas of interest.



### **Abstract**

This presentation is about the dissertation entitled 'Attachment Theory; The pupil-teacher relationship and academic achievement.' It will also provide a brief overview of the key studies underpinning this research and its key findings and recommendations. Attachment theory, its relevance and its importance for pupils and educators will be highlighted in the presentation. To further align with this year's STER conference theme the presentation will provide various practical ideas and suggestions that teachers and staff can implement in both the classroom and the school. Overall this presentation will provide a basic understanding of the key studies relating to attachment theory, the pupil teacher relationship and their effects on academic achievement, building from this research practical ideas and suggestions will be provided in the presentation for educators.

## Teachers access to training and supports in Ireland

### Jeremiah Sheehan

Biology and Physics Teaching, University College Limerick



### Abstract

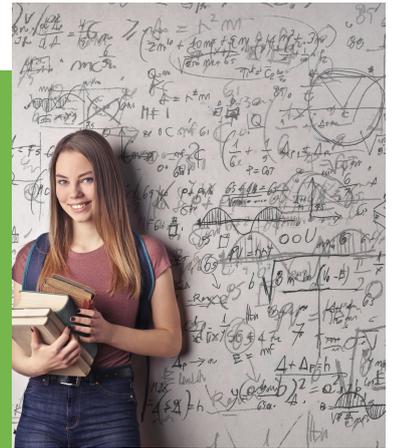
After the introduction of the 1998 Education Act an increasing number of students with Special Education Needs (SEN) began attending mainstream primary schools. Teachers had to adapt many aspects of their practice in response to these changes. Despite these changes there is a lack of research conducted on the training teachers receive to support students with autism (ASD) and other forms of SEN. The purpose of this project is to explore the types of autism specific (CPD) Continuous Professional Development that teachers are accessing and the supports students with autism receive in schools. The aim is to identify the type of CPD training that is most beneficial for teachers and the amount of autism-specific CPD needed to sufficiently prepare teachers to teach ASD students. The second aim is to find the support types that have the greatest impact on ASD students and the number of times supports need to be accessed in order to be effective.

# 'Teacher Strategies to Promote Mathematical Language Acquisition in Primary Education: Exploring the Current Terrain and Rethinking the Future.'

## Erica Casey

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Marino Institute of Education

My name is Erica Casey. I am a final year student on the Bachelor in Education in Marino Institute of Education. Due to a keen interest in both mathematics and language acquisition in the classroom, I chose to conduct my research on Mathematical Language Acquisition in Primary Education. From the process of choosing a research question to formulating the findings of my dissertation, my experience conducting this research was extremely positive.



## Abstract

My dissertation investigates mathematical language in the early years' classroom in Ireland and evaluates the strategies teachers can employ to facilitate young children's mathematical language acquisition. Through documentary analysis, Irish curricula and classroom practice concerning mathematical language development, as well as international research in the field, is explored. Mathematical language development is investigated concerning the Irish primary context and areas to be improved for effective promotion of mathematical language in the early years' classroom are revealed. Through documentary analysis of the most pertinent literature in the field, the strategies that teachers can use to promote young children's development of mathematical language are outlined. The key findings of the research indicate that the most effective strategies to foster mathematical language amongst young children are teacher modelling of a consistent amount and variety of mathematical language, along with a varied use of questioning styles. It is concluded that the implementation of a maths-talk learning community is an important strategy in promoting young children's engagement with mathematical language. However, improvements are needed within Irish primary mathematics education.

## 'An Investigation into the Role of Collaboration in Supporting Special Needs Assistants in Irish Post-Primary Classrooms.'

### **Katie Jones**

B.A. Education, Business & Accounting, Mary Immaculate College

My name is Katie Jones and I graduated from MIC Thurles in 2020 with a BA in Education, Business and Accounting. I decided to research this topic to gain an insight into the role of Special Needs Assistants and people perceptions of working either as one or with one in a post-primary classroom. As I was training to be a teacher at the time of completing this dissertation, I felt it was important to write this so that I could gain additional knowledge and awareness of SNAs which has since helped shaped me into the teacher that I am today. I enjoyed writing this so much that I'm currently completing an SNA training course to further my knowledge and help me bring even more inclusivity to my classroom.



### **Abstract**

This study is concerned with the perceptions of how collaboration could be used in , supporting special needs assistants in post-primary classrooms in Ireland. Collaboration is becoming more popular in Irish classrooms and if used effectively with the rising numbers of SNAs, maximises the learning experience for students with special educational needs (Ballard 1997; NCSE 2014; CRA 2020) The effects of individualised education plans with its benefits and challenges are also researched (NCSE 2006). Using a qualitative method, this study examines teachers and SNAs understandings and experiences of SNA roles in the classroom. It also explore the current collaborative practices being undertaken and their views and opinions relating to it. In common with many researchers, (Barfield 2016; Mundschnek et al. 1997; DuFour 2004; NCSE 2006) this study shows that collaboration plays a positive role in supporting SNAs in post-primary classrooms.

## How can teachers alleviate gendered self-concept in the Maths classroom?

### Gráinne Murphy

Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), Marino Institute of Education

My name is Gráinne Murphy and I am a final year Bachelor of Education student in Marino Institute of Education from Dundalk, County Louth. I have always had a huge passion for gender equality and I was eager to explore the concept of gender in the primary classroom when it came to completing my dissertation. It was obvious to me from my first teaching practice that gender stereotypes are still as real and prevalent in primary school classroom as they were when I was in primary school. My hope as an educator has always been to create an inclusive classroom environment where my students can be free from the limitations that society imposes on them because of their gender. It was because of this that I chose to explore what impact gendered self-concept has on a child's academic performance so that I can aim to alleviate the impact in my classroom



### Abstract

The aim of this research was to aid teachers in alleviating gendered self-concept in the maths classroom. The dissertation has three main objectives. Firstly, to analyse and investigate gender norms and examine how they are reproduced in the classroom to better understand how gender norms can impact self-concept and academic performance. Using documentary analysis, the author drew on international studies and discovered a need for similar studies to be conducted in an Irish setting. The author also drew heavily on the work of the OECD and their Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) to analyse patterns in academic performance for boys and girls, respectively. The author found that further Irish research is needed to explore the influence of parental expectations, representation in resources and teacher feedback in order to create a balance in academic performance between boys and girls and to foster a positive gendered self-concept to promote gender equality in the classroom. The author's findings and suggestions as to how we can alleviate gender norms and create a positive self-concept in a classroom that promotes gender equality, include close communication between teachers and parents; reflective practice on language and feedback by teachers and professional development for teachers to combat subject-specific stereotypes.