



BRIDGING THE GAP

EVALUATION REPORT 2005

Project team

Project Director Áine Hyland

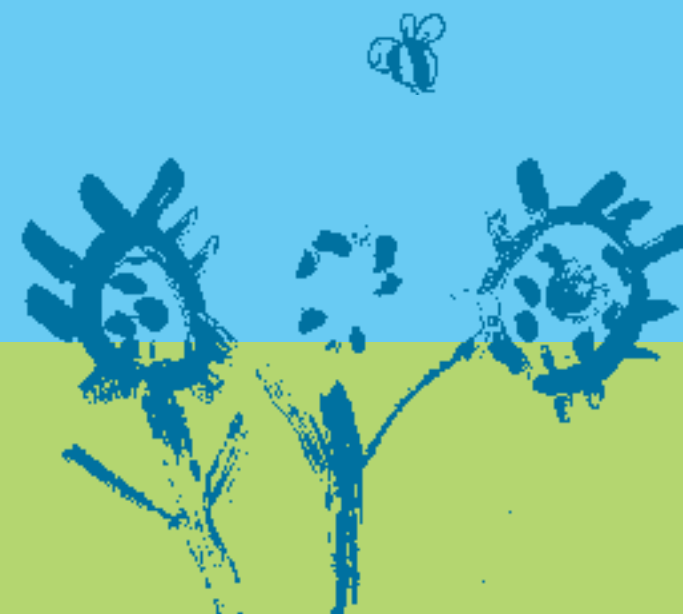
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Bridging the Gap Project
Education Department
University College Cork
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Special thanks to the teachers and pupils of Morning Star NS Ballyphehane whose artwork is featured in this report.

Foreword

**Professor Áine Hyland,
Project Director**

The past year has been an exciting and productive one for *Bridging the Gap*, building on the success of previous years. The project has now come to the end of its fourth year, and we are delighted to see the great benefits it has produced for pupils, their families, their teachers and the Cork city communities in which they live and work. The schools in the project have achieved very positive results: by setting and meeting challenging targets they have greatly enhanced the educational experience of their pupils. As a way of fulfilling its community mission, UCC, through the *Bridging the Gap* project, has worked in partnership with schools and community groups to provide new and enhanced learning opportunities for children and their parents.

This evaluation report summarises what was achieved during the past year by *Bridging the Gap*. In the year when Cork was the European Capital of Culture, over two thousand participants in the project have shown great energy, enthusiasm and creativity as they enjoyed a huge variety of events and activities sponsored by *Bridging the Gap*. This report shows that the projects carried out by schools are of a very high standard and have produced measurable gains in pupils' achievements, motivation, and attitudes to education.





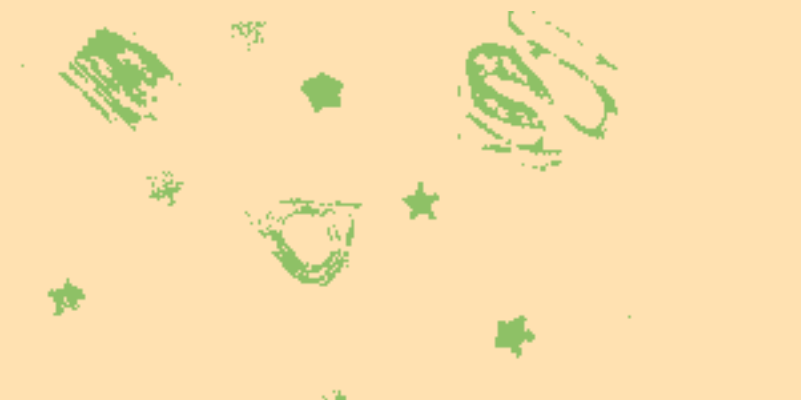
This is a great tribute to principals, teachers, pupils and parents who have engaged willingly in these projects, many of which require an involvement beyond the classroom and beyond the traditional school day. We are very fortunate to work with such a committed group of people.

In the past year, the project has become more widely known at local level, and has involved more pupils and teachers than in previous years. An important achievement has been the publication of *Connections*, an anthology of children's work to celebrate Cork's year as European Capital of Culture in 2005. In a national context, the work of *Bridging the Gap* is beginning to be disseminated widely and we are confident that it will have an impact on national policy-making in the area of educational inclusion. It has also been mentioned in a number of international reports as an example of good practice.

The success of the project is a result of the vision, commitment and hard work of all those involved, especially Tracey Connolly the project manager and Cynthia Deane, project consultant. Special thanks are due to the three funders - the Atlantic Philanthropies, especially Tom Costello who has been unfailingly supportive and helpful; the Department of Education and Science; and an anonymous Cork philanthropist, who between them have contributed almost two

million euro towards this five-year initiative. We are happy to assure our sponsors that there have been very significant returns on the funds invested. I would also like to express my thanks to Professor G.T. Wrixon, President of UCC and to my colleagues in the university for their ongoing support and encouragement.

Looking forward towards the final phase of the project, we know that *Bridging the Gap* will leave a sustainable legacy in schools, communities and the university, and we will concentrate on making the success of the project visible in as many ways as possible.



Reflection on the year

Dr. Tracey Connolly, Project Manager

2004-2005 marked another productive and exciting year for *Bridging the Gap*. The project continued to grow, involving more schools, teachers, pupils and parents in many different activities.

Every school set clear goals for the project as they set out to develop pupils' skills, engage their interests, increase their enjoyment of school and their motivation to succeed, and to involve parents and community in their children's education. In their reports for this year, many schools mention their plans for continuing the work of the project and for integrating it with school development planning for the future.

The year saw the strengthening of collaboration between the project and other initiatives. In April 2005 the project hosted the Junior Certificate Schools Programme *Make a Book* exhibition at University College Cork. Over two hundred post primary students visited UCC as part of the exhibition.

An increased number of pupils from project schools visited special events and celebrations on the UCC campus during the year. In May 2005 *Mysterious Eye*, an intercultural book created by pupils from three post-primary *Bridging the Gap* schools, was launched

in UCC. A 'Kidz Opera' was performed in the Honan Square of the university in June and later in the month over 1,200 pupils attended the annual *Bridging the Gap* showcasing.


On 29 November 2005, the project was honoured to have President Mary Mc Aleese launch *Connections*, an anthology of pupils' work. At the launch the President saw a "mini showcase", representing the work of the project. *Connections* features over one hundred stories, poems and pictures that were selected from the best work produced by pupils in project schools during the year. The high quality of the creative work is a great tribute to the talent of the children, encouraged by their families. It is also a result of the excellent teaching in the project schools, where principals and classroom teachers have high expectations and promote high achievement for all pupils.

Work and collaboration between schools and University College Cork increased during the year especially as staff from a number of university departments continued to work with *Bridging the Gap*.

We look forward to the further strengthening of collaboration in the year ahead.



Introduction to *Bridging the Gap* project and evaluation report



Bridging the Gap is an innovative project run by University College Cork, which aims to “bridge the gap” between the educational opportunities and achievements of pupils in schools in disadvantaged areas of Cork city and those in other areas. *Bridging the Gap* aims to establish Cork City as a centre of excellence for educational inclusion and equality, by working in partnership with schools and their communities to achieve their educational goals. The project is an integral part of the university’s community mission, and it is directed by Professor Áine Hyland, Professor of Education and Vice-President of UCC. It is funded jointly by the Department of Education and Science and by private funding obtained by UCC. More than forty primary and second-level schools and centres in Cork City are participating in the project, which runs from 2001 to 2006 (for a list of participating schools, see Appendix 1). Staff from a number of university departments work with Bridging the Gap, and the project manager is Dr. Tracey Connolly of the Education Department in UCC.

This is the fourth annual evaluation report of the *Bridging the Gap* project. It describes and evaluates the work of the project in the period from September 2004 to August 2005. The report was compiled by Cynthia Deane, project consultant, from extensive material provided by the project manager and by the participating schools. The report includes three

sections. The first section documents the main project goals, activities and outcomes for 2004-2005. In the second section, the school and community-based projects are summarised briefly, showing the impact of the project against the goals set by the schools. The third section evaluates the outcomes for the past year and outlines the parameters for the final evaluation of the project in 2006.



1. Progress report on project activities 2004-2005



Calendar of project activities 2004-2005

2004

September

- 14 Shellshock project; start of visits to schools by staff of Fota Wildlife Park
30 Session for principals: Launch of 2004 Evaluation Report and of project programme for 2004-2005

October

- 15 Visit of President Mary Mc Aleese to St. Mary's on the Hill NS, Knocknaheeny

November

- 1 "Literacies in the 21st Century": paper given by Prof. Áine Hyland at National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) conference in Ennis
8 Guided visit to Crawford Art Gallery (Sunday's Well GNS)
9 Reception for teachers from project schools in Glucksman Gallery, UCC, to present the gallery's education programme and facilities
29 Christmas Party at UCC (Scoil Maria Assumpta and St. Patrick's Infant Schools)
30 *Learning and doing together: Occupational Therapy and Bridging the Gap*. Professional development seminar for teachers, UCC (Presenters: Susan Ryan, and Eithne Hunt, Department of Occupational Therapy, UCC)

December

- 2 Launch of book *Streets, Lanes and Squares in the South Side* (Deerpark transition year students) in Glucksman Gallery, UCC
10 Speech by Dr. Tracey Connolly, Project Manager, at official opening of library in Terence MacSwiney Community College, performed by Micheál Martin, TD, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment
13 *Principals' action learning network, session one: exploring leadership*. Facilitated by Cynthia Deane, project consultant.

2005

January

- 20 *Strategies to support numeracy development*: professional development seminar for teachers, UCC (Presenter: Jerry Mc Carthy, Junior Certificate Schools Programme and Irish Learning Support Association)
21 Visit of President Mary Mc Aleese to Greenmount NS and Deerpark CBS
24 *Principals' action learning network, session two: leadership styles and competences*. Facilitated by Cynthia Deane, project consultant.

Calendar of project activities 2004-2005

March

- 1 Opening of Réaltra art exhibition, St. Patrick's Infants and Girls Schools, Gardiner's Hill
7 *Principals' action learning network, session three: teamwork and negotiation*. Facilitated by Cynthia Deane, project consultant.
22 Opening of Shellshock exhibition, Tigh Filí gallery

April

- 7 Paper on *Lifelong Learning and Access* given by Prof. Áine Hyland at Lifelong Learning Festival organised by Cork Learning Forum
11-15 Graffiti Theatre Company anti-bullying workshops in five schools
18-21 *Make a Book* exhibition in UCC (Junior Certificate School Programme)
25 Session for principals to plan 2005 report and anthology of pupils' work

May

- 3-4 *Changing Minds: Leadership, Creativity and Learning*, public lecture and education forum conducted by Prof. Howard Gardner at National College of Ireland, Dublin. *Bridging the Gap* provided funding for five teachers to attend.
4 *Nutrition and Health*: session conducted by Dr Sheila Morgan, Teagasc Moorepark and Dr. Catherine Buckley of the UCC Alimentary Pharmobiotic Centre
10 *Nutrition and Health*: session conducted by Dr Sally Cudmore and Dr Julian Marchesi of APC in Gaelscoil Mhachan
25 Launch of book *A Mysterious Eye* (compiled by pupils from North Presentation Secondary School, Ursuline Secondary School, Presentation Secondary School) in UCC

June

- 1 Summer production *Mystical Legends* in honour of Cork Capital of Culture 2005 (Scoil Maria Assumpta)
1 Visit to UCC organised by Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha (Gaelscoil Mhachan, Gaelscoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa, Scoil Therese)
8 - 10 Annual showcase of schools' projects at UCC
14 *Kidz Opera* presented at UCC (St. Patrick's GNS, Gardiner's Hill)
15 Launch of CD-ROM and health exhibition in Mayfield (Scoil Mhuire Banríon)
29 Prize giving ceremony at St Kevin's School

July

- 18-24 Harvard Summer Institute



Some activities sponsored by *Bridging the Gap* in 2004-2005

Project goals for 2004-2005

The final phase of the *Bridging the Gap* project is mainly about building sustainable capacity in schools, in communities and in the university that will help to achieve educational inclusion. As the project moved into its fourth year in 2004-2005, the focus was on consolidating its earlier achievements as a foundation for further development. For 2004-2005, the main goals of the project were to:

- ★ Strengthen the active learning partnership between schools, communities and the university
- ★ Concentrate on enhancing the research strand of the project, to ensure that it contributes to shaping future educational inclusion measures
- ★ Engage teachers as researchers in their classrooms, setting targets, planning interventions and collecting data to monitor the impact of their actions
- ★ Disseminate the outcomes of the project locally and nationally, and influence policy and practice to help achieve educational inclusion
- ★ Support the formation and continuation of networks, to promote the professional development of principals and teachers and the greater integration of schools with their local communities

- ★ Work with principals to identify and enhance the leadership qualities and practices that promote high achievement and educational inclusion in schools.

Project activities 2004-2005

As the calendar above shows, the past year has been a busy one for *Bridging the Gap*. Thirty-seven schools have run their own projects, with over two thousand pupils directly involved. The project also sponsored a range of other activities, including visits to the Opera House, theatre and printmaking workshops, links between UCC and school communities, book publication, launches and arts exhibitions, celebration of special occasions in schools, and events associated with Cork's year as European Capital of Culture.



Visits to Cork Opera House

In collaboration with the Cork Opera House, the programme of subsidised tickets for children from project schools was continued in 2004-2005. As in previous years, the programme was extremely popular, with 1117 pupils from nineteen schools attending performances of *Lambert Puppet Theatre* (March 2005), *Hansel and Gretel* (May 2005) and *Oliver* (June 2005). In addition, three schools availed of workshops offered by the Opera House, and pupils from many schools attended "Behind the Curtain" talks about *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Plough and the Stars* and other productions.

Cork Printmakers and Fota Wildlife Park

Twelve primary schools took part in the Shellshock project, which was jointly organised by Cork Printmakers and Fota Wildlife Park. The theme of this year's project was turtles. Each class visited Fota Wildlife Park and had three printmaking workshops, where they produced colour prints that were later exhibited and sold to raise funds for turtle conservation. There has been very positive feedback from pupils and teachers in participating schools about the impact of the project on pupils' levels of skills and confidence. Pupils from one school summed up their experience in the following account.

Turtle project

When I heard the news about how the turtles were endangered and that we had a chance to save them, I was delighted. The first thing that happened was that we went on a trip to Fota Wildlife Park to learn about them and to get a tour. Then we went on a computer and got pictures of the turtles. Our music teacher, Johnny, said that we should write a song about the turtles. We wrote a chorus and then the verses. We then composed the music and practised a lot. We were very pleased with our song.

A lady came to the school and showed us slides of how they were being killed by pollution, for food and just being tortured. Then a man came and brought the art supplies so that we could make pictures. The first week we had a metal thing shaped like a pen and we carved the pictures into a plastic square. Next we put a special kind of paint on to the plastic. Then we made a print on the paper. The best of each were sent to Tigh Filí art gallery where people could buy them for €10.

We went to the gallery to see all of the paintings. We got lots of free goodies. We stayed about three hours. All of the money raised went to the 'Save the Turtle' organisation.

Pupils from Sunday's Well BNS.



Graffiti Theatre Company: programme of anti-bullying workshops

A series of drama workshops was provided for 5th and 6th class pupils in three primary schools and 1st year pupils in two secondary schools. The workshops were entitled “Tackle the Moment” and “Moving On”. The aim was to give young people the necessary skills to deal with bullying by presenting them with situations which may arise during their daily life. This group was chosen because of the specific situations that can happen when pupils move to secondary school. Each class participated in two workshops during the year, and the facilitators reported that there was a high level of positive engagement among participants, especially in the primary schools.

Why drama?

The most important aspect of using drama to confront offending behaviour and teach social skills is that it is participatory and gives students a chance to learn through a medium which is easily accessible. Drama is fun and it gives the student an opportunity to play. As a youngster heads towards adolescence the opportunities to play and the spaces offered for effective play are increasingly limited. The provision of a drama space, an agreed area of enactment, be it simply a cleared-out classroom, provides that opportunity. The strength of this type of workshop lies in the words “What if it were true”. In a drama workshop the students enter a fiction, become a character and live through a supposed experience. They can be both objective and subjective in analysing a perceived experience.

The Graffiti Theatre Company Outreach team

Books published by project schools

In 2004-2005, Bridging the Gap supported the publication and launch of two books by project schools, as well as an exhibition of books produced by pupils in Cork schools as part of the Junior Certificate School Programme *Make a Book* project. *Streets, Lanes and Squares in the South Side* was researched and written by Deerpark CBS transition year students, while *Mysterious Eye* was compiled by pupils from North Presentation Secondary School, Ursuline Secondary School and Presentation Secondary School. One of the people who worked on the latter project wrote:

It was an interesting journey, we trusted we would arrive somewhere wonderful. Though the girls represent a cross-section of society... what emerged was a shared experience of teenage life...

The text reveals the sometimes unbearable pressure of being watched, but also the joyful camaraderie of schooldays. This book is essential reading for teenagers, parents, teachers, those who want to be teenagers, and those who have forgotten the heady days of adolescence.

Mary Branley, Intercultural Consultant, Kids’ Own Publishing Partnership

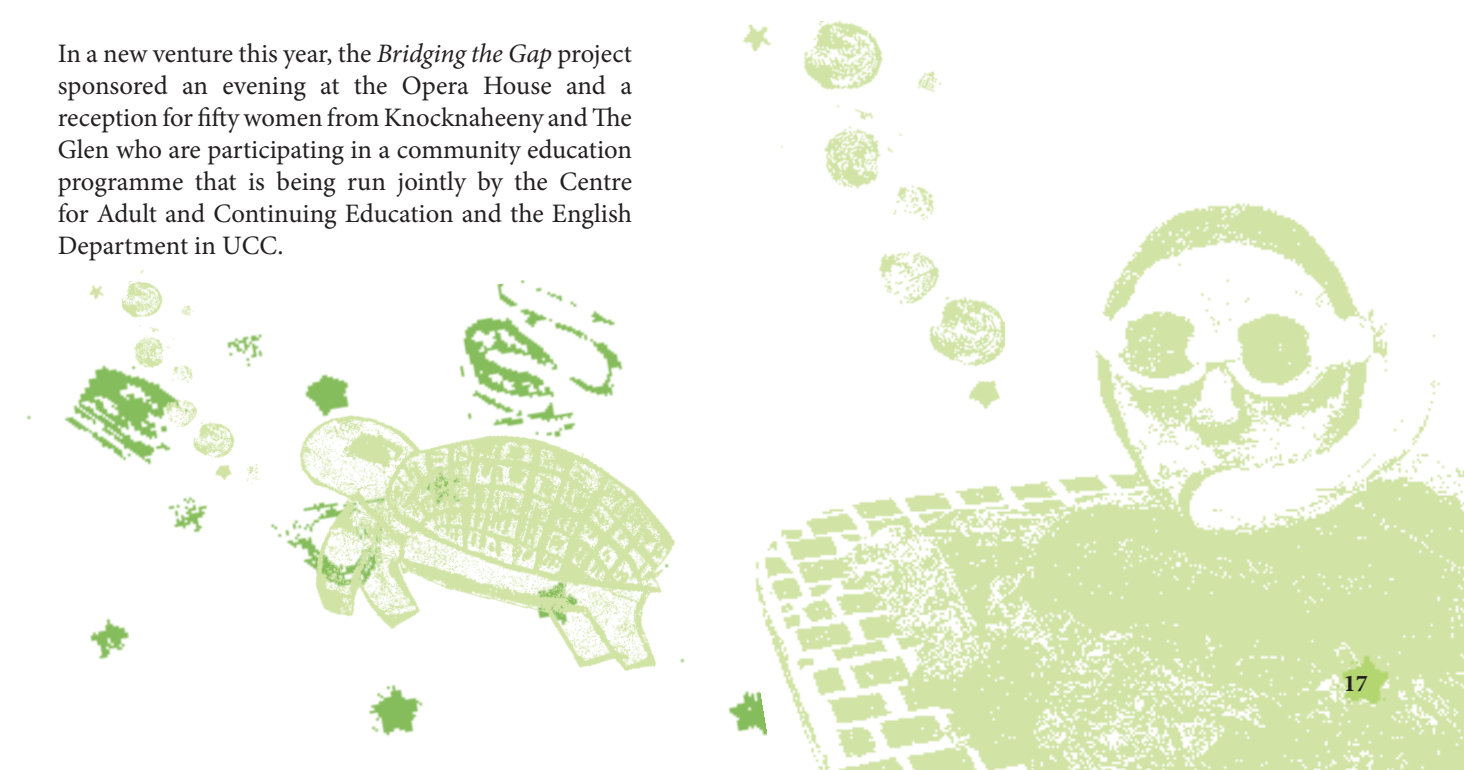
Links between UCC and school communities

Each year, the project has extended the links between UCC and the project school communities. In 2004-2005, as well as facilitating visits to the university campus by groups of pupils, teachers and parents, staff from UCC worked with schools on projects in the arts and sciences. An innovative programme was provided, for example, for high achieving pupils in two schools, the first such programme in Ireland to be offered to less privileged children in the school setting. The Glucksman Gallery is developing learning materials on a pilot basis with ten project schools. Teachers in one school have helped to advise the university on how to make its visitors’ centre more open to schools and communities.

In a new venture this year, the *Bridging the Gap* project sponsored an evening at the Opera House and a reception for fifty women from Knocknaheeny and The Glen who are participating in a community education programme that is being run jointly by the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education and the English Department in UCC.

This programme has been seen as a success by the majority of those involved. Still in its infancy, we are looking forward to building on its current strengths and working together to improve the programme. We have confidence that over time this project has the potential to radically improve and alter the learning capacity of the children involved. Furthermore, the element of teacher development is increasing the quality of the learning experience for all children in the school.

Report of Expanding Horizons programme in St Patrick’s Boys’ and Girls’ schools





Progress in the five project strands



Bridging the Gap has five strands: research, networks, dissemination, professional development, school and community-based projects. In 2004-2005, the project achieved considerable progress in each of these strands.

Strand 1: Research

The research strand of the project has a number of dimensions. Firstly, schools are encouraged to carry out their own research, by gathering and analysing data to measure the impact of their school and community-based projects. Secondly, the project as a whole constitutes an action-research project, which is designed to test a number of hypotheses about promoting educational inclusion in schools. Thirdly, the project makes it possible to bring the findings of relevant national and international research to the attention of principals and classroom teachers, and to provide them with opportunities to integrate best practices in their schools. Finally, the project supports a number of research projects undertaken by individual teachers on a range of educational inclusion topics.

Research: Achievements 2004-2005

- ★ 1. In the past year, schools have focussed more systematically than in previous years on collecting a wide range of useful and appropriate data to measure the impact of their school and community-based initiatives. (For examples of the data collected, see the summary of projects in the next section of the report).
- ★ 2. The project team and participants have continued to document and analyse the outcomes of the project at collective level through action research, which affirms that the project is producing positive outcomes for teaching and learning in schools.
- ★ 3. In the past year, teachers and principals involved in the project have had further opportunities to engage with relevant international research, particularly Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the work of Professor Howard Gardner on multiple intelligences.
- ★ 4. A number of research projects supported by *Bridging the Gap* were completed during the past year, as shown in the table on the next page.



| Name of Researcher | Title of Research Study | Degree Awarded |
|--------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Tracey Connolly | Project Management and Education: An Analysis of the Management of the Bridging the Gap Project | Masters in Education, 2005 |
| Elaine Linehan | Specific Speech and Language Disorder | PhD, 2004 |
| Ellen Lyons | Early School Leaving: A Case | Masters in Education, 2005 |
| Sinéad O'Flynn | The Hillgrove Lane Centre: A Response to Early School Leaving? | Masters in Education, 2004 |

Two further doctoral research projects linked to *Bridging the Gap* are expected to be completed in 2005-2006:

- Evelyn Grant - a study of community music in *Bridging the Gap* schools
- Mary Harvey - a study of the arts as a tool for enhancing learning in disadvantaged schools (research being undertaken with the assistance of a Government of Ireland scholarship).

Strand 2: Networks

The *Bridging the Gap* project provides many opportunities for networks of teachers, principals and others to meet and to share their expertise. As the project progresses, clusters of schools have formed local networks, with positive benefits for the schools and their communities. There is also a strong network of principals, which has become an important source of collegial support especially for new principals.

Networks: Achievements 2004-2005

- ★ 1. Two networks of home-school community liaison teachers ran projects in their schools: one on literacy and one on primary movement.
- ★ 2. A network of three girls' secondary schools worked together with a publishing company and the visiting teacher service for Traveller education (Department of Education and Science) to produce a book, *Mysterious Eye*.
- ★ 3. Pupils and teachers from the three gaelscoileanna in the project participated together in a visit to UCC organised by Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha.
- ★ 4. Pupils and teachers from the two infant schools involved in the project came together at a Christmas party in UCC.
- ★ 5. A number of neighbouring schools collaborated on joint projects:
 - two schools in Mayfield worked on an integrated art, nutrition and health project

- the infant and girls' schools in Gardiner's Hill collaborated in a visual arts project including an exhibition and an artist in residence scheme
- the boys' and girls' schools in Gardiner's Hill worked together with UCC personnel on the Expanding Horizons programme for high achievers

- ★ 6. Six of the *Bridging the Gap* schools were involved in the Junior Certificate School Programme *Make a Book* project. The schools participated in a national exhibition in Dublin on 13-15 April, and *Bridging the Gap* made it possible for the books produced by pupils in the JCSP Cork network to be exhibited in UCC from 19-21 April.
- ★ 7. An action learning network was set up for principals. Three sessions were held with a focus on leadership, and over twenty principals attended each session. It is intended to continue the network in the coming year.

Strand 3: Dissemination

Dissemination happens at a number of levels in the project. Firstly, schools are encouraged to publicise their work using various media. Secondly, through the project activities, schools and teachers are enabled to share examples of good practice with a wider audience of fellow practitioners. Finally, the project team tries to find as many opportunities as possible to spread the word about what is happening in the project, at national and international levels.

Dissemination: Achievements 2004-2005

The two tables below list the references to *Bridging the Gap* that have been recorded in various publications during the past year.



References to *Bridging the Gap*
in print media

| Date | Publication | Details |
|-----------------|--|--|
| 2004 | OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland | Reference to <i>Bridging the Gap</i> as an example of best practice in the promotion of inclusion in the university |
| Summer 2005 | Essays in Education, Vol 1 | “Dropouts or school leavers: more than a difference in verbiage” (Alana James) |
| August 2005 | Moving Beyond Educational Disadvantage | Final report of the statutory Educational Disadvantage Committee, 2002 - 2005 |
| 9 November 2004 | Evening Echo | “Sunday’s Well kids get arty in Crawford Gallery”, article about visit to Crawford Art Gallery by 15 first class pupils from Sunday’s Well Girls National School |
| December 2004 | UCC News | Cover picture of children from Scoil Maria Assumpta and St. Patrick’s infant schools at Christmas party in UCC |
| 3 December 2004 | Irish Examiner | “Photography books turns spotlight on city” article about Deerpark CBS transition year students’ book, <i>Streets, Lanes and Squares in the South Side</i> |

| Date | Publication | Article |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 6 December 2004 | Evening Echo | “Students unearth southside history”, article about launch of Deerpark students’ book in Glucksman Gallery UCC, sponsored by <i>Bridging the Gap</i> project |
| 7 December 2004 | Irish Examiner | “TY students publish fascinating historical book”, article about Deer Park CBS students’ book |
| February 2005 | Irish Library News | Article about opening of library in Terence McSwiney Community College by the Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment, Micheál Martin TD. Guest speaker was Dr Tracey Connolly, <i>Bridging the Gap</i> Project Manager. |
| March 2005 | WhazOn? Cork | Item about Shellshock: Education and Conservation through Art project and exhibition, organised by Cork Printmakers and Fota Wildlife Park and sponsored by <i>Bridging the Gap</i> |
| 1 March 2005 | Irish Examiner | “Art kids search for the stars”, article about Réaltra exhibition of contemporary abstract paintings in St Patrick’s Infant and Girls’ Schools, Gardiner’s Hill |
| May 2005 | About JCSP Newsletter | Article about Make a Book exhibition, held in UCC and sponsored by <i>Bridging the Gap</i> |
| June 2005 | UCC News | •Article about launch of <i>Mysterious Eye</i> (book compiled by pupils from North Presentation Secondary School, Ursuline Secondary School, Presentation Secondary School) in UCC •Article and photograph about visit to UCC by pupils from the three gaelscoileanna participating in the project (Gaelscoil Mhachan, Gaelscoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa, Scoil Thérese), organised by Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha |
| June 2005 | St. Kevin’s Our Place Our Space | Article by CIT student in the school newsletter about making a mural in the school yard, sponsored by <i>Bridging the Gap</i> |
| 2 June 2005 | Inside Cork | “Keep your eyes peeled”, article about launch of <i>Mysterious Eye</i> |
| 4 July 2005 | Evening Echo | “Morning Star kids hop to it”, article about art exhibition in Morning Star National School, Ballyphehane |

Strand 4: Professional development

The project provides professional development workshops and seminars on relevant topics for principals and teachers on a regular basis. Throughout the life of the project, the sessions have been well attended and have served to build both the skills of the participants and their commitment to the project. In addition, scholarships are offered each year for principals to attend the Project Zero Summer Institute at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Professional development: Achievements 2004-2005

- ★ 1. Two ICT courses for principals and teachers
- ★ 2. Project planning and monitoring sessions: in keeping with the usual practice, two sessions were held during the year to support principals and teachers in the planning, monitoring and documenting the progress of their school projects
- ★ 3. Thematic professional development: sessions on “Learning through doing” and “Strategies to promote numeracy development” were held for teachers, and the Glucksman Gallery held a reception to introduce its education programme to project schools
- ★ 4. Principals’ action learning network: the three sessions of the principals’ action learning network covered the themes of identifying leadership issues, leadership styles and competences, and teamwork and negotiation skills for principals.
- ★ 5. Harvard Summer Institute: four principals attended the Project Zero Summer Institute at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in July 2005. This brings the total number of Harvard alumni within the project to twenty-eight: twenty-five principals and three teachers.

Some responses from this year’s Harvard participants

“An intensive bombardment of ideas, most challenging and yet very enjoyable. I find myself questioning and comparing skills I already have with new skills learnt. All journeys must begin with a single step. My journey begins today.”

“I have devised a plan to apply Project Zero theories to some of my subject areas during the coming school year. Next year I hope to expand to other subjects. I will introduce my colleagues (gently) to teaching for understanding. After further staff development, I hope that they will introduce some of the Project Zero practices in their classes.”

“Excitement! A realisation of rich possibilities. I would love everyone from my school to be here! Main learning point for me: look at how I teach through a new lens. By making our pupils skilled thinkers, we are “educating for the unknown”. Really looking forward to using the teaching for understanding framework to teach a curriculum unit in 2005-2006.”



Strand 5: School and community-based projects

Each year *Bridging the Gap* helps schools to plan and undertake their own projects to improve the educational experience for children and families in their communities. Since the start of the project, this strand has proved very successful in engaging principals, teachers, pupils and parents in a variety of creative and innovative activities. Schools set their own goals and they monitor the progress of their project against these goals. They collect and record data as evidence that the project is having an impact in the school and in the community, and they submit a written report at the end of each year.

School and community level interventions: Achievements 2004-2005

- ★ 1. Thirty-seven schools ran their own projects, and over two thousand pupils were directly involved. In many schools, the project involved all pupils. (For a more detailed summary of the school projects, see the next section of the report.)
- ★ 2. Every school set clear goals for their project, which included developing pupils’ skills, engaging their interest and encouraging participation in activities, increasing their enjoyment of school and their motivation to succeed, involving parents and community in their children’s education and extending the skill base of the school as a learning organisation.
- ★ 3. The range and quality of data that schools collected has improved each year, and schools have gathered firm evidence that the project is producing positive results in the school and in the community.
- ★ 4. Schools have also begun to plan for continuing the work of the project after 2006, and for integrating it with school development planning for the future.

Connections: Anthology of Work by Cork Pupils

Pupils from project schools were invited to submit entries for an anthology of children’s work to celebrate Cork’s year as European Capital of Culture. The anthology, *Connections*, features over one hundred stories, poems and pictures that were selected from the best work produced by pupils in these schools during the year. On 29 November 2005, *Connections* was launched by President Mary McAleese in St. Vincent’s Convent NS, to an audience that included the artists and authors, together with principals, teachers and guests. The launch received publicity in the national media.





2. Summary of school and community-based projects 2004-2005





| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|--|---|---|
| Gaelscoil Mhachan, Mahon Homework clubs 1st to 5th classes 27 pupils | Improve literacy and numeracy skills Encourage interest in art activities | Attendance chart and art portfolio | Improved attendance and attitudes to homework More teachers involved in project and attending events Increased use of IT, more networking with other principals |
| Gaelscoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa, Ballyphehane Music | Educational, social and personal development through musical experience Develop musical facilities of the school Develop effective expression skills through musical experience | Worksheets and class activities Music folder for each child | Instruments acquired by school Skills developed by children: musical performance, listening, basic theory Self-confidence, imagination, discipline and teamwork |
| Greenmount NS Green St. Music within the community 3rd to 6th classes 133 pupils | Children, teachers and parents to appreciate, experience and participate in local musical heritage, eg Barrack Street band Improve self-esteem and attendance Encourage children to work together Foster individuals' talents Enhance performance in curriculum areas: performing arts and music | Assessing musical performance; teacher observation, formal and informal assessment | Increased enjoyment and interest among children Improved expectations and ambitions in music Good links with community New school plan for music in the curriculum Formal links with band to provide progression for pupils |
| Maria Assumpta Infant School, Ballyphehane After-school arts programme: "Fun club" Senior infants 29 pupils | Improve oral skills Improve attendance, social skills, confidence and self-esteem Promote positive attitudes among parents Foster appreciation of the arts and literature | Formal and informal observation Language and social skills rubrics administered to sample group October/ May Attendance monitored | Language: improvements recorded in grammar/ language control, poise, fluency, vocabulary, eye contact, body language and message content Social skills: improvements recorded in oral participation/ performing, self-management skills, independence, confidence and responsibility. Positive impact on classroom environment. Average attendance 93% |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|--|--|---|--|
| Maria Assumpta Senior School, Ballyphehane Music: “The crescendos” 2nd to 6th class 64 pupils | Develop musical talents and technical skills for creative expression and participation in the arts Improve confidence and self-esteem Develop perseverance and self-discipline Actively involve parents <i>“Enable children to experience the excitement and satisfaction of musical creativity”</i> | Formal and informal tests of musical performance | Project was a whole school undertaking involving all teachers and parents Improved self-esteem, musical ability, enthusiasm and respect for self, instruments and each other |
| Morning Star NS Ballyphehane Visual arts in the school development plan Junior infants to 6th class 149 pupils | Increase enjoyment and appreciation of the arts: provide opportunities to explore, experiment, imagine, design, invent and communicate with different art media Promote co-operative learning Increase participation of parents Brighten school and surroundings Strengthen links with community | Portfolio collection and display of art work Teacher survey and evaluation of pupils’ confidence, co-operation, social interaction, enthusiasm | Coordinated whole-school approach to planning arts programme High quality of work produced Impact on self-esteem of pupils Positive impact on parents and teachers Link with neighbouring further education college <i>“The school walls have become a gallery”</i> |
| North Monastery NS Scoil Mhuire Fatima, North Monastery Rd. School band 4th and 5th classes 28 pupils | Increase musical knowledge, appreciation and confidence Promote positive interaction between pupils and school Improve pupils’ classroom performance and attitudes Improve home/school/ community relationships | Informal interviews with children Interviews with parents Attendance records: music classes and school | Increase in self-confidence Greater participation in other arts activities in school: drama, poetry writing and art Increased involvement of parents in school activities <i>“The band has given permission to the children to express themselves in new ways. The project has given permission to parents to enjoy being involved in their son’s school life.”</i> |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|---|---|---|
| North Presentation NS Gerald Griffin St. Music 1st to 6th class 144 pupils | Develop musical talents and skills: choral singing, musical literacy, rhythm Enhance pupils’ self-esteem Encourage participation of parents Support implementation of music curriculum through sharing good practice | Questionnaire to teachers before and after project Comments from children Informal music tests: pitch, rhythm, listening and responding | Parents’ association revitalised and parents more involved in school: fundraising has enabled extension of project to all pupils in school Improvement in behaviour of specific pupils Improved performance in music tests |
| School of the Holy Cross, (Scoil na Croise Naofa) Mahon Speech and drama 2nd, 3rd and 4th classes 60 pupils | Improve confidence and self-esteem Improve quality of oral language and vocabulary Encourage parents to support children Foster active learning in a fun atmosphere Facilitate professional development of teachers | Report by classroom teachers Questionnaire to parents Classroom observation by principal Attendance monitoring | Raised self-esteem and confidence Improved listening skills and tolerance of other people’s opinions Increased oral language and improved vocabulary Active participation of disaffected pupils Better teamwork among pupils Greater involvement of parents Professional development of teachers Meeting other teachers working in similar environments Sense of pride and achievement among teachers: <i>“Witnessing meaningful inclusive education at first hand”</i> |
| Scoil Aiséirí Chríost, Faranree Music: School Band 1st to 6th classes 130 pupils | Develop music skills, literacy and enthusiasm towards music Involve parents and community in the project | Surveys of teachers and pupils: results presented as graphs | High percentage of children wish to take music as a secondary school subject Children’s evaluation of own musical ability over two years shows increase in ‘excellent’ category from 15 to 76% Positive feedback from parents about improvement in children’s confidence and concentration Concert performances and competition success in Feis Maitiú |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|---|---|--|
| Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh (B), Bishopstown Social, environmental and scientific education: study of gears, belts, chains and pulleys 5th class, 29 pupils | Encourage study of science and technology in everyday life and the workplace Enable pupils to identify and explore how gears, belts, chains and pulleys transmit movement Apply knowledge acquired to develop and construct machines Develop language, reporting and IT skills Develop cooperative learning and organisational skills Develop skills of sharing, recording and analysing information | Informal assessment before and after project Children documented their work and presented it to others | Group acquired skills of observation, recording, research, sharing, analysing, collaborative working and organisational skills Explored an area of the curriculum that has practical applications Teacher had opportunity to share personal interest in science and technology Group had a positive motivating influence on other teachers and pupils in the school |
| Scoil Eoin Naofa, Mayfield Music: percussion 3rd to 6th classes 120 pupils | Appreciate the value of listening and working together in planning, structuring and practising their work Develop musical awareness Develop confidence | Informal feedback from pupils, parents and teachers | Improvement in attendance, behaviour and attention span Learned skills of organisation, decision-making and problem-solving Increased self-esteem and confidence came with increasing musical ability More willing to perform in public <i>"Drumming really suited the boys, they could give vent to their energy"</i> |
| Scoil Íosagáin, Faranree | Promote musical performance skills Develop art skills | Teacher observation Collection of pupils' artwork | Art booklet produced Music cd/dvd produced <i>"This was a rewarding experience for all the boys"</i> |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scoil Mhuire Banrion, Mayfield Health and equality issues through art 2nd to 6th classes | Engage children in exploring health issues and healthy lifestyle Help children to devise and implement a research project among their peers Compile research into a visual publication and web site Examine how the environment has an impact on people's lifestyles Enhance self-esteem through participation in a creative process Enhance access to the visual arts and SPHE curriculum Involve parents and community in the project | Children's evaluations and comments Teacher observations Children's responses to questionnaires Evaluation by artist facilitating project | CD-ROM produced Mural painted on wall of school yard Pupils are more confident in using multimedia art Increased awareness of healthy lifestyle options Increased awareness of positive leisure options in the local environment, shared with other pupils and families Display of art work in gallery had a very positive impact on children and parents Improved integration of curriculum areas <i>"This is learning at its best, where the children explore and come to understand issues relevant to their own lives while having lots of fun."</i> |
| Scoil Padre Pio, Churchfield After-school Club 5th and 6th class pupils 32 pupils | Improve the quality and frequency of homework assignments Improve attainment in PE, the arts, IT and Home Economics Foster friendship and camaraderie among pupils Cultivate mutual respect between teachers and pupils Assist parents and families in supporting homework | Records of attendance, behaviour, attitudes and self-esteem Class teachers monitored homework Consultation with parents Participation in and enjoyment of activities monitored | Improved completion of homework assignments Opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities Positive feedback from parents and teachers Some of the targeted children have dropped out |
| Gaelscoil Thérèse, Bishopstown Cork City -- European Capital of Culture All classes 35 pupils | Celebrate Cork's year as Capital of Culture Explore music, dance, architecture, history and geography of Cork city Increase pupils' knowledge of the city and foster pride in its appearance, culture and costumes | Informal feedback from pupils, parents and teachers | Pupils greatly enjoyed project activities Positive feedback from parents Increased level of knowledge about, and pride in, the city Increased appreciation of art, culture and heritage Enhanced skills in dance, singing and music helped to develop self-esteem |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|--|--|--|
| Scoil Ursula, Blackrock Music, drama and dance 3rd to 5th classes 65 pupils | Develop musical skills, awareness, knowledge and experience Develop social and interactive skills, self-esteem, motivation and confidence through performance Foster critical appreciation of own performance Provide training for teachers on using music and recording equipment in the classroom | All project activities documented Skills: progress records of skills development Knowledge: testing before and after project Social Skills: sessions recorded by teachers Self-esteem: observation of pupils' reflections on their performance | Measurable improvement in levels of skill, knowledge and social interaction, Parents strongly supportive Teachers improved their own musical and music teaching skills Pupils with learning difficulties were included <i>"The most significant learning point of the project is the importance of objective-based teaching. This has been applied to other curriculum areas"</i> |
| St. Brendan's Girls NS The Glen Drama All classes 106 pupils | Promote awareness and appreciation of drama Develop interpersonal skills, teamwork and self-esteem Teachers to acquire drama know-how from an expert Foster links with home, school and community Involve parents in children's education | <i>"Emphasis was on process not product"</i> Questionnaires to children, teachers | Full attendance on drama day Increased confidence: the pupils performed in a community show outside school Friendships developed across different age groups Improved oral language skills Parents very supportive and involved in production of show Important contribution of expert drama professional <i>"A shared venture for the whole school was a fantastic achievement."</i> |
| St. Columba's CBS, Blarney St. Music All classes 116 pupils | Pupils to enjoy creative music-making and performance Build self-esteem and self-confidence Increase community-wide appreciation of music Increase parents' awareness of their child's potential | Assessment through performance | Three bands in school: every child learns an instrument Music scholarship established, with funding from community Learning from the project is now incorporated into mainstream practice by all classroom teachers <i>"Music in our school is for everyone – it's a fun and active experience for all. Teachers are now guided by the overall vision of the project when teaching music in the classroom."</i> |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|---|---|---|
| St. Mark's Boys NS. The Glen Speech and drama All classes 64 pupils | Enhance language and communications skills, confidence, teamwork Develop number skills and music skills Raise teachers' expectations of pupils Improve communication between teachers and parents Improve learning environment of the classroom Facilitate parents in nurturing talents of children | Recording of performance pre-and post-rehearsal Feedback from pupils, parents and teachers Self-evaluation and peer evaluation by pupils Adjudicator's comments from Feis Maitiú | Additional help provided with speech therapy and movement High level of skill, creativity and confidence developed Children and parents enjoyed performance <i>"We set targets at the beginning of this project.... these targets have been achieved and much more besides."</i> |
| St. Mary's on the Hill NS Knocknaheeny Music 5th classes 47 pupils | Enhance self-esteem through music and performance Improve concentration, behaviour, attitudes and interactions in classroom Improve participation of reluctant students Pass on methods of good practice to other teachers | Measured level of participation in activities | Positive feedback from different audiences Performance was a source of pride for parents and pupils High level of camaraderie developed within the group Level of musical competence has bolstered self-esteem and fostered appreciation of music |
| St. Patrick's Boys and Girls N.S. Gardiner's Hill (Joint project) Expanding Horizons 2nd to 6th class 48 pupils | Provide active learning opportunities for high achieving children Develop peer support, increase self-esteem and motivation individually and collectively Develop higher order thinking skills, problem-solving and self-assessment to create independent lifelong learners Provide teachers with skills to support learning of all children | Feedback from pupils, teachers, tutors and parents (Standardised testing considered inappropriate) | Programme generated excitement in school and local media Individual self-esteem and school profile was raised Increased levels of confidence and motivation Learning seen as a fun activity Higher order thinking and independent learning skills developed Teachers up-skilled on current theories of intelligence and learning: benefit to all pupils Teachers saw little transfer of project learning to classroom |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|--|--|--|---|
| St. Patrick's Girls NS Gardiner's Hill <i>Kidz Opera</i> Whole school, 258 pupils | Compose, produce and perform an opera based on a theme chosen by pupils Involve pupils in specific focused and practical way in Cork 2005 Provide an opportunity for teachers to learn about planning and producing a show Build on home-school links | All aspects of the project documented: Entries for script competition Libretto of the opera Words of songs composed by pupils CD of music composed for the opera | Greater cross-class interaction; pupils of all ages, interests and abilities involved Pupils experienced different genres of writing Pupils had experience of opera as an art form Enhanced oral language development <i>"It helped pupils to explore aspects of life (cultural difference) and encouraged empathy with the feelings of others".</i> |
| St. Patrick's Infant School, Gardiner's Hill Arts and Garden All infants and senior infants classes 155 pupils | Provide an enriching integrated art experience for pupils through music, dance and drama Promote sense of responsibility and respect for the natural world Improve learning disposition through the arts Use environment as a teaching resource Teachers to gain confidence through up-skilling to deliver arts curriculum Involve parents, families and community in a collaborative, productive way | Emphasis on process, not just product Recording and documenting of all project activities and performances Observation by teachers and parents Oral feedback from staff, children, parents and community Questionnaires to staff and parents | Teachers have a high level of skill and confidence in delivering music curriculum Children immersed in rich and varied arts programme: enhances self-esteem and confidence in an interactive, enjoyable way Children enjoy activities in garden and outdoor environment <i>"An integrated programme where music, dance and drama are inter-linked provides our children with a broad, rich arts experience."</i> |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|--|--|--|---|
| St. Vincent's Convent N.S. St. Mary's Rd. Reading 1st class 71 pupils | Increase parents' confidence and competence in helping children to read Increase family/school partnership Increase children's interest in books and reading Enhance oral language ability Improve scores on standardised reading tests Improve attendance Include reading programme in school plan as part of the whole school literacy programme | Survey of parents Standardised testing of children's language and reading attainment Pre-and post-testing: -British Picture Vocabulary Scale -Renfrew Language Scales Action Picture Test -Young Group Reading Test -Drumcondra Primary Reading Test | Parents are more confident in helping children to read; they perceive that school treats parents as partners Children are more interested in books and reading Test scores: significant gains on all measures of reading attainment <i>"The present average score of 99.62 is very close to 100, the level at which the children could be said to be scoring at a level appropriate to their chronological age.... In a disadvantage context, this represents a very desirable outcome".</i> |
| Sunday's Well Boys NS Language Development through Drama and Reading (CAPER) Junior infants to second class | Develop clarity of language, diction, vocabulary Develop ability to communicate clearly, express a wide range of thoughts, feelings and experiences Build self-confidence and empathy | Standardised reading tests -Belfield Infant Assessment Profile: Auditory Discrimination and Sequential Memory Monitoring of attendance and of conversation/ language development | Standard of conversation and language in junior classes has improved dramatically Higher reading age profile; better scores on standardised tests Improvement in attendance Children were introduced to musical productions Increased confidence of children Enhanced opportunities to succeed <i>"We are delighted with the development within the school and hope that the work [of the project] will be absorbed into the future ethos of the school."</i> |

| Primary Schools | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|---|--|---|
| Sunday's Well Girls NS Music: a gift for life 2nd to 6th classes 85 pupils | Enjoy, appreciate and understand music Develop musical potential and experience excitement of musical creativity Nurture self-esteem and self-confidence through performance Enhance quality of life through aesthetic experience Promote parents' interest in music activities | Observation of performance Questionnaire for parents and children Report from classroom teachers | Positive responses from parents, pupils and teachers Increased self-esteem Positive impact on other aspects of school life: attention span, attendance, teamwork Effective integration of music with other curriculum areas <i>"The project is now unrecognisable from its first humble beginnings"</i> |
| Togher Boys NS Music 5th classes 48 pupils (recorder) and 9 pupils (guitar) | Introduce instrumental tuition (recorder and guitar) Provide opportunities for enjoyment of performance Develop musical skills Create awareness among staff of the benefits of instrumental performance | Surveys devised by pupils and completed by pupils and parents Observation of musical performance | Musical skills and knowledge developed Pupils enjoy classes Parents and teachers supportive <i>"The pupils benefit also from their disciplined encounters with the visiting tutors and their positive engagement with the adults involved."</i> |

| Post-Primary Schools and Centres | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|--|--|---|---|
| St. Kevin's School, Infirmary Rd. Art: Our Place, Our Space All classes 24 pupils | Develop pupils' sense of place, of belonging to school, community and city Raise self-esteem Enrich pupils' lives through exposure to, and experience of, the arts Improve attendance | Observation of attitudes and behaviour Survey of staff to assess student reaction Attendance monitored | Positive impact on self-esteem, motivation and behaviour School project won a prize in history competition Greater sense of ownership and pride about the school Slight improvement in attendance Increase in cross-curricular and cooperative learning Teachers have added IT skills |
| Deerpark CBS, St. Patrick's Rd, Deerpark Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Transition year 16 pupils | Familiarise pupils with a broad range of ICT skills Enrich other curricular areas by applying ICT skills to presentation of work Complete ECDL modules Widen learning horizons by structured use of Internet research | Completion of ECDL modules Measuring transfer of skills to other subject areas Question and answer session with pupils | 14 pupils successfully completed all ECDL modules Project work in other subject areas improved Transfer of skills not as effective as previous year; teachers' expectations may have been too high Full attendance on Friday afternoons Improved confidence and self-esteem |
| Mayfield Community School, Old Youghal Rd. Young Scientist Exhibition 1st to 5th year 8 pupils | Raise the level of aspiration among pupils by assisting them to successfully submit a project to the Young Scientist Exhibition Set up a science club to encourage the development of project ideas | Diary of work and progress on projects kept by teacher Guidance counsellor conducted interviews with participating pupils Records of participation and completion of work Quantitative and qualitative progress metrics compiled | Young Scientist exhibition established in the school Five projects submitted; three selected for exhibition Source of pride for school, parents and pupils Greater level of awareness of careers and higher aspiration to achieve third level qualification Increased interest in Biology Image of the school in the community has benefited Positive morale-boosting exercise for school Pupils determined to succeed in future <i>"I want to come back next year and beat all the posh schools!"</i> |

| Post-Primary Schools and Centres | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| North Monastery Secondary School, North Monastery Rd. Computer Studies Transition Year 21 pupils | Establish the ECDL programme in the school Provide the necessary training for two teachers Acquire ECDL training and testing software Prepare pupils for modules 1 and 2 of ECDL | Testing built into ECDL programme | ECDL successfully established in school, but this took a lot of time Self-paced, computer-based training software ideally suited to mixed ability class Low level of success in module examinations: Pass mark of 75% very challenging for students; they need to improve time management in examinations |
| North Presentation Secondary School, Faranree Performing Arts 1st and 2nd year classes | Enhance motivation of pupils through the arts: music, art, drama and dance Engage pupils in active learning Enhance self-esteem Use multiple intelligences Encourage positive attitudes to school Improve relationships between teachers and pupils Enable teachers to develop new skills for use in the classroom Involve parents in children's education Encourage the whole school to participate more in the arts and feel more positive as a result | Questionnaires to pupils | Positive responses from pupils, parents, principal and teachers Pupils developed confidence and discovered new talents Improved atmosphere in school Mixed ability grouping has worked well Teachers have achieved better relationships with pupils, especially those whose behaviour is challenging |



| Post-Primary Schools and Centres | Goals | Data Collected | Results |
|---|--|--|--|
| Presentation Secondary School, Ballypheane Small-group work 2nd and 3rd year 11 pupils | Keep the targeted pupils in school Support them to complete the Junior Certificate examination Encourage them to return to school in September 2005 | Monitoring of results and progress in school tests Pupils set targets for themselves and measured their progress against the targets Self-evaluation by pupils | All target pupils remained in school Improvements in classroom attainment, especially with second years All of the third year pupils are expected to return to do Leaving Certificate Applied <i>"The project is vital to the school. It makes a difference to individual pupils and their chances in life. Without it many of the participants would have dropped out before now, without qualifications."</i> |
| St. Patrick's Secondary School, Gardiner's Hill Physical and leisure activities 1st to 6th years | Encourage participation in dance, aerobics, swimming, music and drama Promote physical activity to improve quality of life Enhance interest in school, motivation and attendance Promote social skills and teamwork Provide stimulating and fun learning experiences | Records of attendance for all activities and clubs Instructor assessed physical activity by informal observation Pupil questionnaire Musical performance in public Participation in competitive drama festival | Growth in self-esteem and confidence Positive outcomes in participation, attendance, behaviour and enthusiasm 70-80% uptake of activities in junior classes Strong spirit of teamwork and collaboration developed School choir and school band formed Positive comments from teachers, parents and pupils |





3. Evaluating outcomes for 2004-2005 and looking to the future





How well did *Bridging the Gap* achieve its goals for 2004-2005?

The final section of the report evaluates the extent to which each of the *Bridging the Gap* project goals for 2004-2005 has been achieved, based on examining the progress in each of the project strands as documented in the two previous sections of the report. It also outlines the approach to evaluation that will be adopted in the final year of the project.

Goal 1: Strengthen the active learning partnership between schools, communities and the university

There has been continued progress towards meeting this goal, with an increasing level of collaboration between the project and the university. However, there is still scope for further development in the future, for example the project might act in a “brokerage” role between schools or communities seeking help and university departments that are willing to provide services as part of their community mission. This kind of development will be greatly facilitated by the high profile that the project has achieved in the university, largely through the efforts of the Project Director and the Project Manager to publicise its work.

Goal 2: Concentrate on enhancing the research strand of the project, to ensure that it contributes to shaping future educational inclusion measures

The research strand of the project has been enhanced in a number of ways in the past year. Firstly, schools have improved the quality of their own research, by systematically gathering and analysing data to measure the impact of their school and community-based projects. Secondly, *Bridging the Gap* as an action-research project has continued to gather data that illustrate the effectiveness of its approach to promoting educational inclusion in schools. Thirdly, the project has begun to introduce principals and classroom teachers to relevant national and international research. Finally, a number of individual researchers supported by *Bridging the Gap* have completed projects on educational inclusion topics.

Goal 3: Engage teachers as researchers in their classrooms, setting targets, planning interventions and collecting data to monitor the impact of their actions

It is clear from the reports submitted by schools this year that this goal has been met and that the research capability in *Bridging the Gap* schools has grown steadily over the life of the project. The systematic collection and analysis of data has become an everyday part of school life, which helps principals and teachers to see how their targeted actions produce results for their pupils and for the community.

Goal 4: Disseminate the outcomes of the project locally and nationally, and influence policy and practice on educational inclusion

In the past year *Bridging the Gap* has achieved a high profile at local level in Cork, through the efforts of both the project team and the schools in promoting their work in the media. At national level, the work of the project has been presented to a range of audiences by the Project Manager and by the Project Director, whose role as chair of the national Educational Disadvantage Committee provides a formal channel for disseminating the findings of the project and influencing national policy. The project’s 2004 evaluation report was very well received and widely complimented by education practitioners for its presentation of practice-based case studies showing real-life classroom approaches that promote educational inclusion.

Goal 5: Support the formation and continuation of networks, to promote the professional development of principals and teachers and the greater integration of schools with their local communities

The past year has seen the formation of a number of successful networks, which have fostered collaboration on joint projects between neighbouring schools. UCC has also contributed to supporting networks

of schools that share common interests, such as the gael scoileanna and the schools involved in the Junior Certificate School Programme. This has produced positive benefits for schools and their communities. The networks developed through the project provide a firm foundation on which to build for the future, and strengthening these networks is especially important as the project enters its final stage.

Goal 6: Work with principals to identify and enhance the leadership qualities and practices that promote high achievement and educational inclusion in schools

The principals’ action learning network has begun to work with principals on leadership issues. Participants have expressed an interest in continuing this network in the coming year. The four principals who attended the Project Zero Summer Institute at the Harvard Graduate School of Education began to consider how schools could measure the impact of arts-based or other interventions on pupils’ learning disposition and classroom performance across the curriculum.

Conclusion: *Bridging the Gap* has had a very successful year

The *Bridging the Gap* project has completed another very successful year, as can be seen from the earlier sections of this report. In particular, the school-based projects have gone from strength to strength, and the summaries presented in section 2 show that schools are setting goals that are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed - and they are collecting data to provide evidence that their actions are producing results. Having clear, focused goals helps schools to target their project and to adapt their approach in the light of emerging results. The goals also provide motivation for success, and make success visible and explicit when it happens. When school communities experience immediate “wins”, it increases confidence and expands the vision of what is possible to achieve.

Looking to the future: Practical guidelines for collecting and analysing data

In 2005-2006 the Bridging the Gap project will focus in particular on capturing and analysing data to provide quantitative evidence that the project has had a positive impact on the educational experiences of pupils in participating schools over its five-year lifetime. The main questions for the final year evaluation will be:

- How have schools changed as a result of participating in the project?
- Has the project produced sustainable benefits in schools and communities?
- How can the learning from the project be transferred to other classrooms, other schools, other communities, other universities, other regions?

The project schools will play an important part in helping to answer these questions, by following a few practical guidelines for collecting and analysing data.

- Use the process of gathering data to engage teachers, pupils, parents and others with the project as much as possible.
- Keep data simple and communicate the information clearly.
- To show progress or improvement over time, try to compare this year's results with baseline data gathered earlier in the project.
- Where possible, try to include data gathered over a number of years, for example attendance levels, results of class tests or standardised test scores.
- Try to find ways of "benchmarking" the outcomes of the project, for example by comparing the performance of pupils before and after the project, or with the performance of pupils who are not participating in the project.
- Use information that is already available and easily assembled in the school, for example attendance registers, test results, term reports, discipline records, homework records. Build on the existing information, look at it in new ways, ask new questions, probe behind the numbers.
- Use standardised tests and assessment instruments if they are appropriate for the purpose of measuring achievement of the project goals.
- Find ways to validate the data collected: use interviews and focus groups, surveys and questionnaires, rubrics

and rating scales to provide as complete a picture as possible.

Measuring achievement of school-based project goals

- The school-based projects in *Bridging the Gap* aim to
- engage the interest of learners and promote positive attitudes to learning
 - help them to develop new skills and knowledge
 - promote the transfer and application of learning from project activities to the everyday classroom setting
 - produce positive benefits for the school, families and community, as well as for individual learners.

In setting goals and targets for their projects, schools have incorporated all of these aims, as shown in section 2 above. The main challenge for the coming year is to ensure that there is a good match between the project goals and the kinds of data collected. This will provide evidence to show in tangible terms how the project has made a difference. The table on the next page shows some examples of data collection methods that might be used to measure achievement of different types of goals.



| Types of goals | Examples of data collection methods |
|---|--|
| Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Promote interest, awareness...Increase motivation, self-esteem, confidenceProvide enjoyable experiences...Enhance expectations, ambitions, aspirations (of pupils, families, teachers)Foster appreciation of... | Measure learners' reactions to the learning activity they have completed <ul style="list-style-type: none">Questionnaires (oral or written)SurveysIndividual interviewsFocus groupsInformal feedback, observation |
| Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop new knowledge, new skills, new ways of working (in specific curriculum areas)Improve literacy, numeracy, social skillsImprove concentration, classroom behaviour and interactionEnhance performance skills | Measure the knowledge, skills and competence that the learner has gained from the learning experience Assessment of learning outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Formal/informal testing of knowledge, skills, attitudes, competenceAssessment by teachers/ peers/ parentsSelf-assessmentRubrics, classroom tests, standardised tests |
| Transfer <ul style="list-style-type: none">Apply new learning in other curriculum areasEncourage healthy lifestyle options | Measure changes in the behaviour and performance of learners as a result of the learning experience, and the transfer of learning to a new setting, eg other subject areas <ul style="list-style-type: none">Structured follow-up after the projectPre-test/post-test to monitor changes and progress (compare "before and after")Monitoring of classroom performanceCompare project/non-project groups |
| Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve home, school, community relationshipsDevelop skills of teachersIncorporate learning from project into school development planning | Measure wider impact of the learning for group/ class/ school/ community <ul style="list-style-type: none">Internal and external feedback (c. 3-6 months later)Monitoring by self and peers/teachersFormal evaluation, using range of analytical and measurement approaches |



Appendix 1

Schools participating in Bridging the Gap project

Primary Schools

- 1. Gaelscoil Mhachan, Mahon
- 2. Gaelscoil an Teaghlaigh Naofa, Ballyphehane
- 3. Greenmount NS, Green St.
- 4. Maria Assumpta Infant School, Ballyphehane
- 5. Maria Assumpta Senior School, Ballyphehane
- 6. Morning Star NS, Ballyphehane
- 7. North Monastery NS, North Monastery Rd.
- 8. North Presentation NS, Gerald Griffin St.
- 9. School of the Holy Cross, Mahon
- 10. Scoil Aiséirí Chríost, Faranree
- 11. Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh (B), Bishopstown
- 12. Scoil Eoin Naofa, Mayfield
- 13. Scoil Íosagáin, Faranree
- 14. Scoil Mhuire Banríon, Mayfield
- 15. Scoil Padre Pio, Churchfield
- 16. Gaelscoil Thérèse, Bishopstown
- 17. Scoil Ursula, Blackrock
- 18. St. Brendan's Girls' NS, The Glen
- 19. St. Columba's CBS, Blarney St.
- 20. St. Mark's Boys' NS The Glen
- 21. St. Mary's on the Hill NS, Knocknaheeny
- 22. St. Patrick's Boys' NS, Gardiner's Hill
- 23. St. Patrick's Girls' NS, Gardiner's Hill
- 24. St. Patrick's Infant School, Gardiner's Hill
- 25. St. Vincent's Convent NS, St. Mary's Rd.
- 26. Sunday's Well Boys' NS
- 27. Sunday's Well Girls' NS
- 28. Togher Boys' NS
- 29. Togher Girls' NS

Post-Primary Schools and Centres

- 1. Deerpark CBS, St. Patrick's Rd, Deerpark
- 2. Mayfield Community School, Old Youghal Rd.
- 3. Nagle Community College, Mahon
- 4. North Monastery Secondary School, North Monastery Rd.
- 5. North Presentation Secondary School, Faranree
- 6. Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane

- 7. St. Patrick's Secondary School, Gardiner's Hill
- 8. St. Vincent's Secondary School, St. Mary's Rd.
- 9. Terence Mac Swiney Community College, Knocknaheeny
- 10. Ursuline Secondary School, Blackrock
- 11. Hillgrove Lane Centre, Gerard Griffin St.
- 12. Sunday's Well Life Centre
- 13. St. Kevin's School, Infirmary Rd.

Members of project steering group 2004-2005

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