

***A Holistic Approach to Cross-Curricular, Immersive Literacy
Improvement in
21 Century Education in Secondary Schools***

Prepared by

Dr. Daithí Ó Murchú DWEC Project Coordinator 2021-2023.

Final Report and Feedback:

In applying to participate in this initiative, secondary schools in the DWEC catchment area were expected over the duration of the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years to undertake a 'holistic' approach to Multiliteracies in their schools. The first meeting of the successful schools was in November 2021. It was preferred, in order to make the most impact in schools that the literacy initiative would focus on SEN students in 1st year or in TY.

"Literacy is key to keeping children from life of disadvantage and crime", (Irish Times, 2014). Moreover, educational disadvantage and especially those students struggling with literacy issues, refers to the complex situation where some individuals get less benefit from the education system than their peers. The [Education Act 1998](#) defines educational disadvantage as, "the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools". Educational disadvantage is demonstrated in many ways, most often in poor levels of participation and achievement in numeracy and literacy in the formal education system. There are other ways in which children may be disadvantaged, for example as a result of a disability, cross-curricular literacy difficulties, ill health, poverty, homelessness, living in rural environments, 'new-comer' status, etc. As we enter the third decade of the 21 century, 'literacy' as we know it has taken on a variety of meanings and challenges and indeed some argue, especially authors and experts such as Alvin Toffler that, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn" (1970). This literacy initiative at DWEC seeks to address some of these 'literacy inequalities' by inviting 2nd level schools to explore traditional and/or more holistically approaches to issues surrounding 'literacy disadvantage' in their schools.

The closing date for reporting was May 31st - Final Report.

1. The Rationale for the Final Report.

In this section the schools were asked to tell us;

1. **why did your school** become involved in the holistic Literacy initiative?
2. **what they did** in holistic Literacy education in their school as a result of this initiative?
3. **what benefits did** the school gain from participation, if any?
4. **Was the school's capacity** and commitment to the initiative rewarded or challenged during the initiative?
5. **the role students played** in the school's development as a holistic Literacy school.
6. **how did the school benchmark** the success of the initiative
7. **any other information as evidence**, web links, that the school deemed relevant to their original application.

2. Reports as received Below:

- *Kishoge Community College* *Page 3*
- *Kingswood Community College* *Page 13*
- *Griffeen Community College* *Page 20*

Kishoge Community College

A Holistic Approach to Cross-Curricular, Immersive Literacy Improvement in

21 Century Education in Secondary Schools

Final Report and Feedback:

In applying to participate in this initiative, secondary schools in the DWEC catchment area were expected over the duration of the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years to undertake a 'holistic' approach to Multiliteracies in their schools. The first meeting of the successful schools was in November 2021. It was preferred, in order to make the most impact in schools that the literacy initiative would focus on SEN students in 1st year or in TY.

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3. General information

1.1 Please provide information on your School.

School Name	Kishoge Community College
Roll number	
Email Address	<hr/>
Telephone Number	
Principal	XXXXXXXX
Nominated representative (1) who will acted as Literacy Coordinator	XXXX
Mobile Number	
Email address	<hr/>
Other Participating SEN/SET Teachers?	SEN and SET teachers 1 st year and TY.

4. Rationale for your Final Report.

In this section we are asking you to tell us;

8. **why *did your school*** become involved in the holistic Literacy initiative?
9. **what you are doing** in holistic Literacy education in your school today as a result of this initiative?
10. **what benefits *did*** you gain from participation, if any?
11. **Was your capacity** and commitment to the initiative rewarded or challenged during the initiative?
12. **the role students played** in your development as a holistic Literacy school.
13. **how did you benchmark** the success of your initiative
14. **any other information as evidence**, web links, that you deem relevant to your application

Your final report is assessed against the seven headings.

4.1 Rationale for your Final Report

Please tell us your rationale for applying to become a Holistic Literacy school with DWEC. This should be summarized under the seven headings indicated above.

1. **Why *did your school*** become involved in the holistic Literacy initiative?

We are an Educate Together School with a very diverse population of students. Many of our students are from EAL backgrounds and we have worked hard to grow a reading culture in our school. We were awarded the Wellread National Award by the PDST in 2020 for our dedication to running literacy events to promote reading. The award expires at the end of 2023, and at the time of our application, we were in the process of opening a new school library to keep the reading flame alive. Our vision for the library was to create an inclusive learning space for all students and staff. The library vision was for it to be a place where lunchtime clubs can be facilitated, and enrichment activities can take place. We became involved in the Holistic Literacy Initiative because we believe that library can be the heart of a school. They are not just spaces for reading- they offer a calm space, a creative space, a space to be curious, mindful, and a space for students to relax and reflect.

2. **What you are doing** in holistic Literacy education in your school today as a result of this initiative?

We now have a very successful lunchtime space for students to enjoy chess and Manga clubs each day of the school week. It's a very busy space and we facilitate up to 40 students some days. We have given students from all year groups leadership opportunities as Library Prefects, and they help the teachers on supervision each lunch time.

Our new library caters for all levels of readers, and we will have a Manga/comic section to cater for students whose cultural backgrounds link them to Manga and Anime art forms.

We have also set up an EAL section and we have received funding from School Language Home Funding Scheme. We purchased Spanish, Chinese and French books from this money.

We have linked with the art department, and we have run a bookmark design competition. Winning bookmarks are being professionally printed for our students. Our vision is to have the walls of the library decorated with student art and we have a roadmap of art projects planned for next academic year to ensure this happens. The projects are literary themed.

We also host a range of events to celebrate diversity through reading. For example, we organise an annual Banned Books Month to celebrate our freedom to read books that explore racial injustice and LGBTQ issues. During this month, students are encouraged to read books such as *Of Mice and Men*, *The Outsiders*, *Animal Farm* - books that help us explore important issues and that support holistic development of the individual.

We continue to organise annual Read Dating events to bring our students together and swap book recommendations. Spot prizes are given for the best overheard conversations.

3. **What benefits *did*** you gain from participation, if any?

The library space is now a thriving place for students who don't necessarily want to play sport and who feel the need for a sense of community through games and books. Many students take advantage of our comic section and some come in to watch the chess matches. The atmosphere is really positive, and the students take care of the space.

We have established a great student library prefect system and the students love their leadership roles. They help with book returns, alphabetizing books, setting up chess matches, promoting competitions and with the general upkeep of the library to ensure it's tidy at the end of each session.

4. **Was your capacity** and commitment to the initiative rewarded or challenged during the initiative

Our biggest challenge was in ensuring good habits were established and that the library space is respected. Ensuring students had library cards and ensuring that all teachers on duty there were consistent in their approach to running the library was key. We communicate regularly and we have feedback meetings on what we think is going well.

Our opening ceremony was a great success and we invited in the poet, Colm Keegan in to say a few words. This took lots of organization and time, but it was really well worth it because it elevated the status of the library.

5. **The role students played** in your development as a holistic Literacy school? Our

students are central to the success of the library. As mentioned in Q2, our Library Prefects ensure that the day-to-day running of clubs are student led and well run. Some prefects volunteer to attend during extra lunchtime slots in the library because they enjoy the space so much. One of our library prefects coaches the chess team and another prefect is in charge of the Manga club.

We have a clipboard for students to request books that they would like the school to purchase. We are upgrading this to a QR system whereby student can scan the code on their ipads and make book requests that way.

We have feedback meetings with our Library prefects so they can make suggestions on how the library is run.

In addition, Year Heads have been in contact to ask if vulnerable students who feel they don't fit anywhere at lunchtime can be given roles in the library. These students now have somewhere to feel part of a community during their lunchtime.

6. **How did you benchmark** the success of your initiative?

The popularity of the library during lunchtimes is testament to its success. Every chess board is in use and all seats on the sofas are filled with readers. We have just purchased cube shaped bean bags to create more seating for readers.

We can analyse the data on our library software to see who is taking out books and which year groups need encouragement.

All first years have a 6-week library taster lesson and they are introduced to the Dewey system and the different genres of book available in the library.

7. **Any other information as evidence**, web links, that you deem relevant to your application?

We attach some photos of our library journey this year.

Stacking the first shelves.



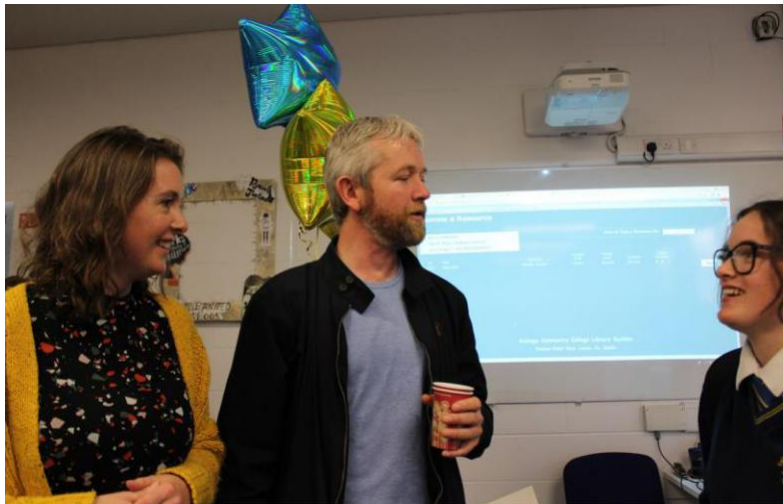
TY Students alphabetizing the books.



Prefects receiving their badges during the opening ceremony.



Author visit, Colm Keegan.



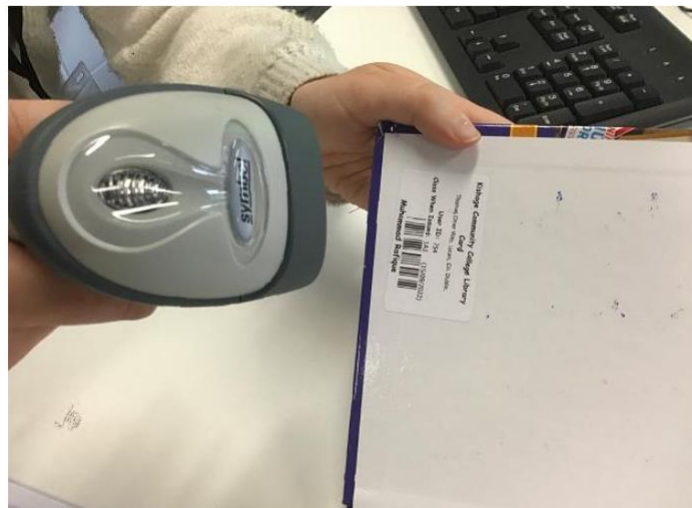
Student Prefect speech for opening ceremony



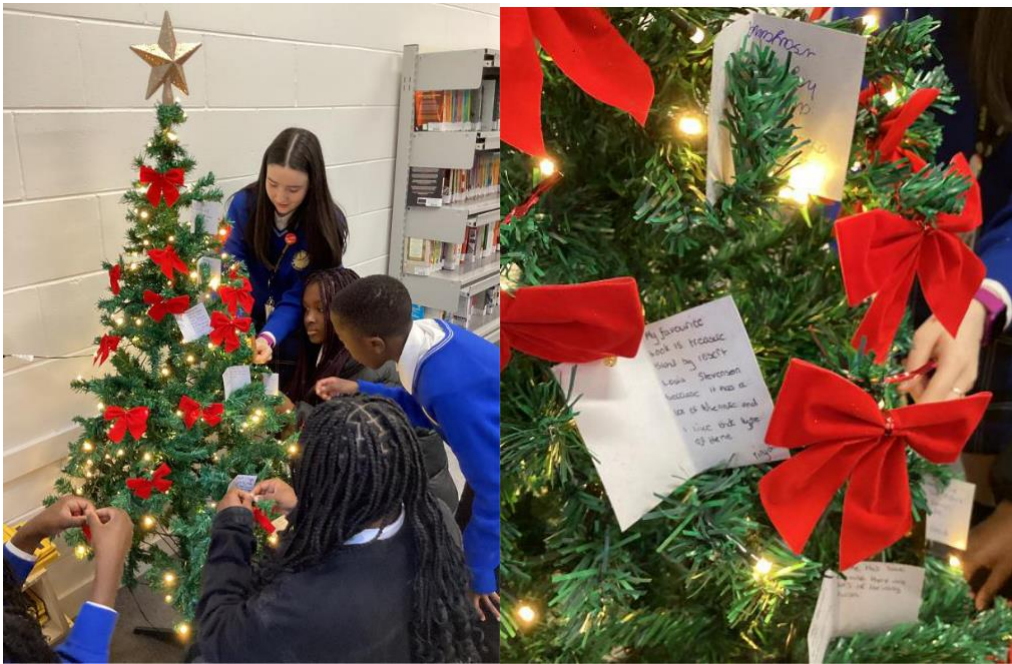
Student audience for opening ceremony



A student using his library card for the first time.



Students decorating our first book tree at Christmas.



What the library looks like now during lunchtime.



Lunchtimes in the library



Excellent Report:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mr. S. J. ...".



Kingswood Community College

A Holistic Approach to Cross-Curricular, Immersive Literacy Improvement in 21 Century Education in Secondary Schools

Final Report and Feedback:

In applying to participate in this initiative, secondary schools in the DWEC catchment area were expected over the duration of the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years to undertake a 'holistic' approach to Multiliteracies in their schools. The first meeting of the successful schools was in November 2021. It was preferred, in order to make the most impact in schools that the literacy initiative would focus on SEN students in 1st year or in TY.

"Literacy is key to keeping children from life of disadvantage and crime", (Irish Times, 2014). Moreover, educational disadvantage and especially those students struggling with literacy issues, refers to the complex situation where some individuals get less benefit from the education system than their peers. The [Education Act 1998](#) defines educational disadvantage as, "the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools". Educational disadvantage is demonstrated in many ways, most often in poor levels of participation and achievement in numeracy and literacy in the formal education system. There are other ways in which children may be disadvantaged, for example as a result of a disability, cross-curricular literacy difficulties, ill health, poverty, homelessness, living in rural environments, 'new-comer' status, etc. As we enter the third decade of the 21 century, 'literacy' as we know it has taken on a variety of meanings and challenges and indeed some argue, especially authors and experts such as Alvin Toffler that, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn" (1970). This literacy initiative at DWEC seeks to address some of these 'literacy inequalities' by inviting 2nd level schools to explore traditional and/or more holistically approaches to issues surrounding 'literacy disadvantage' in their schools.

5. General information

1.1 Please provide information on your School.

School Name	Kingswood Community College
Roll number	
Email Address	<hr/>
Telephone Number	<hr/>
Principal	XXXXXX
Nominated representative (1) who will act as Literacy Coordinator	XXXXXX

6. Rationale for your Final Report.

In this section we are asking you to tell us;

15. **why *did your school*** become involved in the holistic Literacy initiative?
16. **what you are doing** in holistic Literacy education in your school today as a result of this initiative?
17. **what benefits *did*** you gain from participation, if any?
18. **Was your capacity** and commitment to the initiative rewarded or challenged during the initiative?
19. **the role students played** in your development as a holistic Literacy school.
20. **how did you benchmark** the success of your initiative
21. **any other information as evidence**, web links, that you deem relevant to your application

Your final report is assessed against the seven headings.

6.1 Rationale for your Final Report

Please tell us your rationale for applying to become a Holistic Literacy school with DWEC. This should be summarized under the seven headings indicated above.

8. **why *did your school*** become involved in the holistic Literacy initiative?

Kingswood Community College is a 1:1 digital school. Holistic literacy is at the heart of our teaching and learning. We employ the iPads as a tool to access and support multi-literacies which is one of the reasons why we are recognized as a school of excellence by Apple. It is our belief that better readers become better writers as better speakers become better listeners. Digital literacy is not separate to this, it is amongst the skill set necessary to succeed in today's world. With the support of the holistic literacy initiative, we aimed to;

- Support our current literacy initiatives which include our focus on multi-modal approaches to literacy as well our work towards achieving the Well Read award.
- Encourage reading for pleasure in the school.
- Add to our library catalogue and help us to finally open the library.
- Support students in creating digital content to encourage reading for pleasure.

9. **what you are doing** in holistic Literacy education in your school today as a result of this initiative?

We are focusing on the connection between the joy of reading and digital technologies. As a digital school, we consider reading for pleasure and literacy in digital technology to be mutually beneficial rather than opposing activities. We used this project to encourage students to recognize the connection between digital literacies and reading for pleasure. We did so to help launch our library.

- We compiled lists of students' preferred books.

- We purchased these books for the school library to ensure our collection will be relevant to the student body.
 - We formed a team of students to create digital content to encourage reading for pleasure and to promote our library.
 - We used the funding provided to order digital equipment to record these videos (microphones, greenscreen, tripods, iPad clamps, lighting set-up)
 - We coordinated teams of students to create the videos.
 - We *will* share the created content on our VLE (virtual learning environment) to encourage and support reading for pleasure and our library.
10. **what benefits *did*** you gain from participation, if any?

Students improved their teamwork and digital literacy skills. Students also made authentic connections between their love of books and the creation of digital content. The digital content produced showed a love of reading and an understanding of digital advertising and online media, as the videos were in some way to encourage reading. The TYs who organized the inputting of the library catalogue showed admirable maturity and organization skills.

The time needed to supervise the students was difficult to arrange consistently but all teachers involved enjoyed watching the students make such original and creative content with the digital equipment. The whole school will benefit from the collection of books we have accrued and the student-lead support to use our library which will be launched before the end of this school year.

11. **Was your capacity** and commitment to the initiative rewarded or challenged during the initiative?

Our capacity was both rewarded and challenged. The student team comprised of students from TY library team, our Student Digital Leaders and our Student Book Club. Amongst staff, the Library Committee and Teaching and Learning School Development Committees were involved. The students were superb. Their teamwork and passion for reading and creating digital content was obvious. The teachers were equally great. They gave many of their free hours to supervise students in this process.

The main challenge was coordinating groups of students in a way that did not take too much time from exam subjects. This meant that the process has been slow going and we do not have all videos finished yet. The time it took to set-up all the equipment (green screen, microphones, tripods, lighting set-up) had been under-estimated and this delayed production. To add to this, although we now have most of the videos, the library is not ready to be opened just yet. We have no librarian, so our TYs will be managing the library in their free time. This means that the videos cannot be published to our VLE just yet as we cannot promote the library/reading till we have it fully operational. We hope to this just after the Easter break.

12. **the role students played** in your development as a holistic Literacy

school? TY student library team

Students submitted suggestions for books to purchase for the library. These were purchased and students then input these into the library catalogue system and arranged the books in the alphabetical order by author surname on the shelves in the library. They created a video to show other students how to use the library. This inputting process is still ongoing.

Digital Leaders and Book Club members

Students submitted ideas for videos to promote reading. Groups of students used the newly purchased equipment to make these videos.

13. ***how did you benchmark*** the success of your initiative?

We based our success on student involvement and resources accrued:

- The number of books sourced via student surveys (60+)
- The number of students involved in setting up the library catalogue (12)
- The number of students involved in making the videos (19)
- The number of videos made (5 made, 2 still left to be made)
- ***We will*** measure the level of interaction with the videos on our VLE which will show that student have watched the videos.
- ***We will*** measure the level of books being taken out of the library when it launches to track the number of books being borrowed.

14. **any other information as evidence**, web links, that you deem relevant to your application?

Links to Students' Feedback and work:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mU7Lx6f73bI>

<https://youtu.be/teKClrTxILo>

https://youtu.be/v_gQe35_OE

<https://youtu.be/gTOZxub3aYA>

<https://youtu.be/PdPNr2mZ4TE>



Excellent Report:

John S. [Signature]



Griffen Community College

A Holistic Approach to Cross-Curricular, Immersive Literacy Improvement in 21 Century Education in Secondary Schools

Final Report and Feedback:

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"Literacy is key to keeping children from life of disadvantage and crime", (Irish Times, 2014). Moreover, educational disadvantage and especially those students struggling with literacy issues, refers to the complex situation where some individuals get less benefit from the education system than their peers. The [Education Act 1998](#) defines educational disadvantage as, "the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools". Educational disadvantage is demonstrated in many ways, most often in poor levels of participation and achievement in numeracy and literacy in the formal education system. There are other ways in which children may be disadvantaged, for example as a result of a disability, cross-curricular literacy difficulties, ill health, poverty, homelessness, living in rural environments, 'new-comer' status, etc. As we enter the third decade of the 21 century, 'literacy' as we know it has taken on a variety of meanings and challenges and indeed some argue, especially authors and experts such as Alvin Toffler that, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn" (1970). This literacy initiative at DWEC seeks to address some of these 'literacy inequalities' by inviting 2nd level schools to explore traditional and/or more holistically approaches to issues surrounding 'literacy disadvantage' in their schools.

7. General information

Please provide information on your School.

School Name	Griffeen Community College
Roll number	
Email Address	<hr/>
Telephone Number	
Principal	XXXXXX
Nominated representative (1) who will act as Literacy Coordinator	XXXXXX
Mobile Number	
Email address	<hr/>
Other Participating SEN/SET Teachers?	XXXXXX

8. Rationale for your Final Report.

In this section we are asking you to tell us;

22. **why *did your school*** become involved in the holistic Literacy initiative?
23. **what you are doing** in holistic Literacy education in your school today as a result of this initiative?
24. **what benefits *did*** you gain from participation, if any?
25. **Was your capacity** and commitment to the initiative rewarded or challenged during the initiative?
26. **the role students played** in your development as a holistic Literacy school.
27. **how did you benchmark** the success of your initiative
28. **any other information as evidence**, web links, that you deem relevant to your application

Your final report is assessed against the seven headings.

8.1 Rationale for your Final Report

Please tell us your rationale for applying to become a Holistic Literacy school with DWEC. This should be summarized under the seven headings indicated above.

15. **why *did your school*** become involved in the holistic Literacy initiative?

Griffeen Community College became involved in the Holistic Literacy Initiative as we were focusing on factors such as ethos, core values, inclusion and digital strategy from a whole school perspective. As a digital school we place significant value on digital literacy and constantly strive to improve the manner in which we engage with technology and use it to benefit our student cohort. We have a desire to include all students without highlighting difference, and to instil in our student's, skills for life. We saw the project as a strategy that would enable us to place focus specifically on digital literacy and allow us to dedicate time to this important area. We are primarily an iPad school however in the last year we have purchased a laptop trolley in order to expand our capability (we currently do not have a computer room).

16. **what you are doing** in holistic Literacy education in your school today as a result of this initiative?

We are rolling out the Microsoft Expert program with our students with the goal of improving access to all, improving digital literacy in the MS suite and developing inclusion within the groups. We are using newly purchased mice and headphones as a result of the initiative funding. We also have students involved in the iScoil program and their access to these tools have greatly enhanced the student experience. Our students are also availing of their use in coding lessons and have enabled students to move from iPads only to laptop version of Coding programs.

17. **what benefits *did*** you gain from participation, if any?

Through the purchase of mice and headphones, we have improved accessibility for all. These tools have improved ease of use when working through the tasks involved in MS Expert, iScoil and Coding programs. They have allowed greater flexibility for students especially those with limited dexterity and those SEN/AEN students that we support within the continuum of support.

Overall the implementation of their use has improved attitudes towards digital literacy as they have provided greater freedom and flexibility.

18. **Was your capacity** and commitment to the initiative rewarded or challenged during the initiative?

Capacity was limited initially as all students had to work collectively. Therefore, progress was slower than desired and engagement of all was harder to maintain as students had to view tutorials as a class group or had background noise as each individual played through video instructions.

Purchase of the headphones assisted students with sensory challenges in particular, but also facilitated:

- independent learning,
- students moving at their own pace,
- ability to review, rewind and repeat instructions and demonstrations without affecting the learning of others
- effective improvement in the speed at which students could progress.

The mice improved flexibility and ease of access to the content and also improved speed and ability to engage with the content of the program. The headphones and mice will allow us to test more EAL students at the start of each year for the Cambridge exams as we had limited resources before the arrival of the equipment. They will allow us to administer our NGRT and CAT exams faster and more efficiently and effectively allowing us to identify the AEN needs of our first year's faster.

19. **the role students played** in your development as a holistic Literacy school?

Students learning became more active. Students were able to switch between working independently and working collaboratively and they were able to assist each other as they progressed. Students were able to learn from each other as they went about troubleshooting issues as they arose and teaching each other how they overcame obstacles if they were at an advanced stage to their peer.

20. *how did you benchmark* the success of your initiative?

Due to the nature of this project, benchmarking is ongoing. We have identified improved engagement in the digital program of the school as well as general skill development. Teachers involved in roll out of the program have developed skills and are taking part in the program themselves. Students involved in iScoil are making significant progress and are constantly receiving feedback on their progress which has been helped by having access to the tools provided. Finally, students will receive certification for both MS Expert and iScoil when they complete their testing programs at the end of the initiative.

21. **any other information as evidence**, web links, that you deem relevant to your application?





Excellent Report:

These projects which focused on 'holistic' approaches to Multiliteracies in second level schools delivered a most insightful and meaningful engagement, and 'Student Voice' empowerment on so, so many levels to the initiative. From the outset the schools and teachers, students and their communities felt that they were the 'drivers' of the projects, and it was their ultimate responsibility to choose how and when their grant-aid would be spent to benefit their chosen areas. From Creativity of emerging technologies and e-Libraries, incorporating traditional perspectives on literacy in schools with students of all abilities and challenges, to media and digital literacies embedded in everyday activities like chess, film-clubs, reading groups and SEN/SET extra activities, all schools excelled in their quest to be evolving communities of holistic Literacies' practice. It was an hour and a privilege to be part of this small yet exciting and successful 'PILOT' programme.

Dr. Daithí Ó Murchú. On behalf of DWEC.