



EMPOWERING INCLUSIVE TEACHERS  
FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

# EiTTT

## Case Studies

EiTTT (Empowering Inclusive Teachers for Today and Tomorrow) was a European strategic partnership project funded under the Erasmus+ KA2 Education Programme of the European Union. EiTTT focused on the development of mainstream schools as inclusive learning environments for all learners, including those with special needs and disabilities; those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds; and persons with a migrant background.

The project carried out six transnational learning activities on the following themes:



These resources are designed to outline how the EiTTT partners implemented the learning from the project's activities. They aim to inform teacher educators, practising teachers, student teachers, school administrators and policy makers at national and European levels.

EiTTT was coordinated by Marino Institute of Education, Ireland, with partner organisations in Belgium (University Colleges Leuven-Limburg & Karel de Grote University College), Cyprus (Dimotiko Sxoleio Anthoupolis KA), Latvia (Rigas 45. vidusskola) and Finland (Lukkarin koulu). The project partners, who represent three teacher education institutions and three schools, shared a commitment to inclusive education and an understanding of priorities to be addressed if inclusion is to become intrinsic to school practice. The project ran from October 2016 to March 2019.

With a view to facilitating learning for all in the diverse population of contemporary classrooms, EiTTT identified that schools themselves must also be enabled to provide support structures that can facilitate teachers' inclusive practice. As a cross-sectoral group of educators, the EiTTT partners exchanged learning about what they believe are exemplary inclusive education practices in their respective teacher education institutions and schools.

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## Case study:

### Co-Teaching in Teacher Education

University College Leuven-Limburg, Belgium



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## Context

From 7th to 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2016, our first learning activity took place at University College Leuven-Limburg (UCLL) in Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium.

## Education in Flanders

Belgium consists of three regions: Flanders (the Dutch language area), Wallonia (the French language area) and a small German speaking area which has no specific name. These regions are each federated states with a region-specific government. Within the Flemish government, the minister of education is responsible for almost every aspect of educational policy, from early childhood to university education. Yet some specific educational issues (e.g. the start and end of compulsory education in terms of age or the establishing of the minimum conditions for obtaining a degree) are still the responsibility of the federal authorities (i.e. the Belgian government focusing on national matters across regions).

## Structure of education system

Early childhood education is available for children from 2.5 to 6 years. Although early childhood education is not compulsory, almost all children attend it in Flanders. This type of education is multi-faceted in nature and aims to develop children's cognitive, motor and affective skills. Primary education targets children from 6 to 12, and consists of 6 consecutive years of study. A child usually starts primary education at the age of 6, the age at which education becomes compulsory by law. The minimum objectives considered necessary by the government, are described in so-called attainment targets.

Young people aged 12 to 18 have to enrol in secondary education. Secondary education is organised as a uniform system, comprising specific stages and types of education. Pupils only select specialisation subjects in the second stage of this type of education in order to allow them to be introduced first to as many subjects as possible. The second stage (and the third stage) of secondary education distinguishes four types of education forms: 'general secondary education', 'technical secondary education', 'secondary arts education' and 'vocational secondary education'. Each of these types of secondary education offers a common and an optional part.

Once someone obtains his or her secondary education degree certificate, he or she has unlimited access to higher education. Higher education in Flanders can be 'professional' or 'academic' in nature. Higher professional education consists of professionally oriented bachelor courses, which are only offered at colleges of higher education. Academic education comprises bachelor and master courses, which are provided by universities. In Flanders, the following types of higher education courses are offered:

- › Bachelor courses; these include professional bachelor courses and academic bachelor courses
- › Master courses
- › Further training programmes
- › Postgraduate courses, updating courses and in-service training courses
- › Doctoral programmes

## Teacher Education at UCLL



Vzw UC Leuven (formerly KHLeuven) is a university college in Flanders, collaborating under the name UC Leuven-Limburg (UCLL) with two other university colleges: vzw UC Limburg (formerly KHLim) and vzw UC Leuven Comenius Lerarenopleidingen (formerly Group T). UC Leuven-Limburg is renowned for the high quality of its teaching, research and regional development. More than thirty professional bachelor (EQF 6), and lifelong learning study programmes are offered in various discipline fields, with a focus on health care, social work, business and commerce, teacher education and science and technology. UC Leuven-Limburg's strong commitment to research ensures state-of-the-art training programmes for its 15,000 students. The EiTTT project team was based at UCLL's Hertogstraat campus in Heverlee, near the university town of Leuven, some 30 km from Brussels. The entire student body of approximately 2,000 students on this campus, is enrolled in various teacher education programmes, in the largest teacher education institution in Flanders.

Teacher education programmes at UCLL are professional bachelor degrees which lead to the certificates of 'early childhood education teacher', 'primary education teacher' or 'secondary education teacher group 1 teacher' (i.e. the first 3 years of secondary school). These are programmes of 180 credits that are aimed at developing both pedagogical competences and specific professional knowledge skills. Across Belgium, all such programmes are taught at colleges of higher education (not at universities). Those who wish to teach the secondary education group 2 (i.e. the last 3 years of secondary school) have to attend a teacher education course at the university or at a centre for adult education. All the different teacher education programmes are equivalent and are based on a similar set of basic teacher competences.

## Towards Inclusive Education

If students have special educational needs they receive extra attention in the Flemish education system. These needs may be the result of significant intellectual disabilities, psychological disorders, visual, hearing or other impairments or various physical disabilities. In Flanders, most of these children have traditionally attended special schools where they benefit from smaller class sizes and individual guidance from specially trained teachers and educational therapists.

However, on 12th March 2014 the Flemish Parliament approved a parliamentary act on measures for pupils with specific educational needs. The aim of this new legislation is to make education more inclusive. It consists of measures that enable more students with special educational needs to register and remain in regular (mainstream) education. This legislation is known as the 'M Decree'. 'M' refers to the concept 'Maatwerk' (custom-made / tailor-made – i.e. to the educational needs of the child). The M Decree requires that all primary and secondary school students, including those with learning difficulties and 'mild' disabilities, be enrolled in mainstream schools. While students should follow the mainstream curriculum, the right of students to reasonable adaptations by the school to their special educational needs will be guaranteed in accordance with the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The act outlines measures which would allow pupils with specific educational needs to participate fully, effectively and on equal terms in regular schools and classrooms. It also delineates more clearly the admission requirements to the different strands of special education. So, separate special schooling remains an option in Flanders, but the student's need for such provision must now be very well justified. The M Decree therefore, is designed to uphold the child's right to be enrolled in a mainstream school, and to prevent too rapid and potentially undue referral to special schooling. This focus on mainstreaming aims to accord with wider EU policy on inclusive education. Since the beginning of the school year 2015-2016, the provisions of this act are being gradually implemented.

Nonetheless, in Flanders, as in other jurisdictions represented in this project partnership, inclusion policy has proven to be controversial. Concerns have been expressed as to whether the mainstream school system there is ready to meet the needs of

all children. Teachers' groups have called for significant financial investment in mainstream schools to support the infrastructural adjustments and resourcing they believe are required if education is to be truly 'inclusive'. Similarly, questions have been raised as to whether teachers are being afforded adequate time and support to develop the competence necessary to incorporate this policy change in practice. These issues are of interest to the project team, as a premise of our project is that if mainstream teachers' needs are overlooked during such change, there is a risk that inclusive ideals may be conflated with integrationist practice. In Flanders, one promising response in this regard is a pilot re-deployment programme, which, since the 2015-16 school year, has seen 180 teachers from special schools assigned to mainstream schools to work alongside and support (co-teach with) teachers in the mainstream system. This programme has also served to offset teacher job losses in special schools.

## 'Teacher Education for Inclusion' at UCLL

Lijne Vloeberghs (project partner at UCLL) explains:

'The teacher education department at UCLL aims to prepare students to become innovative teachers who always take student diversity in their classrooms into consideration. For our early childhood, primary and secondary education student teachers, as for our student teachers in the advanced bachelor programme in special educational needs, we aim high and teach them about diversity, inclusion and in particular, co-teaching strategies. The educational field in Flanders is surely moving towards more inclusive education; the M-Decree is a first step in this process. We want to prepare our future teachers for this new reality. In our teacher education department we try to prepare our student teachers by using three strategies:

1. Encouraging co-teaching in internships / school placement. We seek opportunities in partner schools for our student teachers to co-teach with classroom teachers. We also model co-teaching during our courses.
2. Encouraging our students to use the Universal Design for Learning framework for developing lessons (we're at the start of this process, the first step is to support teacher educators in their introduction of this approach).
3. Making both teacher educators and future teachers aware of the special dynamics concerning living in poverty (both within our student group and within the pupils in the schools)'.

During the visit to UCLL the project team learned about each of these approaches. The team focused in particular on the strategy of introducing future teachers to co-teaching during teacher education, as a means of providing for their development as inclusive practitioners.

## What is Co-teaching?

A common definition:

Two teachers working together as equal partners with the shared responsibility of a class and developing a powerful learning environment for all students by:

1. Preparing the lessons or activities together (taking into account the specific educational needs of the pupils in their class)
2. Performing the lesson / activity together
3. Evaluating and adjusting the lesson / activity together

The sharing of responsibility between two teachers is an important factor in this definition. As Lynne Cook, a noted expert in the area states, 'co-teaching is not simply having two teachers in a classroom with one acting as a glorified paraprofessional or an in-class tutor for one or two students' (Cook in Spencer, 2005, p. 297). Rather, for true co-teaching to occur, both professionals must co-plan, co-instruct and co-assess a diverse group of students in the same classroom (Murawski, 2010; Naegele, Ralston, and Smith, 2016).

In the research literature (Cook, 2004; Fluijt, 2014) at least six types of co-teaching are distinguished:

### One Teach, One Observe

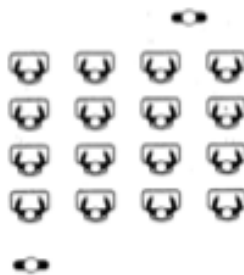
In this approach to co-teaching one of the advantages is that detailed observation of students engaged in the learning process can occur. When one teaches and one observes during co-teaching, the teachers should decide in advance what types of information are to be gathered during the observation and

should agree on a system for gathering the data.

Afterwards, the teachers should analyse the information together. That is, observation should have a deliberate focus, rather than serving merely as an incidental check of student activity.

**When to use:**

- › In new co-teaching situations
- › When questions / concerns arise about students
- › To check student progress
- › To compare target students to others in class

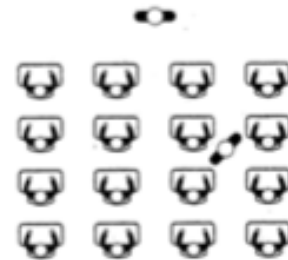


**One Teach, One Assist**

In this approach one person has primary responsibility for teaching while the other circulates in the room providing unobtrusive assistance to students as needed. Although this approach to co-teaching has many merits, it is also often over-used, possibly because it makes few demands for change on the part of the teachers.

**When to use:**

- › When the lesson lends itself to presentation by one teacher
- › When one teacher has particular expertise for the lesson
- › In new co-teaching situations – allows teachers to get to know each other
- › In a lesson process in which student work needs close monitoring

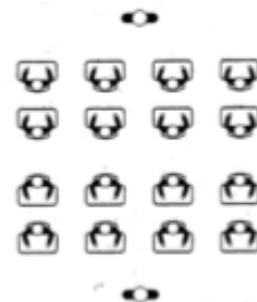


**Parallel Teaching**

In parallel teaching co-teachers are both teaching the same lesson, but they divide the class between them and teach the lesson simultaneously. This approach facilitates closer observation of students and may afford them more opportunity to actively engage and respond in the lesson.

**When to use:**

- › When a lower teacher-student ratio is needed to improve instruction
- › To foster student participation in discussions
- › For activities such as practice, re-teaching, and test review

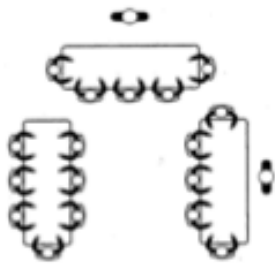


**Station Teaching**

In station teaching, students work independently at stations. Teachers divide the lesson content and students. Students move around from one teacher to another and also to different stations so that each teacher repeats instruction several times and each student engages with both teachers and works at each station. If appropriate, a further station could be set up to require students to work in pairs instead of independently.

**When to use:**

- › When content is complex but not hierarchical
- › In lessons in which review is intrinsic to instruction
- › When several topics are being addressed in a lesson

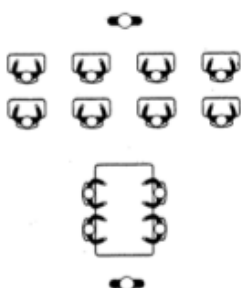


**Alternative Teaching**

In most classrooms there is a need at times for small group work that needs close supervision by a teacher. In alternative teaching, the majority of students in the class undertake the planned lesson with one teacher while a small group either completes an alternative lesson or the same lesson taught at a different level or for a different purpose. This approach might be employed for the full duration of a lesson or at times during the lesson.

**When to use:**

- › In situations where students' mastery of concepts taught or about to be taught varies significantly
- › When high levels of achievement are expected for all students
- › When enrichment is desired
- › When some students are working on a parallel curriculum



**Team Teaching**

In team teaching both teachers are teaching the same lesson simultaneously. Each teacher is very familiar with each stage of the lesson and knows when to take the lead and when to act in a more supportive role. The approach is conversational rather than one of turn-taking as each teacher contributes equally to the lesson.

**When to use:**

- › When 'two heads are better than one' or experience is comparable
- › During a lesson in which instructional conversation is appropriate
- › In co-teaching situations in which the teachers have considerable experience and a high sense of comfort about working together
- › When a goal of instruction is to model some interaction to students

**As indicated in these strategies, through co-teaching during their preparation for practice, student teachers could be facilitated in developing many skills required for inclusive practice:**

- › Co-teaching lowers the pupil/teacher ratio, allowing student teachers more opportunity to work with pupils on an individual basis.
- › It may enable student teachers to become aware at an early stage of their professional development of pupils' diverse learning needs and how best to respond to these needs.
- › As co-teaching can facilitate the provision of unobtrusive assistance to pupils, class management challenges may be reduced and so student teachers' learning about lesson development and the development of pupils' learning may be more readily advanced. This can facilitate the inclusion in education of all pupils in the classroom.

- › If one classroom practitioner is largely observing while the other is both teaching and observing, it is likely that overall observation of pupils will be improved. This practice with a host teacher may enhance student teacher self-assessment and hence their pupils' learning.

## Rationale for Co-teaching in Teacher Education

In 2005 Cochran-Smith and Zeichner highlighted a lack of data linking success in a student teaching experience with pupil learning outcomes. This remains the situation with regard to the impact of co-teaching in student teaching as both the practice and study of this approach are at a relatively early stage. However, the research findings that are available are positive, and underline the potential value of such a methodology for the preparation of inclusive teachers.

While the application of co-teaching in student teaching is a relatively new approach, Bacharach, Heck and Dahlberg (2010) maintain that this emerging practice holds great promise for transforming the world of teacher preparation. As they point out, 'given the increasing diversity of today's schools and the prevalence of teacher accountability issues, the model of learning to teach in isolation should no longer be an unquestioned practice' (Bacharach, Heck and Dahlberg, 2010, p.3). Co-teaching during preparation for teaching has been found to enhance the learning of student teachers, to be beneficial for the teachers with whom they cooperate, and significantly, has also been found to positively impact the learning of the pupils in co-taught classes.

Co-teaching with a cooperating teacher is quite different to the traditional approach of 'dropping' a student into a classroom to observe for a short period of time before s/he assumes full responsibility for the class. In that 'sink or swim' model, student teachers largely survive or fail on their own (Bacharach, Heck and Dahlberg, 2010). However, by teaching alongside a cooperating teacher and also consulting with a college supervisor, student teachers may more rapidly improve their learning about **appropriate preparation and planning** for the complexity of classroom practice. In more gradually assuming solo

responsibility for a class they may do so from a stronger starting point. The status of the student teacher in the eyes of pupils may also be improved as the student teacher is **introduced and perceived as a teacher** from the outset. This approach may also address any **power differential** between cooperating teacher and student teacher as teacher candidates are provided with strategies to 'find their voice', while cooperating teachers should be open to learning from students who bring emerging theories and ideas. Co-teaching can provide student teachers with opportunity to receive direct guidance on the importance of effective **communication and collaboration** skills; skills which are more vital than ever in today's diverse classroom environments. Cooperating co-teachers not only model and coach, they can also **explicitly share their rationales for practice** (Bacharach, Heck and Dahlberg, 2010). In an editorial in the Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education (2015) this point is highlighted: 'It is the sharing of expertise that is critical. . . . a pre-service teacher might share some of the latest ideas from educational research they bring from the university, which when combined with the pedagogical expertise of the cooperating teacher positions them to interrogate the theory and co-reflect critically on the relative impact of putting the theory into practice. Indeed, they could develop new, local theory from doing so.' As the researchers emphasise, these factors should be given due consideration in implementing a co-teaching strategy in student teacher school placement. Schools and teachers involved should be offered appropriate support and training for their cooperative role.

A study by Murphy, McCullagh and Doherty (2014) presents a strong case in favour of including co-teaching within initial teacher education programmes. These researchers focused on the development of ten student teachers' confidence and ability to teach primary-level science as they planned, taught and evaluated lessons in cooperation with their host teachers during school placement experience. In line with findings from previous co-teaching research (Murphy and Scantelbury, 2010) the researchers found a significant overall increase in preservice teachers' confidence in their developing teaching skills and improvements in various aspects of teacher competence. They suggest that co-teaching can provide for the development of classroom practitioners who are more reflective about their work and its impact. The student teachers involved were very positively disposed to this form of preparation. As one stated,



'all pre-service teachers should have a co-teaching experience'. It was further suggested that this model of teacher preparation could also benefit the cooperating teachers involved, as it potentially increased their awareness of, and attention to issues in teaching and learning arising from developments outside of the classroom.

Kerin and Murphy (2015) examined how co-teaching affected the professional development of undergraduate music education preservice teachers during an eight-week school placement. They found that in comparison with student teachers' experience during the traditional school placement, 'there was a radical improvement in the development of professional agency amongst the co-teaching cohort' (Kerin and Murphy, 2015, p.309). In summary, student teachers markedly improved their subject or content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. The researchers also recommend co-teaching as a means of facilitating the sharing of content knowledge supplied by student teachers with experienced teachers' pedagogical knowledge 'so that each expands their teacher repertoire' (p.310).

Bacharach, Heck and Dahlberg (2010) examined the impact of a co-teaching model of student teaching on the mathematics and reading achievement of primary school pupils. The study found that all pupils had increased opportunity for appropriate support when required, and indicated that the teacher candidates improved the academic achievement of their pupils. It is noteworthy that benefits accrued in particular to children from lower socio-economic backgrounds and to children with special educational needs.

Some researchers have raised questions about the efficacy of introducing student teachers to the practice of teaching by means of a co-teaching approach. Their concerns relate to whether these future teachers will be able to teach independently at a satisfactory level when required, whether they might be incorporated through co-teaching into poor rather than effective teacher practice, and whether poor relationships between the co-teaching student and teacher might cause difficulties in the classroom (Wassell and La Van, 2009). In their response to these criticisms, Murphy, Carlisle and Beggs (2009) point out that co-teaching can be applied alongside rather than as an alternative to independent teaching during student

teaching experience. They also refer to the wide variety of co-teaching models that can be applied in various settings. As these findings suggest, student teachers who learn to teach by co-teaching with experienced cooperating teachers have potential to become more effective and inclusive practitioners.

## Learning Activity week at UCLL

The range of learning activities undertaken by the EiTTT project team at UCLL is outlined below.

### Project Activity: November 7th (AM)

Team members shared information on our different school systems:



**Belgium (Flanders):** Outlined in previous sections above.

**Finland:** Compulsory education between 7-16 years. At age 6 years there's preschool. Between 16-18 years students have the choice between general or vocational education. For students with special needs there are special needs schools, special classes in mainstream schools and inclusion through co-teaching in mainstream classes.

**Ireland:** Compulsory education between 6-16 years. Most 5 year olds and half of all 4 year olds also attend primary school. At secondary school level, students can choose either general secondary education with an academic focus, or more vocational and practical courses. For students with special needs, various schooling approaches are possible, e.g. special schools, special classes in mainstream schools or inclusion in mainstream classes. In accordance with government policy, inclusion in mainstream schooling is increasingly popular and has resulted in much student diversity in these classes.

**Cyprus:** Compulsory education between 5-15 years. Pre-school 5-6 years. Primary education 6-12 years. Secondary education 12-15 years. Students can choose between general or technical education. Our project partner school in Nicosia provides education for children between 6-9 years. If children have severe disabilities there's special education, otherwise there are special classes in mainstream school.

**Latvia:** Compulsory education between 5-16 years. Pre-school between 5-6 years. Primary education 7-11 years. Secondary (elementary strand) education 12-16 years. Secondary education 17-19 years. Our project partner school in Riga offers primary, elementary and secondary education. Children with special needs can attend special classes in schools. The local authority provides a multi-disciplinary special team which is responsible for these students' individual lesson plans.

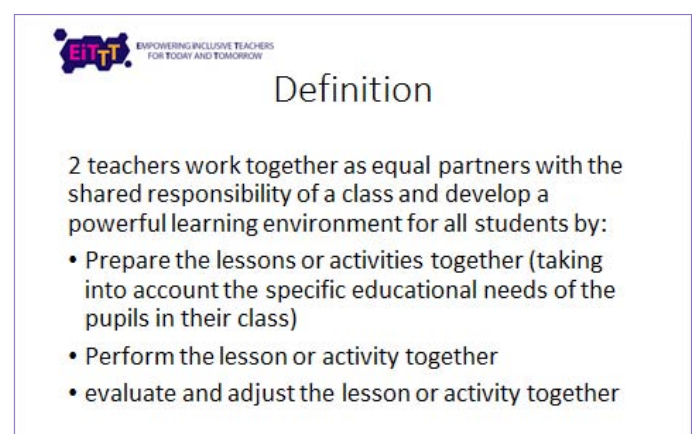
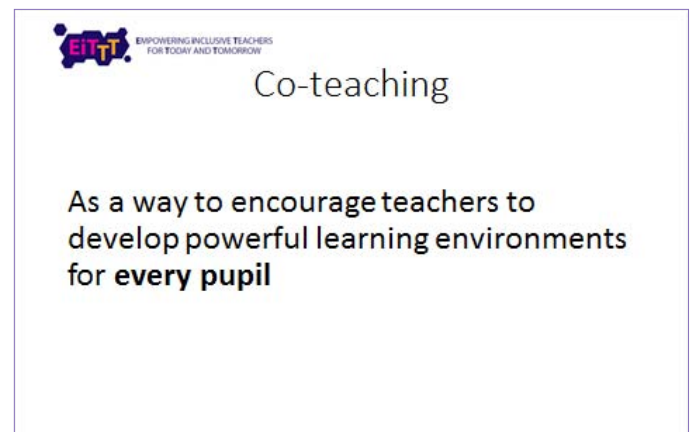


### Key Learning:

- › Inclusion is a new emphasis in the Flemish school system. The focus is not on 'problems' but on how the school can provide for the child's needs.
- › There are many similarities between our education systems.
- › In all partner countries of the project there are similar challenges in mainstream education regarding appropriate support for children with special needs.
- › There are differences between our countries in terms of the range of children with special needs and how these children are supported in the school system.
- › In Flanders (Belgium) as in some other countries of the project, parents have the freedom to choose a school type for their child.

### Project Activity: November 7th (PM)

An overview (with video) was provided on how co-teaching is addressed in teacher education at UCLL. Selected slides are presented below.





## Definition

2 teachers work together as equal partners with the shared responsibility of a class and develop a powerful learning environment for all students by:

- Prepare the lessons or activities together (taking into account the specific educational needs of the pupils in their class)
- Perform the lesson or activity together
- evaluate and adjust the lesson or activity together

## Universal Design for Learning

UC Leuven Limburg  
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08/11/16 – Lijne Vloeberghs

## Key Learning:

- › There are various forms of co-teaching. Students at UCLL have been introduced to some of these approaches.
- › One form of co-teaching isn't better than another. The approach chosen will depend on the needs in the classroom, on learning and teaching styles, on the curriculum and on the subject and lesson concerned.
- › It is fine to switch between styles in one lesson.
- › The aim of co-teaching in teacher education is to help student teachers to focus more on the children in the class.

## Project Activity: November 8th (AM)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a means of developing inclusive learning environments. Another strategy to which student teachers at UCLL are introduced. Origins of UDL: Universal Design (UD) movement of the 1990s. Architect and designer Ron Mace defined UD as 'the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design'

## Empowering future teachers towards more inclusive education = coping with the diversity in the classroom

Within our teacher training programmes :

- Strategy 1 : encouraging co-teaching in internships and by 'walk the talk'
- Strategy 2 : encouraging to use the Universal Design for Learning-framework by developing lessons (we're at the start of this proces, first step is to inform teacher educators)
- Strategy 3 : making both teacher educators and future teachers aware of the special dynamics concerning living in poverty (both within our student group as within the pupils in the schools)

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## Principles of UDL

Students are diverse

Everybody has a different brain

Teaching = the art of making new brain connections

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### Key Learning:

- › Start with the reality that every classroom is diverse instead of preparing a lesson for the 'mainstream' child and then trying to make adaptations. There are multiple ways to approach teaching.
- › UDL's Key Question: What do I want my students to learn, and what barriers might be hindering that learning? You have to know your students first! That's difficult for student teachers. One way of enabling student teachers to focus on children is to provide for co-teaching with the host-teacher.
- › One challenge: As a teacher you're dependent on information provided by parents. Sometimes parents may be reluctant to share all information with you.

### Key Learning:

- › Insight on school system and mainstream classrooms in Flanders
- › Feedback on co-teaching (in teacher education) from host teacher: 'Student teachers and their pupils do better in a co-teaching situation'.
- › Students are not obliged to co-teach with their host teacher, but they are encouraged to do so and it is common for final year students to co-teach.
- › First year student teachers at UCLL do not co-teach. They are mentored by the host teacher and college supervisor but practise alone'.

### Project Activity: November 8th (PM)



Visit to a mainstream primary school, and to a pre-school class and a grade 3 class there. Discussion with a mainstream class teacher who has worked as a host co-teacher with student teachers.

### Project Activity, November 9th

Round table discussion with teacher educators at UCLL.



### Questions addressed:

- › Why co-teaching in student teaching?
- › Co-teaching in the teacher education curriculum at UCLL. Theory underlying this approach?
- › The preparation of host teachers for co-teaching
- › Student teachers' views on co-teaching
- › If co-teaching can enable student teachers to become more inclusive teachers

## Key Learning:

- › Student teachers are introduced to co-teaching concepts and practices from the beginning of their courses.
  - › In various bachelor degree programmes, particularly after their first year in the programme, student teachers are encouraged (though not obliged) to co-teach, i.e. to plan, teach and evaluate together during school placement for classroom practice.
  - › In the bachelor programmes for early childhood and primary education, final year student teachers are required to co-teach in pairs throughout a four-week placement in schools located in communities designated as socio-economically disadvantaged. This strategy is designed to enable future teachers to become more attuned and responsive to the wide diversity of learners in these mainstream classrooms, and thus to facilitate fuller participation in learning by all children. The student teachers are assessed individually on their practice and their final mark is a combination of feedback contributions from the teacher educator / supervisor, the host teacher and the student teacher.
  - › At a later stage in the Special Educational Needs post-bachelor degree programme, students who have chosen an inclusive education placement bring their advanced special education knowledge to the mainstream classroom and are encouraged to co-teach with the mainstream teacher, thereby sharing respective expertise.
  - › Mainstream class teachers who frequently host UCLL student teachers for school practice, report that co-teaching with the host teacher provides for significantly better learning for student teachers and their pupils.
- › Teacher educators at UCLL frequently model co-teaching.
  - › Student teachers must feel professionally 'safe' in order to start working with a co-teacher, i.e. the relationship must be one of trust.
  - › It is best not to obligate students to work with a co-teacher. There should be choice about engaging in this strategy.
  - › Co-teaching with a host teacher calls for very careful planning.
  - › Student teachers are more receptive to the approach if it is presented to them as a means of becoming a more inclusive teacher.
  - › Co-teaching can be a particularly suitable approach when students are learning to teach in challenging contexts.
  - › It is a learning process for everyone; for host teachers, student teachers and pupils. It has to be part of an innovation process with the main aim to help the children; they are at the centre of this learning.
  - › For student teachers the focus can be on children as there is a second pair of eyes in the classroom. When there are two 'teachers' you have opportunity for valuable critical reflection and discussion arising from mutual observation and feedback.

## Co-teaching and Continuing Professional Development

In Flanders, continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers is encouraged but not mandated. At UCLL, co-teaching is promoted as an effective means of CPD. Teacher educators at UCLL shared their experience of developing 'professional learning communities' in schools in which experienced teachers had chosen to co-teach. They highlighted:

- › The value of engaging in co-teaching from the outset of one's teaching career, as a means of CPD.
- › The importance of 'choice' in decisions about employing such an approach. As trust between partners is paramount, teachers should be given freedom in terms of opting for co-teaching and choosing teacher partners. Factors such as teacher personality, as well as working and teaching styles matter.
- › That school climate also matters. It is helpful if school principals support and encourage the strategy, rather than seeking to impose it.
- › That co-teaching is most likely to be employed by experienced teachers when it is promoted as a means of developing more inclusive classroom practice.

### Project Activity, November 10th

Poverty and Education: Towards Co-teaching to Combat Educational Disadvantage:

"1 in 8 children (approx.) in Belgium living in poverty - i.e. potentially 2 – 3 children in every classroom".

There is valuable research underway at UCLL which seeks to target the education system's well-documented role as a potential instrument of social reproduction. The team of teacher educators / researchers undertaking these studies shared details of their dual approach, which involves targeting both teacher educators and student teachers at UCLL. In presenting the stark 1 in 8 statistic above, the research team explained

that the focus of their work is the 'hidden curriculum' in teacher education. As this may be communicated in the first instance, via potentially middle-class perspectives of teacher educators, their research has provided both teacher educators and future teachers with opportunity to engage in community-based activities (i.e. in local homes) in conjunction with 't Lampeke' - a Leuven-based non-profit, community outreach organisation that aims to combat poverty (please see Appendix II).

### Key Learning:

- › This initiative aims to raise awareness amongst student teachers and practising teachers of the often invisible signs of children living in poverty ->It has commenced by raising awareness amongst teacher educators at UCLL.
- › The initiative is based on the belief that it is best if education and well-being systems work together in this context.
- › In Flanders as elsewhere, we need more teachers from 'disadvantaged' backgrounds in teacher education – not just because of their background, but because of a genuine interest in pursuing a teaching career – a 'love' for teaching. We must address the barriers they experience in entering teacher education.

The project team acknowledged the value of this initiative. However, it was concluded that enlightened, committed teachers may be no less challenged by the prospect of engaging effectively in inclusive classroom practice. The team suggests therefore, that such teacher development opportunities might ideally be complemented by school-based responses, e.g. via provision for, and encouragement of co-teaching: Two teachers see more than one: Two teachers in a classroom can learn more via shared reflection on children's learning; Two teachers working in partnership will potentially include all children more effectively.

## Summary of Learning

- › 'M Decree' and Inclusive Education in Flanders
- › Aim of co-teaching in teacher education: To help student teachers focus on children's learning / develop inclusive education skills. It's important to make a connection with EVERY pupil!
- › Different models of co-teaching
- › One form of co-teaching isn't necessarily better than another. Various forms can be employed in one lesson
- › Co-teaching makes it easier to 'see' – two pairs of eyes are better
- › UDL and its implementation in classrooms. Student teachers need to start with the reality of the diversity in a classroom instead of adapting afterwards
- › There must be trust between student teacher and co-teacher. As a student teacher you have to feel 'safe'
- › For student teachers it's helpful to start with the 'One teach, One assist' approach in co-teaching
- › Advantages of co-teaching for student and practising teachers in challenging contexts
- › Co-teaching and CPD - benefits
- › Co-teaching - preparing student teachers to be critical friends
- › Poverty / Disadvantage and Teacher Preparation: 't Lampeke - understanding the importance of the community in schooling and teacher education

## Conclusion

During this Learning Activity week the project team gathered knowledge and shared thoughts on how co-teaching during teacher education can benefit future teachers. The teacher education institute at UCLL, in line with current developments in the education system in Flanders, has chosen to introduce co-teaching as a means of helping student teachers to learn to work more effectively with the ever growing student diversity of their classrooms. Other Inclusive Education strategies under way at UCLL are: (a) The encouragement of student teachers to use the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework for developing lessons and (b) Enabling both teacher educators and future teachers to become aware of the special dynamics and implications of living in poverty (both within the student group and amongst pupils in schools).

The project team focused on how co-teaching can be used to enhance future teachers' own learning and so to benefit pupils in classrooms. This teacher education institute is making the change from a more traditional approach to school placement whereby the mentor is the expert who gives feedback to the future teacher, towards a system of co-teaching in which there is a more balanced relationship between student teacher and classroom teacher. It is believed that if the power balance between student and mentor / host teacher is more equal, student teachers can experience more possibilities to learn. Given that similar dynamics are likely to be at work in teaching practice placement classrooms as in classes taught by two experienced co-teachers, there is potential to learn much more about the possibilities offered by co-teaching (e.g. during the forthcoming Learning Activity week in Finland) and so to further implement co-teaching in the curriculum at UCLL and other teacher education institutions.

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EMPOWERING INCLUSIVE TEACHERS  
FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

# EiTTT

## Case Studies



Funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## Case study:

### Co-Teaching for Inclusive Classroom Practice

Lukkari Primary School, Nurmijärvi, Finland





## Context

The second Learning Activity of the EiTTT project was held from the 6th– 10th of February 2017 at Lukkari Primary School in Nurmijärvi, Finland.

## Lukkari Primary School

There are 278 students in Lukkari Primary School. Students are between 6-12 years old (grades 1-6). Our staff consists: 1 principal, 12 classroom teachers, 5 special class teachers, 1 special needs teacher, 8 assistants, 1 school secretary and 1 extra teacher.

The school year begins on 1st of August and ends the 31st of July. The students have 190 school days. There are holidays during the school year: autumn holiday, Christmas holiday, winter holiday, Easter holiday and summer holiday. The teachers have the same holidays as the pupils. The summer holiday is about 2 ½ months from June to August. Lessons are held between 8.00-14.55. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. Pupils have 19 -25 lessons per week depending on the age of the child. There is usually a break (15-20 minutes) after every lesson. The students spend their breaks playing outside.

The second Learning Activity week of the EiTTT project was attended by a team of twenty people, comprising project partners and colleagues from their schools and institutions. The focus of the Learning Activity was to observe and contemplate Lukkari Primary School's way of Co-teaching as a method of inclusion. On their first day in the school the project team met the students and staff of Lukkari Primary School in a morning assembly. This was the beginning of discussions and exchange between the partners and the staff members/students of the school. These exchanges continued throughout lessons, breaks and lunch time. During the week there was also an opportunity to meet and mingle with the representatives of the Board of Directors and the Parents' Association.

The observation of co-teaching in practice played a central role in the Learning Activity. In the course of the week there were possibilities to observe co-teaching in different classrooms. During the first visits to the co-teaching classes the main aim was to observe the teaching and the communication (words and wordless) between the two teachers and the assistant in the classroom. Later the team was asked to focus their observation more towards the students. Do students benefit from learning in the co-teaching classes, and if so, how do they benefit? There was an opportunity to observe the way the two teachers share their teacherhood in the co-teaching classes and how the students with different learning possibilities were addressed.

We also attended a seminar on Inclusion at the municipal hall. Different aspects of inclusion were introduced. Dr. Risto Hotulainen from the University of Helsinki told us about teacher education in Finland. Mrs Niina Laitinen from Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting told us about their systems for supporting special needs students. Mrs Marjaana Mäkinen explained about the intensified and special support in Nurmijärvi and Dr Anne Ryan provided a summary of the EiTTT project. As well as the seminar on Inclusion the principal and the teachers of Lukkari Primary School gave presentations on facts relating to the school, the school system in Finland, co-teaching and the 'Steps of Support' system. We visited a special education school, the Kivenpuisto School, which shares the Lukkari school campus, to get a different point of view on inclusion.

On Wednesday afternoon the team observed the 3rd, 4th and 5th graders having their elective subjects, which is one of the innovative aspects of the new curriculum in Lukkari school. These students are in mixed age groups and the groups include students with special needs. Students can choose from drama, music, art, cooking, an ipad-course, outdoor activities, science, games and mathematics. On our final day, Friday, we reviewed all of our learning during the week. There was a great deal of feedback from each of the team members. It was a very productive discussion about the benefits of co-teaching for students and teachers.

## Education System in Finland

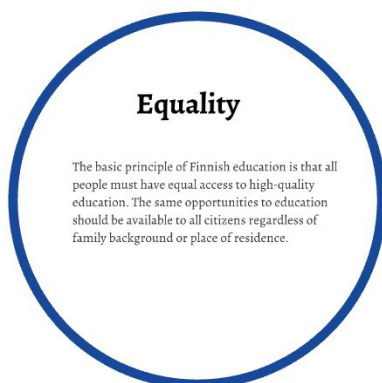
The project team learned about the Finnish education system and the 'Steps of Support' for all children.

There are two official languages in Finland: Finnish and Swedish. English is also widely spoken and a requirement of the national curriculum. At primary school, children take English lessons from Grade 3 at the latest (from grade 2 at Lukkari school). Primary school children are also offered the possibility of studying another language, for instance German or French.



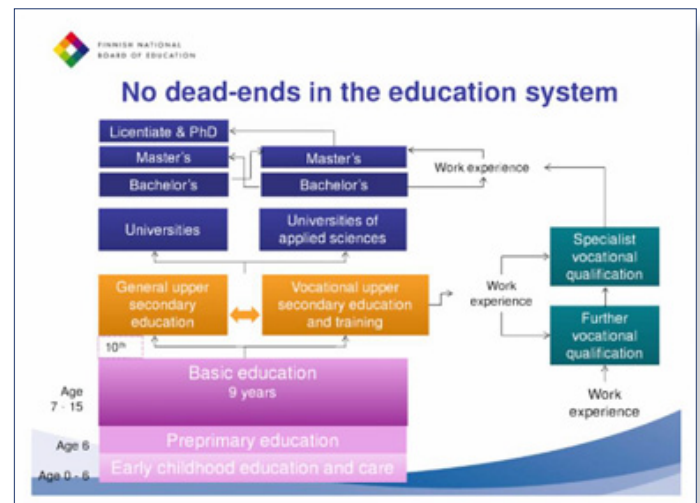
Education is free at all levels in Finland. In pre-primary and basic education school books, a daily meal and transportation for students living furthest away from the school are free for the parents.

One of the basic principles of Finnish education is that all people must have equal access to high-quality education and training. The same opportunities to education should be available to all citizens irrespective of their ethnic origin, age, wealth or where they live.



## The Public Comprehensive School

The majority of Finnish children are educated in the public comprehensive school system. It was developed in the 1970s.



## Curriculum

A revised core curriculum was introduced in 2016. Teaching targets are outlined in this national curriculum. The Finnish National Agency for Education draws up the national core curricula for pre-primary education, basic education, general upper secondary education and basic education in the arts, as well as the curricula for preparatory education for immigrants and morning and afternoon activities for school children. The curricula set out the key objectives, content and policies of education. The national core curricula create a progressive continuum in a coherent way and provide a strong basis for lifelong learning. Education providers and schools draw up their own local curricula based on the national curricula.

The new curriculum introduces certain phenomena that have not been in general use in Finnish schools. From now on children will learn how to code and use new technology. Teachers are encouraged to create new kinds of learning environments both in and outside schools. One of the key words in the new curriculum is phenomenon-based learning. In this approach, a class observes a real-life phenomenon and analyses it through an interdisciplinary approach.



## Freedom of Teaching

Within the framework of the national curriculum, teaching is highly independent. There are no inspection boards visiting schools to monitor their performance or results. While teachers have a great deal of independence, they are all trained at universities and have access to professional development. Most teachers hold a master's degree. The status of the teacher in Finland is exceptionally high. Entry to initial teacher education is very competitive with just 7%-10% of applicants accepted onto teacher education programmes.

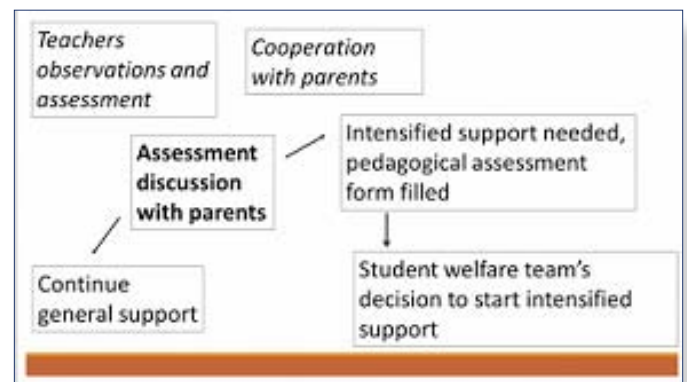
## The Steps of Support

The current thinking in Finland is that the potential of each pupil should be maximised. Therefore educational guidance is seen as essential. Also teachers are required to treat the children as individuals and to help them proceed according to their own capabilities.

## General Support

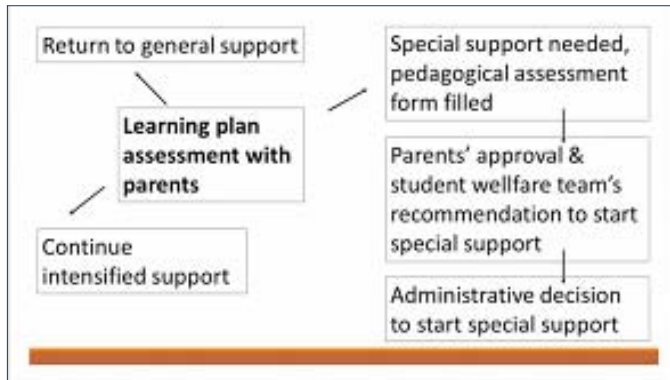
In Finland about 84% of students manage on general support, in other words they are on the lowest step of support. Even when studying on the lowest step the students have the right to get individual support when needed. Pedagogical

discussion and evaluation are done together with the parents. If needed, differentiation, remedial teaching or part time special education/learning support is used. During lessons the help and support of an assistant is possible. These arrangements agreed together with the parents may be written to a learning plan. Guidance counselling and the expertise of the student welfare team are available if needed. During assessment discussions with parents, the teacher can come to the conclusion that general support is not sufficient enough to support the student's learning. If intensified support (next step) is thought to be needed, a pedagogical assessment form is completed and delivered to the student welfare team. The team makes the decision whether intensified support is needed or not.



## Intensified Support

In Finland about 8.4% (Nurmijärvi 11.7%) of students study with intensified support. Their teaching is organised in mainstream classes. On the step of intensified support it is compulsory to link the forms of support to a learning plan. The learning plan is made together with the parents and it documents the test results, ways of differentiation, remedial teaching, part time special education/learning support, support of the assistant and the cooperation with the student welfare team. Assessment discussions of the learning plan together with the parents and the teacher are done at least once a year. If intensified support is not needed any more it is possible to step down to general support or step up to special support if more support is needed. If special support is needed, a pedagogical assessment form is filled and delivered to the student welfare team for their recommendation. Afterwards an administrative decision is needed to start special support.



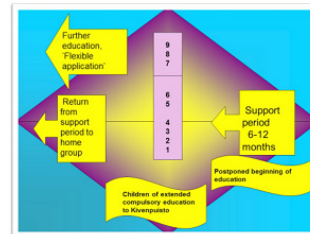
## Special Support

In Finland about 7.3% (Nurmijärvi 8.2%) of students study with special support. An individual education plan is compulsory in special support. This is more precise than a learning plan to document all the test results and used/tried/needed aids to support learning. Multi- professional pedagogical discussion and observation are required on the step of full-time special education. The special needs assistant and the student welfare team work intensively with the student.

Each autumn the municipality is required to report the number of students studying on the different steps of support to the national government.

In Nurmijärvi it is possible to study with special support in special education classes or as an integrated student in a mainstream class. In the primary and the secondary schools there are 17 neurological special education classes, 4 special education classes for students with challenging behaviour and 2 flexible basic education classes. The municipality also has one special needs school, The Kivenpuisto School.

The following slides are from the presentation to the project team by Lasse Latomäki, the principal of Kivenpuisto School.



**What the special education offers?**

- Recognising individual strengths and difficulties in learning
- Strong and individual support for pupils
- Small class sizes
- Individualised education plans for the entire duration of education

**Teaching and everyday life at our school**

- Class-based special education: 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Individualised/partly individualised/partly general syllabi
- Curricula based on operational areas
- HOJKS (Individual Education Plan)

**Kivenpuisto School as a resource centre**

- Areas of expertise amongst Kivenpuisto personnel
  - Earlier school start → extended compulsory education
  - Autism teaching
  - Teaching based on individualised syllabi
  - Creating Individual Education Plans (HOJKS – legal document)
  - Attention deficit and behavioural problems
  - Special needs children in daycare and school
  - Physical disability

**Our focus**

- Good manners and paying attention to others
- Increasing cooperation between home and school
- Working according to Individual Education Plans on a daily basis
- Teaching according to pupils' individual circumstances
- Strengthening the sense of community
- Preventing social exclusion

EITTT is focusing on the development of mainstream schools as inclusive learning environments for all learners, including those with special needs and disabilities and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. For much of the week at Lukkari school, the project team observed co-teaching in mainstream classes, and considered its possibilities as an inclusive learning method.

## Rationale for Co-Teaching in Mainstream Schooling

Co-teaching is about learning and creating new practices and new thinking. Through the changes in teacher thinking and classroom practices that co-teaching appears to bring, it may generate new ways of thinking about teaching. Such a new kind of teacherhood where sharing goes as deep as a teacher's professional identity clearly has implications for teacher education (Rytivaara, 2012).

There are many models and ways to implement co-teaching. Murphy (2011) outlines six models: 'team-teaching', 'supportive

teaching', 'station teaching', 'parallel instruction', 'alternative teaching' and 'one teach/one assist'. The dominant model in the research literature is 'one teach/one assist'. This can be partly explained by the traditional form of engagement between mainstream teacher and special education teacher. The researcher recommends that as a successfully implemented and sustained practice, co-teaching / team-teaching requires that context-sensitive features need to be laid bare in order to explain what inhibits and enables team-teaching to take root in schools and classrooms as normal practice. It also requires wisdom about the management of change and how school improvements can be achieved.

Trends in research include the dominance of the USA-led research model and the tendency to focus more on how to team-teach and less on how team-teaching impacts upon teachers and students. What prevents teachers from engaging in team-teaching is rarely addressed, but the competences needed in order for team-teaching to succeed are at our disposal and very useful. The reported benefits by teachers and students include socio-emotional development as well as cognitive and learning gains (Murphy, 2011).

Experienced co-teachers provide several reasons why co-teaching should be used. Co-teaching is one way to deliver services to students with disabilities or special needs as part of inclusive practices. In co-taught classrooms all students can receive improved instruction. In co-teaching, the instructional fragmentation that often occurs in other service delivery options is minimised. Students benefit by not having to leave the classroom to receive supports. Furthermore, co-teachers often report that one of the most noticeable advantages of sharing a classroom is the sense of support it fosters (Cook, 2004).

Kerins and Tiernan present co-teaching, with a focus on station teaching, as a model of in-class support for a pupil with special educational needs. Station teaching is suitable as a means of in-class support for developing early literacy skills in the infant classes, as it allows for variation in activities and for pupil movement in the classroom after relatively short intervals (Kerins and Tiernan, 2014).

Co-teaching is reported as beneficial for pupils as well teachers. The ability to collaborate effectively can have a very positive

impact on the implementation of an inclusive programme, and co-teaching in an 'inclusive' classroom is often considered the best practice for students with moderate and sometimes severe disabilities. In the studies on collaborative schools, where colleagues come together and feel the shared ownership of the school, the students in the whole school generally have better achievement results (Cook and Downing, 2005).

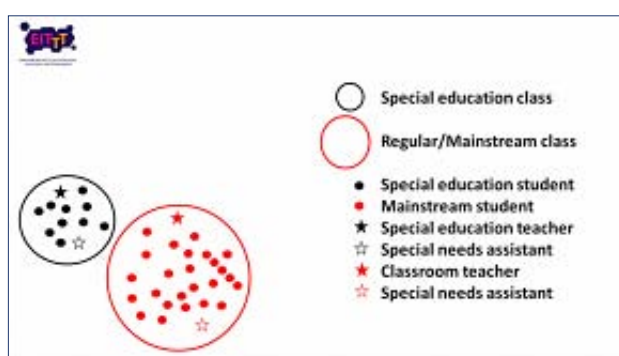
Several researchers have demonstrated the benefits of co-teaching for students. In a study conducted by Almon and Feng (2012) in an urban elementary school, co-teaching in the 4th grade classroom had a more positive effect than solo teaching, as measured by student mathematics achievement. The research done by Walsh (2012) shows that co-teaching can be considered a high-leverage strategy capable of accelerating achievement to close the achievement gaps in reading and mathematics. There are also many benefits to using a co-teaching model with English Language Learners (ELL). Co-taught lessons are inclusive and offer more support for diverse ELL students. Students are able to stay in the content classroom and not "pulled out" for remedial ELL programming. ELL students are also able to interact more with their English-speaking peers (Naegele, Ralston and Smith, 2016).

In his study, O'Leary highlights the potential of co-teaching to create opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively towards providing evidence-based, proactive, effective and inclusive learning environments for all students. Teachers identified co-teaching as valuable for themselves and for their students. Outcomes for students with special educational needs included improved behaviour, fewer discipline referrals, improved attendance and improved academic achievement (O'Leary, 2015).

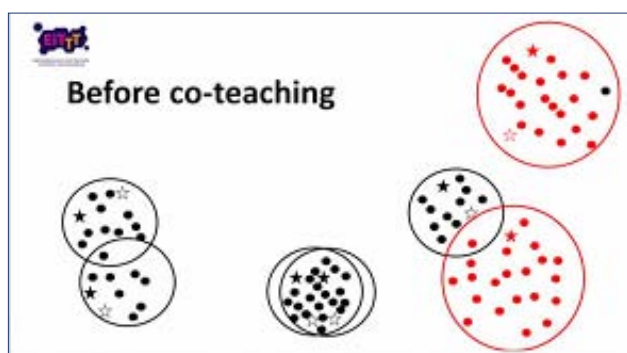
In order to foster ongoing co-operation, co-teachers need time to plan as a team for their shared students, providing opportunities to examine their responsibilities and to share tasks. The support of school management is an essential component in developing co-teaching programmes. Prizeman's study attributed much of the success to the voluntary nature of the co-teachers partnering. The commitment to co-teaching should be tied to a school-wide philosophy that is consistently communicated to teachers, students and parents and invites these to actively support the programme (Prizeman, 2015).

## History of Special Education in Lukkari School

The project team learned about the introduction and development of co-teaching in the school:



Lukkari school is one of the three schools in Nurmijärvi that have regional special education classes in mainstream schools for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.



In Lukkari school, students with special needs have learning difficulties and particular needs relating to their concentration and linguistic development. Even though all the classes worked previously as separate units, the teachers planned and conducted some lessons or activities irregularly together. Sometimes a challenging situation with a special needs student could be solved by temporarily relocating him / her in a different classroom. This possibility was often used when the special education classes were situated near each other and all of the teachers were familiar with all the students. Because the special

education classes are small (max. ten students) it was possible to combine two classes without the number of students rising too high. For instance, PE lessons or field trips could be practically implemented with two classes together.

Cooperation between the special education classes and the mainstream classes was implemented by randomly combining two classes or by temporarily relocating students. The special education students could be integrated in mainstream classes for some lessons in order to try out learning in that environment. If learning and behaviour during these lessons succeeded, then full-time inclusion could be implemented. Relocating students also took place the other way. Mainstream students could be offered more support by randomly enabling them to study in the special education classes. If studying with more support proved to be necessary, then steps were taken to enable this on a permanent basis (moving from general/intensified support to special support).


The idea of combining a special class with a mainstream class and co-teaching emerged during the years of cooperation between these two different types of classes in Lukkari school. Could the “positive peer pressure” in a co-teaching situation help with the behaviour difficulties that occur even with many adults present in the classroom? Could the example of their peers motivate the learning of the special needs students? Could the extra support of the co-teaching class be sufficient to prevent a student struggling with learning not to need to be transferred to a special education class? **Could this form of teaching benefit both the special needs students and the mainstream students?**

A positive attitude towards this new way of teaching as well as approval from the principal made it possible for two of the special class teachers to pilot the first co-teaching class in Nurmijärvi in August 2010. Co-teaching was used as a teaching method in other cities and municipalities, but not in Nurmijärvi. The first co-taught class in Lukkari school had 28 students (22 mainstream and 6 special needs). Two special education teachers taught this class with the help of 1 – 2 assistants.

The pilot year of co-teaching in Lukkari Primary School was a success. Although there were doubts about the co-teaching strategy, the learning results were good and the class worked

well with the two teachers and the assistant. The social benefits of this form of teaching were quickly perceived. All the parents, excluding one, hoped that the class would continue as a co-taught class with two teachers. Because the first graders started their school co-taught, that form of teaching was natural for them. It was easy for these students to work with two teachers and the assistant. The mainstream students worked effectively with the special needs students because all were treated as equal members of the class. Only the team of adults knew which of the students had the formal designation for special education. One of the huge benefits of co-teaching was that the special needs students were not labelled, they were “just students”. With the approval of the principal it was decided to continue co-teaching in Lukkari Primary School.

## Co-teaching in Lukkari School



### History of co-teaching in Lukkari School



- Co-teaching started during 2010-2011.
- It started with two special education teachers, 22 “mainstream” & 6 “special needs” students, 1-2 assistants, 2 classrooms.
- Co-teaching did not result from a reduction in resources.
- Positive attitude and approval from the principal.
- 7 years’ experience of co-teaching (5 special education teachers, 6 classroom teachers, 7 assistants, 200 students).
- Now: 5 regional special education classes for students with learning difficulties and disabilities (= 50 students with learning difficulties, linguistic or concentrational problems for example) in Lukkari School.
- Now: Co-teaching happens in classes from first to fourth grade. After that, students with special needs attend full time special class if necessary.

Lukkari school now has a seven year history of co-teaching in grades 1-4, i.e., teaching special needs students together with mainstream students in mainstream classes. Since August 2010 five special education teachers, six classroom teachers, seven classroom assistants and 200 students have worked in co-taught classes in Lukkari school. There are currently four co-taught classes in the school. The average class size in the co-taught classes is 25 children. In each of these classes there are three adults working together: a classroom teacher, a special education teacher and an assistant. A maximum of ten special needs students is integrated in these mainstream classes. The support needs of these students in these classes vary considerably. Together the teachers teach on a full-time basis and share responsibility for teaching, for students and for

cooperating with parents. Co-teaching requires weekly time for pedagogical planning and evaluating. It is important that the teachers are flexible and motivated to work together.

Every class has a slightly different approach to co-teaching depending on the students and the team of adults. The two teachers plan the teaching of the class to meet the needs of the students. Many of the lessons are held in one classroom so that the teachers teach together. Using this form of teaching the students benefit from the personalities and strengths of both teachers. The assistant (or for some lessons two assistants) moves around the classroom to give individual help if needed. Because there are two teachers present all the time it is easy to make flexible teaching arrangements when needed. Sometimes the special education teacher can teach a smaller group of students with learning difficulties, enabling the classroom teacher to proceed at a faster pace with the other students. It is possible to easily do different kinds of grouping to meet the needs of the students and the subject being taught because of the team of adults (two teachers and 1-2 assistants) working in the class. Working in a co-teaching class requires constant discussions and reflection by the team of two teachers and assistant. It is important to reflect on your own teacherhood and to be aware of the personal strengths and weaknesses of yourself and your team members.



## Types of Co-Teaching in Lukkari School



### Team teaching


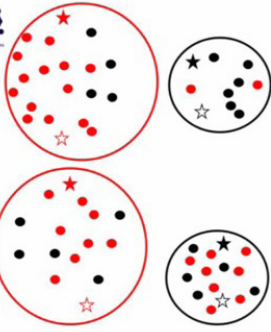
- 80% of lessons
- 1+1>2
- Shared responsibility for planning and teaching
- Requires trust and knowing each other, constant pedagogical discussions




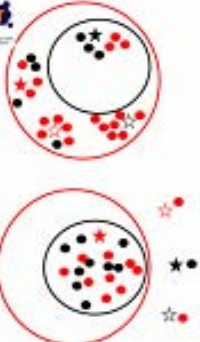
**One teach – one assist**

- Possible to concentrate on teaching one individual (one to one)
- Observation from a different point of view
- Possible to learn from the other teacher, new ideas

**Alternative teaching**


- Flexible grouping depending on the subject, method
- Different groups (big/small, basics/higher aims)
- Possibility to use different teaching methods and notice the diverse ways of learning

**Station teaching**


- Learning by doing
- Individual attention and teaching
- Functional maths, individual reading practises

The EiTTT team observed that co-teaching was very beneficial for both students and teachers in the school:




**Co-teaching: Benefits for students**

- Individual learning, support for learning difficulties (individual educational plan), support measures, many adults
- Possibility for differentiation, use of various teaching methods
- Learning in different groups (big/small, basics/higher aims)
- Evaluation by two teachers
- Peer support, more friends and social contacts
- Special education students are not "labelled"
- Learn to accept diversity



**Co-teaching: Benefits for teachers**

- Re-thinking teacherhood, personal strengths & weaknesses, prioritisation, reflection
- Willing to cooperate, share teacherhood
- Shared responsibility for students, teaching, parents
- Pedagogical planning and evaluation requires weekly time
- New possibilities/teaching methods, differentiation of teaching
- Support from each other
- Teamwork, flexibility, learning with each other and from each other, motivation

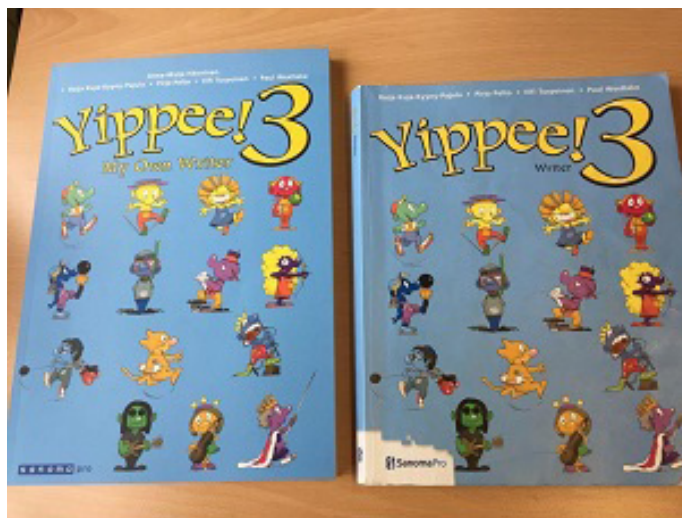
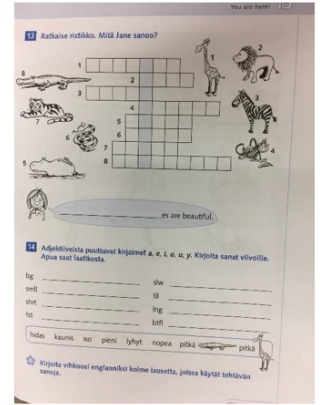
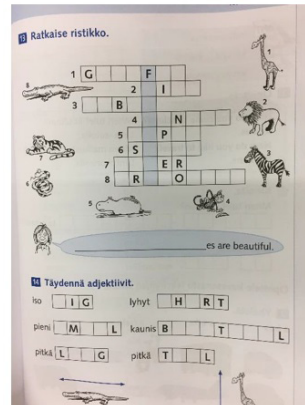


**Co-teaching: Parents point of view**

- Confusion - because of the tradition of one teacher in a class.
- Parents of special education students were worried initially about the size of the class (more than 10 students), but they found it helpful that their child was not "labelled".
- Parents of mainstream students were worried initially about the "negative" effect the special education students might have on their children.
- Very interested in what happens in the classroom between the teachers.
- Appreciate the possibility for individual learning and support.

## Differentiated books – aids for inclusion

The project team found the differentiated textbooks used in the co-taught classes to be particularly helpful. We learned that in Finland many publishers offer teachers easy ways to differentiate teaching by publishing mainstream and differentiated workbooks. These books look similar and have the same numbering in the exercises so the use of different books is not confusing for the students. In Lukkari school differentiated books are used in Finnish, English and Maths. Students with dyslexia also have the possibility (if recommended by the psychologist) to use audio books in some subjects, history for instance.

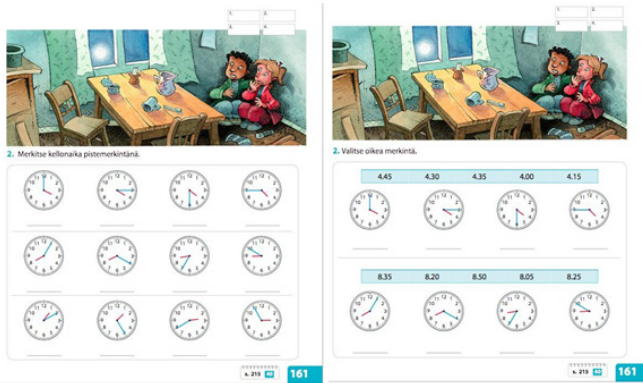


The pictures are from the third grade English workbooks. On the left Yippee!3 My Own Writer (differentiated) is slightly bigger than on the right Yippee!3 Writer (mainstream). All of the students have the same textbooks, but differentiated workbooks are also available. The covers of the books are alike. In 2011 the Best European Schoolbook Award was granted to Yippee! (Sanomapro) English books (third to sixth grade) for facing the new challenges of teaching, for instance by producing differentiated and web-based material for schools.

The differentiated workbooks (on the left) offer more primary and basic exercises while the mainstream workbooks also have more challenging exercises. Extra aids and pictures are placed in the pages to help the students to work independently. Because writing in foreign languages differs significantly from writing in Finnish, extra attention is paid to support spelling, for instance, boxes indicate how many letters are needed in the word.

The Maths books look like the same, but the content of the books is slightly different. The publisher is Sanomapro from Finland. These Maths books are for the third graders.





On the left there is a page from the Maths book for a mainstream student. On the right there is a page from the Maths book for a special needs student. It's easy to work with these books in a diverse classroom situation as all students can participate in the theme of the lesson.

## Key Learning for the project team during this Activity Week:

- › Understanding the Finnish education system and how a primary school works in Finland: the weekly routine, relationship between students and teachers, lessons and breaks, funding
- › Teaching methods and materials, for instance, differentiated textbooks, team work among the teachers
- › The education system in Finland, equality, new curriculum, autonomy combined with structure, attention to the development of the whole person
- › Inclusive education is supported and funded by the government
- › CO-TEACHING IN PRACTICE
- › The training and expertise of the teachers, master's degree, how the student welfare teams work in the school, age profile of the teachers (more mature than in other European jurisdictions)
- › The function and availability of classroom assistants
- › Steps of Support – how to support students with learning disabilities, focus on getting support at earliest possible time, documentation, parental involvement, individual education plan
- › PISA: the lack of Finnish students on the lower layers, the result of the Steps of Support
- › Flexibility and different forms of special education
- › That inclusion should not be a priority for every student. Some students justifiably required more comprehensive support measures (for instance students with severe intellectual impairments or significant behavioural difficulties). In these cases inclusion may not benefit the learning or development of the student. Rather, school inclusion might not prevent social exclusion, and may instead contribute to it.

## Conclusions of the Project Team

### 1. Co-teaching as practised in Lukkari School is an effective means of inclusive education:

- › It provides learning opportunities for all children in the classroom – i.e. genuine inclusion. During observation in these classrooms it was not possible for the project team members to distinguish between children with / without special educational needs. All children in these classrooms were offered equal learning opportunities.
- › Children with special needs are not only ‘socially’ included, they are practically included in class learning.
- › It facilitates children’s different learning styles.
- › It provides opportunity for supported group work.
- › It enables peer tutoring and learning from a variety of ‘role models’ including teachers in collaborative roles.
- › Diversity: Children can learn to accept ‘difference’ as the norm. This can facilitate the development of more heterogeneous friendship patterns and a sense of empathy at an early age.
- › It provides for a multiplicity of abilities, rather than defining any one child as ‘special’ in a universal sense. Therefore, it is likely to enhance self-esteem, as all children (and not least those with special needs) will gain confidence from having their particular strengths in different curriculum areas acknowledged in a mainstream context.
- › It is a valuable alternative approach to separate special class support in mainstream schools.

### 2. Co-teaching is also beneficial for teachers:

- › It enables shared assessment of, and planning for children’s needs – potential for more effective teaching, learning, differentiation, inclusive education.
- › It provides more opportunity to get to know individual children – can better address the needs of individuals – genuine inclusion.
- › At all times the focus can be on teaching and learning, as the classroom assistant provides support with administrative tasks.

- › It provides opportunity to manage the class / children’s behaviour more discreetly so that learning is not negatively impacted.
- › Teachers can learn in practice from one another – sharing curriculum knowledge, methodologies and interests.
- › It provides for flexibility of practice. Co-teaching approaches may be designed in accordance with varied teaching and learning styles.
- › Support: There is opportunity to share the pressures and challenges of classroom life – always someone to talk to.
- › It can facilitate better self-evaluation via ongoing critical reflection with a teaching colleague.

### 3. Co-teaching requires certain teacher competences and commitments:

- › Trust between teacher colleagues
- › Open-mindedness
- › Interest in working together
- › Shared values
- › Similar work ethic
- › Flexibility – acceptance of different approaches to teaching and interacting with children
- › Good communication skills
- › Daily pedagogical discussion
- › Confidence in one’s own abilities
- › Willingness to learn from others
- › Willingness to take risks, to be vulnerable
- › Willingness to commit to shared planning and critical reflection
- › Clear understanding of responsibilities and boundaries
- › Willingness to share full responsibility for students and for liaising with parents
- › Supportive leadership (school principal)

### The few drawbacks we considered:

- › Might students become too dependent on immediate assistance and become discouraged from trying?
- › Might individual teachers feel they have lost independence rather than gained flexibility in teaching approaches?

## Conclusion and Recommendations

While the placement of pupils with varied learning needs in mainstream school classes may prevent social exclusion, it does not necessarily facilitate educational inclusion. However, the practice of co-teaching in such classes can offer much potential for advancing the learning of all pupils in these classes. The shared expertise and commitment of two different teachers and a classroom assistant in a context of considerable pupil diversity can in make inclusive education a realisable goal. We recommend therefore that school leaders consider the strategy of co-teaching as a potential means of giving more practical effect to the policy of inclusive education their schools.

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EMPOWERING INCLUSIVE TEACHERS  
FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

# EiTTT

## Case Studies

### KdG

Karel de Grote  
University College

Funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## Case study:

### Video Interaction Guidance in Teacher Education

Karel de Grote University College,  
Antwerp, Belgium



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [www.mie.ie/eittt](http://www.mie.ie/eittt) OR EMAIL US: [eittt@mie.ie](mailto:eittt@mie.ie)



## Context

This learning activity took place at Karel de Grote University College (KdG), Antwerp, Belgium from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2017. Project partner Leen Stoffels and colleagues facilitated an invaluable range of learning experiences for our cross-sectoral team of teachers and teacher educators. With a view to providing appropriately for the education of all students, including those experiencing difficulties arising from social / emotional factors, the team focused on the concept of **pedagogical sensitivity** as fundamental to learning in school. The teacher education strategy of **Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)** and the manner in which it is employed at KdG to provide for and enhance the development of sensitive, caring, empathetic teachers, was central to our study there. During the course of the week we engaged in a variety of workshops facilitated by a range of expert practitioners. Our learning from these activities was complemented by observation of a range of inclusive and special education practices during study visits to primary, secondary and special schools in Antwerp.

## Education in Belgium

Federalisation has seen education in Belgium organised relatively independently by three regions since 1989. These three regions of Belgium are: Flanders (the Dutch language area), Wallonia (the French language area) and a small German speaking area which has no specific name. While each of these federated states has its own region-specific government, the Belgian government regulates general matters, e.g. the start and end of compulsory education (between the ages of 6 and 18), the minimal conditions for issuing degrees, etc. Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution guarantees free education, the right of parents to choose schools for their children and the (philosophical, ideological and religious) neutrality of government-provided schools.

## Education in Flanders

The Flemish Government oversees education in the Flemish Region and in the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region where the Government of the French Community also has responsibility for education. Within the Flemish government there is a Minister of Education who is responsible for almost every aspect of educational policy, from early childhood to university education. The Flemish Region provides Dutch-language education and also French-language schools in twelve municipalities. There are three education networks in Flanders: Government-provided education; Subsidised public schools (by provinces and municipalities); and Subsidised free schools (mainly affiliated to the Catholic church). The project team visited schools in both the free schools network and in the government-provided education network.

## Structure of the Education System

**Early childhood education** is provided free of charge for children from 2.5 to 6 years. Although not compulsory, almost all children avail of such provision in Flanders. This type of education is multi-faceted in nature and aims to develop children's cognitive, motor and affective skills.

**Primary education** targets children from age 6 to 12 years, and consists of six consecutive years of study. A child usually starts primary education at the age of 6 (the age at which education becomes compulsory by law). The minimum objectives of primary school education provision considered necessary by the government, are outlined in so called 'attainment targets'.

Young people aged 12 to 18 must enroll in **secondary education**. This is structured as a uniform system in Flanders with specific stages and types of education provision; 'general secondary education', 'technical secondary education', 'secondary arts education' and 'vocational secondary education'. Each of these offers common and optional parts. At the initial stage of secondary schooling students are introduced to a broad range of subjects, Specialisation is offered at the second stage.

## Special Education

If students have **special educational needs**, they receive extra attention in the Flemish education system. While traditionally most students with special needs in Flanders have attended special schools, that situation is changing in response to recent legislation ('M' Maatwerk Decree) which advocates mainstreaming with a view to greater inclusivity. The decree outlines measures which allow pupils with specific educational needs to participate fully, effectively and on equal terms in regular schools and classrooms, while delineating more clearly the admission requirements to the different strands of special education. The right of students to reasonable adaptations by the school to their special educational needs will be guaranteed in accordance with the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## Higher Education

The following types of **higher education** programmes are offered:

- › Bachelor courses, both professional bachelor courses and academic bachelor courses. (Professionally-oriented bachelor courses are offered at colleges of higher education. Academic education comprises bachelor and master courses, which are provided by universities).
- › Master's courses
- › Further training programmes
- › Postgraduate and in-service training courses
- › Doctoral programmes

## Teacher Education

In Flanders the teacher education programmes offered are professional bachelor programmes leading to the following certificates: 'Teacher - Early Childhood Education', 'Teacher - Primary Education' or 'Teacher - Secondary Education group 1' (i.e. first 3 years of secondary school). These programmes of 180 credits are equivalent and based on a similar set of competences. They are aimed at developing both specific professional knowledge and pedagogical skills. The programmes are taught

at colleges of higher education. Teacher candidates who wish to teach at the level of Secondary Education Group 2 (last 3 years of secondary school) are required to attend an additional 60 credit programme at the university or at a centre for adult education.



## Teacher Education at KdG

The faculty of Education at Karel de Grote University College has a long history and extensive experience in the provision of Teacher Education programmes. More than 2,500 students are currently enrolled in various teacher education bachelor and master degree programmes. There are fifteen professional Bachelor's degree programmes offered. These comprise degrees in Early Childhood Education, in Pre-primary Education, in Primary Education and in Secondary Education. In addition, the faculty offers Advanced Bachelor's in Education degrees, with options in Special Educational Needs; in Special Education and Remedial Teaching (Primary Education); and in Special Education and



Remedial Teaching (Secondary Education). There is also an International Degree programme and two English Exchange programmes.

With Inclusive Education now a policy priority of the Flemish Ministry of Education, KdG is committed to the preparation of pre- and in-service teachers for inclusive practice in primary- and second-level schools. The Advanced Bachelor's Degree in Special Education (Special Educational Needs Teacher Training) programme has been developed for this purpose. The programme is designed to enable teachers to become more competent and confident in terms of attitudes, knowledge and skills in incorporating diversity in schools. Its ultimate aim is to empower teachers to work effectively in an ever changing world and to become change agents in education. The five competences to be developed by [student] teachers in the programme centre on:

- (1) **Planning and coordinating supports for the individual child with special educational needs and his/her environment.**
- (2) **Differentiating approaches and providing these in accordance with the needs of each child in class.**
- (3) **Working as a partner with all involved in the school and classroom environment.**
- (4) **Serving as a coach to colleagues and as a coordinator of change in the school.**
- (5) **Being reflective and learning from one's own and other's experiences in the practice of education.**

Overall, the programme aims to provide for the further development of professionals *'who are passionate about their profession as a special needs teacher or coordinator' and who stand out because of their skillful coaching and innovative pedagogic approach. They have a positive attitude, always act from a deep respect for the child, parents and other stakeholders, and they are committed to a social engagement as change agents. They dedicate themselves to updating their knowledge and repertoire through lifelong learning. Therefore they have a great responsibility in achieving real inclusive education opportunities for ALL children and young people.*

## Focusing on Home Background: Video Interaction Guidance (VIG)

In line with the interrelationship between Education, Social Work and Healthcare courses at KdG, the field of Education incorporates in its programmes for prospective and practising teachers, **a focus on contextual / home background factors** with respect to the children with whom they [will] work. In this regard, a **key teacher education strategy** employed is Video Interaction Guidance (VIG). This approach which was originally employed in Flanders as a means of supporting the welfare of vulnerable families via the use of video for home coaching and training, is now finding its way into the education system and schools there. In 2013-'14 staff of the faculty of Education at KdG were among the first teacher educators in Belgium to be introduced to this method. Several of these teacher educators shared their expertise and ideas with the project team.

### Sensitivity, Care, Empathy, Responsiveness: Key qualities in teaching



Bert Murawski, a former teacher who is currently employed as a teacher educator at KdG, facilitated an in-depth consideration by the team, of the key qualities of effective teachers. With reference to his own career spent in school classrooms and administration, where he engaged with children exhibiting a variety of behavioural challenges, Bert described how he had developed an interest in the social / emotional factors underlying these behaviours. **He shared his observations on how and why children respond differently to different teachers:**

- › Children come to school from very diverse home backgrounds and with quite varied experiences of parent / child relationships. This reality may be easily overlooked in our quest for more effective pedagogical strategies.
- › Just as strong emotional ‘bonding’ between parent and child is crucial in child development, so sensitivity, care, empathy and responsiveness on the part of the teacher can provide for similar bonding with the pupil and hence can more effectively enable the pupil to fulfil his or her educational potential.
- › Good social / emotional development facilitates intellectual development.
- › The quality of the teacher / pupil relationship is fundamental to effective pedagogical endeavours in school.
- › ‘Attachment theory’ as first outlined by researchers such as Bowlby and Ainsworth in the 1960s and 1970s, may be employed to explain the centrality of the teacher / pupil relationship in education.

## Attachment theory

‘Attachment Theory’ is a psychological model that attempts to describe the dynamics of long-term and short-term interpersonal relationships between humans. It focuses on the relationships and bonds between people, such as between a parent and a child.

In the 1960s and ‘70s John Bowlby demonstrated that nurturance and responsiveness were the primary determinants of attachment. The central theme of this theory is that the primary caregivers who are available and responsive to an infant’s needs allow the child to develop a sense of security. The infant knows that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base

for the child to then explore the world. The provision of a ‘safe’ environment in which children can develop, calls for sensitivity, care, empathy, and responsiveness in the home and school.

Mary Ainsworth expanded greatly on Bowlby’s original work, conducting research that revealed the profound effects of attachment on behaviour. A number of studies since then have supported Ainsworth’s theory, and have indicated that attachment styles also have an impact on behaviours later in life.

For the project team, the focus of this presentation and our ensuing discussion on the ‘person’ of the teacher, raised questions about the processes of selection and initial preparation of candidates for teaching and about how teachers are professionally supported on an ongoing basis.

## VIG in Teacher Education

In two subsequent workshops facilitated by teacher educators An Leroy (KdG) and Luc Degrand (University College, Leuven-Limburg) we considered the matter of how teacher educators might practically support the development of appropriate personal dispositions in prospective and practising teachers. The use of technology and specifically Video, was considered to offer a valuable means of enabling [student] teachers to reflect on their classroom practices and on their engagements with their students. The challenges [student] teachers often experience with the requirement to ‘reflect’ on their professional engagements with a view to learning from such reflections are well documented. The team considered how technological advances that have provided ease of access to, and facility with the use of video might facilitate these reflective and learning processes.

Following this discussion, team members undertook an insightful practical exercise that simulated [student] teachers’ likely response to the experience when introduced to this technique. Using iPads, we set about video recording one another’s responses to a series of questions, and documenting our feelings about this exercise. In the word cloud that subsequently emerged, ‘Uncomfortable’ was the most common sentiment expressed! We could readily recognise the importance of carefully supporting [student] teachers’ introduction to such a teacher education strategy, in terms of both their technological competence with the requirements of the strategy and their personal and professional self-confidence.



## Theory and VIG

In a further workshop we studied a mix of valid theories underpinning the strategy of VIG:

- › **Communication Theory:** The value of basic, non-verbal communication.
- › **Attachment Theory:** The need for sensitivity in engagements between educator and child.
- › **Learning Theory:** Much human behaviour is learned / can be learned.
- › **System Theory:** Context is complex. The importance of multi-dimensionality. Professional distance (rather than immediate judgement) is important.
- › **Empowerment Theory:** The need for self-awareness of own competencies; focusing on actions that work, repeating these; positive learning experiences.

From such theoretical perspectives, video recording presented as a valuable alternative to [student] teachers' written accounts of their professional reflections. We learnt that provided these students feel enabled and secure about the process involved and the manner in which such recordings might subsequently be employed, the removal of the requirement to structure their reflections in written format, has been found to significantly enhance student teachers' professional reflections and learning.

## VIG in Practice in KdG

The team explored the variety of VIG strategies that have been employed with some KdG student teachers during their placements in schools over the past four years. In that time, almost all of the schools involved in hosting KdG student teachers for school practice have granted permission for video recording by student teachers in classrooms. The processes employed are as follows:

- › Student teachers work in groups (maximum 5 students per group).
- › They film three moments of their practice in the classroom (beginning, middle and end periods of the day) – either a self-recording or one taken by e.g. a host teacher or fellow student teacher.

- › They may use any preferred video recorder – (phone, camera, iPad, tablet).
- › One video fragment should represent an activity or activities of which they are proud, while the other should serve to raise questions they have about their practice / engagements with school students.
- › In groups, the student teachers then share and discuss some of these – (looking repeatedly at the video fragments and sharing multiple interpretations of them).
- › They are then required to summarise what they have learnt.
- › The kindergarten / primary school, caters for 600 children aged from 2.5 to 12 years, drawn from 33 different national backgrounds.
- › 75% of this school population comes from home contexts deemed to be socio-economically disadvantaged.
- › The pupil / teacher ratio in each class is determined in the school on a class by class basis in accordance with the SES (socio-economic status) and learning profiles of the pupils in the class.
- › In Antwerp, a school enrolment system is in place to prevent the concentration in any particular school of pupils from backgrounds designated ‘disadvantaged’, and thus to provide for socio-economic diversity and inclusion in the pupil population of all schools. When deciding where to enrol their child, parents may select up to five possible schools. Having registered this decision with the School Government in Antwerp, their child is subsequently allocated a place in one of the selected schools.

**At KdG, the VIG strategy** is considered to be “**really working**”, with student teachers much more aware of their competences and dispositions and hence the nature of their engagements with their students. We concluded that the strategy obviously offers student and practising teachers much potential to explore the quality of these engagements in terms of the **Pedagogical Sensitivity required to support the learning needs of all their school students and not least those experiencing difficulties arising from social / emotional factors.**



The project team was privileged to visit Melgesdreef primary school and the adjoining secondary school (Atheneum MXM) located in the Antwerp suburb of Merksem. These mainstream schools have a combined enrolment of more than 1,000 students. In the course of presentations and discussions with the school principal and staff and during visits to classrooms, we explored the policy and practice of inclusive education at the heart of this impressive campus. We learnt that:

## Personalising the Curriculum

- › In accordance with the four levels of the care system in all Belgian mainstream schools (Basic; More Intensive; Extension of Care / External Support; Highest Level), Melgesdreef school provides a structure of support for children to facilitate their inclusion in mainstream education. Nonetheless, it was emphasised that while the learning objectives designed for the children respect this structure, they are **also personalised to take account of individual needs.**

### School Structure

- Kindergarten 2.5 - 5 years = 11 classes with teacher + 4 flies
- Primary school 6 -12 years = 19 classes + 5 flies
- Policy: flying team + care coordinator + school leader



### Role of the fly team

- Support at teacher and student levels
- Work in the classroom, not out of the room (inclusive)
- Educated in...
- Helicopter view
- 4 members of the team, also team coach



## School visit Atheneum MXM

Atheneum MXM, the adjoining second-level school has a current enrolment of more than 400 students. In this school as in all second-level schools in Antwerp, the student population is expected to increase by 30% - 40% in the coming years. As in Melgesdreef primary school, the backgrounds of students in Atheneum MXM are very diverse.

The school's learning programmes are based on the principles of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**.

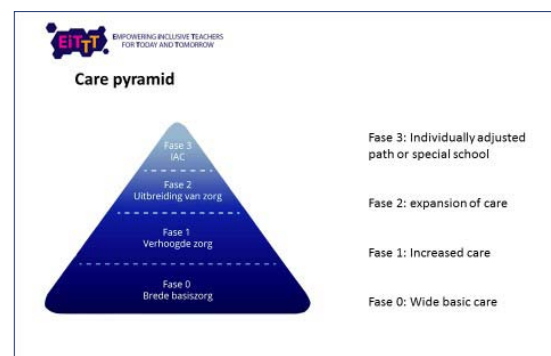
Alongside the UDL strategy, tailor-made programmes are drawn up for individual students. These programmes are designed on an ongoing basis by a **school team of 6 – 7 teachers**. In classroom contexts of very considerable diversity, (i.e. in a situation where many different teaching strategies may be required), this team draws up programmes for groups as well as individuals in the class.

## Visit to Tongelsbos Special School

For the final school visit of this learning week, the project team spent a day at Tongelsbos Special School, courtesy of EiTTT project partners Ilse Van de Vreugde, School Principal, and Kevin Paesmans, School Coordinator. Tongelsbos is a primary and second-level special school located 30km from Antwerp. 160 students are currently enrolled in the primary section of the school, with 220 students in the secondary section. The staff comprises 35 primary teachers, 65 second-level teachers and 25 other staff (paramedical and support personnel).



Students at Tongelsbos are assigned to classes and particular programmes that accord in the first instance, with their Care Needs.



The school's care team comprises a psychologist, a psychologist / pedagogue, a social worker, a speech therapist, a physiotherapist and a 'time out' worker (to support students' needs for time out of class / school arising from behavioural difficulties). The variety of 'time out' options offered and the colour-coded card system involved (in accordance with the level of support required) was of much interest to the project team. These supports also included provision for time away from the school in another school facility or with external school partners. Several teachers also serve on a 'Student Guidance' Support Team' and an 'Autism Spectrum Disorder Support Team'. **Universal Design for Learning** underpins all activities in the school.



The focus of educational provision at Tongelsbos is on Vocational Training, with students offered choices from a wide range of course options within their individual capacities. The project team was privileged with opportunities to observe teaching and learning in classrooms, and to explore the school's extensive gardening and animal care facilities, which are features of the school's programme for all students.



## Other School Supports at Tongelsbos Include:

- › **Variety of Playgrounds** (some very 'quiet', some 'busier' in accordance with students' needs)
- › **Adapted Internships** (teacher accompanies child for some of the internship)
- › **Newsletter for Parents** (sharing experiences, challenges)
- › **Regional support to mainstream schools:** The institution of the 'M Decree' in Flanders and hence the policy of including students in mainstream schooling if at all possible, has presented various challenges to the provision of appropriate mainstream education. The most pressing of these challenges is the importance of ensuring that mainstream teachers are satisfactorily prepared to support the learning needs of all students including those with special educational needs. To that end, in September 2017, regional support networks were introduced. This sees teachers from special schools providing support in the form of information, advice and guidance on teaching strategies, to teachers in local mainstream schools. We learnt that teachers from Tongelsbos together with teachers from other nearby special schools form such a team of 18 that provides support to 200+ teachers in mainstream schools in the region.
- › **Co-teaching:** This strategy was introduced at Tongelsbos School following the EiTTT team's in-depth study of the approach during our visit to Lukkari School, Finland in February 2017. Further co-teaching is planned at Tongelsbos, particularly in classes where students have emotional / behavioural difficulties. Co-teaching is also practised by the team of teachers from Tongelsbos during collaboration with, and provision of support to mainstream teachers in nearby schools.
- › Discussions are under way with local schools to develop **'Inclusive' Tongelsbos Departments** in these schools. Where appropriate, students from Tongelsbos would attend these schools for one or more days at a time, with a view to their eventual full inclusion in mainstream schooling.



## In Summary

- › The team focused on the concept of Pedagogical Sensitivity as fundamental to learning in school. We acknowledged that just as strong emotional 'bonding' between parent and child is crucial in child development, so high levels of sensitivity, care, empathy and responsiveness on the part of the teacher can provide for similar bonding with the pupil, and hence can more effectively enable the pupil to fulfil his or her educational potential.
- › We recognised that the need for such appropriate personal dispositions in teachers is now more critical than ever, given the diverse population of students in contemporary mainstream classrooms. In this regard we learnt that in accordance with the trajectory of contemporary societal developments, and hence a strategic interrelationship between Education, Social Work and Healthcare courses at KdG, the Faculty of Education incorporates in its programmes for prospective and practising teachers, an emphasis on the impact of contextual / home background factors on school students' educational development.
- › We concluded that the ability and willingness to review and reflect deeply on the quality of their engagements with their students and the possible factors, including home background factors, impacting on these, is key to the development of appropriate sensitivity and responsiveness in teachers.

- › The challenges [student] teachers often experience with the requirement to 'reflect' on their professional engagements with a view to learning from such reflections are well documented. The team considered how technological advances that have provided ease of access to, and facility with the use of video might facilitate these reflective and learning processes.
- › The teacher education strategy of Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) and the manner in which it is employed at KdG to provide for, and enhance the development of sensitive, caring, empathetic teachers, was central to our study.
- › We concluded that the VIG strategy offers student and practising teachers much potential to explore the quality of these engagements in terms of the Pedagogical Sensitivity required to support the learning needs of all their school students and not least those experiencing difficulties arising from social / emotional factors.
- › We realised the need to carefully support [student] teachers' introduction to a teacher education strategy such as VIG, in terms of both their technological competence with the requirements of the strategy and their personal and professional self-confidence.
- › Our in-depth theoretical and practical learning during the week was complemented by observation of a range of exemplary inclusive and special education practices in primary, secondary and special schools in Antwerp.

## Key Learning during this Activity Week:

### Video Interaction Guidance in Teacher Education

One of the two main highlights of this week was VIG as a means of enabling (student) teachers to observe, reflect on and learn from key aspects of their engagement with students in the classroom.

### Preparing the teacher mentally and materially

It is of great essence that the (student) teacher knows in advance what the purpose of filming themselves is. It has to be clear that this is not used for evaluation but is used for self-reflection and to observation the key aspects of their engagement with students in the classroom.

The material set-up is easy and you don't have to use high end video material. A simple table or smartphone is enough. The only thing you have to beware of is the sound. Put your device somewhere where there are almost no disturbing sound of the neighbourhood.

### During the lesson

There is no use for long videos of the lesson. The learning is done in the small difficult parts of the lesson. A teacher knows when the students are in a change and simply put on the camera for a few minutes when that happens.

### The observation

There are several options to do the observation afterwards but always keep in mind that this is a positive way of observing a (student) Teacher.

It is possible that the (student) teacher does this learning themselves with the help of some key questions.

- › The second option is that they do this in a peer group. The (student) teacher has to know this in advance in order to ensure themselves.
- › The third option is to do this with a teacher or a coach. But in this case there is a thin line between observation and coaching.

In each of the cases it is important to look at the video a couple of times to see all the different aspects that happen when the interaction of the students.



## Books and articles

### The sensitive teacher



#### 1) A New Perspective on the Effects of First-Grade Teachers on Children's Subsequent Adult Status by Harvard education.

EIGIL PEDERSEN, THÉRÈSE ANNETTE FAUCHER, WILLIAM W. EATON

In this article Eigil Pedersen, Thérèse Annette Faucher, and William W. Eaton

have taken on one of the most difficult questions in educational research: the impact of the classroom teacher on children's adult status. The authors detail the results of a research project of unconventional methodology and Unusually long duration. They sought originally to examine atypical IQ changes but came to focus on the enduring effects of one remarkable first-grade teacher. Drawing upon the idea of the "self-fulfilling prophecy," the authors relate the effects of teachers' attitudes and resultant behavior to the subsequent adult status of sixty children. Their conclusion, in contrast to that of many recent studies, is that the classroom teacher may have a significant effect on children's chances for success in later life.

#### 2) 'Teaching is a relationship, a way of being with and relating to others, and not merely an expression of having mastered a set of delivery skills.'

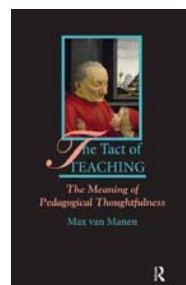
(Bullough & Gitlin, 1994).

#### 3) 'The purpose of any pedagogical act is not a product nor a result but simply the act itself.'

(Prof. Dr. Max van Manen, Alberta University Alberta (Canada)1992.

**4) *In the pedagogical relation-in the experience of being a father, a mother, a teacher – a part of our life finds its fulfilment. 'The pedagogical relation is not merely a means toward an end, it finds its meaning in its own existence, it is a passion with its own pains and pleasures. Similarly, for the child the pedagogical relation is a part of life itself, and not merely a means for growing up-for that the pedagogical relation lasts too long, and how many do not experience that aim! Among the few relationships granted to us during our lives, such as friendship, love, and fellowship in the***

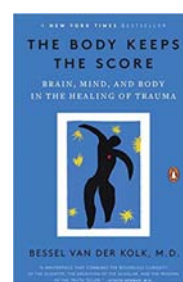
***workplace, perhaps the relationship to a real teacher is the most basic one, one which fulfils and shapes our being most strongly.*** (Nohl, 1982).



#### 5) The Tact of Teaching The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness

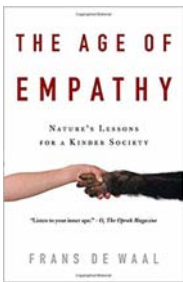
This thought-provoking book offers an original perspective on the meaning and practice of teaching as a reflective activity. Max van Manen defines pedagogical thoughtfulness as the way that educators grow, change, and

deepen themselves as a result of reflecting on living with children. He shows how the processes of teaching require tact an interpretive intelligence, a practical moral intuitiveness, a sensitivity and openness toward the child's subjectivity, and an improvisational resoluteness in dealing with children. All teachers — current and future — who are concerned about the "caring" aspects of their work will be inspired by this text.



**6) Renowned trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk has spent over three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he transforms our understanding of traumatic stress, revealing how it literally rearranges the brain's wiring—specifically areas dedicated to pleasure, engagement, control, and trust. He shows how these**

areas can be reactivated through innovative treatments including neurofeedback, mindfulness techniques, play, yoga, and other therapies. Based on Dr. van der Kolk's own research and that of other leading specialists, *The Body Keeps the Score* offers proven alternatives to drugs and talk therapy - and a way to reclaim lives **and to organize schools.**



7) By studying social behaviours in animals, such as bonding, the herd instinct, the forming of trusting alliances, expressions of consolation, and conflict resolution, Frans de Waal demonstrates that animals—and humans—are “preprogrammed to reach out.” He has found that chimpanzees care for mates that are

wounded by leopards, elephants offer “reassuring rumbles” to youngsters in distress, and dolphins support sick companions near the water’s surface to prevent them from drowning. From day one humans have innate sensitivities to faces, bodies, and voices; we’ve been designed to feel for one another.



8) Regulation of emotion

As a basis for human existence ‘the art of balance’





EMPOWERING INCLUSIVE TEACHERS  
FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

# EiTTT

## Case Studies



An Associated College of  
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin

Funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## Case study:

Student-teacher Placement  
in a Special Education School Context –  
Developing Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes  
for Inclusive Practice

Marino Institute of Education, Dublin, Ireland



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [www.mie.ie/eittt](http://www.mie.ie/eittt) OR EMAIL US: [eittt@mie.ie](mailto:eittt@mie.ie)



## Context

Marino Institute of Education (MIE) was privileged to host the EiTtT project team in Dublin for one week from 27<sup>th</sup> November – 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2017. Despite the time of year, delighted project partners from Finland, Cyprus, Latvia and Belgium, quickly dispatched with recommended umbrellas, and in the company of MIE colleagues, spent a week in sparkling sunshine exploring all that the lovely Marino campus and city of Dublin have to offer. As participants remarked, it was a “wonderful week” of very varied and insightful learning activities that included workshops and presentations facilitated by MIE staff and student teachers, as well as visits to a wide range of mainstream and special schools around Dublin during the school placement period for MIE’s student teachers.

## Marino Institute of Education (MIE)



MIE is a Higher Education Institution located on Griffith Avenue in Dublin, approximately 4.5km to the north of the city centre. It is a teaching, learning and research institution and an associated college of Trinity College, the University of Dublin (TCD). MIE’s education programmes are focused on promoting ‘Inclusion and Excellence in Education’. For over

one hundred years MIE has been involved in education, and specifically in initial primary teacher education. During the last decade the vision and scope of the institute’s activities have been re-envisioned and extended to incorporate the full continuum of teacher education (initial, in-service and continuing professional development) as well as the education of specialist practitioners at early years, primary and further education levels. At present there are approximately 1,000 students registered in MIE across the following range of programmes: Bachelor in Education (B.Ed. for Primary Teaching); Bachelor in Science (B.Sc. Education Studies); Bachelor in Science (B.Sc. Early Childhood Education); Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching); Master in Education Studies (Intercultural Education); Master in Education Studies (Early Childhood Education); Master of Arts (Christian Leadership in Education); Certificate in Spirituality and Human Development; Professional Diploma in Education (Further Education); International Foundation Programme. The institute also offers a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses. MIE’s academic programmes are validated, quality assured and accredited by TCD.

## Teacher Education at MIE



Approximately 115 undergraduate students enrol annually on the four-year B.Ed. degree course at MIE. A further 65 (approx.) post-graduate students are enrolled on each year of the two-year Professional Master of Education (PME) degree. The latter course is open to graduates of any discipline who wish to qualify as primary teachers. Course modules undertaken by both cohorts include: The Primary School Curriculum; Foundation Disciplines of Education (Psychology, Sociology, History, Philosophy); Inclusive Education (Special Education, Educational Disadvantage, Development Education & Intercultural Education); ICT (Information and Communication Technology); School Placements (Practicum) in Mainstream and Special Education settings.

All educational activities in MIE are centred on the principle of **'Promoting Inclusion and Excellence in Education'**. Hence Inclusive Education is a key aspect of MIE's undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes for prospective teachers. Preparation for inclusive practice is integral to all of these courses, and student teachers are required to demonstrate a commitment to such practice during a range of mainstream school placements, including placement in a designated area of educational disadvantage. Second year B.Ed. students and first year PME students undertake a discrete one-year **Inclusive Education module**, with provision structured as follows:

### One year (5 ECTS) Inclusive Education module. Components:

- › **Course Work:**
  - (a) - Special Educational Needs
  - (b) - Educational Disadvantage
  - (c) - Development Education & Intercultural Education
- › **School Placement (Practicum) for Special Education:**

In addition to the course work above, the module incorporates a ten-day placement in a special education setting. Students may choose to undertake this placement in a **special school** or in a **special unit/class** in a mainstream school. During this placement students observe and work alongside the class teacher and SNAs (special needs assistants). The students are required to engage in as much work with pupils (in small groups and on a one-to-one basis) as permitted by their host teacher. While they are not formally assessed on their teaching abilities during this placement, the students are required to document their ongoing learning in a reflective journal. Each student on placement is visited by a member of the academic staff who reports in a formative manner on the student's development and learning during the period of placement. This placement experience is invariably described by most students as one of the most valuable learning opportunities of their teacher education course. They generally find it 'highly informative', 'professionally challenging' and often 'transformative'. Significantly, students report that it also affords them a heightened appreciation of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to work more inclusively with all children in mainstream school settings, and following this placement they appear to be far more committed to, and confident about, doing so. In summary, students' feedback suggests that the experience of this placement in a special education setting can enhance their overall understandings about education and children's learning, and serve to prepare them more comprehensively for future practice in both mainstream classrooms and special education settings. **Student teachers' development and learning arising from this placement experience was the focus of the Learning Activity week in Ireland for project partners.**

## Teaching in Ireland

Teaching in Ireland is regulated by the Teaching Council. All qualified, practising teachers must be registered with this body. The manner in which prospective candidates are selected and prepared for teaching at primary and second levels is also governed by the Teaching Council:

**Entry to primary teaching** in Ireland is very competitive with prospective entrants required to demonstrate high academic standards in their final secondary school examination ('Leaving Certificate'). Candidates compete for a limited number of places in one of five Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) - teacher education colleges / universities, based on points awarded in respect of Leaving Certificate examination results. Applicants are required to be competent in both the Irish and English languages as primary school teachers must be able to teach the Irish language and the range of primary school subjects through both English and Irish. Undergraduate applicants (those seeking to enter teacher education with second-level qualifications only) enter a four-year degree [B.Ed.] programme of initial teacher education. This degree represents a Level 8 award on Ireland's National Framework of Qualifications. Entrants with an existing university degree in any discipline (post-graduates) apply to undertake a two-year initial teacher education course at Master's degree level (Professional Master of Education – PME). This is a level 9 award on the Qualification Framework. Places on the PME programme are awarded on the basis of qualifications, an interview and an oral examination in Irish.

**Entry to second-level teaching** is also open to undergraduate and post-graduate applicants. The former apply (via competitive entry based on points awarded at Leaving Certificate examination) to undertake a 'suitable degree'. Such a degree is defined as an award from a state-recognised university or similar third-level college, which enables the holder to teach at least one curricular subject to the highest level within the post-primary school curriculum. This degree is followed by a post-graduate teacher education course (PME). Post-graduate applicants who already hold a 'suitable degree' apply directly to course providers to undertake a two-year PME degree. There are presently 14 universities / colleges / institutes) in Ireland providing second-level teacher education programmes.

## Inclusive and Special Education in Ireland

MIE lecturer and EITTT project coordinator Dr Anne Ryan outlined developments over the last 30 years in Inclusive and Special Education in Ireland:

### **Towards Inclusion:**

- › From the mid- 1980s pressure was mounting for the 'integration' of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) into mainstream schools.
- › Special Education Policy development in the 1990s was influenced by the international Human Rights movement, Government sponsored initiatives and parental litigation.

### **Legislation is put in place:**

- › **1998:** The Education Act saw the first legal definition of disability and special educational needs in Ireland.
- › The Act defines the support services available, and the functions and responsibilities of the Minister for Education, the inspectorate and schools.

It recognises the rights of children with SEN to participate fully in schools and to access educational supports and services, in '**as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources of the State**'.

### **EPSEN Act:**

- › **2004:** The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN)
- › Under the Act, children with SEN will be educated 'in an **inclusive environment** with children who do not have SEN'.

## Current Special Educational Needs Policy and Practice

Deirdre Murphy, a lecturer in Inclusive Education in MIE, brought the team up to date with a presentation and workshop on current **Special Educational Needs Policy and Practice in Ireland**. Deirdre’s presentation addressed Special Educational Needs Policy and Practice in Ireland’s Early Childhood, Primary and Post-Primary education sectors.

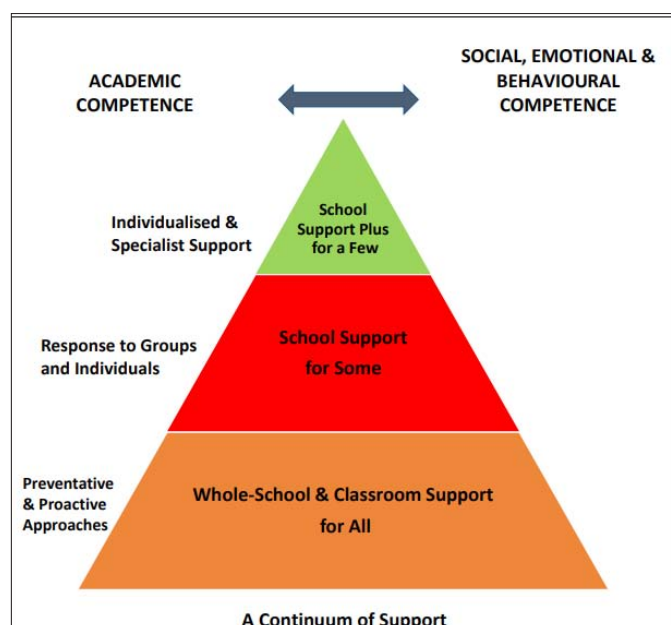
## Recent SEN Developments in Early Childhood sector (Birth – 6 years)

- › The Access and Inclusion (AIM) model aims to ensure all Early Years settings are equipped with adequate resources, personnel and training to be inclusive environments for all children, including those identified as benefitting from additional support with or without a diagnosis.
- › The model has levels of tailored and targeted support to cater for the various levels of need of both the child and their early years setting.



## Recent SEN Developments in Primary Education (4 – 13 years)

- › The Continuum of Support model (2007) enables schools to implement varying levels of support at classroom, whole school and external support levels.



- › The **new model of the Primary Curriculum (2015)** - the curriculum is currently being revised.
- › To date, a new Primary Language Curriculum (2015) has been developed. This includes and supports children with a wide range of abilities ranging from severe and profound needs to those deemed ‘gifted and talented’.
- › The revised policy for allocating Special Education Teaching personnel to schools (**Special Education Teacher Allocation model, 2017**). This model represents a significant change as the allocation of resources now takes account of the overall needs profile of the school (i.e. includes socio-economic context of the school as well as pupils’ identified learning needs).

## Recent SEN Developments at Post-Primary (12-18 years)

- › **New learning programmes: Level 2 (2014) and Level 1 (2017)** learning programmes enable students with identified Special Educational Needs to access their Junior Certificate year (first State examination in second-level school at approximately 15 years of age).
- › These programmes aim to ensure that students with identified Special Needs, just as those without such needs, have their learning and achievements supported and formally accredited.

## Workshop: Support Materials for Teachers of Children with SEN (Primary) 'Special Educational Needs Pathways'

Deirdre explained the new curriculum resources that have been developed to support the inclusion of children with Special Needs at primary school level.

- This material is known as the '**Special Educational Needs Pathways**' (2016). Deirdre demonstrated how it can enable the children to access the new Primary Language Curriculum and to have their learning and progress supported and recognised.

Some children with more complex needs may take considerable time to make progress in one progression milestone and/or in one progression step, this is why the SEN pathways are provided.

- The seven levels or 'pathways' were outlined. EITTT partners studied video footage featuring children with Special Needs demonstrating their learning in classrooms. Partners worked in groups to engage with the various 'pathways' and identify which level or path was being illustrated in each video exemplar of the child's learning. They were then invited to ascertain the next appropriate pathway for the child.

SEN Paths	The child...
Experiencing	is present during a learning activity, s/he is exposed and/or awake and/or exposed to the learning environment. S/he is beginning to acclimatise to the learning environment such as objects, people, sounds and other sensory experiences.
Attending	becomes attentive to and/or engaged with the learning activities presented by changing gesture, posture, vocalisation, eye gaze, movement etc. S/he is acclimatised to the learning environment.
Responding	demonstrates capacity to actively or purposefully take an interest in the learning environment. S/he begins to indicate likes, dislikes or preferences. S/he actively responds to a learning activity with or without support.
Initiating	shows curiosity about the learning environment. S/he actively and independently seeks opportunities to engage with and/ or influence that environment.
Acquiring	demonstrates that knowledge, a concept or a skill is being learned. S/he explores and participates in the learning.
Becoming Fluent	moves towards fluency and accuracy in familiar learning contexts. S/he independently and consistently demonstrates recall mastery of the skill /concept / knowledge learned.
Generalising	transfers and applies learned skills, knowledge or concepts to familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

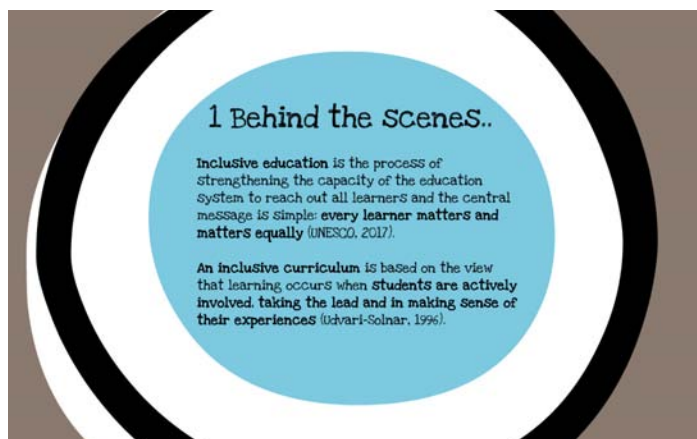
The workshop concluded with a discussion which was continued in later EITTT group reflection and feedback sessions during the week.

For their first afternoon on the MIE campus the team members gained practical insight into a sample of the course work relevant to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Inclusive Education which is offered to student teachers at Marino Institute of Education. MIE lecturer Dr Anne McMorrough explained as she does for her students, the steps involved in making an 'imovie' and / or a podcast.

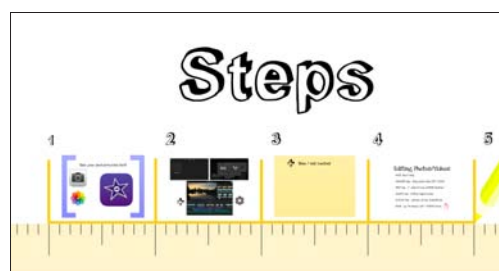


## Workshop: Movie-making or Podcasting

The activity provided for a collaboration of various types of creative skills and different learning styles.



In small groups of 3-4 people, partners then replicated these processes. Their task was to engage with students and staff around the campus and elicit and record (video and audio recordings) understandings and opinions about a topic – in this case - ‘**Inclusion**’. Having edited and embellished (e.g. with music) these recordings to their satisfaction, partners shared their imovies / podcasts with the whole team.



With a range of freely available ‘apps’ to choose from, it was a versatile and easy undertaking which demonstrated for the project partners how student teachers’ introduction to relevant technology can have a key role in supporting a culture of inclusion in schools. As student teachers discover, the activity is an enjoyable and productive means of being inclusive of the varied strengths, talents and interests of all involved.



### **Student Teacher Practicum Placement in Special Schools**

The focus of the learning week was on Initial Teacher Education for Inclusive and Special Education in MIE, and **specifically on student teachers’ potential learning in this regard during their placement in schools and ‘special’ classrooms for children with special educational needs.** An emerging body of research literature is examining the potential of such placement experiences for student teacher learning. It is interesting to note that many of these study findings resonate with the views and recommendations expressed by the project partners and student teachers during the course of this learning week.

## **What the Research Says**

Inclusive education is a central plank of current EU education policy (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CPRD] 2008; Council Conclusions on the Social Dimension of Education and Training 2010; Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the Implementation of the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training [ET2020]). However, effective inclusive practice in mainstream classrooms is a challenging undertaking even for experienced teachers. It requires that teachers hold appropriate attitudes and values with regard to inclusion in society and in schools, as well as relevant knowledge and skills. High quality teacher education for inclusion is therefore a prerequisite.

While course work and field placements are integral elements of most teacher education programmes, researchers have increasingly focused on the potentially valuable understandings that student teachers develop during field experience. Donald Schon’s proposal that much important professional knowledge is developed through ‘knowing-in-action’ in the course of practical experience and reflection on that experience (Schon, 1992, 124-5) is of interest in this respect. From such a perspective, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) distinguished between teacher learning as the acquisition of ‘knowledge-for-practice’ and the construction of ‘knowledge-in-practice’. Knowledge-for-practice is described as knowledge about teaching acquired through course attendance, readings, examinations and assignments, which is then applied in the practical field of the school classroom. ‘Knowledge-in-practice’ on the other hand, is seen as constructed knowledge, developed in the course of experience and learning. This knowledge, arrived at during the contextually embedded ‘process of acting and thinking wisely in the immediacy of classroom life’ (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, 266) is arguably of paramount importance in teaching. Teacher educators may facilitate student teachers’ development

of this knowledge by providing appropriate support during the students’ practicum placements. Students can be afforded ‘opportunities to enhance, make explicit, and articulate the tacit knowledge embedded in experience and in the wise action of very competent professionals’ (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, 263). The student teacher builds on her/his existing theories, linking this previous knowledge about teaching and learning with new experiences and understandings developed in the field (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999, 258).

The momentum for inclusive education and the appropriate preparation of teachers in this respect, has seen researchers increasingly exploring student teachers’ experience and learning in non-traditional practicum contexts. So far, most research of this nature has addressed prospective learning in terms of appreciation of socio-cultural diversity in multi-cultural school settings. These study findings point to the ‘powerful impact’ (Sleeter, 2001, 97) of such placements on student teachers’ learning, and highlight in particular, the students’ better ability to view all children, whatever their home background circumstances, as capable of learning (Burant and Kirby, 2002). However, the findings are not unequivocal. A question remains as to whether such practicum experiences might also serve to reinforce any existing stereotypical concepts and prejudices held by students, particularly if students are not supported in unpacking and deciphering their experience (Burant and Kirby, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Practicum placement in a separate special education setting in which children have disabilities or special educational needs has predictably been shown to have value for prospective special education teachers. There is relatively little known however, about the learning potential of such an experience for students preparing to teach in mainstream classes. Nonetheless, the research that has been conducted on this student teacher experience to date is, with some reservations as highlighted above (Burant and Kirby, 2002; Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust and Shulman, 2005), very promising as to the potential for appropriate pedagogical learning for inclusive practice.

Walton and Rusznyak (2013, 2014) report the findings of such a study conducted with pre-service teachers enrolled in a four-year Bachelor of Education degree course in a South African university. While the requirement to develop an understanding of ‘inclusion’ is infused in the general course work undertaken by these students, in their third year the students also undertake a discrete module titled ‘Diversity, Inclusion and Pedagogy’.

Having already completed several assessed placements in mainstream classroom settings, students from this cohort who have demonstrated ‘acceptable levels of classroom competence’, are encouraged to undertake a practicum placement in a ‘diverse’ context or in a school with ‘diverse’ students (Walton and Rusznyak (2014, 961).

Fifteen of nineteen students who, at their request, were undertaking such a supervised placement in a ‘special’ school - i.e. a school focused on educational provision for students with disabilities or special educational needs, agreed to participate in the study. The researchers sought to investigate what, if any, pedagogical learning occurred during this placement. They employed a focus group methodology, and sourced additional data from the students’ reflective journals and relevant ‘Facebook’ posts during this practicum. Data was gathered at three intervals – before placement, immediately after it and several months subsequently. Before placement the researchers investigated the students’ expectations of how they felt the experience might compare with their previous practicum experiences and what they might learn from it.

A key finding was that contrary to their expectations, the student teachers found that teaching approaches in special schools did not greatly differ from those with which they were familiar in mainstream settings. Their general belief that teachers in special schools held a type of ‘secret pedagogical knowledge’ was discounted. Rather, they expressed surprise that teaching strategies and resource materials employed in special schools were similar to those in mainstream class settings, and that learning styles were also quite similar. Furthermore, in line with research findings from the service learning sector, these student teachers felt that their experience in this special school/class practicum foregrounded much of what they learn in mainstream classes. It facilitated much keener observation; a ‘stepping back’ and ‘taking notice’, and ultimately a ‘new awareness’ of pedagogical knowledge that had hitherto been implicit or tacit (Gallego, 2001; Walton and Rusznyak, 2013).

With a view to their preparation as future mainstream classroom practitioners, the researchers identified five aspects of pedagogy that were highlighted for the student teachers as a consequence of this practicum:

**1. Pedagogical choices that acknowledge difference:**

As they engaged with a variety of students with different learning needs, the student teachers became less preoccupied with identifying individual disabilities and seeking particular responses to these. Rather they

not only came to realise the prevalence and interaction of multiple disabilities but also the extent and variety of student ability. Hence, they gradually came to a better understanding of difference as a given, and as a starting point for their lesson planning. ‘Problems’ they realised, were not rooted in students but in inappropriate pedagogy. The challenge for the student teacher therefore became one of good pedagogical planning with a view to preventing and reducing learning difficulties and so facilitating learning for all.

2. **Focusing on the Big Idea(s) of the lesson:** The students learnt the importance of prioritising one or more key concepts in a lesson and thereby ensuring all students were potentially included in key learning.
3. **Multiple and relevant representations of knowledge:** The need to re-visit concepts to facilitate different learning rates was also an important realisation, as was the value of employing varied methodologies and resource materials in this process to allow for different learning styles.
4. **Lesson pacing:** Initially taken aback at the ‘slow’ pace of lessons, the student teachers gradually recognised the futility of achieving curriculum coverage at the expense of content mastery, and began to reconsider their pedagogical priorities.
5. **Behaviour management and social skills:** The students were impressed at the ‘more personal way’ their host teachers calmly managed behaviour in class, and observed with much interest teachers providing explicit and effective instruction in social skills.

In summary, the authors report that all the student teachers in the study considered that the placement had been a valuable learning experience. In terms of difference and disability it provided for better awareness and empathy. In bringing valuable aspects of teaching and learning that were obscured in mainstream settings to the fore, it had ‘potential to advance their pedagogical learning’.

In a subsequent analysis of data from this study the researchers considered if the student teachers’ placement experience in a special education setting could contribute specifically to their learning for inclusive practice (Walton and Rusznyak, 2014). They undertook this investigation with some reservations, citing Lambe and Bones (2008) finding that such placements leave pre-service teachers ‘less hopeful’ about inclusion, given that mainstream class settings may not be able to measure up to the well-supported and resourced environment of the special school.

They also refer to Loreman's (2010) assertion that placements in separate special settings can send 'mixed messages' to future teachers. The researchers applied Loreman's (2010) synthesis of 'essential skills, knowledge and attributes for inclusive teachers' in their analysis. The students' responses were found to meet three of these seven areas of criteria for teacher preparation:

- 1. A respect for diversity and an understanding of inclusion:** It was evident that the student teachers' engagement with young people with a range of disabilities and learning challenges had afforded them valuable insights that had advanced their understanding of what was entailed in being an inclusive practitioner.
- 2. Inclusive instructional planning:** As outlined above, the student teachers felt that their better insights and understandings arrived at as a consequence of the placement, enabled them to plan more effectively for inclusive practice.
- 3. Instructing in ways conducive to inclusion:** The student teachers not only recognised the value of employing a variety of strategies and materials, they reported feeling more confident about doing so, and being more patient and willing with regard to responding to individual needs.

Loreman's other areas of criteria (Engaging in meaningful assessment; Lifelong learning; Fostering a positive social climate; Collaboration with stakeholders) did not feature in these findings.

The researchers had added the further 'dispositional' dimension to their investigative criteria. They did so in acknowledgement of Waitoller and Kozleski's (2010) assertion that the development of 'critical sensibilities' – 'the question of what is being done for the benefit of whom' - is an important element of teacher preparation that can be overlooked in a preoccupation with 'skills and technical content'. As Picower (2011) explains, teachers need to be exposed to experiences that 'awaken their consciousness' and enable them to 'critically recognize injustice'. The student teachers' responses on this dimension were found to vary. Not all were convinced of the benefits of a special school practicum as preparation for inclusive practice. Nonetheless, the issue, as identified by the authors, lay not so much in their experience of this placement but in their interpretation of it. As several researchers have pointed out, irrespective of the type of practicum experienced, all student teachers need support and 'critical guidance' (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005) 'to make

sense of what they have seen and heard' (Banks et al., 2005).

The authors conclude, that 'the potential affordances of the special school practicum are sufficient to continue to encourage these placements'. They underline the importance of 'mediating' the practicum for student teachers with a view to enabling informed consideration of the potential and limitations of both special and inclusive education.

## EiTTT Visits to Students on Placement in Schools

The EiTTT project Learning Week in MIE had been arranged to coincide with the period of special education school placement for MIE's B.Ed. (year 2) student teachers. At the time, these students were undertaking their second week of this two-week placement. The students had already gained some experience in mainstream class settings. Now in their second year of initial teacher education and with three months of their year-long Inclusive Education module completed, the placement was their first practical experience of full-time special education. Each student had sourced her/his own school for placement. They could choose to spend the placement in a full special school or in a special 'unit' / class within a mainstream school. Schools are invited to accommodate one or more students who spend two weeks in the school both assisting and learning by shadowing a class teacher and working with groups and/or individual children under the supervision of the teacher. At that early stage of their teacher education course, the students are not formally assessed on their teaching in this special setting, but are expected to work with the children as requested and to demonstrate initiative at every opportunity. While students are not required to prepare formal lessons, they must complete an Observation Task on three children, noting each child's learning strengths, challenges and progress, as well as helpful teaching and management strategies and resources for enhancing learning. During the placement each student is visited in their school by a member of the MIE staff (school placement tutor) who engages the student in discussion to ascertain the student's openness to learning there and the quality of her/his engagement with the experience.

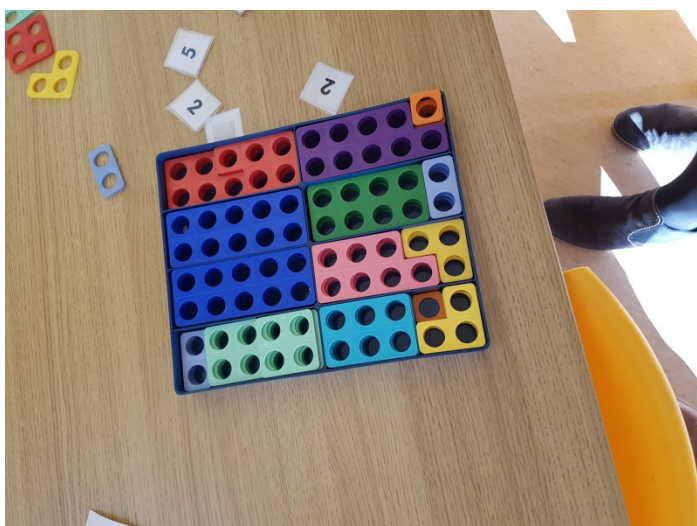
Over the course of two mornings the project team in groups of 3-4 people, each comprising a mix of teachers and teacher educators from different countries, and accompanied by an MIE staff member, visited students in their placement schools. Visits were made to students in six special schools and a further six mainstream schools. The schools were all located in the greater

Dublin area, in both suburban and inner city locations, and catered for children from a range of social class backgrounds. The visits had been pre-arranged, with the consent of the schools and the student teachers involved. Team members were warmly welcomed into the schools. Principals and staff gave generously of their time, meeting with the team and explaining the school's organisation, learning programmes and provision of support for student teacher learning.

The student teachers were aware that the project team visit would be similar to the usual visit they received from an MIE tutor during their placement, i.e. it would be an informal, discursive-type meeting during which the student would be asked to share her/his experience and any new learning arising from this placement. The MIE staff member accompanying the team members would serve as the 'tutor' and initiate discussion with the students. The student teachers willingly engaged in these discussions and shared their learning stories with the team.

### Observations on student teachers' placement in special 'units' / classes in Mainstream Schools:

On their return to MIE in the afternoons, each of the teams provided feedback to the whole group on their views in particular about the value of such placements for student teacher learning. The enthusiasm with which team members shared these accounts was remarkable. It was evident that the variety of schools, school structures and personnel encountered by the whole group had provided for an immensely rich and exciting learning experience for the project team in a short period of time. Notwithstanding the variety of schools visited, there was much consistency in this feedback, as the following themes illustrate:



### **‘The Variety of Special Education Settings’**

- › ‘The schools differ hugely’
- › ‘Such different systems in one school – full inclusion and separate units. Also, pupils can switch from one to the other during the day’
- › ‘Flexible transitions - very good’
- › ‘Teachers can move from teaching in mainstream classes to teaching in special units every few years – very advantageous for teacher learning’

### **‘The Positive, Active Role of the Principal’**

- › ‘The principal’s influence on the school’s atmosphere is very important / significant’
- › ‘The principal of the school knew each child personally and knew everything about the child’s ability’

### **‘High Level of Teacher Commitment’**

- › ‘Individualised approach very good’
- › ‘Pupil-centred decisions’
- › ‘Pupil-led decisions’
- › ‘Cooperation with parents’
- › ‘Interest in CPD’

### **‘Very Organised Schools’**

- › ‘Very organised learning programmes – targets for every student’
- › ‘All the work is very well planned and organised’

### **‘Children in Special Units are Made to Feel Included’**

- › ‘Super facilities’

- › ‘Environment is very inclusive’
- › ‘The environment is prepared for inclusion’
- *‘Attention paid to each child’s ability and personality’*
- *‘There is no rush in the teaching process’*
- *‘Learning is happening’*



## **Student Teacher Learning**

Team members were of one mind about the potential for student teacher learning during the placement:

- › ‘Absolutely – a very worthwhile placement experience for a student teacher’
- › ‘Really valuable for the students’
- › ‘Student teachers were observing, and working one-to-one with pupils, following the teacher’s lead’
- › ‘They were very enthusiastic’
- › ‘Students are there less than two weeks but they know so much’
- › ‘Student teachers already know what they are to do in the class and what their purpose is there’
- › ‘They know their [children’s] personal development and notice the strengths of each child in the class’
- › ‘They are familiar with the stage of development of each child’
- › ‘They interact well with the children’

- › ‘They have very detailed plans which show that each student is very responsible for what they are doing’ (The student teachers shared with team members their notes for the observation task they were required to undertake.)
- › ‘Yes, a very worthwhile experience for the student teacher – first practical experience of SEN; **opportunity to link observations during this SEN placement with approaches to mainstream teaching – to transfer learning; learning about the many ways of working in SEN classes - that these should be used in mainstream classes also; learning the importance of knowing your pupils; learning the value of positive reinforcement**’
- › ‘The experience is very valuable in order to understand the theory behind special education and teaching in general’
- › ‘Student teachers feel empowered’
- › ‘Maturity of the student teachers’
- › ‘Good to have student teacher exposed to SEN so early’
- › ‘Valuable experience for the student teacher. Learning that not everyone can do that job. ‘You need to get inside yourself. It makes you get inside yourself’

It was suggested also that this placement might ideally be the first of several such placements in ‘diverse’ settings during the students’ initial teacher education course. This theme was reiterated in partner feedback throughout the week:

- › ‘We are conscious that this is still a very early stage of learning [about special education] for the student teacher. Can be quite profound if working with students with severe disabilities. Perhaps the placement in year 2 could be the first of several such placements? – As they progress through their course they could be offered more opportunity to work in special education settings if they express particular interest in doing so – and could gradually be assessed on their teaching there?’

## Observations on student teachers’ placement in Special Schools:

Again, partners were highly impressed at the ‘maturity’ of such young student teachers and at the extent of their apparent learning in just over a week of placement. This was a consistent theme in partners’ observations. It raises the possibility as the student teachers also suggested, that the placement is a maturing experience in itself, as students confront and begin to mull over the ‘big’ questions around education, i.e., ‘equality’, ‘inclusion’, ‘exclusion’, ‘difference’ and ‘disability’:



- › ‘Positive placement for student – we were blown away’
- › ‘Students had such a big experience to share’
- › ‘The maturity of the student teachers and their opinions, observations and attitudes’
- › ‘It is a great opportunity for students to have placements in special schools. They get such diverse experience which helps them to get involved in any teaching process’
- › ‘They already knew a lot about the schools, pupils and environment’
- › ‘Student teachers were observing, working one-to-one, analysing the work in the classroom, discovering new ways to interact with the children’
- › They were learning that ‘to work in special school you have to be prepared for everything, because each day working with children who have autism is totally different; – that all children are so different with different skills; - the importance of one-to-one work; – that positive behaviour and attitudes are so needed in special schools; - that dealing with emotions is very important’

The view that such placements should be offered to student teachers more than once, re-emerged at this stage. Given the variety of school types and the different learning opportunities they afforded future teachers, it was strongly suggested that as students progressed through their teacher education course, they would benefit from further placement opportunities in settings of their choice. The possibility of formally assessing the students' teaching performance in such subsequent placements was also suggested:

- › 'A two-week placement is enough at the beginning when you are assisting. It is enough time to be introduced and to understand what you need to know. We also think they must have other experiences with more time to find their own methods'
- › 'The experience is significant and important. It might be important to have several opportunities for SEN placements in different schools / surroundings'

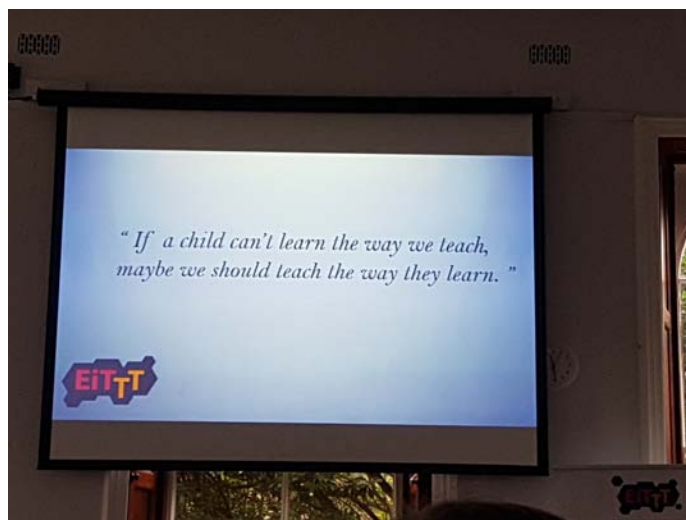
Other observations were similar to those made a day earlier after the visit to mainstream schools. Partners were very taken with every aspect of this educational provision:

- › 'The Principal – huge amount of influence'
- › 'The active role of the Special Needs Assistants'
- › 'The use of the walls of the classroom – pictures, learning plans, communication, behaviour plans'
- › 'Opportunity to achieve in the school the level 1 award in the language curriculum'

## EiTTT Partners Engage With the Student Teachers

Thirty-five student teachers randomly selected from the B.Ed. 2 year group were invited to return to college from school placement for one day during the learning week, to meet and share their views about this placement with the project team. The designated day was the second last day of the students' placement and the EiTTT team visit to MIE. In preparation for this, all students in the year group had completed and returned a questionnaire documenting their views on the placement experience. A representative sample of these questionnaires was displayed for partners to read upon their arrival in MIE that morning. As the students arrived, they were seated in groups with several team members assigned to each group.

Three students had agreed in advance to open the learning day by sharing video diary reflections which they had been invited to record before and during their placement.





These three students were drawn from special education school settings that were quite diverse and geographically dispersed. They had put together video and audio self-recordings of their views and feelings as they prepared for, and proceeded through their first practical experience of special education. As all partners agreed, their presentations were very powerful. The students had recorded their very individual learning journeys over the preceding weeks with commendable sincerity. They spoke of apprehension and anxiety before the placement, but also of an openness and curiosity; a ‘not knowing what to expect’. As placement began, their recordings described their rapid immersion into a new world that course work alone could never have revealed; ‘you just couldn’t understand without being in the school’. The depth of their learning and reflection in such a short period of time was very apparent.

However, it was also evident that despite the wealth of experience described in their work with the children and the teachers, the students were largely unaware of the progression in their learning; ‘I wasn’t really teaching them’. This response came from a student to a question posed by one of the team as to whether the experience might impact on that student’s future mainstream practice. The response highlights student teachers’ still early stage of understanding of concepts of ‘teaching’, ‘curriculum’, ‘learning’ and ‘education’. It puts an onus on teacher educators to enable students to tease out these conceptualisations by ‘unpacking’ their experience of the placement immediately afterwards, through questioning, discussion and analysis with teacher educators. Indeed, as partners suggested, it is likely that the value of the placement is conditional upon the quality of such supported reflection subsequently. Following these presentations many more questions and comments followed from project partners and other students.

Of the latter, some students spoke of having their ‘eyes opened’ to the possibility of a new career direction in education, while others felt that special education ‘is not for me’. Most students were of the view that their learning had just begun, that the experience of the placement had raised many questions for them, and that the opportunity to experience more such placements in diverse settings during their teacher education course would be very beneficial to their professional development.

## Students and Project Partners in Conversation

Following these presentations, all thirty-five students seated in groups with project partners, conversed at length. For more than an hour, until the conversations were reluctantly drawn to a close, students and project partners listened to, and learnt from one another with great enthusiasm. A note-taker at each table summarised proceedings. The positive impact of the placement for students was reiterated. Their learning appeared to be wide-ranging. It was specific to the special needs context, **transferrable to mainstream classrooms** and relevant for their general professional development as future teachers. Some of the students’ and partners’ comments are as follows:



## Learning for Future Practice

***‘You see that each child has individual needs. Diagnosis is the same but each child is different’***

***‘Learning shouldn’t be measured by your peers. It’s just yourself’***

***‘It was beneficial to see how resources are used for children with different needs and strengths’***

***‘Resources – more active learning taking place than passive learning. Children need variety in their lessons to be engaged’***

***‘Visuals, timetables, schedules, PECS books, sentence strips, Apps, curriculum (adapted)’***

***‘Strategies – Now, Next, Then’***

***‘UDL’ in practice***

***‘Technology used to engage children’***

***‘Music worked really well with children in a special needs setting’***

*‘Focus on life skills – important for children with serious disabilities’*

*‘Rewards systems – children are rewarded for good behaviour and other behaviour is not dwelt on’*

*‘Special ed. teachers need patience’*

*‘Team teaching – powerful way of working together’*

*‘Teachers in mainstream schools with attached units rotate every year to ensure to keep interest and reduce repetition’ (partner comment)*

*‘Interesting to observe the teamwork with the teachers and the SNAs’ (partner comment)*

*‘Need flexible teachers and systems’ (partner comment)*

*‘Resources like visual timetable could be used in mainstream placements’*

*‘You learn strategies which you can use in mainstream’*

*‘Realising children can only focus for such a period of time and need to burn off energy after doing work’*

*‘Importance of frequent breaks for the children’*

*‘Parents getting involved / communicating about their children’*

#### **Other Comments from Students**

*‘Good that the placement is not optional. You are pushed out of your comfort zone. Gives you the chance to try SEN schools and opens your eyes as to whether or not you would like it in the future’*

*‘Inclusion is best when everyone is benefitting – both the child with special educational difficulties and the children in the mainstream class’*

The students also noted their learning from the project partners:

**Learning from Belgium:** – *‘Kevin told us about the donkeys and garden that they use in their [special] school as an outlet for the children. The children help to take care of the animals and garden. Animals work well with children with ASD to help the children to calm down’*

– *‘For children in the special school there is integration with mainstream schools e.g. two days in the special school and three days in the mainstream school’*

– *‘Children diagnosed with Dyslexia in Belgium must stay in mainstream schools’*

**Learning from Finland:** – *‘Integrate when possible. Recognise that it is not always possible’*

The main ‘drawback’ of the placement experience seemed to have been its brevity! As already highlighted, this was a key theme during the week. Not only were students eager for more such experience, several suggested that they should be required to engage more formally during the placement by taking responsibility for teaching the children. Alternatively as they proposed, they might progress towards this with further such placements during their teacher education course, so as to provide for the possibility of selecting to undertake such experience for part of their final, assessed, ten-week school placement in fourth year. Typical comments were as follows:

*‘Not long enough’*

*‘Only one placement’*

*‘Two-week special ed. placement in 2nd year – not enough in our opinion’*

*‘Students only see one area of special education – need more than one experience to see more’ (partner comment)*

*‘The importance of experiencing different settings and classrooms’ (partner comment)*

*‘Not teaching, just observing’*

*‘Students are not sure if they would be confident teaching in a special school after just one placement’ (partner comment)*

*‘Give students the choice in their last year to organise their long placement themselves – e.g. five weeks in a special school + five weeks in mainstream’*

**Partners reiterated their views as to the value of the placement for future teachers, and added some suggestions in accordance with those of the students:**

*‘Very important placement’*

*‘Experiencing it personally, not just theory’*

*‘The depth of knowledge about the pupils was surprising even after two weeks’*

*‘Great strategies for future careers’*

*‘Student teachers surprised that the students in schools weren’t learning ‘academic lessons – good learning’*

*‘Peer feedback might be valuable for example during first-year placement*

*‘Might be important to have another SEN placement in later years’*



On the final day of the learning week the team worked in country groups to reflect on all aspects of their learning during the week. Facilitated by MIE lecturers Dr Sandra Austin and Dr Anne McMorrough, they used the padlet tool (<https://padlet.com>) which enabled large screen presentation of concurrent feedback from each of the country groups. Some general points noted by each of the groups are as follows:

*‘The placement is important and significant for student teachers. They learnt new ways to make contact to pupils. It might be important to have several opportunities for SEN placements in different schools’ (Finland)*

*‘Student teachers have learnt so much during their placement – more than in lectures’ (Finland)*

*‘Student teachers are eager to get more information about SEN after their placement’ (Finland)*

*‘Every [school] student has his/her learning objectives’ (Cyprus)*

*‘The gap between theory and practice is diminishing with the placements’ (Cyprus)*

*‘The certificates of mainstream schools and special education schools are the same. In Belgium there are still some differences and that is not empowering for inclusive education’ (Belgium)*

*‘The pathways [SEN Pathways] set out by [Ireland’s] policymakers are very clear and easily translated for other use’ (Belgium)*

*‘In Ireland you can be a special needs teacher without doing any further study. In Belgium, schools oblige you to do a Bachelor after Bachelor programme’ (Belgium)*

*‘In Belgium the teacher education colleges do a lot of one-day school visits to mainstream schools and special schools before the students go on placement in special schools. We are worried that the [Irish] students will generalise the view of one school to all of them and not every special education school is the same’ (Belgium)*

*‘We had a discussion with a student on placement who said the experience of the first week (shock!) is totally different from the second. You learn a lot from teachers who are working there’ (Latvia)*



Finally, the EITTT team came together again to outline their overall impressions of this placement experience in preparing future teachers for inclusive practice. They responded to three questions and offered some additional recommendations:

**1. Is this placement necessary? Is it valuable in initial teacher education (Why / not?)**

*'It's valuable and necessary for student teachers.'*

*'Yes, they can learn valuable things from the placement in special education schools that they can easily transfer to classroom practice in mainstream schools.'*

*'Yes . . . it has to be part of a bigger approach in teacher education about children with special needs.'*

*'It's their first or only contact with special education.'*

*'They learn very much more during that placement than attending lectures.'*

*'This helps student teachers to understand the theory better.'*

*'The placement helps students to evaluate their skills and feelings. It helps them to choose whether they would like to work in special education or not. Students have an opportunity to observe teachers' work, make their own decisions and learn how to behave and work in special education and decide would they like to copy the methods or not. This placement could help students to find out their own new skills, what they could do, how to react. During the placement they achieve more than expected.'*

*'Yes – reflection necessary! Knowledge about children with special needs important for all teachers'*

*'Placement is a very important part of each student's studying process. It is time and opportunity to check the given theory in practice and find out some new ideas and methods to use in further placements and teaching career.'*

**2. Is this placement necessary / valuable in preparation for mainstream teaching?**

*'This placement is very valuable for mainstream school. It gives a lot of . . . experience which students could use in mainstream schools even if there are not any children with disabilities. The knowledge in this experience allows students to understand what is inclusion and that it is not only 'academic learning'. It comes as a shock to students, because they are thinking firstly about including kids with disabilities / disadvantages in mainstream classes and teaching them the same as others. The placement shows that it is totally different. You have to teach them daily life skills . . . inclusion means a lot more than just the definition.'*

*'We strongly recommend this placement for Teacher Education. This is a good way to teach them to be an inclusive teacher also in mainstream setting. The placement is necessary for their further studies. After that they can concentrate on obtaining methods and strategies for SEN pupils.'*

*'The students will gain tools for their own 'teacherhood' during that placement. E.G. teachers must be open-minded, patient, positive; individual needs must be acknowledged and taken account of; focus on positive behaviour rather than negative; teaching is caring for children.'*

*'Transfer of methods / materials'*

*'They learn that teaching is not teaching but teaching is loving and caring.'*

3. What (if any) learning opportunities does it afford student teachers which might not happen otherwise (i.e. via course work alone?)

*‘Practice could be so different from expectation (positive and negative)’*

*‘The individual approach to children’*

*‘They learn to ‘leave’ the curriculum [for] the wellbeing of the child’*

*‘Not only that children have to adapt but the teachers also have to adapt’*

*‘After the placement the students are much more curious and are stimulated more by the courses at college.’*

*‘The student teachers are willing to get more information about SEN.’*

*‘Some student teachers are interested in working in special schools, others are not (they find this out)’*

## Partner Recommendations

*‘The students go on placement to very different schools. They should not generalise their ideas of special education schools.’*

*‘It’s important that student teachers share their experiences with peers and tutors as all of them have a different kind of placement.’*

*‘It would be better / important to get a second placement in different SEN setting / environment.’*

*‘In our opinion the placement is better in 3rd or 4th year. You could do some school visits in 1st or 2nd year.’*

*‘Repeat this experience in 3rd / 4th year.’*

*‘Students would like to have more placements in special schools to have more experience and new ideas and thoughts.’*

*‘Students (student teachers) would like to have more interaction with teachers and in the class.’*

*‘It might be useful / an idea to consider if the placement aims could also include teaching / co-teaching, not just observation. The student teachers would have been ready to teach but they felt it was difficult ‘because they were allowed to observe’. These partners felt the students were capable of so much more.’*

*‘Students learn what deep learning is – small steps – back to basics – so also explicit teaching.’*

*‘UDL . . . It is important to know this because they can use this learning in special education and use it in mainstream classes.’*

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- › The EiTTT team came to Marino Institute of Education in November / December 2017 to learn about how MIE's student teachers are prepared for inclusive educational practice in schools. The team specifically addressed the two-week placement that the students undertake in a special education setting. Informal feedback from student teachers and academic staff in MIE over many years has indicated that this placement serves as a valuable learning experience for future teachers, with much potential to advance their learning for inclusive practice. As student teachers have reported, the experience of this placement can demystify their thinking about 'disability' and 'special educational needs'. It can afford them greater opportunity than in mainstream classes to 'notice' variations in children's learning capacities and styles and to consider more carefully how to apply 'ordinary' methodologies to effectively respond to these. Research findings indicate that students' focus as future teachers may consequently shift from a preoccupation with children's 'learning difficulties' to a recognition of potentially 'problematic pedagogies'. Hence student teachers are better able to regard human 'difference' as a given and a starting point for all lesson planning.
  - › There was a unanimously positive response from the EiTTT team members about the potential of this placement experience for enhancing student teachers' professional development.
  - › It was seen to be a vital element in the preparation of inclusive practitioners.
  - › Partners recommended that student teachers be offered further opportunities to practise in 'diverse' settings during their teacher education course and that they be gradually assessed on this practice.
- › The importance of informed, supported reflection by the student teachers on this experience (i.e. in conjunction with teacher educators) was underlined.
  - › In conclusion, the EiTTT team highly recommends that teacher educators incorporate such placement experience in the preparation of beginning teachers for effective practice in our diverse world. In accordance with Walton (2017), we are not advocating a privileging of practical over theoretical aspects of teacher education, but rather that inclusive education be positioned above all as a form of professional knowledge that enables student teachers, to apply theoretically informed judgements to the complexity of learning diversity for the betterment of their own development and ultimately that of their students.

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EMPOWERING INCLUSIVE TEACHERS  
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# EiTTT

## Case Studies



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## Case study:

Inclusion Through Education – Students  
from Refugee/Migrant/Socio-economically  
Disadvantaged Backgrounds

**Anthoupoli Primary School K.A., Nicosia, Cyprus**



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [www.mie.ie/eittt](http://www.mie.ie/eittt) OR EMAIL US: [eittt@mie.ie](mailto:eittt@mie.ie)





## Context

The fifth Learning Activity of the EITTT project was held from the 23rd– 27th of April 2018 at Anthoupoli Primary School K.A. in Nicosia, Cyprus.

## Anthoupoli Primary School K.A.

The Primary School of Anthoupoli opened in September 1977, three years after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus and the construction of the refugee settlement of Anthoupoli. The school sheltered refugees from 83 different occupied communities. Many of the families of these refugees still live in the Anthoupoli settlement. Others sold or rented their flats to non-refugees, but most families living here still experience socio-economic difficulties.

For all the above reasons, the vision of the school has been set as follows:

“We promise to work together under the values of cooperation, respect and creativity. To build a learning environment where everyone will be happy. Teachers and pupils will work with zeal, comfort and creativity.”

In our school there are 138 pupils between 6–9 years old (Grades 1st, 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup>). The staff of the school consists of one Head teacher, two Deputy Head teachers, seven permanent teachers, one visitor teacher, two special needs teachers, two speech therapists, one assistant to a child with mobility problems and a school secretary who is shared with the adjoining Anthoupoli school K.B.

The school year begins every 1st Monday of September and ends on the penultimate Friday of June. We have 12 public holidays, Christmas Holidays (about 15 days), Easter Holidays (15 days) and Summer Holidays (e.g. this year begins on the 25th of June and ends on the 2nd of September).

## EITTT Learning Week

The fifth Learning Activity Week of the EITTT project was attended by a team of twenty two people, comprising project partners and colleagues from their schools and institutions. The focus of the Learning Activity was to observe and contemplate the delivery of in-school supports as a method of inclusion. On their first day in the school the project team met the pupils and staff of Anthoupoli Primary School in a morning assembly.

The observation of in-school support in practice played a central role in the Learning Activity. In the course of the week there were possibilities to observe in-school support either by classroom observations or by school supporters such as the School Inspector, the teachers of the school and members of the Parents' Association. Since the care of children of socio-economic problems continues in the afternoons, we had the chance to see in practice the Private Institute and the All – Day School where children do their homework and spend constructively their time. Experts on migrants, refugees and special education gave us information in order to apply it in our schools and fulfil our goals on in-school support.

## What is “School support for Inclusion”?

School support for Inclusion is a strategy where the school makes its best in order to make sure that all children have something to eat, have clothes to wear, they are happy and then they learn at their maximum. School support is not only an in – school care, but it continues after the end of the school day. In this way, school brings together all aspects of the community, such as parents, church, supermarkets, clothes shops and donators. It aims not only in equality but also in equity. That means that every child has different needs and school has to do its best to fulfil these needs in order to give him/her the chance to progress in all aspects of his/her life.

## Rationale

The approach of “School support for inclusion” is essential for our school and for any school that includes children with socio-economic problems, since it takes into account first the well-being of a child and then its progress at school. If a child feels hungry, sad or neglected it can’t concentrate to its lessons. If its parents can’t fulfil these needs, then the school, as a second family, has to find ways to overcome the obstacles of hunger, sadness and neglect in order to fulfil its learning purposes.

This strategy was introduced in our school since we had a number of children coming from families with socio-economic difficulties. The school couldn’t close its eyes towards pupils who didn’t have a snack to bring from home, who couldn’t buy a school uniform, who didn’t have money to follow schools’ excursions or educational visits or who didn’t speak Greek in order to communicate with their classmates and teachers. Because the school itself is public, it doesn’t have its own budget in order to decide how to manage its own money. It was essential to search for collaborators, official and non-official, in order to help those children.

Our strategy is based on the theory of “The sensitive teacher” which takes into account the bonding between the teacher and the child. This bonding offers to the child security, it helps the child to regulate its emotions, it takes perspective of the child, it helps the child to set its own goals and the child trusts its teacher because he/she is always sweet, smart and kind. In this way we promote the mental, physical and social well-being of the pupils, as a lifestyle, on the one hand, with the development of personal and social skills and values, on the other hand with collective action on upgrading their social and natural environment.

## Learning

### > Our agenda: Day 1

Our pupils along with their teachers welcomed our Erasmus+ partners at a school gathering. The pupils sang and danced welcoming in their own way our European friends.

After that, all partners were divided in six groups. Each group entered a class in order to observe a lesson that it took place at that time.

The next step was to observe some lessons through video watching. That gave the chance to all partners to observe the same lessons and to have a common ground for discussion later on.

Since it is essential for a visitor to understand some facts about the country that hosts him/her, we thought that it would be a good idea to have a tourist guide in order to give specific information to our partners. Mrs Maria Achniotou managed in a half an hour to present Cyprus under its geographic and historical scope.



One of the challenges Europe has to face, is dealing with migration. A representative from the Office of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Cyprus, Mr Demetris Morfis, explained the role of such offices around the world and the programmes they run in order to help communities and/or schools to deal with migrants. Mr Morfis talked about children mobility, integration challenges, integration and inclusive schools, inclusive classrooms, community capacity building, how to get a better understanding of non-migrant children, how to maintain better participation of migrant children at school and, finally, he presented IOM’s projects and interventions on integration and inclusion.

Most of our partners didn't know that there is such an office in their countries, and once they learned about it, they communicated with colleagues that work in schools with a lot of migrants in order to get the soonest advices from their local office of International Organisation of Migration.



In our group we have three Universities, two from Belgium and one from Ireland. For this reason we invited Dr Katerina Mavrou who is an Assistant Professor on Inclusive Education & Assistive Technology at the European University. She presented Special and Inclusive Education in Education Sciences Degrees. She gave some brief information about Special and Inclusive Education in Cyprus and she presented the Programmes of Study at the European University.

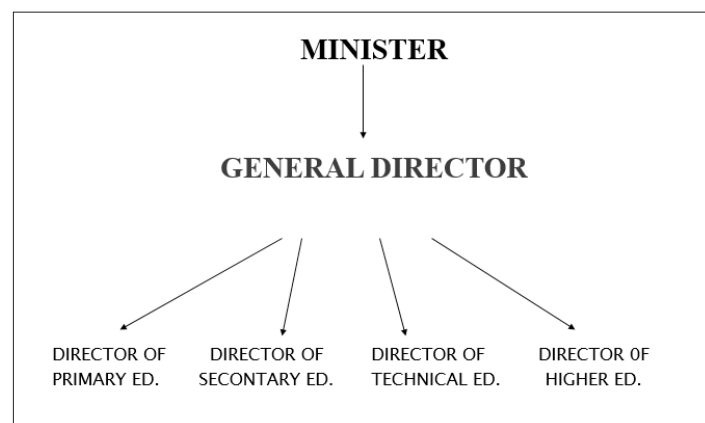


### > Our agenda: Day 2

All participants observed Greek lesson at B1 Class. It was held by the mainstream teacher of the class Mrs Katerina Ioannou, along with the speech therapist Mrs Louiza Stylianiou. During co-teaching, it was obvious that the two teachers were acting as one. That was due to the fact that they have been cooperating for two years now and during this procedure they became friends. During the session we observed three modes of co-teaching. During the observation, we could draw some conclusions such as: the lesson was well prepared, both teachers were involved equally and the use of the textbook and the other resources was exemplary. The children worked for 80 minutes, full focused on a variety of linguistic activities such as finding the 5Ws (who, when, where, why, what), finding the episodes of the story, putting sentences together in order to make the summary of the story etc.

After the lesson, the school inspector of Anthoupoli Primary School K.A., presented the Cyprus Educational System and the DRASE Programme. Since our schools are public, our system is centralised.

So, we have:



From the age of five till the age of 17 years old, all children are educated for free by the state and their attendance is compulsory until the age of 15. The curriculum in primary education consist of the following subjects:

- Greek Language
- Maths
- History
- Geography
- Science
- English Language
- Physical Education
- Music
- Art
- Design & Technology
- Religious Education
- Environmental Education
- Health Education

Secondary Education is divided in (A) Lower (Gymnasium) where basic general education is offered. It is free and compulsory for three years. (B) Upper Secondary Education consists of two directions: 1. Lyceum and 2. Technical and vocational education.

The Inclusion Policy of the Ministry includes the following programmemes:

### **1. All-day schools on a voluntary basis:**

- 130 primary schools, 9 special schools and 58 kindergartens
- Until 3:05 p.m. or 4:00 p.m.
- One period for lunch, one for completing pupils' homework and supportive teaching and two for the teaching of optional subjects of interest
- Priority is given to schools in low disadvantage areas
- Free lunch is given to students from families with low income

### **2. Activities of School and Social Inclusion**

- Co-funded project 2014-2020/2022
- Participate: 15% of Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary, Lyceum, Vocational Schools
- Selection: Research among all schools in 2016. New research in 2019.

#### **Criteria:**

- Low income population
- Low performance students
- Socioeconomic background of their families

### **3 Team of experts “Task Force on School Violence”**

- The team is contacted by educators, school counselors, psychologists
- Their task is to develop, promote and implement a holistic action plan for each school that needs intervention.
- They provide financial support to schools in order to employ extra staff

### **4. Summer Schools**

- 30 schools pre-primary and primary schools with 3800 students 5-11 years old (8% of the students).
- Priority to students from families with low socioeconomic background and students with special needs.

### **5. Extra afternoon support**

- Funding afternoon activities or support the interests of very poor students. (1% of the student population)

### **6. Extra teaching hours**

- A) For pupils that don't speak Greek or they speak very few Greek (2 year project).
- B) For pupils with low performance.

### **7. Free breakfast to poor students**

- Free breakfast to very poor pupils (10% of the pupils population).

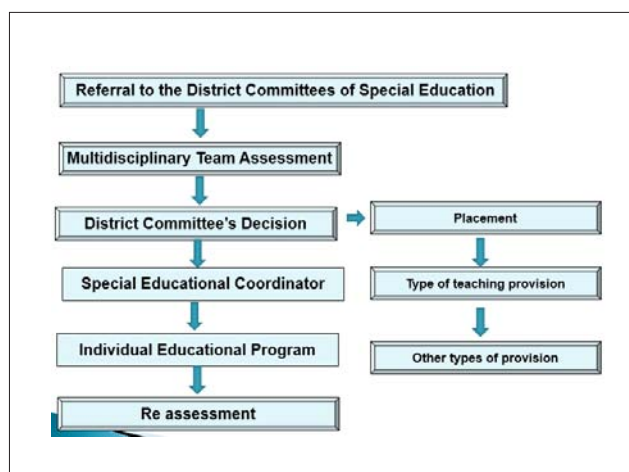
## 8. Co-Teaching

- › Both teachers need to know very well the profile of all pupils (family background, performance, student interests, etc.).
- › Personal aims and short duration aims are set for each pupil.
- › Both teachers follow the appropriate methodology.
- › Both teachers help all pupils.



The following presentation was held by Dr Maria Constantinidou, an officer in the department of Special Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture. She emphasises that the Laws for Education and Training of Children with Special Needs (1999-2014) are the legislative framework which regulate all matters regarding the education of children with special educational needs. Thus, all children, regardless of gender, ethnic origin and irrespective of the residential status of their parents, are entitled to have access to free public education and are eligible for additional educational support. Special Education may be provided in public schools from the age of 3 years old. District Committees are responsible for the assessment of the children and decide upon their placement in different educational setting with provision of both teachers, care assistants, educational resources, special equipment, assistive technology etc.

## Special Education in Cyprus:



### Special Education Reform:

- › The Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) is in the process of an educational reform in special education (new policy and new legislation).
- › The help from experts has been obtained (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education).
- › The MOEC is in the process of consultation with all stakeholders.

The next step, was to present Anthoupoli Primary School KA. Evidiki Papageorgiou presented the community in which the school is situated. Then, she went back in time in order to give a broader framework of the circumstances that created the need of building the specific school.

To be more specific, the Primary School of Anthoupoli operated in September 1977, three years after the Turkish invasion in Cyprus and the construction of the refugee settlement of Anthoupoli. The school sheltered refugees from 83 different occupied communities. During the first year of being established, it had 362 pupils, with 254 pupils being enrolled the following year. Within three years, the school had 751 pupils.

The classes consisted of 32-40 pupils. Years full of difficulties, pain and poverty. The school was called upon to fulfil its social role and tried to help pupils and their families with the many problems they faced as a result of the Turkish invasion.

The large and ever-growing pupil population made it difficult for the school administration to create new housing needs. The first three school years, the school functioned as one. Under the noble sponsorship of Mr. Evangelos Valaris, a new building was added. The school year 1980-81, the school operates in two cycles with separate principals and teaching staff.

In 2004, earthquake resistant works were carried out and the school was radically renovated. Architectural changes were made and the workshops were moved to the first floor. The school became well-equipped in all laboratories. The closed gym functioned in the school year 2010- 2011.

The school has been demonstrating a myriad of activities aimed at improving pupils' personalities, enhancing self-esteem and improving their learning outcomes. Rich activities, targeted, cultivate opportunities for learning with experiential workshops and exploiting the talents of children in Art, Music and Theater. At the same time, practices are implemented to prevent and reduce delinquency through the cultivation of communication and conflict resolution skills.

### **School support to facilitate the inclusion of pupils from refugee/migrant and socio-economically “disadvantaged” backgrounds.**

The programmes our school runs:

#### **1. Greek Language Programme offered by the Ministry of Education to non - Greek speakers.**

For the establishment of immigrant pupils proficiency level is taken into account:

- › the ability for reading comprehension and writing-speech production
- › their communication skills, and
- › the acquisition of grammatical / editorial structures and vocabulary.

In addition to evaluating pupil progress throughout the school year, a final evaluation must also be done. Competent to judge each time, which children need support and to what extent, it is

the class teacher, the school director, the school inspector and the educational psychologist who collectively examine the case and judge accordingly.

In our school there are eight non Greek speaking children. One beginner and seven non beginners. To these children an enhancing Greek language teaching programme is been offered for a period of two years. Both, the beginner and the non - beginners, are taught Greek twice a week.

#### **2. Breakfast to destitute pupils**

Free breakfast is provided to pupils who need financial assistance and fall under the categories of beneficiaries designated by the Ministry of Education. The humanitarian effort of the Ministry of Education has been supported by various operators. This school year, part of the programme is co-funded by the European Refugee Fund (ERF). In our school 35 children are given a sandwich during the 1st break.

#### **3. Optional All-Day Primary School**

- › Participation to the programme is free, but parents pay €60 a month for the lunch of their children.
- › Timetable of the Optional All – Day Primary School
- › 40 minutes lunch (13: 05-13: 45)
- › 40-minute study of homework or reinforcement teaching (13: 45-14: 25)
- › 40 minutes of engaging in a subject of interest A (14: 25-15: 05)
- › 1. English or other language: 2 periods (e.g. Monday-Thursday)
- › 2. Computers: 2 periods (e.g. Tuesday-Friday)
- › 3. In case there is not a computer lab, Health Education (Health Education, Environmental Education, Traffic Education) is offered.
- › 15-minute break (15: 05-15: 20)
- › 40 minutes of interest in a subject of interest B (15: 20-16: 00)
- › On Wednesdays, 40 minutes of interest C.
- › Optional (periods of interest) A, B AND C (15: 20-16: 00) 6 periods total weekly

› **They select three of the following:**

1. Athletics (specific sports): 2 periods
2. Music (specific musical instruments): 2 periods
3. Art (visual arts, photography, etc.): 2 periods
4. Drama: 2 periods
5. Design and Technology: 2 periods.
6. Folk Dance: 2 periods

#### **4. Health Education**

In our school pupils seek, not only to learn about the physical consequences of certain behaviors, but also to judge the factors that influence their behavior, to practice communication, cooperation, conflict management and coping skills pressure of friends, tackle social stereotypes, manage issues such as security, consumer education, rights and obligations, use and abuse of substance dependence sex education, etc.

#### **5. Classroom Management**

We aim to improve children's behavior towards "visitor teachers". To involve all school teachers, administrators and parents in the effort being made. To seek for close cooperation between classroom teachers and "visitor teachers" for exchange of information, good practices and support. To define a common - school processes in order to have consistency and continuity in all classrooms. Pupils need to behave with equal respect to all teachers in the classroom and in the courtyard. Pupils should maintain the same effort in all subjects. Parents need to develop interest and ask about all the lessons and communicate with all teachers.

#### **6. Co – Teaching**

Since we entered the EiTTT programme, we included the co-teaching in the main programme of the school setting stable hours on the pupils' weekly programme.

Our criteria of starting Co – Teaching in a class are:

- › We choose classes that have more than one pupil of special education programme.
- › We take the teachers permission to participate in the programme.

- › We try to have join time for programming and setting the goals for each lesson.

#### **7. Promoting Literature**

Literature is an important means of combating social exclusion and at the same time as a means of improving learning outcomes. We urge pupils to read for pleasure either on their own, in groups or elder pupils reading to younger. We organise weeks or days focused on literature. During those days, pupils meet writers, book designers and they visit bookstores. They enjoy reading while they eat a fruit or a cookie and drink a glass of juice. Sometimes the whole school reads the same book and children are involved in drama activities connected with that book.

#### **8. Occupied Cyprus**

We focus on three parameters

1. I learn about my country. This target emphasises the necessity of our students to know their history, traditions, legends, myths and customs and to get to know to various areas of our country, both free and occupied.
2. I do not forget my occupied land. The dominant position in our educational programme is the effort of preserving the immaculate memory of our occupied villages and cities. Our occupied land should come to life in the eyes of children through the development of programmes / actions / initiatives that will highlight, through geographic, historical, cultural and linguistic elements, the unified and indivisible of our country.
3. I claim the liberation and reunification of my homeland. The claim for the liberation and reunification of our homeland can only be continuous, expressed in peaceful ways and on the basis of the application of the basic human rights and freedoms.

#### **9. Afternoon preoccupation – Afternoon Care at Private Institutions**

One of the problems our school has been facing throughout the years, was the afternoon preoccupation of the children facing socio - economic and educational difficulties. Their background were or are parents with low income or no income and illiterate parents.

This year the school assists nine children on its own, along with four other children who are partially supported by ΣΕΑΥΠ (Coordinating Committee on Health and Citizenship Education) and the EU. Total 13 children.

**The economic assistance comes through:**

- › The Christmas Bazaar
- › The Christmas Bazaar is organised annually by Ms. Venetia Agroti and Christiana Gavrielidou. Ms. Venetia is responsible for the financial part while Christiana for the handicrafts. Not only parents, but also people who know the problems of the school and they want to help, give their presence to the Bazaar. Usually the profit is around €4500.
- › The Coordinating Committee on Health and Citizenship Education (ΣΕΑΥΠ).
- › The Coordinating Committee on Health and Citizenship Education has approved 4 of our pupils to get the yearly allowance of afternoon preoccupation, which rises up to €600.
- › The European Union
- › We get a yearly donation of the amount of €1500 from the European Union.
- › Donations:
  - Red Cross
  - Alkyonides
  - Local companies
  - People of the community.
  - Parent’s Association
- › Parents have been always next to school and they have been trying to reinforce the efforts of the school.

The Primary School of Anthoupoli K.A.. continues its route in time, aiming even higher.

Two representatives of the Parent’s Association, the Chairman/ President and the Vice President came to our school in order to present to our partners the structure of the Parent’s Association and the different ways they give support to the school.

In 1996 under the continuous press of the parents to have more active role in school society and legal identity, they move on to the establishment of the Parents Association Board, and be member of the Federation of Parents association Elementary schools in Nicosia District, and also member or the Co Federation of Parents association board Elementary schools of Cyprus.

**The scope of Parent’s Association is:**

- › Suggest to school’s Principal, and Local School board, actions that have to be done, to improve facilities and school building, but also to improve the quality of students living in the school, and better working conditions for the teachers.
- › To ensure and bond the relationship between all parents, members of the association, by sharing thoughts and opinions, and introduce them to school’s principal.
- › To be in contact and cooperation with school authorities in order to resolve issues related to the school.
- › To use financial assets in order to help school to overcome difficulties (materials and support).
- › To organise activities (educational or recreational) to bring parents together with the educational staff.
- › To promote the social, educational and national activities of the school.
- › To provide the available assets to our students that their families are facing economic difficulties.

**Structure of the board – Organisation:**

- › Chairman-President
- › Vice President
- › Secretary
- › Secretary Assistant
- › Teller
- › Assistant teller
- › Members





The election of a new board is held at the beginning of the school year. The board calls monthly meetings and additional meetings when it is considered to be necessary.

#### **Parent's Association Committees:**

- › Committee for the all-day school
- › Health and Safety Committee
- › Ecology Committee
- › Educational Committee
- › Committee for the school Canteen
- › Committee for the poor students
- › Event Committee
- › Advisory Committee
- › Communications Committee

#### **Support and Activities:**

- › They support school by contributing financially to purchase materials that helps educational staff to do their job effectively, such as projectors, computers, stationery, etc.
- › They are in communication with local authorities, school board, ministry of education, in order to express their needs and pushing things to the right direction.
- › They support the families with financial problems by giving them food and clothing during the Christmas and Easter Seasons, covered financially to participate to all school outdoor activities.
- › In cooperation with the school, church, and specialists, they try to support families with social problems (uneducated parents, foreigners, violence in the family, etc.)
- › They organise fairs for the economic support of their association.
- › They organise charity events in order to support school's poor students.
- › They promote healthy nutrition habits by organising event for healthy breakfast.
- › They have active part to all school activities, educational, ecological or recreational.

### **> Our agenda: Day 3**

#### **Action Day “The Consequences of war”**

##### **Purposes of the Action Day:**

1. The school wanted to show to the pupils that the war is not the solution in solving peoples' problems, because during a war a lot of people lose their lives, others are declared as missing people, many people are misplaced, they become migrants or refugees, they live in poverty, they lose their homes, their jobs etc.
2. Learn about Cyprus tradition.

The pupils, along with our partners, divided in groups and went through seven (7) stations.

##### **Station 1: Missing people**

Mrs Charita Mantoles is a woman who has six missing people in her family due to Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974. She told her personal story at a school gathering giving the message that the pain of the families that have missing people never ends.



### Station 2: “The suitcase of a refugee”

Each group entered a refugee tent. They discussed about how it feels leaving in a tent and the difficulties one might face when he/she has to live in a tent for a long time. Then, they have to think one thing they would take with them in case they had to leave suddenly from their home. The teacher showed them the suitcase of a refugee. They named the things that they could see in the suitcase and they discussed about their importance for the person it was carrying it.



fears and hopes a mother has for her child. In many cases, these hopes are directly linked to our country and its future.

The children worked on activities that had to do with feelings.



### Station 5: Short film “Omikro thetiko” (“O+”)

#### The movie

Cyprus 1974, a few days after the Turkish invasion, we are in a refugee camp next to the occupied areas. Hundreds of families deprived of everything are forced to live there, full of anxiety for missing people. A dying girl is waiting for a blood transfusion (hospitals only carry blood for the injured soldiers), and she also desperately desires her bridesmaid dress she left when she had to vacate her house. Her mother asks the UN representative to bring her the dress from the occupied house. The UN soldier initially denies, but after a few days he returns to the camp. He brings the dress to the girl, but then it is too late. The girl passed away.

The director of the film, Mr Michael Georgiades, was present and the pupils had the chance to talk to him. He tried to discuss the symbolisms of the film. The girl represents Cyprus, a small country that faced war. Unfortunately no country could help in order to avoid occupation. Even the help from the UN came too late. Another thing that was clear, is that in today's society, people sometimes are left alone even if they need help.

### Station 3: “The dairy of an enclaved pupil”

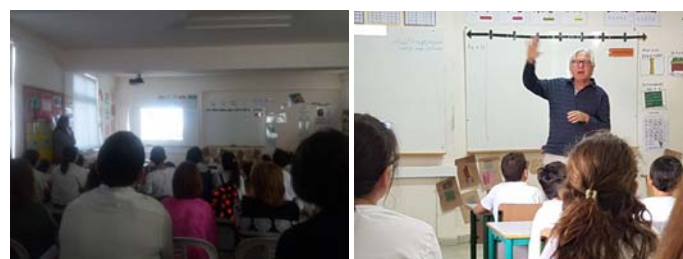
Mrs Nicky Chronia is a teacher who lived as an enclaved pupil when she was a little girl, because her village was occupied by the Turkish army in 1974. Her family chose to stay at their village instead of moving in the free part of Cyprus. She shared her experiences as an enclaved pupil and she also presented some traditional costumes of her grandparents and some handicrafts from her mother and grandmother.



### Station 4: “From Earth to stars”

At the beginning, Mrs Rea Papageorgiou read a book excerpt from the book “From Earth to Stars / Dünyalar Kadar”.

The particular book is written by Marina Michaelidou Kadi and Mehves Beydoglu, while Angeliki Pilatis signed the illustration. It is, as far as we know, the first bilingual book for children, written in Greek and Turkish. The book is essentially a maternal hymn to her child. It has the form a letter that describes all the joys,



### **Station 6: Folk songs and dances**

One of our main targets, is children to learn about their traditions and customs. For this reason, they had the chance listen to traditional songs and watch traditional dances.



### **Station 7: Balloons**

We wanted to close our action day with a message of peace and love. Each child had a white balloon and it let it go up in the sky making a wish for Cyprus.



## **› Our agenda: Day 4**

On Thursday, we visited the school of Agios Mamas, a primary school which is in the area of ours, and it includes two special units in its programme. We had the chance to observe both units.

It was clear that in both units there were pupils with different learning disabilities and ages. The lessons are highly structured in order to fulfil the variations of each child. Pictures and alternative communication is used. Sometimes pupils have the opportunity to choose themselves what to do among of 2-3 activities. Pupils don't spend the whole school day in the special unit. Depending on their abilities, they intergraded in the mainstream programme of their class.

After our observation at Agios Mamas Primary School, we went at Anthoupoli Primary School K.A. in order to continue classroom observations.

The first lesson we all observed was an English Lesson at First Grade. Mrs Koulla showed how we teach English as a second language to our pupils. The lessons of English are highly structured and they include joyful activities for the children. At First Grade, since the focus is on oral skills (children don't read or write in English until 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade), the lesson includes various games, songs, repetition of the new vocabulary and storytelling.

The second lesson we all observed was a Health Education lesson with Second Grade pupils. Mrs Venetia Agroti showed a typical lesson of Health Education. It is very common to use books and drama technics as a means of discussion.

In this case, the children were divided in groups. Each group had a picture and discussed about the rights of children and their feelings when their rights are abandoned.

Then, they listen to a story about a girl who was saving money to buy a bike. The day she managed to fulfil her goal and save the right amount of money, she was on her way to buy her bike. On her way she saw a wounded dog. She had a dilemma whether to choose a bike or to save the dog.

The teacher used drama technics to help the children realise the feelings of the protagonist in the story. They formed the corridor of thought, they formed the ladder of feelings and through empathy they made decisions.

After the lessons, we had the chance to have a round table discussion among the teachers of our school and our Erasmus+ partners. The teachers of our school gave information about our educational system in general and in particular, about our vision in our school. We emphasise that it is important for us for every child to feel safe and has a sense of belonging in order to support its needs. We do our best to have a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment for everyone. We do know that the challenges in our school make us complete persons. On the other hand, it is very common for teachers to feel exhausted because of the emotional investment they give to the school. In this sense, we need to find ways to give our teachers the time or the way to fill up their butteries so they can continue giving their best.

## Optional Whole Day School (In – school afternoon programme)

In our school operates an optional whole day school. This means that if the parents would like to leave their child/children at school till 4:00 in the afternoon, they have this option. The programme is free, but they pay €60 per month for the child's lunch. Our partners had the chance to observe the programme of the school and talk to the head teacher who is responsible for the programme.

The programme of the Optional Whole Day School runs as follows:

### Timetable

- › 40 minutes Lunch (13: 05-13: 45)
- › 40-minute study of homework or reinforcement teaching (13: 45-14: 25)
- › 40 minutes of engaging in a subject of interest A (14: 25-15: 05)
- › 15-minute break (15: 05-15: 20)
- › 40 minutes of interest in a subject of interest B (15: 20-16: 00)
- › On Wednesdays, 40 minutes of interest

The subjects are divided into obligatory and optional (subjects of interest) as follows:

### Obligatory 4 periods total weekly

1. English or other language: 2 periods (e.g. Monday-Thursday)
2. Computers: 2 periods (e.g. Tuesday-Friday)
3. In case there is not a computer lab, Health Education (Health Education, Environmental Education, Traffic Education) is offered.

### Optional A, B AND C: 6 periods total weekly

They select three of the following:

1. Athletics (specific sports): 2 periods
2. Music (specific musical instruments): 2 periods
3. Art (visual arts, photography, etc.): 2 periods
4. Drama: 2 periods
5. Design and Technology: 2 periods.
6. Folk Dance: 2 periods

### › Our agenda: Day 5

The fifth day was a day of discussion, feedback, drawing conclusions and evaluation. We had the chance to organise our meeting at a conference room situated at the area called Governors Beach.

At first we were all divided in mixed groups and we discussed our learning during the past four days. We wrote down our conclusions and evaluations. Then, one by one, we announced our thoughts and what we learned from the Learning Activity in Cyprus.

The overall outcome was that we need more caring teachers in our schools in order to overcome the everyday obstacles we face in schools. Happier pupils mean happier teachers and happier teachers mean a better educational system. Teachers need to have support, flexibility and resources to feel that they have the power to respond to the needs of the pupils. School has to have a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment where all children can learn. We need to set high standards for our children and give them the message that “they can do it” because we believe in them and because we are by their side. They need to feel that they are responsible for their own learning and for this reason they need to learn how to learn by themselves. So, teachers have to engage more their pupils in the classroom activities.

## Key Learning during this Activity Week:

- › In African societies they say that “It takes a village to raise a child”. This proverb means that it takes an entire community of different people interacting with children in order for children to experience and grow in a safe environment. In our case, in the society of school, other partners can help in order to facilitate the inclusion of pupils from refugee/migrant and socio-economically “disadvantaged” backgrounds. Such partners are parents, the community, the church, volunteers, Organisations, the Ministry of Education etc.
- › One of the challenges Europe has to face, is dealing with migration. Since there are Offices of International Organisation for Migration (IOM) all around the world, we need to contact them and learn about their programmes. We need to learn about children mobility, integration challenges, integration and inclusive schools, inclusive classrooms, community capacity building, how to get a better understanding of non-migrant children and how to maintain better participation of migrant children at school.
- › In Cyprus a special teacher can come from both paths:
  - › A) He/She can have a first degree in special education or
  - › B) He/She can have a first degree in education sciences plus a masters in special/inclusive education
- › Teachers and Early Childhood Educators need to have a BA degree in order to be able to work at a public or a private school or kindergarten.
- › In both cases, Primary School Teachers or Early Childhood Educators, can specialise in Inclusive Education and if they wish it, they can follow a MA programme for further specialisation.
- › The Inclusion Policy of the Ministry includes the following programmes:
  - All-day schools on a voluntary basis
  - Activities of School and Social Inclusion
  - Team of experts “Task Force on School Violence”
  - Summer Schools
- Extra afternoon support
- Extra teaching hours
  - a. For pupils that don’t speak Greek or they speak very few Greek (2 year project).
  - b. For pupils with low performance.
- Free breakfast to very poor pupils (10% of the pupils’ population).
- Co – Teaching
- › In Cyprus Special Education may be provided in public schools from the age of 3 years old. District Committees are responsible for the assessment of the children and decide upon their placement in different educational setting with provision of both teachers, care assistants, educational resources, special equipment, assistive technology etc.
- › In special units that can be found in mainstream schools, there are pupils with different learning disabilities and ages. The lessons are highly structured in order to fulfil the variations of each child. Pictures and alternative communication is used. Sometimes pupils have the opportunity to choose themselves what to do among of 2-3 activities. Pupils don’t spend the whole school day in the special unit. Depending on their abilities, they intergraded in the mainstream programme of their class.
- › Anthoupoli Primary School K.A.: School support to facilitate the inclusion of pupils from refugee/ migrant and socio-economically “disadvantaged” backgrounds. The school runs the following programmes:
  - › Greek Language Programme offered by the Ministry of Education to non - Greek speakers.
  - › Breakfast to destitute pupils
  - › Optional All-Day Primary School
  - › Health Education
  - › Classroom Management
  - › Co – Teaching
  - › Promoting Literature

- › Occupied Cyprus
- › Afternoon preoccupation – Afternoon Care at Private Institutions
- › The role of Parents' Association in Cyprus:
  - Suggest to school's Principal, and Local School board, actions that have to be done, to improve facilities and school building, but also to improve the quality of students living in the school, and better working conditions for the teachers.
  - To ensure and bond the relationship between all parents, members of the association, by sharing thoughts and opinions, and introduce them to school's principal.
  - To be in contact and cooperation with school authorities in order to resolve issues related to the school.
  - To use financial assets in order to help school to overcome difficulties ( materials and support).
  - To organise activities (educational or recreational) to bring parents together with the educational staff.
  - To promote the social, educational and national activities of the school.
  - To provide the available assets to our students that their families are facing economic difficulties.
- › Action Day "The Consequences of war". Although war is not a solution to peoples' problems, we have to face its consequences since there are wars all over the world.
  - During a war, a lot of people die, plenty of them are missing, others are tortured, others have disabilities and most of the people have emotional and psychological problems.
  - The economy of the country is demolished.
  - People try to be alive and safe.
  - Wherever they go, they carry their personal history and the history of their country.
  - When we have pupils from a country that faces a war, we need to have in mind all of the above, in order to plan suitable programmes.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

- › In order to plan a programme about the inclusion of pupils from refugee/migrant and socio-economically "disadvantaged" backgrounds, you need to have a personal contact with the parents and the children in order to understand their case and be able to give them the best that you can.
- › You can always start from the basic needs in life, such as if they have a home to live, if they have enough money, if they have food to be fed etc. If they don't, then you need to bring them into contact with the right services and if this takes time, you need to inform the people you think they can support them to act until the services give their help. These people can be the parent's association, volunteers, the church, people from their own country etc.
- › Then, you need to understand if the parents can help their children with learning. If not, then you need to find ways to support the children.
- › Finally, you need to understand what can be done at school, in order to give them the best that you can.

## What research says

### A. Socioeconomic inequalities in education

Socioeconomic inequalities in education are an important issue for researchers, policy-makers and even teachers and parents. In democratic societies the ideal is socioeconomic inequalities in educational outcomes should be zero or minimal.

“The Europe 2020 strategy is the EU’s agenda for growth and jobs for the current decade. It emphasises smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe’s economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity and underpin a sustainable social market economy.” The two targets that have to do with education is (1) to decrease rates of early school leavers below 10% and (2) at least 40% of people aged 30–34 having completed higher education. So, the emphasis of the education target is on helping employability and reducing poverty. It is clear that both features are socioeconomic.

For Europe, it is a fact that students from disadvantaged backgrounds “fare worse in educational attainment and learning outcomes than their better-off peers”. Thus, if European countries try to offer the same quality education to children from poor socio-economic and migrant backgrounds, those children will enjoy greater chances for successful living.

The main reason that socioeconomic inequalities still exist in our societies is that the processes by which socioeconomic background influences educational inequality are not well understood. There is no simple relation between expenditure and equity in education systems. Different researches show that socioeconomic differences can cause either small or large differences in academic achievement, indicating that the relationship between SES and academic achievement can be either shallow or deep. Due to this, the relationship between them is also referred to as “socioeconomic gap” or “socioeconomic gradient” in different research contexts.

Gary N Marksab et al., distinguish four types of explanations based on the extent to which they emphasise the importance of material, cultural, and social factors and school systems. Material resource explanations focus on the roles of poverty, income, and wealth. We know from observation that income and wealth are related to student achievement and other

educational outcomes (Alexander & Eckland, 1974, 1975; Jencks et al., 1972, 1979; Orr, 2003; Pong & Ju, 2000). Another group

of explanations emphasise the role of social relationships; stronger connections between students, schools, parents, and the local community promote educational success. Social capital theory argues that social networks and social relationships have a substantial impact on a variety of social outcomes. However, from what has been studied, it seems that the importance of social capital for student achievement is not strong. Other explanations focus on cultural differences between high and lower status families and what this implies for student performance. It seems that cultural factors do influence educational outcomes. DiMaggio (1982) shows that US children from “cultured” backgrounds receive higher grades, despite of their measured cognitive ability. Cultural behavior was also found to influence educational attainment, college attendance, and college graduation (DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985).

School systems also figure in explanations of socioeconomic inequality in education. As Gary N Marksab et al. report, school systems that reward ability and effort rather than social origins, may substantially reduce the extent of social reproduction between generations. Many researches try to figure out the extent to which schools influence educational outcomes. School differences in achievement vary enormously across educational contexts. These differences are largest in countries with highly tracked school systems and considerably smaller in comprehensive systems (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2001).

### B. The caring teacher theory

There is a long discussion about the impact of the caring behavior of teachers on pupils’ learning. Researches that focus either on pedagogical issues either on ethical issues, show that when pupils know that their teachers genuinely care, they respond by greater effort to reach their potential.

As Noddings (1992, 27) emphasised, “Caring is the very bedrock of all successful education.” It seems that pupils not just feel, but they also know when their teachers recognise their effort, spend time to understand their feelings and thoughts and respect their abilities and interests.

In which ways teachers can show their care to their pupils? Pedagogically speaking, it is been agreed that caring teachers place the children at the center of the educational process. They engage pupils actively in the learning process and this engagement is essential for learning to be fun, meaningful, and enduring. The caring teacher ensures that the needs of each student are met. A. Lumpkin, 2007

Caring teachers give positive and reinforcing comments, they reward the efforts of pupils, their learning from mistakes, and their persistence to overcome their learning difficulties. The caring teacher uses multiple instructional approaches and provides diverse learning experiences to engage pupils' interest and learning (DeCastro-Ambrosetti and Cho 2005). They use action-based or experiential learning teams and problem-based learning (Bassis 2003; DiLisi et al. 2006; Krockover et al. 2002; McCarthy and Anderson 2000).

Caring teachers reflect on their work. Reflection reinforces the importance of creating a caring, learner-centered environment characterised by positive and respectful interactions with pupils (Taylor et al. 2002).

From the care ethic point of view, 'teaching is one of the foremost of personal relations' (John Macmurray). Caring teachers establish and maintain relations of care and trust which include listening, dialogue, critical thinking, reflective response, and making thoughtful connections among the disciplines and to life itself. (Noddings 2012)

Most researchers focus on what constitutes caring teachers, what are the behaviors, characteristics, and beliefs of caring teachers, and how are they impacted by the contexts within which they work. Nel Noddings sets two more parameters. She strongly believes that when we adopt the relational sense of caring, we cannot look only at the teacher, but we also need to take into consideration pupils and circumstances. Even though she doesn't focus on the circumstances or situations that promote care in education, she focuses on pupils as much as on teachers.

If we look at the part each participant plays, we understand that the carer (the teacher) is first of all attentive. He/She understands what the cared-for (pupil) is feeling and trying to express. "The carers' motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for". On the other hand, the cared-for recognises the caring and responds in some detectable manner. (Noddings 2005)

The foundation for successful pedagogical activity is based on three steps. Caring leads to the first step which is trust. Because of the trust, pupils accept what their teacher is trying to teach. The second step is dialogue. When pupils talk to their teacher, it is easier for the teacher to learn about their pupils' needs, working habits, interests, and talents. The third step is for the teacher to be inspired to increase his/her own competence (Noddings, 1999).

Owens & Ennis (2012) considering three theoretical frameworks, moral development, the theory of relational knowing and the role of self in teacher development, they strongly support the believe that in pre-service teacher education we need to promote an ethic of care as fundamental pedagogical content knowledge. Meaning that Universities and Pedagogical Institutes need to question themselves on what kind of teacher do they want to promote, about the processes of selection and initial preparation of candidates for teaching and about how teachers are professionally supported in order to become caring.

In conclusion, caring for the pupils we teach means planning to their needs. It also means pursuing the personal and professional skills we need to grow continually in order to become better professionals, more effective teachers, and more fully developed human beings.



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EMPOWERING INCLUSIVE TEACHERS  
FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

# EiTTT

## Case Studies



RĪGAS 45. VIDUSSKOLA

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## Case study:

### Cross-Disciplinary Support for Inclusive Education

Riga Secondary School No. 45, Riga, Latvia



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## Context

The EiTTT Project team was based in Riga, Latvia for the week of the 26th to 30th November, 2018. This learning activity took place at Riga 45th secondary school. (Rīgas 45.vidusskola). Upon arrival, the project partners were greeted by the school principal, Baiba Neimane, teachers and project partners Natasa Dilba, Laura Zavacka and Iveta Liepina, and were entertained with a delightful performance of traditional music and dance by the school's students. It was a week of immersive learning about Latvia; its traditions and culture, and an opportunity to gain a comprehensive insight into Latvia's education system. Riga Secondary School No. 45 has extensive experience in facilitating Inclusive Education with Support Teams and Outreach Programmes. It was this collaborative, integrated support model which was the focus of our study during the week. The project partners focused on the concept of **Support Teams** working in schools in Latvia and of how this support takes account of both academic and social-emotional factors in the learning process for children.

## The Education System and Teacher Education in Latvia

The education system in Latvia is administered at three levels - national, municipal and institutional. The Parliament (Saeima), the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Science are the main decision-making bodies at national level. The Ministry of Education and Science is the education policy development and implementation body that oversees the national network of education institutions, sets educational standards and determines teacher training content and procedures.

### Language of tuition

In state and municipal educational institutions the language of tuition is the state language - Latvian. Education in other languages of tuition can be acquired in private educational establishments, as well as in state and municipal educational institutions where they provide study programmes for national minorities.

### Tuition fee

The tuition fee for pre-school, basic and secondary education in an educational establishment under the auspices of the state or municipality is funded from the national or municipal budget. A private educational institution may set its own tuition fee for providing education. In higher education programmes the state covers tuition fees for a certain number of students' places and the respective students receive state grants. Each higher educational institution may set a tuition fee for the remaining student places.

All students are entitled to a state guaranteed loan for his/her studies in higher education programmes. A foreign citizen or stateless person pays for his/her education in accordance with the agreement concluded with the respective educational establishment. The tuition fee for citizens of the European Union countries and their children is determined and covered according to the same procedure as for citizens and permanent residents of the Republic of Latvia.

### Pre-school education

Preschool education (kindergarten) caters for children below the age of six or seven. Kindergartens are established by local governments and private organisations. Since 2002, preschool education for five-and six-year-olds has become compulsory and is considered part of general education. In 2018 almost 96% of five-year-olds and 93% of six-year-olds were enrolled in preschools.

The objective of the pre-school education curriculum is to ensure multi-faceted development of a child's personality, to promote health and readiness to enter the primary stage of basic education. Pre-school education is considered a comprehensive first stage of general education and all children have to complete it by the time they are 7 years old. This deadline may be extended for a year due to specific health or psychological problems by parental request or on a doctor's request or recommendation.

Pre-school education can be delivered at various pre-primary education institutions (kindergartens) or at special pre-primary classes in general education institutions. Children with special educational needs attend special pre-school institutions or classes for children with special needs within general education

schools. There are public and private pre-primary education institutions. Public sector institutions require that parents make a financial contribution to cover the cost of meals, but access to educational activities is free of charge. The fee in the private sector institutions covers the full costs of the programme, except for the salaries of pedagogues teaching pre-primary education to five and six year olds.

### Basic education

A nine-year single structure basic education programme incorporating primary and lower secondary education (according to The International Standard Classification of Education) is compulsory for all children from the age of 7 (Grade 1) and is generally completed by the age of 16, but may continue until the age of 18. The National Basic Education Standard determines the objectives and tasks, the compulsory curriculum and the principles and procedures for assessment of basic education. The aim of basic education is to provide opportunities for acquiring the basic knowledge and skills required for community and personal life, to lay the foundation for continuing education, to promote the learner's harmonious development and to foster a responsible attitude toward one's self, family, society, the environment and the state.

Full **basic education** programmes are provided in educational institutions named Basic Schools. The first six grades of basic education can be provided by primary schools. 'Secondary schools' may also provide a full programme of basic education in addition to second-level education. Compulsory basic education can also be provided by different educational institutions such as vocational schools, special education institutions, night schools, boarding schools, etc.

Upon completion of grade 1 in primary school, knowledge and skills in all subjects acquired by pupils are assessed in a descriptive way without marks. After grade 2, some subjects including the Latvian language, a minority language and mathematics are assessed on a 10-point scale. Upon completion of grade 3 foreign languages are also assessed on such a scale. From the beginning of grade 4, pupils' achievements in all subject areas are assessed on a 10-point scale.

At the end of basic school students take centralised national examinations, and the number and content of these examinations is determined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Having received assessments in all subjects of the basic

compulsory education curriculum and the centralised national examinations, pupils receive a Certificate of Basic Education. This qualifies students for admission to further education and training in secondary level educational programmes and serves as a selection criterion.

Should a student not be successful in an assessment in any of the basic education subjects or centralised national examinations, he/she receives a school report which provides opportunity to continue education and training in basic vocational education programmes.

### Special Needs Education

Special schools or special education classes within general education schools provide education for children with special needs that correspond to their individual developmental needs, abilities and health conditions. The structure of special education is very similar to that of mainstream education. It provides opportunities for persons with special needs to attain general knowledge and skills, with a strong emphasis on their applicability, thereby facilitating social inclusion.

### Preparatory Vocational Education

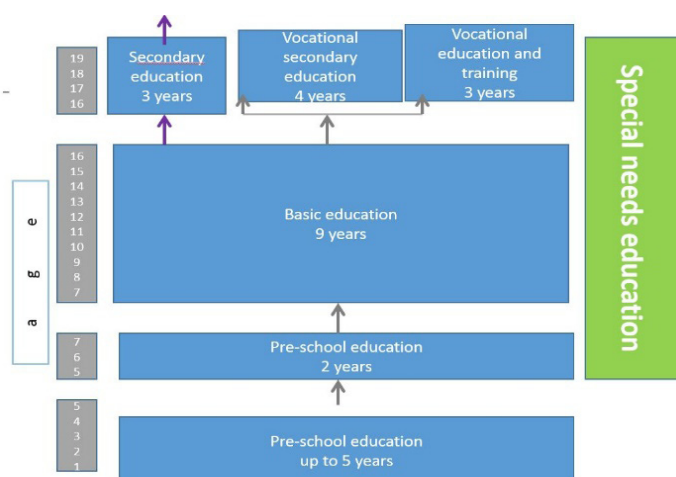
Preparatory vocationally-oriented education in arts, culture and sport is available in addition to basic education. Participation is voluntary and provides the opportunity to prepare for further professional training in the chosen area.

### Secondary Education

There are two types of programmes at the secondary education level: academic secondary education programmes and vocational secondary education and training programmes. The main task of academic secondary education programmes is to prepare for further studies at university, while the vocational programmes are aimed at acquiring a qualification for entering the labour market directly and/or continuing education. When admitting students to secondary level educational programmes, schools are free to hold entrance examinations according to the basic compulsory education standard, except in those subjects for which students have already received assessments reflected in the compulsory Certificate of Basic Education.

## Higher Education

The admission procedure to higher education is not centralised; each higher education institution has its own admission board and criteria. However, a Certificate of Secondary General Education or Diploma of Vocational Secondary Education is required to proceed to all higher education programmes. Admission is competitive, based on each institution's examination results. Institutions may set additional requirements concerning some specific prior education or training, special aptitude or previous qualification (for example, in arts, music, sports).



## Study programmes

Two groups of programmes can be distinguished: academic programmes and professional programmes. The duration of bachelor's programmes may be three to four years at different institutions. The master's degree of higher professional education is awarded if the total duration of studies is at least five years.

## Teacher Education in Latvia

General admission to higher education applies also for entry to teacher training programmes. Although the main access requirement is a general upper-secondary education certificate (with marks in subjects relevant to the programme), the training institution, depending on the course or area of specialisation, establishes methods of selection and has the right to state additional admission requirements. Recently, practical

selection procedures to state-financed study places have been based on the results of centralised examinations passed at the end of secondary education, but may also include competitive entrance examinations and (or) a ranking according to the marks in secondary education certificate. The latter can be accompanied by an interview. Teachers in Latvia are trained at four higher education institutions. They undertake one of the following programmes:

- › First-level professional higher education study programmes (short-cycle higher education study programmes)
- › Second-level professional higher education study programmes (integrated bachelor programme)
- › Academic study programmes in pedagogy followed by a professional higher education study programme

In order to qualify to work in a school, all teacher candidates must undergo study programmes leading not only to higher pedagogical education but also to a teacher qualification in the respective level of education. Most programmes also prepare teachers to teach certain subjects. Thus, completion of a certain kind of programme entitles you to teach the respective subject at the respective level of education. There are exemptions – early childhood teachers and primary school teachers (classes 1-4) receive a teacher qualification in that level of education and are entitled to teach most subjects i.e. they are generalists.

The Cabinet of Ministers' Regulations on the Necessary Academic and Professional Qualifications of Pedagogues and Professional Competence Development Procedures for Pedagogues prescribe that a person is entitled to work as a teacher after completing a 2-3 year short-cycle programme or 4-5 year Bachelor study programme and acquiring teacher qualification. Bachelor study programmes open up the possibility to enter a Master's programme. Practical placements at school are also a compulsory part of initial training of the teachers.

In Latvia, a student acquires a teacher qualification and is entitled to work as a teacher immediately after the completion of an initial training programme. There is no other transition period required in order to become fully qualified for a teaching profession.

A teacher who has previously acquired qualification via a 1.5 - 2 year programme and who wishes to acquire a further qualification can enrol in a second-level professional higher education programme. In this case, the number of credit points of pedagogical practical work may be reduced or the previous time spent for professional improvement may be acknowledged. The general structure of pedagogical education for student teachers comprises four parts:

- › Pedagogy and psychology
- › Content of specific subject/s to be taught in school and the methodology of teaching
- › Pedagogical practice and development of the qualification thesis
- › General education courses like languages, ICT, arts, physical education

Computer science is mandatory for all student teachers. Areas of management/administration, aspects of behaviour management/school discipline, integration of pupils with special needs, work with multicultural groups of pupils are offered in compulsory courses or core curriculum options in initial teacher education.

## Teacher Education for Inclusion / Special Education in Latvia

The qualification of special education teacher and the qualification of teacher / speech therapist are acquired in separate programmes. These qualifications allow the teacher to work at all education levels. It is possible to acquire the qualification of a special education teacher in various higher education institutions and in a variety of ways:

- By completing a 4 or 4.5-year professional study programme in special education
- Through a 2.5-year study programme (80–93 credits) for teachers who are already qualified
- Through master's study programmes
- Through in-service training courses for teachers with qualifications in some other subjects (at least 72 study hours)

All such student teachers have to acquire knowledge in psychology, special pedagogy and medicine in order to be able to integrate children with special needs into mainstream schools.

The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers ensure that teachers undergo ongoing professional development. For example, teachers may undergo in-service training in Inclusive Education. Teachers themselves are responsible for their professional development, but the head of the educational institution (school) in which the teacher is employed together with the municipality, plans the provision of professional development. Long established educational institutions (schools) with experienced staff, special education development centres, non-governmental organisations and higher educational institutions are permitted to provide training for teachers who implement inclusive education.

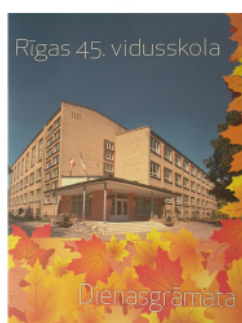
## Riga Secondary School No. 45 (Rīgas 45. vidusskola)



Riga Secondary School No. 45 was founded in 1911. Located approximately 7.5km from the central district of Latvia's capital city Riga, this large school has a present enrolment of 714 students ranging in age from 7 – 18 years. The students are accommodated in 32 classes across grades 1-12. Together with the school principal there are eight deputy directors and 100 teachers employed in the school. In accordance with general educational practice in Latvia, schooling at Rīgas 45. vidusskola

is structured into three levels; Primary, Basic and Secondary. Grades 1- 4 comprise the Primary level, grades 5 - 9 are the Basic level and Secondary schooling takes place in grades 10 - 12.

### Uniforms and diary



The school has six education programmes:

- › Basic education programme
- › Basic education programme with professional orientation
- › Special basic educational programmes for pupils with physical problems
- › General comprehensive secondary educational programme
- › General comprehensive educational programme with humanitarian and social courses
- › General Secondary educational with professionally oriented course in music

## Music in the Curriculum

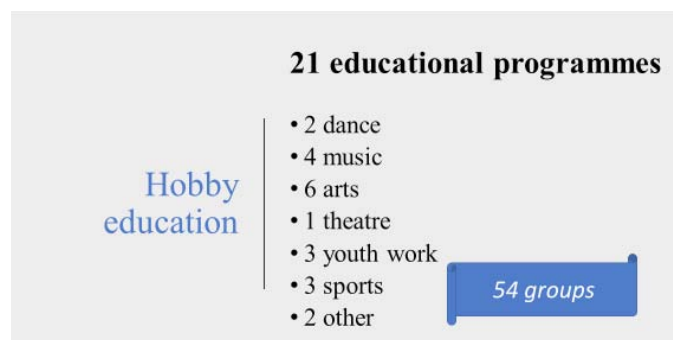
Strongly influenced by historical links with the Soviet Union, Music holds pride of place to this day in the cultural life of Riga. Hence, in 1968/69, a course of Music was introduced at Rīgas 45. vidusskola. This aspect of the curriculum has flourished and is

still at the core of the school's pedagogy. There are two Music programmes provided: Basic Music Education and Vocational-Oriented Music.

Students selected to study in classes oriented towards music have to play at least one musical instrument. They may choose from a range of instruments, e.g. piano, clarinet and saxophone. This additional tuition is provided by the school at no cost to the many students involved. Some students learn traditional Latvian music and dance as an additional subject which is not compulsory.

## Extra-Curricular Activities: 'Hobby Education'

There are many extra-curricular activities offered after formal school lessons. The following 'hobby groups' are provided at Rīgas 45. vidusskola.



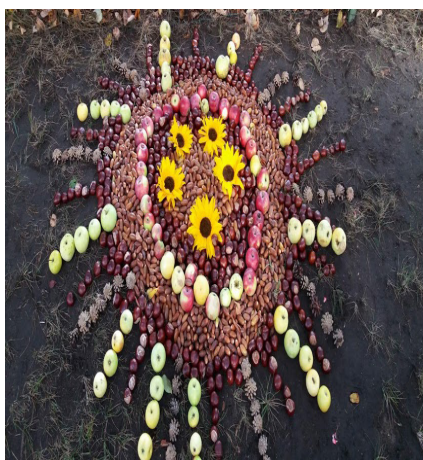
Riga 45th Secondary School celebrates all national and historical events and also marks special days and events such as 1st of September – first day of school; The 'Week of Colours', The 'Week of Slippers', Christmas Day, 'Fathers' Day', The 'Last Bell' – for students in classes 9 and 12.

## Week of Slippers



Riga 45th Secondary School celebrates a 'Week of Slippers'. It is held in the first week of October when the weather is becoming cold and rainy. Children take old slippers from their homes to school and wear them all week in school. In this way children are demonstrating that summer time is over and winter is coming. It means that walking in muddy boots in school is not allowed and everyone must change their shoes when they are in school. The slogan of the week is – 'Clean school without dust and mud'!

## Week of Colours



Another unique tradition at Riga 45th Secondary School takes place in April. The weather in Latvia is usually cold, rainy and snowy until then. Everyone is waiting for springtime. During this period children celebrate the 'Week of Colours' by wearing brightly coloured clothes (usually bright

yellow, light green, bright red) - colours which remind us of spring. We really believe that the spring will come sooner then!

## Support Teams in Schools in Latvia

The purpose of special education within the concept of the development of education in Latvia is to give students with special needs opportunities to gain an appropriate education according to their capabilities and health status in each educational institution, while providing educational, psychological and if necessary, medical supports, in preparation for work and life in society. Parents of children with special needs may choose any educational institution in which to enrol their child. Each educational institution has a right to provide a special education programme in the manner prescribed by the law on general education, if the conditions in that institution are appropriate and if qualified staff are available to provide high quality education for students with special needs.

Latvia's 'Educational Development Guidelines 2014-2020' determine the characteristics of high quality inclusive education for personal development, human welfare and sustainable national growth. Within these guidelines parents have the freedom to choose a school for their child. However, the chosen school must also offer the opportunity to attend and the possibility to learn. This means that every mainstream school should provide a suitable environment and suitable staff for supporting schoolchildren with special needs. Since 1997 therefore, every mainstream school in Latvia has had Support Teams. The main task of these teams is to support students with special needs and their teachers. In many schools these Support Teams of inter-disciplinary professional personnel are based on-site on a full-time basis. The composition of these teams varies from school to school and generally comprises the following:

- **Special Education Teacher:** Identifies and analyses needs. Provides in-class learning and special needs educational support. Provides advice and support to class teachers and to parents.
- **Psychologist:** Identifies student learning difficulties and particularly those arising from emotional / behavioural challenges and recommends interventions and strategies to teachers and parents.
- **Speech Therapist:** Works with pupils from 1st to 4th grade. Makes suggestions for diagnosis. Works with groups or individuals and prepares guidelines for students and their teachers. The therapist works alongside teachers in mainstream and special education settings.



- **Social Pedagogue:** The Social Pedagogue encourages dialogue and co-operation between families and educators and takes responsibility for educating and supporting young people with respect to a range of social and/or community-based issues.

## The Role of the Support Team:

- › Cooperating with the class teacher
- › Observing students who need the support
- › Cooperating with parents, seeking resolutions to difficulties arising
- › Presenting and analysing students' strengths and needs (together with special teachers, social pedagogues and the school's head teachers and assistant head teachers)
- › Making decisions regarding next steps
- › Drawing up ( usually with the psychologist)
- › Individual Learning Plans for students who need support

In special schools the Support Team is complemented by additional medical personnel such as Nurses, Doctors / Medical Officers, Paediatricians, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists /Physical Therapists and Psychiatrists.

## The Support Team at Riga 45th secondary school

With a view to facilitating Inclusive Education, the school has a full-time Support Team on site comprising:

- One Speech Therapist
- One Psychologist,
- Two Social Pedagogues
- Four Special Education Teachers

This team supports students from grades 1 - 4 (approximately one third of the school's student population) who experience a wide range of difficulties. In addition the school has:

- A Career Advisor,
- Two Sports Activities Organisers
- Two Librarians

During the Learning activity week the project partners observed lessons in different subjects. It was an opportunity to observe the teachers and children in their daily work. The partners were also introduced to the members of the Support Team and observed them in their work.



We noted that co-teaching between members of the Support Team (e.g. Special Education Teacher, Social Pedagogue or Speech and Language Therapist) and the teaching staff is one strategy employed to support students within the classroom. Individual support is provided to a maximum of three pupils in any one class. The Special Education Teacher supports the class teacher in working with learners with physical and/or intellectual disabilities and vision or hearing impairments. A Speech and Language Therapist works with children with speech problems in the first six classes. Withdrawal from class is available either for small group instruction or individual attention for some students. Support is also provided to help students prepare for lessons, and to integrate in class and in the school in general. For students with identified special needs there is additional support provision such as extra time during assessments and

the conduct of these in separate venues. Individual Learning Plans and Individual Behaviour Support Plans are drawn up by the teachers in conjunction with the support team.

## “Mēs Esam Līdzās” Rehabilitation Centre



Inclusive Education Support Centres have been established in Latvia's main cities. A set of methodology support materials has also been developed and is published online for teachers and parents.

For students with special needs and physical impairments that preclude their full-time inclusion in mainstream schooling, support is available from Rehabilitation and Support Centres. On the invitation of centre Director Dr Andra Greitāne, the team had the great privilege of visiting the “Mēs Esam Līdzās” Rehabilitation Centre which is affiliated with Riga 45th Secondary School, and engaging with students and staff there. This centre is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation which developed as a response to the lack of such services in Latvia. It provides for the education and development of children with a range of special needs. As we learnt, the emphasis in this centre is on supporting the child's quality of life in the broadest respect. Children are encouraged and supported in their management of everyday responsibilities, in establishing and maintaining relationships, in participating in community life, and with their recreational needs and interests. Both medical and educational personnel work side by side in this setting. The valuable role of the Arts as a means of communication and in enhancing children's physical, intellectual and emotional development is also a central feature of this centre's curriculum. If required, the Ministry of Education provides funding for child transport and transport assistance between these rehabilitation centres and their affiliated schools.

## Riga No. 1 Special Boarding School



Another very informative morning was spent with students and staff at Riga No. 1 Special Boarding School. Founded in 1924, this was the first such school in Riga. With 200 students currently enrolled, the school employs a teaching staff of 75, as well as 35 assistants and a range of allied medical / therapeutic personnel. A broad range of learning and extra-curricular activities is incorporated into the two special education programmes provided - one for students with intellectual impairments and another for students with severe or multiple disabilities.

The school's success in identifying each student's vocational potential and supporting its development was evident. With a development centre on site which provides support to parents and offers continuous professional development courses for teachers, the school is considered a 'Centre of Excellence'.

### Samples of Students' Work: Embroidery / Book-binding



## Ropazi Secondary school: Ropažu Vidusskola



A visit to Ropažu Vidusskola, a mainstream school located approximately 36 kilometres outside of Riga, offered another insightful perspective on inclusive educational provision in Latvia. Presentations from school staff and a student-led tour of the school referenced the school's exceptional commitment to the importance of environment in education. Located in pristine rural parkland, the interior of this long-established school building had been recently re-designed to reflect an understanding of the impact of environment on student and staff wellbeing and hence learning.



Furthermore, Environmental Education and Protection were central features of the school's learning programme. The prevailing atmosphere in the school was one of remarkable

calm and respect and above all of much pride in, and enjoyment of the educational endeavours underway. Input was provided by school staff on the clearly structured supports in place to meet the needs of the diverse student population.

### Key Learning During the Week:

- **Inter-disciplinary collaboration / Support Teams:** The value of an integrated response for inclusive education: Teachers' inclusive practice is enhanced through their liaison with, and support from a readily accessible (ideally on-site) team of other relevant professional personnel in health and social service disciplines – personnel who are also engaged with the students concerned and their families. Such Support Teams offer opportunity for the immediate sharing of information and for the employment of strategies such as co-teaching, all of which benefit the holistic development of the child.
- **Art / Music based Education:** The potential of the Arts as an alternative means of communication and in advancing the physical, intellectual and emotional development of all children.
- Inclusive education **Support Centres** established in the main cities of Latvia. A set of methodological support materials for teachers and parents is also available online.
- Parents of students with special needs **can choose any educational institution** for their child.
- Each educational institution has a **right to provide a special education programme** if the provisions in the school are in accordance with legal requirements and if suitably **qualified staff** are available to provide high quality education for students with special needs.
- **Support Teams** were created to support teachers, students with special needs and parents. The Support Team is a great help for teachers, students and parents at Riga 45th secondary school.
- All special education institutions of Latvia are extending their functions and their **cooperation** with general education schools and vocational training schools.
- **Life-Skills / Vocational Education:** Exceptionally high student vocational skill levels were evident in the schools visited by the project team – indicating considerable attention to this aspect of curriculum in Latvia.

- **Shared campus for pre-primary, primary and secondary mainstream education:** In some schools in Latvia children share a campus from age 5 (kindergarten) to age 18 (secondary education). This structure can provide for easier transition from one schooling stage to another and facilitate collaboration between teachers and support personnel.
- **The role of environment** in facilitating students' engagement with learning and in enhancing wellbeing.

### Some comments from project partners at the close of our Learning Activity Week in Latvia:

*'Integrate special need classes in mainstream schools. Teachers and paramedics from both schools can work together and learn from each other.'*

*'Continuing professional development should be provided for all staff involved.'*

*'The benefit of having a multidisciplinary Support Team in mainstream schools. You can get in touch with them to support children when needed. You also can experiment with different forms of co-teaching in classes.'*

*'A complete support team including all specialists is a must in every school in order to support children, teachers and parents effectively. A support team should include nurse/doctor, clinical psychologists, physiotherapists, social pedagogues, special education teachers, speech therapists. The size of the support team will depend on the school's population and needs.'*

*'It is very beneficial to free up a teacher from teaching duties every day (as we observed in this school) with a view to supporting the learning and development of children with behavioural difficulties.'*

*'Sense of 'Community' – celebrating with music': The importance of taking the time to celebrate with your school, class, ... important moments in life ...'*

### What the Research Says

Following the shared European education policies of accepting parents' rights to choose the educational institution for their children, there are attempts in Latvia during the last 15 years to integrate and educate children with special educational needs in general educational institutions. The goal, implementation of inclusive education in mainstream school, is stated also in nationally accepted national and education development plans.

According to these plans, the majority of learners with special needs who are learning in mainstream schools should be provided with professional assistance of a special pedagogue/special education teacher and special teaching assistant.

In real life, the number of special pedagogues/special education teachers and special teaching assistants at schools is negligible and so are their work hours.

In many schools in Latvia school leaders think that most needed are logopaedists (deal with speech disorders) and psychologists (deal with behaviour disorders), as there is not enough money to provide the full spectrum of professionals (not in Riga 45th secondary school as in our school all spectrum of professionals are provided. There is a wide range of specialists in our Support team.)

Professionals know that wherever a learner with special needs studies he/she needs assistance of a special pedagogue/special education teacher, corrective action, in order to achieve higher educational background and, very probably, to work and support himself in the future.

By investing into professionals in Support teams in schools in Latvia in mainstream educational institutions we invest into future. This is linked to advanced democratic society policy-sustainable development and education for sustainable development. One of the challenges is providing equal opportunities to all society members.

It is still a huge challenge to provide equal opportunities to all society members.

In Latvia there is the Latvian Association of special Education teachers. The aim of the association is to rise and address issues related to special education in Latvia, offer opinions and recommendations, study and publish documentation and recent findings. It helps also to all specialists working in Support teams in mainstream schools to find answers to difficult questions.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

The EiTTT Team came to Riga 45th secondary school in November 2018 to learn about the role of the support team in the school. Students with a variety of learning disorders in mainstream schools are supported by different specialists to help them to study. The EiTTT group observed how the support team works in the school and what kind of support it offers to students, teachers and parents. EiTTT partners were also able to experience how the support team model works in other schools in Latvia – one mainstream school and two special schools. The number of students with learning difficulties studying in mainstream schools in recent years has been increasing. The ability to respond to different learning disorders and challenging behaviours are the main reasons why the support team model in Latvia is very valuable.

The EiTTT team gave positive response about the work of support teams:

- It is a must to have a support team in every school in order to help schoolchildren and teachers in their daily work. It also helps to produce suggestions to parents.
- The support team can help to plan interesting lessons and it is good for organising different kind of co-teaching.
- It is a way to organise the inclusion of a student in a mainstream school despite of him/her having learning difficulties or challenging behaviour.

In conclusion, the EiTTT partners highly recommended having support teams in all schools as a way of supporting every student. It was noted that the composition of support teams in many schools in Latvia depends on the availability of municipal funding, therefore the model may differ as it is reliant on available funding.

## References

<http://www.oecd.org/education/Education-Policy-Outlook-Country-Profile-Latvia.pdf>

<http://specialaispedagogs.lv/>

