



Naas  
Community  
College

## Naas Community College

### Literacy Policy

#### Introduction

In July 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills, R  air   Quinn, launched the National Strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020*. The strategy seeks to “address significant concerns about how well young people are developing the literacy and numeracy skills that they will need to participate fully in the education system, to live satisfying and rewarding lives and to participate as active and informed citizens in our society” (Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, 2011, pp. 7).

Literacy is often thought to refer only to the skills of reading and writing. However, literacy includes “the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media and digital media” (Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life, 2011, pp.8).

The skills of literacy and numeracy feature strongly in the JCSA curriculum introduced in 2014. This programme seeks to further improve literacy levels at second level with its focus on four strands of literacy; reading, writing, oral and digital.

#### Rationale

In 2009 the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked Irish Students 17<sup>th</sup> out of 34 OECD countries in literacy performance. They also found that 17% of all Irish fifteen year olds and almost one in four teenage boys lack the literacy skills necessary to function effectively in society.

In 2012, PISA showed that the literacy levels of Irish teenagers had improved significantly, placing Ireland 4<sup>th</sup> out of 34 OECD countries in print reading performance. While this score is significantly higher than in 2009, it does not differ to the scores in 2000, 2003 or 2006. In fact, Ireland does not yet rank amongst the top performers internationally with regard to literacy. For example, 10% of Irish students are top performers in reading compared to 25% in Shanghai-China. The 2012 results for Ireland also show that the gender gap between boys and girls continues with girls considerably out performing boys in the area of literacy.

Naas Community College is committed to ensuring that all students are provided with a holistic education which encourages independent thinking and allows all students to reach their full potential. Through the promotion of an integrated whole school approach, our school aims to create an environment where literacy is developed and embraced as a lifelong asset which supports students as they strive for excellence.

## **Aims & Objectives**

The aims of this policy are to:

- support student learning across all subjects through the development of student's literacy and communication skills
- support all teachers to become teachers of literacy
- promote a shared view of literacy and literacy development across the curriculum and provide appropriate staff development
- teach students to read fluently and with understanding, using reading methods that are appropriate to the material

- develop student's writing skills for a range of purposes and audiences, using spelling, punctuation and syntax appropriately and with confidence
- enable students to communicate clearly and with assurance. They should be able to talk and listen in a variety of groupings and in both formal and informal contexts
- to promote reading for pleasure
- to promote the wide use of ICT as a medium for the further development of language across the curriculum
- to use effective models of planning, target-setting, development and action planning to ensure common approaches and consistency across the school

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

### **Board of Management**

The board of management is responsible for:

- ensuring the literacy policy is developed and reviewed as appropriate
- considering reports from the principal on the implementation of the policy

### **Senior Management**

The senior management team led by the principal is responsible for:

- engaging the whole staff in developing strategies for the improvement of literacy in the school with the aim of establishing a comprehensive and co-ordinated literacy programme
- participating in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the whole school literacy strategy
- putting in place structures to review, monitor and evaluate the literacy development plan on an annual basis
- assessing the performance of students and using data from these assessments to establish the existing levels of achievement
- creating a culture of continuous improvement and shared goals

- evaluating teaching practices with regard to literacy and identifying areas for improvement
- evaluating the efficacy of assessment and evaluation measures in the school and making adjustments as necessary
- determining the role of the literacy Co-ordinator
- providing finance for material resources and ensuring efficient use of available resources
- providing opportunities for effective communication between the Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator, SEN Co-ordinator, the Senior Management Team and subject departments so that literacy, numeracy and special educational needs is integrated
- identifying and making provision for the training needs of staff in the form of relevant and focussed continuing professional development
- liaising with parents and external agencies in the provision of literacy supports for students

## **Literacy Co-ordinator**

The literacy co-ordinator is responsible for:

- leading the planning, implementation and evaluation of the whole school literacy strategy
- chairing regular meetings of the literacy committee
- assessing the performance of students and using data from these assessments to establish the existing levels of achievement and set targets
- setting challenging but realistic goals for improvement in literacy targets focussed on the progress of every student
- supporting and maintaining the implementation of strategies through subject departments
- planning, running and reviewing whole school literacy interventions such as word millionaire and paired reading
- liaising with senior management, numeracy co-ordinator, SEN co-ordinator and subject departments
- identifying, sourcing and alerting staff of appropriate resources
- identifying CPD needs and alerting staff to CPD opportunities

## **SEN Co-ordinator**

The SEN co-ordinator is responsible for:

- organising the additional teaching supports to students with low achievement in the area of literacy
- administering the New Group Reading Test to all first year students in September
- gathering data relevant to literacy – NGRT, CAT5, education passport, psychological reports, teacher observation and identifying students in need of high levels of literacy support
- liaising with the literacy co-ordinator with regard to the individual needs of SEN students on an ongoing basis
- creating, monitoring and reviewing IEP's which include clear literacy targets in consultation with relevant stakeholders
- monitoring and reviewing literacy supports for SEN students

## **Subject Teachers**

All subject teachers are responsible for:

- using agreed common approach and strategies in identified areas for literacy development (see Appendix 1)
- contributing to the development and implementation of a whole school literacy programme (see Appendix 2)
- contributing to the monitoring and evaluation of language development throughout the school
- participating in whole school literacy initiatives e.g. DEAR (See Appendix 3 & 4)

## **Students**

Students are asked to:

- participate fully and to the best of their ability in whole school literacy initiatives

- follow the school's policy with regard to homework (See Appendix 5)
- make every reasonable effort to improve their literacy levels
- **Parents**

Parents are asked to:

- promote reading at home and to be seen as readers (discuss the book they are reading, ask child about their book, visit bookshops, library)
- encourage child to read newspapers and listen to the news
- engage in discussion with their child on current affairs
- encourage the use of dictionary
- encourage child to take time with written homework in particular the drafting and redrafting of written work
- participate in school activities to promote literacy when invited to do so
- contact the school if they have any concerns about their child's literacy levels

## **Success Criteria**

- improved results in standardised tests such as NGRT
- improved reading ages
- high levels of academic attainment in state exams
- participation by all staff and students in whole school literacy interventions
- positive attitudes towards reading displayed by students and staff

## **Monitoring Procedures**

- tracking standardised test results against class test results
- tracking reading ages (NGRT – September & May)
- tracking achievement in state exams
- review of whole school initiatives with teachers, students and parents as appropriate

- literacy policy on all subject department meeting agendas
- literacy policy regularly on agenda for whole staff meetings
- principal reports to BOM as necessary

## **Review Procedures**

- This policy will be reviewed in May 2016 through data analysis, teacher questionnaire, student focus group and parent focus group.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson of Board of Management**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next review:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 1: Whole School Literacy Strategies**

### **(a) Print Rich environment**

#### **Create a print rich classroom by:**

- having lots of visual cues/reminders on display
- having posters/definitions/keywords on display
- referring regularly to the visuals on display
- rotating visuals so that students do not become bored
- displaying student work in literacy corridor or in the corridor outside your class
- ensuring that any work that is on display uses the correct spelling and grammar

### **(b) Key words**

#### **Acknowledge the importance of keywords by:**

- pre teaching key words for each topic
- displaying keywords on wall and referring to them regularly
- ensuring a copy of the key words for all relevant topics is in subject department folder
- participating in key word week
- teaching students to recognise and where ever possible, to spell key words correctly

### **(c) Notes / Handouts**

#### **Ensure that all students can utilise classroom notes and handouts by:**

- using typed notes (Recommended Font: Arial. Recommended Font Size: 14)
- using one 1½ line spacing
- using bullet points / headings
- keeping the amount of text used as short as possible
- making notes available electronically to students

### **(d) Spelling/grammar**

### **Promote correct spelling and grammar by:**

- realising that all teachers are literacy teachers
- actively teaching the spelling of words specific to your subject
- correcting spelling and grammar in written work
- promoting the use of dictionary and thesaurus

### **(e) Reading Aloud**

#### **Ensure students hear excellent models of reading by:**

- not asking students to read aloud in class unless the piece of text has been pre taught and they have had time to practice the piece
- providing students with good model of reading when you read aloud to them
- inviting students to read but never coercing a student into reading aloud

### **(f) Promoting Reading**

#### **Promote reading for pleasure by:**

- discussing the book you are reading with students
- asking students about what they are reading
- creating a classroom library consisting of specialist magazines, reference texts and relevant articles
- compiling a reading list which is relevant to your subject area and displaying it in your classroom (For example: Science – Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything*. Business – Steve Job's biography)
- contributing to the Read Wall
- participating in whole school reading initiatives such as DEAR, Book in a bag

### **(g) Graphic Organisers**

#### **Support students with literacy difficulties by:**

- avoiding large volumes of text
- using bullet points and headings
- using graphic organisers such as fishbone/placemat/mind maps/venn diagrams to present information

## **(h) Reading for understanding**

### **Support students to read for understanding by:**

- teaching students how to scan for keywords
  - teaching students how to highlight keywords
  - teaching students how to summarise a piece of text using bullet points and headings
  - showing students how to use index / contents page
  - doing a readability test on text book
  - knowing the reading age of your students and differentiating your instructional practice and homework appropriately
- (For example, do not expect students who have a lower reading age than the book to:
- find the answers in the book without support
  - read and find information from the book without support
  - do the set questions in the book without support)

## **(i) Written Work**

### **Promote an excellent standard of written work by:**

- ensuring students use the guidelines for written homework
- expecting homework be presented neatly in the correct copy with a margin, appropriate heading and date
- checking punctuation and spelling
- ensuring paragraphs are used and ideas are correctly sequenced
- encouraging students to use draft, re draft and editing techniques

## **(j) Oral Literacy**

### **Promote student's competency and confidence with regard to oral literacy by:**

Providing pupils with regular opportunities to speak and listen in the following contexts:

- In pairs with a working partner

- in small groups with opportunities to take on various roles
- with the teacher or another adult
- in whole class discussions
- in presentations to a wider audience

## Appendix 2: Subject Department Guidelines

### Whole School Literacy Plan

### Subject Department Checklist

|   |                  |           |                   |
|---|------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| <b>Subject Department:</b>  | <b>Convenor:</b> |           |                   |
|   | <b>Teachers:</b> |           |                   |
|   | <b>Yes</b>       | <b>No</b> | <b>incomplete</b> |
| <b>There is a literacy section in the subject folder</b>                                      |                  |           |                   |
| <b>All teachers know the reading age of the students in their class</b>                       |                  |           |                   |
| <b>A readability test has been done on all the text books used in the department</b>          |                  |           |                   |
| <b>The results of the readability test are in the subject folder</b>                          |                  |           |                   |
| <b>There is a keyword list for each topic in the subject folder</b>                           |                  |           |                   |
| <b>Keyword lists are on display in classrooms</b>   |                  |           |                   |
| <b>Students are taught to spell subject specific words</b>                                    |                  |           |                   |
| <b>Students are taught to skim text for answers</b>   |                  |           |                   |
| <b>Students are taught to summarise chapter</b>   |                  |           |                   |
| <b>All members of department have read and are familiar with the school's literacy policy</b> |                  |           |                   |
| <b>There is a copy of the school's literacy guidelines in the subject folder</b>              |                  |           |                   |

| What needs to be done | Person Responsible | Date of completion |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                       |                    |                    |
|                       |                    |                    |
|                       |                    |                    |

## **Appendix 3: Some Whole School Literacy Interventions**

### **Literacy Notice board – word / fact / riddle / quote of the week**

There will be a weekly display on the literacy notice board. Teachers are encouraged to discuss the display with their students.

### **Keyword Week**

This strategy supports the pre-teaching of keywords and concepts of the topic ahead as well as reinforcement and revisions exercises. Staff will be informed of a week where special emphasis is to be placed on keywords. Students are asked to create keyword posters for different subjects. These posters will be displayed in the corridors. The three best posters will receive a prize at the end of the week.

### **Word Millionaire / Reading Challenge**

Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?" is a short-term reading intervention, which challenges a class group of students to engage in recreational reading, at home with the support of their parents, and to collectively read a total of one million words (or more) over a four-week period.

This can become a competition whereby class groups compete with each other to read the most words collectively.

### **Paired Reading**

Paired Reading is a short-term reading intervention which promotes fluency. Student reading is supported by a tutor. Paired Reading runs 3 to 4 times a week for six weeks. A paired reading initiative can work where students act as tutors to a primary school class or senior cycle students are reading tutors for a junior cycle class or parents work with students as tutors.

## **DEAR (Drop Everything and Read)**

This is a great way of promoting reading across the whole school or year group. The idea is that at a set time, every day for a week, everyone stops what they are doing and reads for fifteen minutes. It is a shared experience, gets people talking about books and reading while conveying a strong message that the school believes in reading. Students read, principals read, teachers in the staff room read, phones are taken off the hook and secretaries read, the caretaker reads and all visitors to the school are offered books to read or magazines to look through.

## **Creative Writing Competition**

This in school competition is aimed at encouraging students to write creatively using drafting and re drafting. Students are given a visual along with a sentence to inspire them to write a short story within specific parameters. There are prizes given for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

## **Spelling Competition**

This in school competition is aimed at improving the spelling of key vocabulary offering the students a challenge in order to motivate the learning process. Initially students compete within their class groups before the class winners go on to compete with each other. The overall winner receives a prize.

## **One Book, One School, One Community**

This initiative encourages reading for pleasure as all students, staff and families within the school community are invited to read the same book at the same time. Various events are organised to promote discussion of the book.

## **Visiting Authors**

Writers, poets and journalists are invited to the school whenever possible to share their passion and enthusiasm for reading and literature. Students are sometimes given the opportunity to engage in workshops or to attend informal talks where they are encouraged to interact and ask questions.

## **World Book Day**

World Book Day takes place in March each year. Various activities are organised throughout the day to celebrate reading for pleasure.

## **Reading Corner**

This is a public area of the school where reading for pleasure is encouraged by students, staff and visitors. It is a welcoming space that offers enticing reading material such as novels, magazines and newspapers.

## **Book Club**

Book club takes place on the first Tuesday of every month and is open to both staff and students. Each month a book is chosen by the group and is read and discussed at the following meeting.

## **Read Wall**

This is an area (preferably a wall painted red) where staff and students are invited to stick a photocopy of the cover of a book they have just read with a mark out of ten written on it. This serves as a review for those who might wish to read the book.

## **Book in a Bag**

This is a whole school policy whereby all students and teachers keep a book in their bag at all times. Students are encouraged to take their book out and read whenever they have time for example, if they finish a task early.

## **Random Acts of Reading**

Books are left randomly around the school at specific times of the year as a surprise for students to encourage them to read.

## **'Caught Reading' Posters**

Photographs of students and staff who have been 'caught' reading randomly around the school are turned in to posters to promote reading

## **Appendix 4: Literacy Calendar 2015-2016**

### **Term 1**

- Literacy notice board
- Book club
- Keyword Week

### **Term 2**

- Literacy notice board
- Book club
- Word Millionaire
- Creative writing Competition

### **Term 3**

- Literacy notice board
- Book club
- Paired Reading
- Visiting author
- World Book Day Celebrations

### **Term 4**

- Literacy notice board
- Book club
- Spelling Competition
- DEAR

## Appendix 5: Checklist on Standard of Homework

|  |  |
|--|--|
| All students must have a pencil, red biro, ruler, calculator, blue or black pen, colouring pencils, drawing equipment, mathematical set, eraser, topper and pencil case. |  |
| Homework must be completed in the correct homework copy for the subject.   |  |
| Date the top of page for homework.   |  |
| Page number in book/Year of exam paper at the top of the homework.   |  |
| Use only blue or black pens for the main text.   |  |
| All questions are numbered.  |  |
| All questions should be answered in full sentences where required.   |  |
| Every sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop or question mark.  |  |
| Handwriting is clear and easy to understand.   |  |
| The meaning of each sentence is clear.   |  |
| Diagrams where required are drawn in pencil, presented neatly and properly labelled.   |  |
| The use of rulers, red bios and other requirements set down by the teacher are followed.   |  |