

**Title of Research Project:** The Impact of the School Environment on Learning - A Collaborative Health and Education Approach to Applying Research Knowledge to Practice

**Researchers:** Michelle Bergin, Annette Hardiman, Aideen Molloy and Anne O'Rourke



**Contact Details:** [Michelle.Bergin2@hse.ie](mailto:Michelle.Bergin2@hse.ie)

**Relevant key words:** School Seating; Flexible Classroom Furniture; Dynamic School Seating; Inclusive Classroom Environments; Classroom Participation; Collaborative Approach

### **Summary:**

Our project aimed to develop a collaborative forum of teachers, occupational therapists, educational psychologists, designers and suppliers in a shared learning workshop series to review research, policy, guidelines, expert analysis and actual school furniture available to schools in the West of Ireland.

Using a shared learning community methodology, participants engaged in both formal learning opportunities, research and reflective learning processes on the project topic. The following research activities were completed.

1. A review of current primary school seating and furniture available to schools in the West of Ireland- Supplier presentation of products in terms of cost, ergonomics and posture.
2. A rapid review of the research on school seating and participation.
3. A collective analysis of the application of research to practice.
4. Working with three local schools to engage students in presenting their perspective.
5. Organisation of interdisciplinary conference.

Our findings included:

Children are spending the majority of school time in sedentary positions. Current school seating is mismatched for children's anthropometric requirements, which is significantly associated with poor posture and pain. Flexible school seating is available. There is a dearth of research regarding the impact of school seating on participation. There is a need for further research including participatory design methodologies situated within the context of research regarding school environments and the impact on participation to inform decision making regarding furniture provision.

**Published:** May 2020