

Title of Research Project: Moving to Learn Ireland Practitioner Forum: A Forum for Teachers to Engage with and Share Practice of a Movement Integration Programme for Primary School Children

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Summary:

Moving to Learn Ireland involves the integration of movement into academic lessons such as English, Gaeilge and Maths to improve the physical activity levels of primary school children while also enhancing their learning experiences. Our project aims to build on previous research by training teachers to implement these lessons in their classrooms and establishing a teacher forum to promote practitioners' engagement with the Moving to Learn Ireland resource. The forum allows teachers to share their experiences and ideas therefore enhancing the implementation of active lessons.

Four teachers in primary schools around Limerick and Clare volunteered to participate in the initial stages of this study. Teachers attended two training workshops where they were introduced to the 'Moving to Learn Ireland' resource and participated in English, Irish and Maths lessons which integrate movement. During the weeks between workshops, teachers were asked to implement the lessons in their own classrooms. Post-implementation focus groups were conducted allowing the teachers to share their experiences and feedback with the group. Observations of the lessons in practice were carried out in the teachers' classrooms and individual interviews with the teachers were conducted by a member of the research team. Three of the schools participated in phase II of the project in which a CPD session was conducted at whole school level. Nineteen teachers completed pre- and post-questionnaires which were included in the analysis.

Preliminary analysis of the findings illustrates that teachers valued the training received and that they felt accountable by providing feedback on the lessons implemented. There also seemed to be a sense of community that was developed through the forums and the teachers who participated seemed inclined to “do well” with the lessons so they could share that with the others involved.

Having a space to discuss the challenges and barriers associated with movement integration could have contributed to their perceptions that the barriers they initially anticipated did not exist in practice; or if they did, they felt comfortable modifying the lessons or their environment to make them work. This is a significant finding given that the majority of the research in this area refers to barriers that teachers face when considering movement integration in the classroom.

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