NCSE PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH PILOT PROGRAMME

SCHOOL RESEARCH SUMMARY

School name: Carrigaline Community School

Practising teacher lead: Ann O Regan
Research theme: INCLASS aims to develop better understandings of how we meet the needs of learners with additional educational needs (AEN) in classroom settings across school types (primary, post-primary, special schools)

Research aim:

- To develop teachers as research partners in the INCLASS research intervention
- To share findings from the study amongst participants, advocacy groups and policy makers in order to guide future practice and engagement regarding inclusive practice/ pedagogy in school settings.

Methods

Observations, Conversations and Journaling was used with 18 participants including students, teachers, parents, and SNAs.

Research findings

In this research, the teacher-researchers collaborated on the design of a semi-structured observation template that would allow them to look upon their familiar teaching worlds with researchers' eyes. The research revealed similar themes and concerns, across all four schools, in relation to how teachers are developing inclusive practice at Stage one of the Continuum of Support.

This close-to-practice research generated 44 observations of classroom practice across settings. We worked in collaboration with University College Cork. This involved targeted collaborative workshops with researchers on topics such as formulating research questions, conducting literature reviews, research methodology, data analysis, and research dissemination. The INCLASS research received full ethical clearance from the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork.

The physical setting, UDL, Collaboration, and the Role of the SNA's were identified as key factors in fostering inclusive practice at this stage of support.

My top findings

- Team teaching is an effective strategy for INCLASS support
- UDL is an effective practice to help meet the needs of students with AEN in the mainstream classroom
- Collaboration is key to effective INCLASS support
- SNA support in the classroom was identified as hugely beneficial to INCLASS support

Based on this data we have clearly identified effective InClass practice in these schools, however the data also revealed some challenges, particularly in the area of UDL training, time for collaboration, and the role of the SNA.

Impact of my research

We are working on time-tabling more Team Teaching in a wide variety of subject areas and have been having conversations with staff to put this into practice.

We have chosen to improve on Collaboration as one of our goals from the Indicators of Practice

While the data has led us to focus on some of the key findings, one of the unexpected benefits, was the importance of being involved in the research process itself. Teachers and SNAs were energised by the experience of being involved. There was a sense of recognition that their voices and experiences mattered. It also opened up opportunities for professional conversations - taking teachers and SNAs out of the ‘bubble’ of the classroom, into reflective practice.