



Care in Schools

“WELL-BEING IN CARING SCHOOLS”

Buone pratiche, strategie e percorsi verso il benessere della scuola in Europa

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Máirín Ní Chéileachair Dublin West Education Centre



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The first job of schools is to care for our children...We should educate all our children not only for competence but also for caring... The main aim of education should be to produce competent, caring, loving and lovable people"

(Nel Noddings: The Challenge to Care in Schools)

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- There is a challenge to care in schools. The structures of schools work against care and ,the need for care is perhaps greater than ever.
- What are the structures in our schools which mitigate against “care”
- What structures have we put in place to promote it?



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- Education should be organised around themes of care...The main aim of education should be to produce competent, caring, loving and lovable people.
- How can we plan to realise this aim?
- What competencies can we teach children to promote care and loving?



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- The best homes and schools are happy places.
- Is your school a happy place?
- How would I know?



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- The happiness of teachers is an important factor too, and happy teachers are more likely to produce happy children.
- What are we doing to ensure teachers are happy?
- Can we do anything?



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The Irish Experience... Research shows:

Teachers feel that they

- “make a difference”
- Engage in interesting and worthwhile work
- Their jobs are important and enjoyable
- Provide value in society
- They experience job security and satisfaction based on pupil’s development and achievement

(DES 2004, IPPN 2005, The Teaching Council 2011)



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Principals

Articulate their vision of their jobs in terms

- of care
- holistic development of the child
- development of full potential of child
- school community involving all stakeholders
- IPPN 2006 “Irish Principals are highly motivated and passionate about the role and strive to be exemplary leaders of learning.”



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Research

- Stories of Care
- Principal Interviews
- School Visits “vignettes”



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Stories of Care

- 24 teachers
- Wide Range of Schools
- 20 stories
- Emerging themes



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- The activities described in the stories of care fell into categories, almost naturally
- Meet and Greet, Home and Community Links, School Councils, Peer Mentoring and Events



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- My God, you would hope that they would be wouldn't you!"
- Schools are involved in programmes and activities which actively promote and foster care
- Most teachers are passionate about Care...when given the opportunity to speak about it.
- Most of the activities are all about relationship building and a significant proportion of them involve teaching the children to care... for each other, themselves, their school and community (cf Nel Noddings, Care as an aim of Education)



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The Principals

- In line with the findings from the “Stories” all principals were able to talk about the ethos of care in their schools and the activities carried out to promote it.
- It was common for principals to say that they had never really “thought about it”...in the main, schools don’t name Care.
- The role of the principal: most teachers see it as central, principals are not so sure! “Caring...surely the teachers are doing that in the classrooms”



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- School Visits “Vignettes of Care”
- DEIS, Large Urban, Small Rural
- The schools were warm and friendly places, despite poor physical conditions in some places.
- Reception areas were colourful and welcoming.
- Children were happy to be coming to school, lots of happy faces
- The intangibles of “the feel and the atmosphere” should never be underestimated.



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Some questions

- What can principals and class teachers do to foster a culture of care in today's society?
- How can we give Care "currency" or value in the current discourses?



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- As teachers and as principals we all know the Stories of Care from our schools
- How can we ensure that these stories are told?
- What can we do to ensure that these stories are valued?



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Some questions:

Do we care?

Do teachers care for each other? Our schools? Our pupils? Our communities?

If we don't care how can we teach children to care?

Who cares anyway?



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- How does this feed into “Wellbeing”
- Can a caring school promote wellbeing for pupils, for staff?
- What is happening already in your school which promotes wellbeing.
- Don't re-invent the wheel!

Caring in schools: And finally!

