



# Equality of Challenge

## Equality of Challenge Initiative

### Piloting Educational Provision for Exceptionally Able and Dual Exceptional Students

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#### Project Background and Overview

'Equality of Challenge' is a small-scale project which aims to pilot models of educational provision for exceptionally able students in post-primary schools and with an emphasis on inclusive principles. It is exploring how generally recognised principles can be applied in the Irish context and aims to provide a framework and examples of practice which can be generalised and used by schools and teachers in developing learning and teaching in relation to students with exceptional ability / dual exceptionality.

The objectives of the initiative include the development of:

- professional knowledge and awareness of identification, and of learning and teaching in relation to exceptionally able and dual exceptional students
- examples of school policy and system development which assists in the identification and assessment of exceptionally able and dual exceptional students
- examples of differentiated teaching approaches based on an established inclusion policy
- exemplars of strategies for developing the metacognitive skills of exceptionally able and dual exceptional students
- awareness of social and emotional issues related to exceptional ability and dual exceptionality, and the addressing of students' needs in this area
- strategies of how to develop an environment and culture in which exceptional intellectual ability is accepted and celebrated by peers
- models and examples of school-based sustainable enrichment activities
- examples of systems for identifying and supporting socially-disadvantaged exceptionally able and dual exceptional students
- models of continuing professional development (CPD) which contribute to the learning and teaching of exceptionally able and dual exceptional students.

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Two of the participating schools have been working with the SESS on the initiative since 2008-09:

- Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School, Tralee, Co. Kerry
- Schull Community College, Co. Cork

Further schools are now participating in the initiative: 2010-11:

- Scoil Dara, Kilkock, Co. Kildare
- Loreto Secondary School, Kilkenny
- St. Clement's Redemptorist College, Limerick
- Castletroy College, Limerick
- Coláiste Mhuire, Askeaton, Co. Limerick
- St. Leo's College, Carlow
- St. Colmcille's Community School, Dublin
- St. Paul's Community School, Waterford
- Mount Saint Michael Secondary School, Claremorris, Co. Mayo.



(Teachers from the participating schools at a Teachers' Seminar, September 2010)

The project approach, based on inclusionary principles, is guided by the Inspectorate's *Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines* and the NCCA's *Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers*.

- [Click here for the Inspectorate's 'Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs Post-Primary Guidelines' \(PDF 3.2Mb\)](#) [1]
- [Click here for the NCCA's \*Exceptionally Able Students: Draft Guidelines for Teachers\*](#) [2] (PDF 1Mb).

An initial Approach Framework was developed by SESS as a broad roadmap for the initiative's implementation. This included an emphasis on the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers and the development of schools' systems and procedures. Based on this approach, the SESS provided CPD support and scaffolding, in concert with the schools' own CPD strategies.

Mr. John O'Roarke, Principal of Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School, has written about such CPD issues, as they related to the initiative, in the June 2009 Journal of the Second Level Support Service.

- [Click here to Equality of Challenge Approach Framework](#) [3] (PDF, 76kb)
- [Click here to see the Journal of the Second Level Support Service](#) [4] (PDF, 4mb).

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## Early Progress

Some of the early learning and outcomes of the initiative were presented at the conference of the Irish Learning Support Association (ILSA) in September 2009.

- Observations from Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School on differentiation strategies and extension tasks used during the first year of the project.  
[Click here to see observations \(PDF, 59 Kb\)](#) [5]

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- In developing the Equality of Challenge Initiative within the school, the implementation group in Mercy Mounthawk used a three-phase reflective cycle during their first year (2008-09). In each phase, a four-stage reflective exercise was used, based on the use of extension strategies with exceptionally able students in teachers' classes.  
[Click here to see reflective cycle template \(PDF, 66 Kb\)](#) [6]
- Ms. Pauline Burke, an English teacher in Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School, discussed the mainstream differentiation strategies and resources developed by the school at the ILSA Conference in Sept. 2009:  
[Click here to see presentation \(PowerPoint, 262kb\)](#) [7]
- Ms. Jean Johnston, SEN Coordinator in Schull Community College, described testing and assessment used in the school, the identification of students with dual exceptionality, and the role of the school's SEN system in provision for exceptionally able students, also at the ILSA Conference in Sept. 2009:  
[Click here to see presentation \(PowerPoint, 8.4 Mb\)](#) [8]
- Dr. Tom Daly, Assistant National Coordinator SESS, outlined the Equality of Challenge background and context and introduced the presenters at the ILSA Conference in Sept. 2009:  
[Click here to see presentation \(PowerPoint, 1.3 Mb\)](#) [9]

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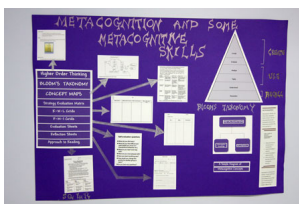
## Metacognition Skills and Strategies

In September 2009 the SESS produced a resource on metacognitive skills and strategies as part of the Equality of Challenge initiative. The resource, entitled *Metacognition for the classroom and beyond: Differentiation and support for learners*, was developed with the input of Dr. Sarah McAlwee of the University of Oxford.

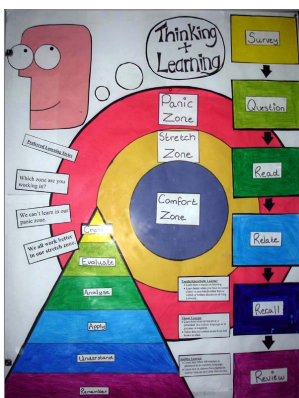
Strategies for teaching and learning outlined in the resource were explained by Dr. McAlwee at a workshop for teachers in September 2009. These were trialled in Mercy Mounthawk and Schull Community College in 2009-10 in a variety of school contexts – e.g. mainstream classrooms, SEN/Learning Support settings, and mentoring activities.

- [Click here to see the resource 'Metacognition for the classroom and beyond: Differentiation and support for learners' \(PDF, 1.3 Mb\)](#). [10]
- [Click here to see Dr. McAlwee's presentation at the Equality of Challenge Metacognition Workshop \(PowerPoint, 0.9 Mb\)](#). [11]

Some outcomes are outlined in the section below.



(A poster on Metacognition Skills, Learning Support Room, Schull Community College)



(A poster on Metacognition Skills, Mercy Mounthawk Secondary School, Tralee)

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### Samples of Work from the Project 2010-11

- [Examples of Practice from the Schools 2010-2011](#) [12]  
This section contains a range of examples of practice developed by the schools during 2010-11.
- 'Exceptionally Able / Dual Exceptional Post-Primary School Self-Review'. This review document may help schools in planning for developing provision in the area of Exceptional Ability and Dual Exceptionality.  
[Click here to download the self-review document \(PDF, 75 kb\)](#) [13]

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### Samples of Work from the Project 2009-10

Examples of strategies, resources and other materials developed by the Equality of Challenge schools will be posted here as they become available.

- Amendments to Policy on Special Education Needs: This outlines some of the early policy and provision issues that emerged in Schull Community College from its participation in the initiative.  
[Click here to see Amendments to Policy on Special Education Needs \(PDF, 456 kb\)](#) [14]
- Page from 'Learning Journal'. This metacognitive strategy is used to aid students in regulating their own learning.  
[Click here for Learning Journal \(PDF, 49 Kb\)](#) [15]
- 'Gold Award Task Matrix' sample: This metacognitive strategy encourages and helps teach students to use higher-order thinking and learning approaches.  
[Click here to see the Gold Award Task Matrix sample \[PDF, 408 Kb\]](#) [16]
- A sample differentiation task used for English writing, based on the 'must, should and could' strategy - it also contains a peer-assessment framework.  
[Click here to see sample differentiation task \(PDF, 79 Kb\)](#) [17]
- A further differentiation task, indicating expected higher-order thinking outcomes  
[Click here to see sample differentiation task \(59 Kb\)](#) [18]
- A sample extension task for exceptionally able first-year History students  
[Click here to see sample History extension task \(PDF, 46 Kb\)](#) [19]
- Sample tasks for a class, with additional extension task  
[Click here to see sample extension task \(PDF, 35 Kb\)](#) [20]
- A sample individualised education plan for 'Peter' - a dual exceptional second-year who comes from a disadvantaged background and is a member of a one-parent family living in a socially-deprived area of town.  
[Click here to see sample Individualised Education Plan for dual exceptional student \(PDF, 137 Kb\)](#) [21]

(Schull Community College also participated in the Assessment for Learning programme (AfL) and found similarities in the strategies - AfL is therefore mentioned in a sample of observations from the school, below)

- Observations from the implementation group in Schull Community College on the early use of Metacognition Strategies  
[Click here to see the report \[PDF, 93 Kb\]](#) [22]
- Observations on strategies used in one-to-one and small class contexts.  
[Click here to see observations \[PDF, 74 Kb\]](#) [23]

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- The use of Bloom's Taxonomy in English poetry  
[Click here for observations on the use of Bloom's taxonomy \[PDF, 63 Kb\]](#) [24]
- The use of four strategies in mainstream classes (Pair Problem Solving; Show me Boards; Extra Time to Answer Questions; Activating Prior Knowledge)[Click here for a review of the strategies \[PDF, 68 Kb\]](#) [25]
- Observations on metacognition strategies used in Science class.  
[Click here for observations on metacognition strategies used in Science class \[PDF, 64 Kb\]](#) [26]



(The implementation team, Schull Community College)

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## Other Documents and Information

### Report of a CIDREE collaborative project:

The CIDREE project (Curriculum Provision for Exceptionally Able Students) set out to bring together some of the experiences of schools and teachers in Ireland, Switzerland and the Netherlands in providing curriculum provision for students with exceptional ability. The Equality of Challenge Initiative features in the report from Ireland.

[Click here to see the CIDREE report \[PDF, 1MB\]](#) [27]

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*(This section last updated, October 6th 2011)*



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**Special Education Support Service** is an initiative of Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education and Skills, funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2007-2013, "Transforming Ireland - A Better Quality of Life for All".