

DesignSKILLS

Divergent thinking in the classroom

JUNIOR CYCLE FOR TEACHERS (JCT)

The DesignSKILLS programme, developed in collaboration with the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI), is part of our wider Arts in Junior Cycle initiative which aims to support professional learning experiences to promote engagement with the arts and learning in junior cycle.

DesignSKILLS embodies the principles and key skills which underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) and provides teachers with practical and creative methodologies to use in their practice and 'places students at the centre of the learning process.'

Arts in Junior Cycle, supported by the Creative Ireland programme (2017–2022), Pillar 1 Creative Youth, is guided by the principles expressed in the Arts in Education Charter (2012) and originated from an Arts Council and JCT pilot initiative which started in 2014. DesignSKILLS is playing a key role in realising the Charter's ambition that 'art education will be an integral part of the junior cycle experience'. The programme provides young people with access to the arts and opportunities to be creative and innovative in a post-primary context, working authentically with designer-makers to focus on their learning and development of knowledge, skills, understanding and values in Visual Art.

Dr. Pádraig Kirk

Director
Junior Cycle for Teachers

DESIGN & CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND (DCCoI)

The Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) recognises the key role that education plays in preparing young people for a new world of work where creativity will be a key competency. The DesignSKILLS programme has been developed through a collaborative partnership approach between DCCoI and Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT). It is grounded in research on design thinking at post-primary level conducted at Carlow IT's designCORE as part of the South East Action Plan for Jobs. It is supported at a policy level by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and is feeding into the roll-out and development of supports for visual arts teachers at post-primary level.

Since Irish Design 2015, DCCoI has been engaged in building towards a National Design Strategy highlighting the important role design has in Ireland's future. Building capacity in relation to 21st century skills and enabling young people to become creative citizens is key to the future of the design and craft sector in Ireland.

John Tynan

Head of Education, Training & Development
Design & Crafts Council of Ireland

The DesignSKILLS programme aims to develop teaching and learning in relation to the design process in post-primary schools in Ireland. The programme links professional designer-makers with teachers to develop a six-hour mini project that explores the design process.

It focuses on the very beginning of this process and emphasises ideation, problem solving, divergent thinking, risk taking and experimentation.

Importantly, the programme impacts the young people who take part in the classroom projects, but it also aims to create a legacy with the teachers, upskilling them in the delivery of the design process. It is hoped that this will have a knock-on effect on the other students they teach and will teach in the future.

SUPPORTING CREATIVE IRELAND

SUPPORTING COLLABORATION BETWEEN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL APPROACHES TO CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION

This programme is a partnership between Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), Association of Teachers' Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI), National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI). It represents a coming together of the formal school setting with the designer-makers' personal and professional approach to creativity. As is stressed in Points of Alignment this 'is not just about the arts community or the education community', it is about partnerships.

EXTENDING THE RANGE OF CREATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

This programme will progress Creative Ireland's Creative Youth Plan goal to 'enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding by 2022'. Funding from Creative Ireland is helping to achieve the scalability of DesignSKILLS, ensuring that proper support and infrastructure is in place to grow.

EMBEDDING THE CREATIVE PROCESS

DesignSKILLS focuses on process. This is integral in the new Junior Cycle Visual Art specification and is interwoven throughout the whole specification. The programme emphasises specific skills and techniques that professional designers use to generate new ideas, problem solve and refine their design ideas.

Empowering Young
People to become
Creative Citizens

PROGRAMME IMPACT

Students gain practical experience of design processes which they can use in the art room but also bring into the rest of their learning experiences. Young people will explore their own individual ideas and develop their creative potential, supported by professional designer-makers and their teachers. This programme aims to equip them with skills for life.

Developing teaching practice is core to DesignSKILLS. Research conducted in partnership with DesignCORE highlighted the beginning of the design process as a difficult phase for teachers as it can be unpredictable and risky. The programme supports teachers to embrace the unknown and allow them to really engage with the struggles, challenges and rewards of the design process. Through peer-reflection sessions at the end of the programme, we aim to build a community of learning around design thinking in post-primary education.

‘Key learning was in the students’ ability to recognise value in initial selection of primary sources; value in reflecting on each step to progress learning and development; respond to this reflection with constructive and positive approaches; and to celebrate all the mistakes during the processes.’

– Coláiste Oiriall [Knockaconny, Monaghan](#)

For the designer-makers who take part, DesignSKILLS increases their understanding of the post-primary curriculum and thus their capacity to work in this educational context. Feedback from designer-makers is that the programme also feeds their own creative process.

Designer-makers and teachers participate in peer-reflection sessions which take place regionally at the end of each programme. These sessions give participants space to process their experience of the programme and share this with their peers.

'I certainly feel that this programme positively impacted on my professional practice... Over the project I felt the need to order my somewhat scattered ideas and sketches in a more organised manner. It was also interesting to consciously look at my thinking process and problem solving mechanisms... I've never really fully looked at how my ideas are developing but this project made me look through that journey in me.'

Gabi McGrath
[Textiles](#)

Time for reflection and review is core to the ethos of DesignSKILLS, allowing participants to contextualise learning within their professional practice and build a community of learning in relation to arts education at post-primary level.

SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Each DesignSKILLS project is unique. It depends on the collaborative approach of the teacher and the designer-maker and the innovation of the students working in the classroom. To date, DesignSKILLS projects have covered design elements from drawing, using primary sources, technical skills, responding to a brief and more. However, at the heart of the programme is the goal to establish the importance of building strong foundations for the creative process through research and experimentation.

These are skills that are important not just for art, craft and design but are transferable to the wider lives and development of the students who take part. The future of work is increasingly flexible and diverse; the World Economic Forum predicts that analytical thinking and innovation will be the top of the list of desirable skills in 2022.

DesignSKILLS encompasses active learning, creativity, originality and initiative. Through its process-focused approach to learning, encompasses all these elements.

‘The students took more ownership of their work when given a little more freedom to explore and experiment’

– St. Mary’s College Arklow, Co. Wicklow

DESIGN & CRAFTS COUNCIL OF IRELAND

The Design & Crafts Council of Ireland (DCCoI) is the national agency for the commercial development of Irish designers and makers, stimulating innovation, championing design thinking and informing Government policy. DCCoI’s activities are funded by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation via Enterprise Ireland. DCCoI currently has over 60 member organisations and more than 3,000 registered clients. www.dccoi.ie

JUNIOR CYCLE FOR TEACHERS

Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) exists to inspire, support and empower teachers in the transformation of junior cycle education in Ireland. Since its establishment by the Department of Education and Skills it has provided dedicated and ongoing continuing professional development support for school leaders and teachers in all post-primary schools, special schools and other centres for education offering the junior cycle programme. www.jct.ie

CREATIVE IRELAND

The Creative Ireland Programme brings coordination and focus to existing culture-based policies and initiatives, leading to ambitious new actions. It creates and implements new alliances and initiatives which will empower and enable every person in Ireland to have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential. www.creativeireland.gov.ie

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) advises the Minister for Education and Skills on curriculum and assessment for early childhood education, primary and post-primary schools. www.ncca.ie

DESIGNCORE

DesignCORE collaborates across the natural and social sciences to further applied design research knowledge transfer at regional, national and EU levels. Its focus is human-centred design research, engaging in rigorous research methods with expertise and academic theory and design-thinking to gain deep insight into real world contexts. www.designcore.ie



Design

DesignSKILLS

Divergent Thinking in the Classroom

Learn

to

Design

