Units of Learning Within and Beyond...

BETTY MC LAUGHLIN, WELLBEING TEAM LEADER, JUNIOR CYCLE FOR TEACHERS (JCT) - LOOKS AT THE POTENTIAL FOR EXPANDING WELLBEING LEARNING BEYOND CSPE, PE, SPHE AND GUIDANCE

With the introduction of Junior Cycle reform, the promotion of wellbeing is being placed at the core of all education endeavours and, as schools begin to plan their promotion of wellbeing, we have a number of suggestions below, in order to assist schools in the documenting and developing of their wellbeing programmes.

As part of the new Junior Cycle, which is now well underway in schools nationwide, students are experiencing and engaging in a new area of learning called wellbeing. This designated area of learning, that is underpinned by a vision of caring for the learner, is building upon the excellent work that schools have already been doing in support of students’ wellbeing for many years.

This area of learning for and about wellbeing, which comes on foot of the introduction of the NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines (2017), is now being formalised within the curriculum and is becoming more visible than heretofore for our students.

Wellbeing is a multi-faceted concept and efforts to promote student wellbeing require a whole-school approach. This entails schools having to look at their structures, experiences, resources and other aspects that the whole-school community can provide, to enhance young people’s sense of wellbeing. Through a school’s wellbeing programme, students will learn the knowledge, attitudes, skills and values to enable them to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others.

Each school has the autonomy to be flexible when planning its wellbeing programme. Students, parents and teachers each have an important part to play in planning a programme that suits the specific needs of students in their individual schools and within their wider community.

The wellbeing curriculum in Junior Cycle aims to ensure that all students engage in important learning about wellbeing through a number of key areas. The area of wellbeing within Junior Cycle began with a minimum of 300 hours of timetabled engagement in 2017 and will move to 400 hours as the new junior cycle is fully implemented in schools by 2020. NCCA’s Wellbeing Guidelines state that “While CSPE, PE, SPHE and guidance-related learning provide the main pillars for building a school’s Wellbeing Programme, other subjects and short courses can also make an important contribution” (p. 53). It is important to take into account that within the new Junior Cycle, schools have more autonomy to plan a programme around their selection of subjects, short courses and other learning experiences that meet the needs of their students’ and their interests.

The new subject specifications for Junior Cycle require less time than previous syllabi – 240 hours for Gaeilge, English and Maths and 200 hours for all other subjects. One consequence of this will be an increase in the time available for learning in wellbeing (NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines p44). When planning a junior cycle programme, the starting-point must be the shared vision and values of the school, alongside consideration of the principles and statements of learning as set out in the Framework for Junior Cycle (DES, 2015).

A Junior cycle programme, that builds the foundations for wellbeing is broad and balanced, provides choice, has meaning and relevance, is enjoyable and engaging, provides opportunities to experience challenge and success, equips students with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to develop as learners and build positive relations.

Schools which offer the Level 2 Learning Programme’s Priority Learning Units (PLUs) – (Communicating and Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Care, Living in a Community and Preparing for Work – will be aware that these PLUs already incorporate significant learning about and for wellbeing.

With careful planning and teacher collaboration, it is possible to include elements of learning or activities taking place in Home Economics, Music, Science, Religious Education and Visual Art, to name just a few potential subjects. For example, in Home Economics, aspects of food and health studies could be included within a school’s wellbeing programme. Similarly, a unit of learning on sustainable living might be provided within Geography, Home Economics or Science and counted as part of a school’s Wellbeing Programme. One-off events, such as school retreats and friendship days, could also be included. (NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines p50).

When identifying the elements of learning (beyond CSPE, PE, SPHE and guidance-related learning) that could be incorporated into a school’s wellbeing programme, it is important that the rationale for their inclusion is clear, that they are linked to the six wellbeing indicators (Active, Aware, Connected, Respected, Responsible and Resilient) and that the learning about wellbeing is clearly outlined and documented on the NCCA Appendix I summary document in the NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines, 104-105).

The JCT Wellbeing Team is currently working on exemplars of Appendix I, which will provide support for schools to assist them in their work, as they incorporate various units of learning within their wellbeing programmes for their students. Please see the Resources Section of the JCT Wellbeing website, where we have uploaded tried and tested exemplars of Appendix I that focus upon (1) Study Skills and (2) An Induction programme to support students transitioning from primary to secondary school.

Please also see, published overleaf in this edition of Leader, our completed Appendix I exemplar with useful instructions on Exploring Homelessness in our Community. This has recently been developed by the JCT Wellbeing Team in order to provide another exemplar for schools and to assist them in developing similar units of learning that are suitable for their own school context and inclusion in their wellbeing programmes.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the JCT Wellbeing team at: info@jct.ie
Exploring Homelessness in our Community

Title of Unit: Exploring Homelessness in our Community

Duration: 6 hours

Aim: Students will explore their understanding of homelessness and understand the causes and consequences of homelessness in society.

The following tables show how this unit Exploring Homelessness in our Community may be linked to the central features of teaching and learning in Junior Cycle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement of Learning</th>
<th>Example of related learning in the unit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOL 7 Values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in their local community</td>
<td>By investigating the causes and effects of homelessness, students will examine their potential role and contribution to the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOL 9 Understands the origins and impacts of social, economic and environmental aspects of the world around him/her</td>
<td>By examining different case studies of people who are homeless, students develop their understanding of how people in different circumstances become homeless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOL 24 Uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical manner</td>
<td>Students will use technology to research and present their learning</td>
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Key Skills

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<tr>
<th>Key Skill</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Student Learning Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>Discussing and debating</td>
<td>Students use a placemat activity at the beginning of the unit to discuss their current understanding of the issue of homelessness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with others</td>
<td>Co-operating</td>
<td>Students in teams will decide on team leaders and assign roles and responsibilities while researching the issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being Creative</td>
<td>Implementing Ideas and taking Action</td>
<td>Students in teams will draw on a range of skills to create a presentation, poster or video on the topic of Homelessness</td>
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The Wellbeing Indicators and Descriptors that this Learning Unit supports:

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<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>• Through focusing on case studies, students will come to recognise that they have a responsibility for the wellbeing of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>• Student appreciate that their actions impact on the lives and wellbeing of others in local and global contexts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respected</td>
<td>• Students learn how to demonstrate empathy, care and respect for homeless people and others who experience disadvantage in our society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aware</td>
<td>• Students develop awareness of their personal values and the values of society in relation to homelessness.</td>
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Learning Outcomes

At the end of this learning unit, students will be able to:

- Identify the reasons and situations which can lead to homelessness in Ireland
- Explain the causes and consequences of homelessness, including the human impact
- Consider helpful and unhelpful responses to the issue of homelessness
- Use digital technologies to communicate their understanding of the causes and types of homelessness and possible responses to homelessness

Sample Learning Activities

- Students will use a placemat activity to identify their current understanding and misconceptions about homelessness in Ireland.
- Students will examine a range of case studies about homelessness in Ireland and categorise possible causes under the headings, social, economic and political
- Through the case studies students will discuss and evaluate the way that a person’s human rights are affected by homelessness.
- Students will source appropriate and relevant information about homelessness in Ireland.
- Students will brainstorm and discuss possible responses to the problem.
- Students will work collaboratively to manage, share and present their learning.
- Students will use success criteria to evaluate their own learning and give constructive feedback to peers

Students will show evidence of their learning when they:

- Engage in the different learning activities e.g. as they respond to brainstorming activities, answer questions, engage in discussions and undertake research.
- Make a presentation to their classmates on at least 2 of the following: possible causes of homelessness; the human impact; possible solutions. Students will be able

Success Criteria for a class presentation

Success criteria should be discussed and agreed with students beforehand. Sample success criteria could include the following:

- The project is based on reliable information drawn from reputable sources
- The presentation includes a critique of the different causes of homelessness
- The presentation should engage the audience and demonstrate creativity

Useful web links:

- https://www.focusireland.ie/our-stories/

Evidence of their learning:

- One assessment activity is sufficient for summative assessment purposes as part of a unit, two at the most.
- The ‘end of unit’ assessment is designed to allow students to show evidence of their important learning in this unit.
- The assessment should relate closely to the aim and learning outcomes of the unit.
- Where the assessment is completed in a group, ideally the group should not include more than three students.