PEPAYS Ireland Forum 2026

Maximising Impact: Transforming Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport for Sustainable Development

Book of Abstracts

Friday, June 12th 2026

Dublin City University

DCU
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

PEPAYS Ireland

Table of Contents

Oral Presentations **5**

Parallel Session A (11:00-12:00) **5**

Understanding the Culture of External Provision in Primary Physical Education A Comparative Thematic Analysis of Six National Contexts 5

Brian Boyle, Richard Bowles, Michelle Dillon *5*

Physical Education Teachers' Learning Communities Through Social Media in China 5

Yue Xu *5*

Funding Innovation in Youth Sport Participation 6

Sowmia Sundaresan, Conor Fadian, Benny Cullen *6*

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Gaelic4Mothers&Others Programme in Ireland: A Thematic Analysis 7

Glynis Gardiner, Wesley O'Brien, Irene Hogan, Conor Philpott *7*

Exploring the Physical Activity experience of Children who are Blind and Vision Impaired 7

Lisa Flynn, Kristina Millar, Sarahjane Belton, Noel O'Connor, Sarah Meegan, Una Britton, Stephen Behan *7*

Parallel Session B (11:00-12:00) **8**

Epistemological beliefs and teaching practices of teacher educators in initial education physical education 8

Mirko Aguilar Valdés, Alejandro Almonacid-Fierro, Antonio Calderón *8*

Policy intentions and enactment across Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport in Ireland: Policymakers' perspectives 9

Mairéad Grogan, Ann MacPhail, João Costa, Brendan O'Keeffe *9*

Fitness Test Battery Software Platforms for Monitoring Physical Fitness Among Adolescents in Secondary Schools: A Scoping Review 9

Eoin Joy, Padraic Rocliffe, Catherine Woods, Wesley O'Brien, Brendan O' Keeffe *9*

Assessing health literacy and physical literacy of young people engaging with health and wellbeing initiatives in an underserved community in Ireland *10*

Maeve Murray, Hannah Goss, Stephen Behan, Wesley O'Brien 10

"You're Told It's Your Decision…": Player Perspectives on Development Pathways in Youth Camogie 11

John Murphy, Hilary Fitzgerald, Jean McArdle. *11*

Parallel Session C (11:00-12:00) **12**

The Feasibility of the COMMUNICATE toolkit for supporting physical activity communication within whole-of-school programmes 12

Caera Grady, Elaine Murtagh, Catherine Woods *12*

Evaluating the Impact and Sustainability of 'The Daily Move': An Innovative Adaptation of 'The Daily Mile' Initiative in Irish Primary Schools 12

Luke Hanna, Edward Coughlan, Con Burns, Cian O'Neill *12*

Connecting Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (PESP) to the Sustainable Development Goals: A Mapping Analysis of UNESCO Documentation 13

Zhendong Li, Ann MacPhail, Sean Healy *13*

Psychological and Relational Correlates of Dropout in Organised Sport 14

Zining Liu, Ross.D.Neville *14*
Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy for Sustainable Development. A Scoping Review 14
William Hughes, Zhendong Li & Ann MacPhail *14*
Parallel Session D Lightning Talks (11:00-12:00) **15**
Learning to Let Go: Developing and Facilitating a Cooperative Learning Unit in Physical Education from Teacher-Led to Pupil-Led Practice 15
Stephanie Bowden, Stephanie Bowden, Ellanna Fitzpatrick, Beibhinn Murphy, Maeve Murray *15*
Examining Macro-, Meso-, and Micro-Level Commitment to Equity and Diversity in Teacher Education in Ireland 16
Síofra Hannah Lawlor, Ann MacPhail, Antonio Calderon & Joanne O'Flaherty *16*
Research activity aligned with the UNESCO Chair Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy for Sustainable Development 16
Ann MacPhail *16*
Advocating for Implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity: Challenges and Support Requirements 17
Joey Murphy, Karen Milton, Matthew Mclaughlin, Trevor Shilton, Gabriella McLoughlin, Lindsey Reece, Jacqueline Mair, Artur Direito, Katharina Kariippanon, Kelly Mackenzie, Myrto Mavilidi, Erin Shellington, Masamitsu Kamada, Leonie Heron, Edtna Jauregui, Chalchisa Abdeta, Ilaria Pina, Ryan Pinto, Rachel Sutherland *17*
Life Skill Development in Primary Physical Education (PE): Opportunities and Challenges 18
Oisín Ryan, Déirdre Ní Chróinín, Lorcan Cronin *18*
Participatory Methodologies to promote student voice and agency PA and Health Projects 18
Lucia Sanchis-Francés, Alexandra Valencia-Peris *18*
Irish Secondary Schools Physical Literacy Project 19
Seán Townsend, Stephen Behan, Nathan Gavigan, Sarahjane Belton, Brendan O'Keeffe *19*
Parallel Session E (12:00-13:00) **19**
Do Irish Schoolyards Support Physical Activity, Wellbeing, and Sustainability? Insights from a National Survey 19
Michelle Bergin *19*
Teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes in CLIL PE through Irish - Preliminary findings from the 6-week LÉIM intervention. 20
Conor Philpott, Craig Neville, Diarmuid Lester, Hilary Ní Chonchubhair, Tomás Dowling *20*
Reducing inequalities (SDG 10) through reflexivity and vulnerability: applying critical pedagogy in Adapted Physical Activity (APA) teaching 21
Tomás Aylward, Maura Coulter *21*
Teaching 'Outdoor and Adventure Education' in Primary Schools in Ireland at a time of Curriculum Redevelopment 21
Michelle Dillon, Maura Coulter *21*
"Goldilocks day": identifying the optimal awake movement behaviour composition for predicted cardiometabolic health outcomes in youth 22
Joey Murphy, Charlotte Lund Rasmussen, Javier Brazo-Sayavera, Ademola Victor Damilola, Nastja Loredan, Aoko Oluwayomi, Luís Bettencourt Sardinha, Niels Wedderkopp, Elaine Murtagh *22*
Parallel Session F (12:00-13:00) **23**
Personal PE Notebooks as a Pedagogical Tool in Primary PE 23

Grace Cardiff *23*

Extending beyond the pitch to mainstream education: Parental insights into a football centred physical activity programme for children with autism. 23

Ellen Lavery, Barry Lambe, Aisling McGrath *23*

Enhancing Inclusion in Physical Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Irish Post-Primary Schools 24

Paidi Kelly, Frances Murphy, Joe Travers *24*

Inclusive Physical Education for Pupils with Visual Impairment: Developing Teacher Supports through Design Based Research 25

Niamh Boylan, Frances Murphy, Sinéad McCauley Lambe *25*

Practice What We Teach: An Overview of School Placement in University College Cork 25

Wesley O'Brien, Holly Peters, Conor Philpott, Diarmuid Lester *25*

Parallel Session G (12:00-13:00) **26**

Preliminary Validity and Reliability of a tool to evaluate Physical Education student teachers' self-efficacy and outcome expectations of implementing Pedagogical Models 26

João Costa, Carmen Barquero Ruiz, João Mota, Claire Walsh, Paul McFlynn *26*

Burnout Among SETU Sports Scholarship Students: Implications for Academic Performance and Dual-Career Demands 27

Aoife Kennedy *27*

Evaluating the Impact of a Digital Health Intervention on Council Workers Physical Activity Levels 27

Zahra Khodabacksh *27*

Preliminary Impact of LifeLab Dublin on the Health Literacy and Wellbeing Levels of Adolescents from Socio-economic Disadvantage 28

Lorna Burke, Nathan Gavigan, Sarahjane Belton, Mika Manninen, Hannah Goss *28*

Digital Technology-Based Interventions for Physical Activity and Dietary Behaviours in Children: A Systematic Review of Effectiveness, Delivery, and Intervention Components 29

Layla Alvey, Tara Coppinger, Alison Merrotsy, Ciara O'Sullivan, Mai O'Leary *29*

Symposium (12:00-13:00) **29**

Reframing Health and Fitness in Post-Primary Physical Education - Pedagogical Perspectives, Practice and Policy 29

Elaine Murtagh *29*

Teachers' perspectives on incorporating muscle strengthening exercise in physical education 31

Brendan O'Keeffe, Darragh Collins, Niamh O'Loughlin, Angeliek Verdonschot, David Lubans, Elaine Murtagh *31*

Embedding Health in Movement: Integrating Health-Related Activity Through Gymnastics in Junior Cycle PE 32

Elaine Murtagh, Alana Ní Chuinneagáin, Brendan O'Keeffe *32*

PEAI Position Statement on Fitness Testing 33

John Murphy, Brendan O'Keeffe *33*

Oral Presentations

Parallel Session A (11:00-12:00)

Understanding the Culture of External Provision in Primary Physical Education A Comparative Thematic Analysis of Six National Contexts

Brian Boyle, Richard Bowles, Michelle Dillon

External Provision (EP) or outsourcing in the global educational system involves transferring curriculum development or delivery to private organisations, driven by neo-liberal, market-oriented policies since the 1980s (Ball, 2009; Ball and Youdell, 2008; Lair, 2012). The constant interplay between policy and practice impacts what teachers teach and what students experience as Physical Education (PE). This results in a 'slippage' (Penney and Evans, 2005) where policy intent is altered by contextual realities like institutional resistance or economic limitations, manifesting in inconsistent implementation.

Externally provided physical activity programs, where specialists deliver instruction, are a recognised strategy to mitigate reliance on generalist teachers for primary school PE. A common justification for outsourcing is gaining access to 'specialised' expertise, though this can come at the cost of pedagogical expertise (Enright et al., 2020; Griggs, 2010). While research highlights this demand, some scholars argue that viewing expertise solely as subject or content knowledge is overly simplistic. Empirical data demonstrates that EP is highly prevalent globally:Ireland: 82% of surveyed teachers ($n=513$) reported regular engagement with EP (Teehan et al., 2023). This aligns with Mangione et al. (2020), who found 24 different external entities integrated across 67 schools, most commonly the GAA (59.7%) and swimming.New Zealand: 87% of surveyed teachers ($n=487$) indicated using EP in their schools (Dyson, 2016).This review highlights the need for standardised EP training via teachers and NGOs to align with national curricula, promoting inclusivity and physical literacy. Future research should address non-Anglophone contexts and long-term student outcomes to mitigate sportification risks.

Physical Education Teachers' Learning Communities Through Social Media in China

Yue Xu

Introduction: Social media can be used to build professional learning communities that align with school responsibilities and support professional development opportunities among physical education teachers worldwide1. While most studies exploring cultural differences in social media usage have been conducted in the USA and UK, this study examines the extent to which Chinese physical education teachers engage with social media platforms as a community for learning. Methods: Purposive sampling was used for participant recruitment, with the inclusion criteria as follows: (1) teachers hold a registered teaching certificate in school physical education in Shanghai; (2) teachers actively use social media for professional learning purposes; and (3) the school has established regulations, policies, or workshops to enhance teachers' use of social media for professional learning. Interview questions were informed by a range of previous research study protocols and organized in five elements. Two pilot interviews were conducted to adapt the

interview questions to the Chinese context. 31 participants were selected for semi-structured individual interviews conducted via Tencent Meeting (Voov). Data analysis was guided by elements from various models of learning communities, including Communities of Practice, Teacher Professional Communities, and Professional Learning Communities.
Results: Four themes were identified: (1) WeChat, Tiktok, and Redbook were the main platforms for accessing innovative teaching approaches and district-led learning activities. (2) The physical education and health curriculum 2025 provided teachers with opportunities to design teaching, creating extra workload. (3) School-based and district-based group chats were joined mandatorily for teachers with less than five years' teaching experience, while friend-based group chats were joined voluntarily with teachers outside of the school from previous education experience. (4) The new curriculum encouraged teachers to use AI-based tools for innovation in teaching but lacked related facilities and guidelines provided in the schools.
Discussion: The findings of this research will inform the most effective support needed for Chinese physical education teachers to maximise the use of WeChat as a professional learning community. It is envisaged that this will include reducing teachers' workload, fostering a non-judgmental learning culture in group chats within and outside schools, and updating facilities or devices to enable teachers to try innovative ideas in the classroom.

Funding Innovation in Youth Sport Participation

Sowmia Sundaresan, Conor Fadian, Benny Cullen

Background: Only 12 % of post-primary students meet the national physical activity guidelines of at least 60 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. Eight National Governing Bodies were funded through the Teen Sport Innovation Fund. An internal evaluation was conducted to understand the processes undertaken by the eight projects and the role such targeted funding played in sports participation.

Methods: The study employed purposive sampling to recruit all project leads of the Teen Sport Innovation Fund 2024. Seven project leads participated in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Transcripts were coded using codes/themes derived both from the objectives of the study and the 5-stage design thinking process (innovation).

Findings: The evaluation found that NGBs operated within a context of strategic focus and operational capacity which determined internal organisational challenges to undertake participatory initiatives. Within this context, although NGBs varied in their models of design and delivery, almost all organisations saw value in two core ideas: developing participation pathways beyond play; and co-designing programmes with teenagers. Targeted investments for specific demographics were largely perceived to be a crucial mechanism to deliver participatory programmes. It was also important to build accountability in organisations that are meeting initial gaps in participation of the target demographics. Taking note of innovation timelines, it would be important to fund implementation beyond the initial 12-months cycle.

Conclusion: Continued ring-fenced funding to demographics, ongoing support with innovation (design, implementation and measurement of success) and 2-year funding timelines (funding the

design stage and the a cycle of implementation) will positively enable sport organisations to develop targeted, co-designed initiatives towards youth sports participation.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Gaelic4Mothers&Others Programme in Ireland: A Thematic Analysis

Glynis Gardiner, Wesley O'Brien, Irene Hogan, Conor Philpott

Purpose: Women's participation in sport and physical activity remains consistently lower than men's worldwide. The Gaelic4Mothers&Others (G4M&O) programme, developed by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) to engage women aged 25+, promotes fun, non-competitive participation in Ladies Gaelic Football. This study evaluates the effectiveness of the programme and explores participants' experiences to inform future programme development.

Methods: A mixed-methods design was used, based on a validated self-reported online survey. This abstract focuses on qualitative data generated through an open-ended question included in the survey, completed by 386 participants. Responses were analysed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns in experiences and perceptions beyond the quantitative measures.

Results: A total of 1,111 women completed the full survey, with 386 contributing qualitative feedback. Five themes were identified: (1) Flexibility, Access, and Participation; (2) Enjoyment and Well being (3) Community, Friendship, and Belonging; (4) Inclusivity, Equality, and Recognition; and (5) Resources, Costs, and Practical Supports. Participants highlighted strong enjoyment, social connection, and health benefits but also noted challenges related to programme flexibility, recognition, resource availability, and the financial and logistical barriers affecting accessibility.

Conclusions/Implications: The G4M&O programme effectively supports women's physical, mental, and social well-being while fostering inclusive community engagement. However, programme sustainability and growth would benefit from greater flexibility in rules and delivery, targeted funding to strengthen accessibility, and enhanced supports addressing participants' diverse needs. These findings can guide practice and policy aimed at promoting lifelong, community-based physical activity for women.

Support/Funding Source: This research was funded by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA).

Exploring the Physical Activity experience of Children who are Blind and Vision Impaired

Lisa Flynn, Kristina Millar, Sarahjane Belton, Noel O'Connor, Sarah Meegan, Una Britton, Stephen Behan

Background: Children and adolescents who are blind or vision impaired (BVI) represent a significant but underserved demographic in public health. In Ireland, over 32,000 children are BVI, yet they engage in significantly lower levels of physical activity (PA) than their sighted peers. This population is at risk of missing the "triple dividend" of health benefits—immediate, lifelong, and intergenerational—offered by an active adolescence. This study investigates the current state of PA, physical education (PE), and active travel (AT) to identify pathways for sustainable transformation

in youth sport and education.Methods: A mixed-methods design was utilized to capture a holistic view of the BVI experience. Quantitatively, a cross-sectional survey (n=53) assessed PA levels and engagement in PE and AT. Qualitatively, reflexive thematic analysis of focus groups involving adolescents aged 12-18, grounded in the Social Ecological Model, explored lived experiences and systemic barriers.Results: Findings indicate a critical failure in current inclusion models. Only 9.6% of BVI youth meet the World Health Organization's PA guidelines of 60 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous activity. Engagement in school-based PE is worryingly low, with a mean of 58.63 minutes per week—well below national recommendations—and only 32.1% of respondents meeting guidelines. Furthermore, just 14.4% utilize AT for school journeys, citing environmental hazards like cluttered pavements and inaccessible infrastructure. Qualitative data reveals that adolescents often feel "out of PE," struggling with a lack of teacher training and the tension between seeking autonomy and requiring adult assistance for mobility.Conclusion and Impact: To maximize impact and achieve sustainable development in youth sport, policy must move beyond documenting obstacles toward addressing lived experiences. Transforming these landscapes requires a multi-level approach: improving professional training for PE teachers, implementing the National Sustainable Mobility Policy with BVI-specific accessibility, and centering youth voices in intervention design. Fostering fundamental motor skills and social inclusion now establishes a healthy foundation that reduces long-term healthcare expenditure and supports the health of future generations

Parallel Session B (11:00-12:00)

Epistemological beliefs and teaching practices of teacher educators in initial education physical education

Mirko Aguilar Valdés, Alejandro Almonacid-Fierro, Antonio Calderón

This study aimed to understand the relationship between the epistemological beliefs of teacher educators who teach disciplinary and pedagogical courses in Physical Education teacher education programs and their teaching practices, considering contextual conditions and professional experience in universities in the central-southern region of Chile. Existing research indicates that such beliefs shape instructional decision-making and teaching practices, and have been identified as a central area for professional learning and development among teacher educators.
The study was framed within a post-positivist paradigm, employing a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design. Findings revealed the coexistence of naïve and sophisticated epistemological tendencies, with a predominance of naïve orientations. Teaching practices were largely experiential, characterized by a predominance of non-interactive discursive strategies and a fragmented approach to knowledge organization. However, these practices were significantly mediated by contextual factors and professional experience.
The results demonstrate that epistemological beliefs play a key role in shaping teaching practices, although this relationship is complex and non-linear rather than deterministic. In light of these findings, the study highlights the importance of fostering structured opportunities for pedagogical reflection that enable teacher educators to make their beliefs explicit, critically examine them, and align them with contextual demands. Such efforts are essential for strengthening the professional development and enacted professionalism of teacher educators within initial teacher education.

Policy intentions and enactment across Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport in Ireland: Policymakers' perspectives

Mairéad Grogan, Ann MacPhail, João Costa, Brendan O'Keeffe

Background: Only 12 % of post-primary students meet the national physical activity guidelines of at least 60 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. Eight National Governing Bodies were funded through the Teen Sport Innovation Fund. An internal evaluation was conducted to understand the processes undertaken by the eight projects and the role such targeted funding played in sports participation.

Methods: The study employed purposive sampling to recruit all project leads of the Teen Sport Innovation Fund 2024. Seven project leads participated in semi-structured interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams. Transcripts were coded using codes/themes derived both from the objectives of the study and the 5-stage design thinking process (innovation).

Findings: The evaluation found that NGBs operated within a context of strategic focus and operational capacity which determined internal organisational challenges to undertake participatory initiatives. Within this context, although NGBs varied in their models of design and delivery, almost all organisations saw value in two core ideas: developing participation pathways beyond play; and co-designing programmes with teenagers. Targeted investments for specific demographics were largely perceived to be a crucial mechanism to deliver participatory programmes. It was also important to build accountability in organisations that are meeting initial gaps in participation of the target demographics. Taking note of innovation timelines, it would be important to fund implementation beyond the initial 12-months cycle.

Conclusion: Continued ring-fenced funding to demographics, ongoing support with innovation (design, implementation and measurement of success) and 2-year funding timelines (funding the design stage and the a cycle of implementation) will positively enable sport organisations to develop targeted, co-designed initiatives towards youth sports participation.

Fitness Test Battery Software Platforms for Monitoring Physical Fitness Among Adolescents in Secondary Schools: A Scoping Review

Eoin Joy, Padraic Rocliffe, Catherine Woods, Wesley O'Brien, Brendan O' Keeffe

Background: Physical fitness (PF) is a key indicator of youth health. Increasingly, schools are adopting fitness test battery (FTB) software platforms to assess, monitor, and report student PF. This scoping review aimed to identify FTB software platforms used in secondary schools globally, map the PF components and tests incorporated within these platforms, and examine platform functionality, including software inputs, outputs, and accessibility features.

Methods: A scoping review was conducted using a six-stage framework and reported in accordance with PRISMA-ScR guidelines. Four electronic databases and targeted grey literature were searched to identify FTB software platforms used in secondary schools. Data were charted using structured

frameworks and analysed using descriptive statistics and manifest content analysis to map platform characteristics, including fitness components, test items, and software functionality.

Findings: Twenty-eight platforms were identified across 26 countries/regions, predominantly in Europe (64.3%) and Asia (25%), revealing marked regional clustering and limited representation in low-to-middle income contexts. Health-related PF components were universally included, whereas performance-related PF components were less consistently assessed (75% of platforms). Most platforms (85.7%) operated under government or institutional provision, and although all generated digital reports, the scope and intended recipients varied across students, teachers, schools, and policymakers.

Implications for School Health Policy, Practice, and Equity: Findings reveal an uneven global distribution of FTB software platforms, highlighting inequalities and the need for coordinated international approaches to support equitable, evidence-based PF monitoring in schools.

Conclusions: This review provides the first global mapping of adolescent FTB software platforms used in secondary schools. Despite expanding functionality, gaps persist in regional coverage, performance-related physical fitness integration, and student access, indicating that harmonised testing alone is insufficient without sustained governance, funding, and institutional or commercial support.

Assessing health literacy and physical literacy of young people engaging with health and wellbeing initiatives in an underserved community in Ireland

Maeve Murray, Hannah Goss, Stephen Behan, Wesley O'Brien

Introduction: Physical literacy (PL) and health literacy (HL) impact children's lifelong health and wellbeing. Children living in underserved urban communities may experience structural and social barriers influencing PL and HL development. A contextual understanding of these literacies can inform targeted health promotion strategies for physical activity engagement in youth.

Methods: Participants (n = 65; 5 – 13 years) were recruited from three urban youth community health and wellbeing programmes. Participants completed Physical Literacy in Children Questionnaire (PL-C Quest), assessing four domains of physical, psychological, social, and cognitive PL, and the Health Literacy for School-Aged Children-5 (HLSAC-5) assessing five domains of theoretical and practical knowledge, critical thinking, self-awareness and citizenship HL. A subsample (n = 12; 5-6 years) completed actual (TGMD-3 short form) and perceived (PMSC) motor competence measures.

Results: Social was the highest scoring PL domain for all children. Lower PL-C Quest scores observed in younger children (5-6 years). Mean results observed comparable PL findings with published cohorts. Subsample spearman's rank correlations revealed separate statistically significant correlations between perceived locomotor skills mastery; perceived ball skills mastery and overall perceived mastery ($p < .001$). No statistically significant associations observed between actual and perceived motor competence mastery (p = .66). Moderate to high HL levels (83.1%) were observed and was comparable to published international data. Higher levels of overall HL

associated with higher levels of PL in children ($r(62) = .371$, $p > .05$), with the strongest correlation found in the younger years.

Discussion: Utilising PLC-Quest and HLSAC-5 presents novel findings of health and wellbeing in an Irish underserved urban setting. Further demonstrating comparable results to existing published cohort data. However, a contextual approach is required to underscore the importance of systems-level implementation strategies for HL and PL in Irish urban communities.

Conclusion: Strengthening PL and HL in underserved communities can be structured through extensive health and wellbeing targeted intervention. Reinforcing an integrated systems approaches to health promotion in Ireland is warranted.

"You're Told It's Your Decision…": Player Perspectives on Development Pathways in Youth Camogie

John Murphy, Hilary Fitzgerald, Jean McArdle.

This study examined player experiences of development pathways within intercounty camogie, with a focus on how young athletes navigate and perceive their participation across club, school, and county contexts. Building on Phase 1 findings from interviews with Development Officers and Games Managers, a vignette was developed to illustrate potential differences in male and female pathway experiences and to act as a stimulus for deeper reflection and discussion.
Phase 2 adopted a qualitative approach, involving four focus groups (n = 18) with players who had progressed through development squads. Participants first engaged with the vignette and reflected on its alignment with their own experiences. They then completed a calendar-mapping activity to capture a representative 12-month period of participation, including training, matches, and other commitments. This approach enabled both discussion-based insights and visual representations of player workloads and environments.
Thematic analysis identified five key themes: (1) scheduling demands and calendar congestion, (2) organisational structures and coaching continuity, (3) player development experiences, (4) resource provision and perceived inequality, and (5) social environment and team culture. Players described development squads as enjoyable and valuable, particularly for skill development, motivation, and social connection. However, calendar timelines highlighted frequent overlap between club, county, and school commitments, with limited coordination between stakeholders. Participants also reported variability in coaching approaches, communication, and access to resources, alongside perceived differences between male and female development environments.
Overall, the findings highlight the complexity of youth sport participation within multi-team systems. While development squads provide meaningful opportunities for engagement and progression, greater alignment across stakeholders, improved communication, and more consistent support structures are needed to better support player development and wellbeing within camogie pathways.

Parallel Session C (11:00-12:00)

The Feasibility of the COMMUNICATE toolkit for supporting physical activity communication within whole-of-school programmes

Caera Grady, Elaine Murtagh, Catherine Woods

Purpose: This study aimed to assess the feasibility of the co-created COMMUNICATE toolkit to improve the communication of physical activity messages among whole-of-school physical activity programme implementers.
Methods: A pre-post, quasi-experimental, mixed-methods feasibility study design was adopted following the Orsmond and Cohn (2015) objectives for feasibility studies. Secondary schools enrolled in a whole-of-school physical activity programme in Ireland were invited to participate (N=14). Data were collected using online surveys and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with teachers and students respectively. Survey data were analysed using independent and paired samples t-tests to compare the differences between and within the groups. Interview and focus group data were analysed using a combined inductive-deductive reflexive thematic analysis. Data were integrated during the analysis and write-up stages.
Results: Six schools (40%) were recruited, including 170 peer leaders and three coordinating teachers. The timing of the data collection needs reconsideration to maximise student engagement, and the validity and reliability of the Determinants of Physical Activity Questionnaire with adolescents needs to be established. The intervention, though perceived as acceptable and appropriate, was not fully implemented. Providing the toolkit at the start of the year and aligning training with the rest of the whole-of-school programme training may improve implementation. The study was manageable for the research team as intervention implementation is performed by the teacher at each site. No significant differences were found between the intervention and control groups at follow-up for any outcomes. Participants believe that there are benefits of using the toolkit for i) peer leaders' personal development and knowledge, and ii) the whole-of-school communities' PA and knowledge levels.
Conclusions: Refinement of the co-created COMMUNICATE toolkit intervention and study procedures is required before a definitive trial takes place. Future studies should use the learnings from this trial to adapt the co-created COMMUNICATE toolkit to different school contexts.

Evaluating the Impact and Sustainability of 'The Daily Move': An Innovative Adaptation of 'The Daily Mile' Initiative in Irish Primary Schools

Luke Hanna, Edward Coughlan, Con Burns, Cian O'Neill

Background
The Daily Move (TDMo) is a modified version of 'The Daily Mile (TDMi) that incorporates a wider range of physical activity options to support children's engagement. This research assessed and compared the health-related effectiveness of TDMi and TDMo, and evaluated the sustainability of TDMo through teacher-led implementation.

Methods
Phase One involved the participation of ~7-year-old and ~11-year-old cohorts from six primary schools. Two schools were assigned to TDMi (n=102; M=8.81 years; SD=1.97), two to TDMo (n=87;

M=9.16 years; SD=2.76), and two served as controls (n=79; M=10.05 years; SD=1.9) during a 10-week intervention. Pre- and post-intervention assessments measured cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF), fundamental movement skills (FMS), health-related quality-of-life (HRQoL), school-based moderate-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and sedentary behaviour, and enjoyment in TDMi and TDMo. Phase Two involved teachers (n=28) implementing TDMo for two separate 5-week blocks. Teachers completed questionnaires (n=4) aligned with the RE-AIM framework at the start and end of each block. Two teacher focus groups (n=6) and one child focus group (n=6) were conducted post-intervention.

Results
Both TDMi and TDMo significantly improved CRF and MVPA ($p<0.05$). TDMo had a significant positive impact on FMS, sedentary behaviour, and HRQoL ($p<0.05$), whereas TDMi did not ($p>0.05$). Enjoyment ratings were significantly higher for TDMo (4.61 vs 4.43; $p=0.03$). Teachers perceived their implementation of TDMo to positively influence multiple outcomes including fitness, movement, and concentration. Children's participation in choosing the games of TDMo sessions increased significantly from Block One to Two ($p=0.01$). Most teachers (96.2%) intended to sustain implementing TDMo after Block Two concluded. Identified implementation barriers included time constraints and inclement weather.

Conclusion
The diverse nature of TDMo is associated with broader health benefits and higher engagement compared to TDMi. Advance planning, integration into teachers' schedules, and commitment to delivery are key to mitigating implementation barriers and supporting the sustainability and impact of TDMo in primary schools.

Connecting Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (PESP) to the Sustainable Development Goals: A Mapping Analysis of UNESCO Documentation

Zhendong Li, Ann MacPhail, Sean Healy

Over the past decade, UNESCO has published a wide range of official documents concerning Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (PESP). These outputs span a diverse and fragmented array of document types. As the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have gained increasing global emphasis, recent documents have increasingly sought to situate their agendas within the broader SDG framework and draw connections to sustainable development principles. However, most still lack explicit, structured alignment with the SDGs and do not systematically clarify PESP's positioning in advancing SDGs. This fragmented landscape means no clear overview exists that clarifies how UNESCO positions PESP in relation to the SDGs.

This study presents a descriptive mapping analysis of 39 UNESCO PESP-related policy documents published from 2015 to 2025. A structured Excel-based coding framework was used to systematically document key features, thematic foci, and connections to the SDGs across official documents. This was followed by an inductive approach to interrogate how SDGs/sustainability and its related elements are conceptually framed and operationalized within these texts.

Results confirm clear alignment with eight specific SDGs (3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17). Furthermore, the mapping identifies three primary SDG-related intended functions of PESP: (i) supporting quality

physical education (QPE), (ii) advancing equity and inclusion, and (iii) fostering social transformation. This study provides a consolidated overview of how UNESCO links PESP with the SDGs, serving as a reference point for future policy, practice, and research aligned with the global sustainable development agenda.

Psychological and Relational Correlates of Dropout in Organised Sport

Zining Liu, Ross.D.Neville

"Sustaining young people's participation in organised sport is central to the broader goal of sustainable sport development. If sport is to contribute meaningfully to lifelong physical activity, wellbeing, and positive developmental outcomes, it must create environments that not only attract young people but also support them to remain involved over time. Understanding the psychological and relational factors that underpin continued participation, and that may help reduce dropout, is therefore critical. Although previous research has identified a range of motivational and social influences associated with intentions to continue in sport, fewer studies have directly examined the factors that distinguish those who remain involved from those who have actually dropped out.

The present study addressed this gap by comparing current and former participants in organised sport across key psychological and relational determinants: goal orientations, psychological need satisfaction and frustration, and coach-athlete relationship quality. Two hundred and thirty-five participants (M age = 20.95 years, SD = 2.19) completed a questionnaire assessing their current sport participation status (N = 127 continued players; N = 108 dropout players) and validated measures of the identified determinants. A multivariate analysis of variance showed that the overall set of psychological and relational variables significantly differentiated the groups (Wilks' $\lambda = .814$, $F(11, 223) = 4.65$, $p < .001$). Follow-up analyses indicated that those who continued in sport reported higher coach-athlete commitment, closeness, and complementarity, greater autonomy, competence, and relatedness satisfaction, and lower autonomy, competence, and relatedness frustration than those who had dropped out. Task and ego orientation did not significantly differentiate the groups.

These findings suggest that sustainable participation in youth sport is shaped not only by motivation, but by the quality of young people's relational experiences and the extent to which sport settings support their basic psychological needs. Creating more need-supportive and relationally positive sport environments may therefore be an important strategy for reducing dropout and strengthening the long-term sustainability of youth sport participation."

Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy for Sustainable Development. A Scoping Review

William Hughes, Zhendong Li & Ann MacPhail

The integration of sustainability into education has become an essential priority for twenty-first-century learning, with UNESCO emphasising the need for education systems to cultivate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to support more just, peaceful, and sustainable futures. Within this landscape, Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy (PESP) is increasingly recognised as a promising yet underexplored field for advancing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). As a discipline concerned with purposeful human movement and

the relationships between body, environment, and community, PESP offers unique potential for supporting learners' understanding of sustainability in embodied, social, and place-based ways. Despite recent growth in studies linking PESP with sustainability, concerns remain regarding the conceptual clarity with which sustainability, sustainable development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are invoked. In particular, not all studies articulate working definitions of ESD specific to PESP contexts, raising questions about how sustainability is being interpreted, operationalised, and claimed within the field. This review aims to investigate the extent to which PESP for sustainability development related research defines and interrogates conceptual understandings of sustainability and its related elements, before asserting that the study contributes to sustainability. Given the conceptual complexity and emerging nature of the field, a scoping review methodology was selected. The review followed Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework, was guided by the Joanna Briggs Institute Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Peters et al., 2020) and reported according to PRISMA-ScR. A comprehensive search of PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, SPORTDiscus, and relevant grey literature (up to June 2025) identified studies meeting Participant-Concept-Context criteria. Data were charted descriptively and thematically to capture study characteristics, conceptualisations of sustainability, methodological approaches, and reported advocacy skillsets. Findings will provide a critical foundation for advancing conceptual rigour and pedagogical innovation in PESP for sustainable development.

Parallel Session D Lightning Talks (11:00-12:00)

Learning to Let Go: Developing and Facilitating a Cooperative Learning Unit in Physical Education from Teacher-Led to Pupil-Led Practice

Stephanie Bowden, Ellanna Fitzpatrick, Beibhinn Murphy, Maeve Murray

Pre-service teachers (PSTs) translation of university-based content knowledge into effective school-based practice is a complex and non-linear process. Teaching practicum plays a critical role in developing PSTs' self-efficacy, yet challenges bridging the gap between theoretical and responsive pedagogical enactment in diverse classroom contexts.
Three PSTs collaboratively designed Skill Sphere, a five-lesson cooperative learning unit grounded in curriculum models and contemporary PE pedagogy. Implementation across three post-primary school settings (two DEIS) allowed data from reflective accounts, lesson artefacts and tutor feedback to explore how PSTs enacted and adapted their pedagogical knowledge in practice.
A shift from teacher-led instruction towards pupil-centred and pupil-led learning observed across all settings with pupils engaged in collaborative problem-solving, strategic thinking and shared responsibility for learning. PSTs demonstrated increased confidence in structuring lessons that integrated cognitive, social and physical domains. Differences in school context outcomes were seen as one rural DEIS secondary school context was found to challenge pupils empowerment to independently develop creative non-verbal strategies for PE engagement.
Pupils transition from passive participation to active cognitive engagement means task execution moves to collective construction of solutions, demonstrating leadership, adaptability and shared ownership. These findings position cooperative learning as a powerful pedagogical approach that functions as a "practical laboratory" for developing transferable life skills in PE as facilitated by PSTs. While increased pupil autonomy was evident, PSTs identified challenges in maintaining

learning quality such as sustaining reflective practice underpinning importance of university-based content into practice, paving the way for sustainable development principles by reducing dependency on teacher feedback and equipping pupils with the skills and confidence to engage in lifelong physical activity.
This study demonstrates that intentionally scaffolded cooperative learning units can support PSTs in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Fostering pupil agency and embedding reflective pedagogical processes contributes to development of confident, adaptable educators, promoting sustainable, student-centred PE environments.

Examining Macro-, Meso-, and Micro-Level Commitment to Equity and Diversity in Teacher Education in Ireland

Síofra Hannah Lawlor, Ann MacPhail, Antonio Calderon & Joanne O'Flaherty

Purpose: Despite improvements in awareness of social issues across Ireland's educational context, there is a need for ongoing development in educating pre-service teachers' (PSTs) on equity and diversity (ED) matters in their teacher education (TE). This study aimed to distinguish between macro-, meso-, and micro-level commitment of ED in Irish TE, and what involvement at each level looked like.
Methodology: A thematic analysis was undertaken of a narrative document on the provision for ED in Irish TE. Three steps (open, axial, and selective coding) guided the analysis by inductively assigning each sentence/key-point a preliminary 'tag(s)' using Taguette, an open-source qualitative data analysis software tool. These tags were then systematically reviewed, before the Taguette dataset was exported to Microsoft Excel, where multiple tables were pivoted to view the information from different perspectives. Each tag was labelled with "micro", "meso", and/or "macro". Tag frequencies were calculated at each level, and broader themes were identified and refined until a final thematic framework was established.
Findings: Sixteen codes were established, totalling 250 tagged sentences (tags). Some tags fell under more than one of the micro (N=71), meso (N=153), and macro (N=127) levels. The codes were grouped into four themes, (1) legislative involvement of ED in TE, (2) importance of ED for pupils, (3) current setbacks and how these need to be addressed, and (4) process of becoming teachers who strive for ED.
Conclusions: Despite the recent update of standards for initial TE in Ireland (macro), there is still uncertainty about how ED can be implemented within classrooms (micro) and in practice across institutions (meso). Establishing more policies at the macro level is essential to ensure that all institutions implement effective support measures that prepare PSTs to teach in an equitable, diverse, and inclusive way.

Research activity aligned with the UNESCO Chair Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy for Sustainable Development

Ann MacPhail

The UNESCO Chair Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy for Sustainable Development, awarded in 2024 to the University of Limerick, is an international effort that seeks to establish a sustainable and inclusive approach to physical education and sport (PESP). By collaborating with global

partners, the Chair will facilitate research, capacity building, and educational practices that contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

One objective of the project is to develop and disseminate an innovative research agenda/portfolio that captures the pressing issues and potential synergies between PESP and sustainable development, with a view to directing stakeholders in meaningful research endeavours in the area. Four research projects are underway and include (1) an ontological framework for embedding sustainability in PESP, (2) a scoping review exploring the extent to which sustainability is interrogated in the physical education and sport pedagogy for sustainable development literature, (3) conceptual clarifications of the alignment of PESP, sustainable development and education for sustainable development and (4) systematically identifying and mapping instances in which sustainable development is captured in PESP-related initial teacher education (ITE) programme documentation.

Advocating for Implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity: Challenges and Support Requirements

Joey Murphy, Karen Milton, Matthew Mclaughlin, Trevor Shilton, Gabriella McLoughlin, Lindsey Reece, Jacqueline Mair, Artur Direito, Katharina Kariippanon, Kelly Mackenzie, Myrto Mavilidi, Erin Shellington, Masamitsu Kamada, Leonie Heron, Edtna Jauregui, Chalchisa Abdeta, Ilaria Pina, Ryan Pinto, Rachel Sutherland

Background: There is limited understanding of the challenges experienced and supports required to aid effective advocacy of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA). The purpose of this study was to assess the challenges experienced and supports needed to advocate for the GAPPA across countries of different income levels. Methods: Stakeholders working in an area related to the promotion of physical activity were invited to complete an online survey. The survey assessed current awareness and engagement with the GAPPA, factors related to advocacy, and the perceived challenges and supports related to advocacy for implementation of the GAPPA. Closed questions were analysed in SPSS, with a Pearson's chi-square test used to assess differences between country income level. Open questions were analysed using inductive thematic analysis. Results: Participants (n = 518) from 81 countries completed the survey. Significant differences were observed between country income level for awareness of the GAPPA and perceived country engagement with the GAPPA. Challenges related to advocacy included a lack of support and engagement, resources, priority, awareness, advocacy education and training, accessibility, and local application. Supports needed for future advocacy included guidance and support, cooperation and alliance, advocacy education and training, and advocacy resources. Conclusions: Although stakeholders from different country income levels experience similar advocacy challenges and required supports, how countries experience these can be distinct. This research has highlighted some specific ways in which those involved in the promotion of physical activity can be supported to scale up advocacy for the GAPPA. When implementing such supports, consideration of regional, geographic, and cultural barriers and opportunities is important to ensure they are effective and equitable.

Life Skill Development in Primary Physical Education (PE): Opportunities and Challenges

Oisín Ryan, Déirdre Ní Chróinín, Lorcan Cronin

Physical education (PE) is an opportunity for development of life skills (Opstoel et al., 2020) but guidance on how to effectively support this learning in primary PE remains limited. Therefore, the broad objectives of this study were to explore what can be learned from primary school teachers' current experiences of life skills development in PE? This qualitative research involved semi-structured interviews (averaging 50 minutes) with 13 primary teachers to learn from their current experiences of life skills teaching in PE. A reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) of interview transcripts generated three themes: (1) Primary PE as a unique context for life skills development; (2) Developing life skills in primary PE using an implicit–explicit continuum; and (3) Contextual constraints shaping life skills development practice in primary PE. The findings provide insight into how teachers value life skills as key prerequisites for children to progress through second and third level education as well as their working careers; why they consider primary PE a unique context for life skills development in comparison to other curriculum subjects due to its interactive, embodied, and social nature; and how they caution that supports are needed for effective implementation of life skills in primary PE. Findings provide practical direction on areas where additional support is needed to ensure that teachers can capitalise on opportunities for life skills development in PE.

Participatory Methodologies to promote student voice and agency PA and Health Projects

Lucia Sanchis-Francés, Alexandra Valencia-Peris

This proposal highlights the importance of participatory methodologies as a foundation for promoting student voice, agency and meaningful involvement in school based PA and health projects. Rather than presenting empirical findings, it outlines a methodological and conceptual framework developed within the context of a doctoral research project, aiming to inspire more inclusive and student centred approaches in educational settings.

Traditional health promotion initiatives in schools often rely on adult driven perspectives that overlook the complexity of a child´s lived experiences. Participatory methodologies challenge these traditional dynamics by recognising children as social actors who are simultaneously competent, agentic and vulnerable. This perspective aligns with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which conceptualises participation as a process requiring space, voice, audience and influence. Ensuring that methodological conditions allow these dimensions to emerge is essential should students be meaningfully involved in shaping health related projects.

Consequently, a single method rarely captures the diversity of students' viewpoints, as their voices emerge through multiple forms of expression (Hill, 2013). For this reason, the proposal advocates for a multi method approach that integrates a range of visual and participatory techniques such as Photovoice, Draw–Write–Tell, Structured Interview Matrix (SIM) and World Café. These methods expand the opportunities for students to communicate what matters to them, creating safe, creative and inclusive spaces where their contributions are genuinely valued.

By diversifying the techniques used and acknowledging the plurality of participants, this proposal argues that participatory approaches generate richer and more contextualised insights while

strengthening students' sense of belonging and empowerment. Ultimately, promoting health and PA in schools requires not only evidence based practices but also ethical and methodological commitments that position children as active contributors, which offers a powerful pathway for rethinking childhood as a meaningful mode of existence in its own right.

Irish Secondary Schools Physical Literacy Project

Seán Townsend, Stephen Behan, Nathan Gavigan, Sarahjane Belton, Brendan O'Keeffe

Physical Literacy is an important factor in supporting lifelong participation in physical activity and sport. It includes not only the physical ability to move well, but also the knowledge, motivation, and confidence needed to stay active throughout life. In Ireland, many teenagers are not meeting the recommended levels of physical activity, and there is currently limited national data tracking how their Physical Literacy develops over time. This research project aims to assess and monitor physical literacy levels among adolescents in Dublin. It will build on previous large-scale studies such as the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity (CSPPA) Study and the Moving Well-Being Well project, which was led by several members of the research team, by expanding the movement competency data collected in those projects and contributing data relating to the motivational and confidence aspects of engaging in physical activity .
The study will focus on students in post-primary schools and will examine three key areas of Physical Literacy as set out by the Irish All-Island Consensus Statement: knowledge and understanding, confidence and motivation, and physical competence. A combination of questionnaires and practical movement tasks will be employed. The questionnaires will explore students' knowledge of physical activity, how confident they feel taking part, and what motivates them. The movement competency tasks will include a foundational movement screening, examining students' movement skills across a variety of fundamental and functional movement skills. There will also be a simple, school appropriate, fitness test battery that measures upper and lower body strength and cardiovascular endurance.
Data will be collected over a three-year period, allowing the researchers to track trends across time. The findings will help schools, sports bodies, and policymakers to develop targeted strategies that encourage more young people to stay active. A pilot study is underway for the affective questionnaires and movement screening, and while the sample size at this stage is far too small to make any conclusions (n=16), exploratory findings across the data collected for the different components of Physical Literacy shows promise for the development of a detailed student Physical Literacy profile in the future.

Parallel Session E (12:00-13:00)

Do Irish Schoolyards Support Physical Activity, Wellbeing, and Sustainability? Insights from a National Survey

Michelle Bergin

International evidence highlights the role of green school environments in promoting children's physical activity and wellbeing (Bikomeye et al, 2021). Nature-based schoolyard interventions are associated with increased and sustained physical activity, improved socioemotional health, enhanced cognitive outcomes, and environmentally resilient spaces (Fernandes et al., 2023; Ly &

Vella Broderick, 2024; Van den Bogerd et al., 2023). These benefits align with evolving Irish policy priorities, particularly the wellbeing strand of the redeveloped curriculum (Department of Health, 2021; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2025), which recognises the interconnected roles of outdoor learning, playful pedagogies and healthy school environments. However, there is limited national evidence on school outdoor environments.

This study reports on the first national survey of outdoor play provision in Irish primary schools (n = 463; 15% of all schools). The survey, co-designed with stakeholders and grounded in a rights-based framework, included 55 items across five domains: school profile, time, space, permission, and supports/constraints. Data were analysed descriptively, with results interpreted through the interrelated conditions shaping outdoor play and physical activity opportunities.

Results indicate that Irish outdoor environments are predominantly hard surfaced yards (94%). Over half lacked access to sports pitches, gardens, trees, or seating, while approximately 70% lacked shelter or natural areas. Notably, 72% reported a loss of school grounds in the past decade; however, less than 20% accessed sports or community park facilities weekly. Weather significantly constrained outdoor time, with 22% reporting no usable outdoor space during wet conditions. Resource provision was narrow, with 30% reporting no access to outdoor materials and 70% reporting only balls or fixed sporting features. Inequalities were evident, with urban and DEIS schools reporting fewer resources and greater perceived barriers. Priority support needs identified were funding, design guidance, staff training, and caretaker support.

This study highlights significant opportunities to improve Irish schoolyards with enforceable design standards, guidance and funding to support children's engagement in physical activity, outdoor learning and wellbeing, alongside sustainable development agendas to create more biodiverse and weather-resilient schools.

Teachers' Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes in CLIL PE through Irish - Preliminary findings from the 6-week LÉIM intervention.

Conor Philpott, Craig Neville, Diarmuid Lester, Hilary Ní Chonchubhair, Tomás Dowling

The study and practice of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in Physical Education (PE) is a relatively underexplored field; however, existing research indicates a range of mutual benefits for learners regarding their PE content knowledge and skills, as well as their language competence. For learners, CLIL-PE research to date suggests that this dual-approach may lead to higher levels of physical activity, increased levels of motivation for PE and language learning, and reductions in language learning associated anxiety (Salvador-García & Chiva-Bartoll, 2017; Lamb & King, 2020; Salvador-García et al., 2022).
This study aims to report the impact of teaching CLIL-PE through Gaeilge in 3 English-medium primary schools within socio-economic disadvantaged areas of Cork City who were engaged in a specifically designed CLIL-PE intervention. This study will discuss:

I. The impact of a CLIL-PE teaching intervention (titled Léim) over 6 weeks in their individual contexts, on teachers' attitudes (n=8) to Gaeilge, PE and CLIL-PE.
II. Teachers' perceptions (n=8) of students' interest and motivation levels when participating in CLIL-PE.

Qualitative methods were employed that included teacher focus groups, reflective diaries, and audio-recorded lessons (n= 3) were used to record teachers' perceptions prior to, during, and after the intervention.
Preliminary results reveal an overall positive impact of the CLIL-PE intervention. Initial apprehension from teachers was reported during the pre-intervention phase. Following the intervention, an increased use of Gaeilge and positive attitudes towards the language, and the teaching of the language in PE was reported from teachers. While small-scale, this study hopes to initiate conversations around the merits of teaching PE through an additional language by highlighting the positive impact of CLIL-PE on teachers' attitudes towards Gaeilge.

Reducing inequalities (SDG 10) through reflexivity and vulnerability: applying critical pedagogy in Adapted Physical Activity (APA) teaching

Tomás Aylward, Maura Coulter

The empowerment of our young students/learners and other participants who experience disability is central to their rights under both the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This includes while they engage in our Adapted Physical Activity (APA) programmes. We work to enable those persons experiencing disabilities (PeD) to achieve their potential through adapted physical education, physical activity, and sport. In teaching and leading APA/APE, we practitioners should first acknowledge and then seek to reduce inequalities (SDG 10) and the power gradient inherent in that learning situation. Following a narrative review of literature on critical pedagogy, we argue for some consideration of strategies to enhance sustainable practices in APA and APE. By identifying the inherent power asymmetries between educators and PeD, this presentation critiques the "normalcy" present in sport and physical education dialogue. We are advocating for APE and APA educators to flex their pedagogical strategies to include critical pedagogy in line with the social justice and advocacy ethos which underpins practice in these fields. To facilitate this shift, we propose a dialogic framework centred on practitioner reflexivity, moving away from a "compensatory" model of adapted activity, toward a more "emancipatory" orientation. This critical pedagogy approach requires educators to embrace vulnerability and to work to share power in the teaching and learning setting by relinquishing traditional educator control and sharing more authority with learners. Although this reduction in control may seem counterintuitive, it is presented as a necessary paradox for empowering PeD, who may feel disempowered by the normocentric aspects contemporary sport and education.
Modelling critical pedagogy in APA/APE practice and in related teacher education programmes has the potential to change how PeD experience our programmes and how they may enact their own agency sustainably in the pursuit of sport and physical activity.

Teaching 'Outdoor and Adventure Education' in Primary Schools in Ireland at a time of Curriculum Redevelopment

Michelle Dillon, Maura Coulter

Research suggests that engagement with natural environments, such as that experienced during Outdoor and Adventure Education (OAE), has a positive impact on our wellbeing (Gill 2014; Mayer et al.2009). The holistic nature of OAA gives children 'exploratory experiences in a meaningful

context, enabling them to develop an understanding of the embodied self' (Maude 2010, p.113). However it is under-represented in Irish children's learning (Woods et al 2022), with only 20% experiencing OAE in primary school. This raises questions as to why OAE is valued by teachers yet is not being taught. This research focuses on understanding teachers' perspectives and practices surrounding OAE delivery in schools across Ireland. A mixed-methods study was undertaken. A survey of a stratified random sample of Irish primary schools (n=303) and seven teacher interviews were undertaken. The quantitative data were descriptively analysed, and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021) was used to analyse the interviews. Interrelated themes were generated through the data, namely; the impact and value of OAE for students during PE such as working cooperatively and resolving conflicts with peers; the influence of a school's physical location, with schools located for example on the coast emphasising the need for children to be water confident; teacher understanding of the curriculum and challenges surrounding the delivery of OAE including time to plan and prepare resources, particularly in the context of the new primary PE curriculum. In a time of curriculum redevelopment, supporting teacher agency in teaching OAE, must be considered if they lack curriculum knowledge and access to appropriate teaching spaces. A call for supporting teachers through careful professional development that equips them with the knowledge and confidence to deliver the OAE Activity Area in the Wellbeing Specification is advocated.

"Goldilocks day": identifying the optimal awake movement behaviour composition for predicted cardiometabolic health outcomes in youth

Joey Murphy, Charlotte Lund Rasmussen, Javier Brazo-Sayavera, Ademola Victor Damilola, Nastja Loredan, Aoko Oluwayomi, Luís Bettencourt Sardinha, Niels Wedderkopp, Elaine Murtagh

Background: Most research focuses on the relationship of individual movement behaviours, neglecting how different compositions throughout the day associate with cardiometabolic health outcomes. The aim of this study was to explore the optimal awake movement behaviour composition associated with predicted cardiometabolic health outcomes in youth. Methods: The study included participants (N = 1,310 participants; 11.1 ± 2.5 [range = 7.98–17.1 years]; 55.9% female; 100% European) from the International Children's Accelerometery Database. Accelerometer measured sedentary behaviour (SB), light-(LPA) and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) defined the awake movement behaviour composition. Four cardiometabolic health outcomes (lipid profile, blood pressure, glucose metabolism, and body mass) were assessed through nine parameters. These were regressed against the awake movement behaviour composition, adjusting for relevant covariates to estimate the optimal awake movement behaviour composition for each predicted cardiometabolic health outcome (i.e. "Goldilocks Day"). Results: The final models found a significant relationship between the awake movement behaviour composition and cardiometabolic health outcome, excluding lipid profile indicators. For indicators of glucose metabolism, blood pressure and body mass, the Goldilocks Day consisted of less SB (−12 to−39 min), LPA (−8 to −32 min) and more MVPA (+44 to 47 min) when compared to the sample mean. Conclusion: These findings concur with current guidelines that more MVPA and less SB are better, but the optimal time youth should spend in each behaviour depends on the health outcome of interest. This indicates that one size does not fit all when making recommendations for multiple cardiometabolic health outcomes.

Parallel Session F (12:00-13:00)

Personal PE Notebooks as a Pedagogical Tool in Primary PE

Grace Cardiff

Positive learning experiences in Physical Education (PE) are crucial, as children who experience PE as meaningful and relevant are more likely to be physically active across their lifespan. This study extends existing literature by examining the pedagogical potential of personal PE notebooks to support the individualisation and personalisation of learning experiences in primary PE. The research is guided by the question: What insights can be gained from how a teacher and children use personal PE notebooks in primary PE across time?

This study combined self-study and ethnographic case study approaches within a broader research project to examine my experiences as a primary teacher and those of my 5th class students (n = 38) in enacting student voice practices in PE across two academic years. Personal PE notebooks were used to document children's experiences through responses to teacher-created prompts, alongside free writing and drawing. Additional data sources included teacher reflections, critical friend meeting transcripts, and children's focus groups (n = 4; 16 participants). Data were analysed using a deductive thematic approach (Braun et al., 2016).

Findings highlight how children used the notebooks, how their entries informed my teaching, and the conditions required for the notebooks to add value in PE. Children used the notebooks for goal setting, monitoring progress, lesson feedback, and contributing ideas, enabling them to shape their PE experiences. The notebooks enhanced my understanding of children's experiences and preferences, revealed inclusion issues not always visible in lessons, and served as a form of formative assessment, supporting me in planning responsive lessons. Effective use depended on developing a shared language with children, regular and sustained engagement, adequate time, and varied prompts and response formats.

When meaningfully embedded within practice, personal PE notebooks can serve as a valuable pedagogical tool, supporting the individualisation of teaching and the personalisation of children's experiences.

Extending beyond the pitch to mainstream education: Parental insights into a football centred physical activity programme for children with autism.

Ellen Lavery, Barry Lambe, Aisling McGrath

Purpose: Sports clubs can contribute positively to community health and well-being through engagement with diverse sub-population groups. The League of Ireland (LOI) currently implement a multi-component health promotion initiative known as 'More than a club' (MTC). One programme promotes inclusion and belonging through sport in children with autism known as 'Football Friends'. The programme consists of a weekly football session and an inclusive match night experience. The purpose of this study was to explore how MTC can transform experiences in sport for children with autism and to explore the perceived impact of the programme on physical, psychological and social-wellbeing outcomes for participants. Methods: A qualitative approach was

used to explore the parental and facilitator perceptions of the programme. Qualitative interviews and observational site visits were conducted. The qualitative interviews were conducted with parents of the participants (n=8) and programme facilitators (n=4). Observations took place at both the weekly football session and the match night experience (n=2). Results: Parental interviews highlighted the strong sense of belonging and purpose that football friends creates for the children. This included implementation elements such as empathetic coaches and a non-judgemental environment. Flexibility in the delivery approach and the adaptive environment were cited as key elements in supporting sustained participation and long-term engagement. Improved self-esteem and social connections were perceived to support children's engagement beyond the programme including attendance and ability within mainstream school settings. Outside the pitch, parents also highlighted positive impacts personally which the programme offered. This included elements such as emotional support, social connections and an informal way of gaining information regarding service provisions for their children. Conclusion: Opportunities for physical activity and sport are limited for children with autism. This programme demonstrates the positive relationship between a structured and inclusive environment and improvements in physical, psychological and social well-being in those with autism. Football friends demonstrates how health promotion in sports clubs can transform sporting experiences for those with disabilities.

Enhancing Inclusion in Physical Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Irish Post-Primary Schools

Paidi Kelly, Frances Murphy, Joe Travers

Background: The EPSEN Act ensures that students with disabilities, including those with an intellectual disability are educated in a mainstream setting provided that it is beneficial to both them and the other students in the class (EPSEN Act, 2004, Article 2). However, while there has been an increase in the number of students with intellectual disability (ID) in mainstream classes in post-primary schools, Physical Education (PE) teachers do not feel prepared to teach these students PE in Ireland (O'Connor and McNabb 2020) and beyond (Ammah & Hodge, 2005, Vickerman & Coates 2009). This study aims to investigate the supports that are needed and to design some further supports to enhance the quality of PE provision for students with ID. The focus of this presentation is on the review of literature underpinning the study.
Methods: A literature review examining the PE experiences of students with ID and teachers of these students as well as related general issues such as inclusion, barriers to inclusion, current types of organized physical activity that is available to people with ID as well as how people with ID are integrated into the Irish education system.
Results: Findings from the literature review can be categorised into two main themes: (1) teacher experience and attitudes; (2) barriers that prevent students with ID accessing PE and accessing further opportunities for physical activity.
Conclusions: The literature review suggests that Irish PE teachers feel underprepared for teaching students with intellectual disabilities leading to the identification of four key stakeholder groups who can support the PE teachers: 1) students with intellectual disabilities, 2) PE teachers, 3) PE ITE educators, 4) Sports coaches involved in the delivery of adapted physical activity programmes. Members of these four key groups have been interviewed to inform the support for PE teachers in mainstream schools as professional development is designed.

Inclusive Physical Education for Pupils with Visual Impairment: Developing Teacher Supports through Design Based Research

Niamh Boylan, Frances Murphy, Sinéad McCauley Lambe

Supporting mainstream class teachers to include a child who is visually impaired (VI) in physical education (PE) lessons is a complex and unresearched issue. The overall aim of this research is to identify the supports that teachers require to include students who are VI in quality PE. These researcher-designed supports will be informed by feedback given by the teachers and refined by the researcher employing a design-based research approach.
Phase one of this study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with teachers (n=11) of children who are VI.
Preliminary findings indicate that teachers benefit from supports that include:
(a) Guidelines on inclusive practice in PE
(b) Sample lesson resources with a focus on inclusion including video clips of PE activities and use of specialised equipment
Phase two involved recruiting teachers (n=4) currently teaching PE to a child with VI to support a design-based research approach.
Data collection methods included:
(a) observation of a number (n=8) of PE lessons by the researcher
(b) semi-structured interviews pre and post observation of the lessons
(c) implementation of the designed supports in the participating teachers' PE lessons
The researcher designed supports for teachers were developed using a Design Based Research Methodology (Brown, 1992). DBR, a cyclical approach, allowed the researcher to develop resources informed by the lesson observations and the feedback from teachers through interviews. Revisions and ongoing modifications were undertaken further informed by the feedback from two critical friends with deep expertise in inclusion in PE to support triangulation of the data.
This research study with its focus on supporting teachers to include a child with VI fully in PE lessons has the potential to signpost quality experiences for children in PE.

Practice What We Teach: An Overview of School Placement in University College Cork

Wesley O'Brien, Holly Peters, Conor Philpott, Diarmuid Lester

Background:
School placement is a central component of the B.Ed. (Hons) Physical Education, Sport Studies and Arts programme at University College Cork (UCC). This four-year initial teacher education degree prepares students to become dual qualified teachers of physical education (PE) and a chosen arts subject (English, French, Gaeilge, History or Mathematics). A structured, developmental placement model supports progressive professional learning through immersive experiences, research informed practice and engagement in authentic school contexts.
Context and Methodology:
During the 2025–26 academic year, 148 students across Years 2 to 4 undertook placements in 47 partner schools. In Year 2, 52 students completed a paired ten week placement comprising a three week immersive phase, during which six PE lessons were taught, followed by a seven week extended phase involving one PE class per week. In Year 3, 50 students progressed to an individual placement in their arts specialism, teaching 12 classes during the immersive phase and two classes

per week during the extended phase. In Year 4, 46 students completed a year long placement, teaching both PE and their arts subject for a minimum of six hours per week.
Years 2 and 3 students complete a 15 credit placement module incorporating microteaching, research methods and the development of an electronic school placement portfolio (Taisce), documenting planning, reflection and professional growth. In Year 4, students complete a 20 credit placement module assessed through pedagogy, professionalism and critical reflection, with the Taisce serving as the core evaluative tool across all years.
Conclusion:
Students are supported through a triadic partnership involving the student teacher, treoraí (cooperating teacher) and UCC placement tutors in both PE and the arts subject. In 2025–26, 19 placement tutors supported final year students, with moderation and external examination included. The sustained, immersive placement model and school university partnerships underpin a high quality ITE experience and support the development of reflective, practice informed teachers.

Parallel Session G (12:00-13:00)

Preliminary Validity and Reliability of a tool to evaluate Physical Education student teachers' self-efficacy and outcome expectations of implementing Pedagogical Models

João Costa, Carmen Barquero Ruiz, João Mota, Claire Walsh, Paul McFlynn

Background: Innovative Physical Education (PE) requires student-centred pedagogies that support coherent and inclusive learning across domains. Pedagogical Models (PMs) offer a promising pathway to meet these demands, but initial teacher education must help student teachers (STs) develop the confidence and expectations needed to implement PMs in ways that resist wash-out effects.
Aim: This study examined the construct validation and score reliability of a tool designed to assess PE STs' self-efficacy and outcome expectations regarding PM implementation in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.
Methods: Following a prior content-validation stage, 155 STs from four Irish PE programmes completed a survey comprising: a) an adapted Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES; 12 items) focused on general PM implementation; b) PM-specific outcome expectations (PMOE; 5 items); c) model-specific self-efficacy beliefs (SEB; 4 items); and d) general PM intention of use (2 items). Using branching logic, respondents completed PM-specific sections only for models with which they reported familiarity. Construct validity and score reliability for the OSTES and SEB were assessed using confirmatory factor analysis and composite reliability (omega). PMOE was analysed descriptively through domain profiles using means and 95% confidence intervals.
Results: Preliminary findings supported the tool's overall structural validity and reliability. For OSTES, a three-factor solution showed the strongest overall fit, consistent with previous literature. Across PM-specific SEB subscales, standardised loadings were substantial (.65 to .95) and score reliability was satisfactory to high (ω = .84 to .89). PMOE profiles generally differentiated across models and broadly aligned with theoretical expectations. Model-specific findings should be considered tentative, as the branching design produced uneven and small subsamples for some PMs.
Conclusions: The tool shows promising preliminary structural validity and reliability and may

inform strategies to strengthen PM integration in PE programmes. A larger sample will support more robust validation, including invariance testing across PMs.

Burnout Among SETU Sports Scholarship Students: Implications for Academic Performance and Dual-Career Demands

Aoife Kennedy

Balancing academic and athletic demands places student-athletes at significant risk of burnout, particularly within sports scholarship programmes where performance expectations are high. Despite growing international research, there is a lack of evidence examining burnout within Irish higher education contexts. This study aimed to investigate burnout levels among South East Technological University (SETU) sports scholarship students, explore the relationship between stress factors and burnout, and examine its perceived impact on academic performance.

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed, with 37 SETU sports scholarship students participating (78% response rate). Burnout was measured using the Athlete Burnout Questionnaire (ABQ), alongside measures of academic and sport-related stressors and perceived academic outcomes.

Findings revealed moderately high levels of burnout across all dimensions, with emotional and physical exhaustion reporting the highest mean score. Strong, statistically significant positive correlations were identified between both academic and sport-related pressures and burnout. Burnout was also strongly associated with negative academic outcomes, including reduced motivation, decreased concentration, and perceived declines in academic performance. Qualitative findings reinforced these results, highlighting fatigue, time pressure, and difficulty balancing dual commitments.

These findings demonstrate that burnout is a significant issue among Irish sports scholarship students, with clear implications for academic engagement and performance. The study highlights the need for enhanced dual-career support structures, including improved academic flexibility, targeted wellbeing supports, and more balanced scholarship expectations to support student-athlete success.

Evaluating the Impact of a Digital Health Intervention on Council Workers Physical Activity Levels

Zahra Khodabacksh

Physical inactivity is a major global public health concern, contributing to the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, alongside substantial economic burden (WHO, 2022). Despite guidelines recommending regular physical activity, a significant proportion of adults remain insufficiently active. Digital health interventions (DHIs), particularly those using wearable technology and behavioural prompts, offer scalable solutions, though their long-term effectiveness remains unclear (Shcherbina et al., 2019; Larsen et al., 2022; Golbus et al., 2024).

This study evaluated a DHI using the app MyPatientSpace, which delivered prompts, health information, and challenges to participants, and was linked to Fitbit devices provided as part of the study. The intervention targeted 30 local government workers in the South-East of Ireland (mean age = 48.9 ± 10.5 years), a population with high occupational sedentary behaviour. Participants were monitored over nine months for daily step count and physical activity minutes. No other health markers were assessed in this study; however, as part of a wider doctoral substudy by UPMC Sports Medicine and Institute for Health, the same participants are also being examined for BMI, blood pressure, and additional markers. Repeated-measures ANOVA and independent-samples t-tests were used to assess changes over time and gender differences.

Results showed a significant decline in both step count and physical activity over the study period ($p < .001$), with no improvements following the intervention. No gender differences were observed at any time point. These findings suggest that, although theoretically grounded, the DHI alone was insufficient to sustain long-term behaviour change.

The study highlights limitations of wearable-based interventions without ongoing engagement strategies. Future research should focus on multi-component, theory-driven approaches that foster intrinsic motivation and long-term adherence, particularly in sedentary occupational settings.

Preliminary Impact of LifeLab Dublin on the Health Literacy and Wellbeing Levels of Adolescents from Socio-economic Disadvantage

Lorna Burke, Nathan Gavigan, Sarahjane Belton, Mika Manninen, Hannah Goss

Background: Health Literacy is a person's ability to find, understand, appraise and use health information in order to develop and sustain their health. Low adolescent health literacy is associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours. Health literacy is seen as a key component of whole-school health promotion and has been integrated into curricula across the globe. LifeLab is a co-designed health literacy intervention for post-primary students attending DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools. LifeLab was co-designed by students and teachers from the target population over a number of years, leading to the development of the nine week programme. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of participation in LifeLab on health literacy and wellbeing in a cohort of Irish adolescents from areas of social disadvantage.

Methods: 345 students, across 15 classes, from four DEIS schools, participated in LifeLab between 2024-2025. This study used a longitudinal design with two cohorts. Pre, post and follow-up (at three and six months) data was collected. The outcomes were split into one primary outcome of health literacy as well as six secondary outcomes of wellbeing measured by WHO-5 (1), and the KIDSCREEN-27 (5). The data was analysed in R using mixed models as the primary analytic framework.

Results: Results showed an increase in health literacy levels of participants from pre- to post-intervention, with improvement generally maintained at follow-up (Group 1: $b = 0.80$, $SE = 0.33$, $t(549) = 2.40$, $p = .017$, $dz = 0.19$; Group 2: $b = 1.07$, $SE = 0.49$, $p = 0.03$, $dz = 0.45$). There was no significant change in the first wellbeing assessment, however there was some variability within the second assessment subcomponents.

Conclusions: Findings point to the positive impact of LifeLab on the health literacy levels of adolescents. Future research is warranted to track LifeLab participants against a control group and using additional health literacy assessments against the programme.

Digital Technology-Based Interventions for Physical Activity and Dietary Behaviours in Children: A Systematic Review of Effectiveness, Delivery, and Intervention Components

Layla Alvey, Tara Coppinger, Alison Merrotsy, Ciara O'Sullivan, Mai O'Leary

This review examines the effectiveness of digital technologies in increasing physical activity (PA) and improving dietary intake/behaviours among children, while also exploring how these interventions are delivered in real world settings. This is an ongoing review, pre-registered on PROSPERO (CRD420251032788) following PRISMA guidelines.
A literature search was conducted in consultation with a librarian across EBSCOHOST, ProQuest Health Research Premium Collection, and PUBMED/MEDLINE. Searches were limited to publications from 2010 onwards and were conducted in June 2025.Search terms reflected 4 key concepts: digital technology, PA, dietary intake/ behaviours, and children, using keywords and Boolean operators (AND/OR). Reference lists were also screened.
Eligibility criteria were guided by the PICO framework. Studies were included if they involved children aged 5-12 years from any socioeconomic background and implemented digital technology interventions that were delivered in school, community, or home settings and were aimed at improving PA and/or dietary intake/behaviours. Interventions delivered face-to-face were eligible if they incorporated digital technology support. Studies without a digital component were excluded. Primary outcomes included changes in PA behaviour (MVPA, step count) and dietary behaviours (dietary intake, fruit/vegetable consumption) as well as PA/nutrition knowledge. Secondary outcomes included motor skills, fitness, and intervention feasibility and engagement.
A total of 3,310 studies were identified, with 27 included after screening and full-text review. Data extraction was conducted independently by 2 reviewers, with disagreements resolved through discussion with the supervisory team. Preliminary characteristics of included studies were conducted across 13 countries, with the majority from the USA (n=8), followed by China (n=3), Portugal (n=3), Mexico, Australia, and Canada (n=2 each); while Greece, the UK, Spain, the Philippines, Poland, Hong Kong, and Germany each accounted for one study. Data synthesis and quality appraisal are ongoing. The review will identify gaps and inconsistencies in the evidence base and offer recommendations for future research and practice.

Symposium (12:00-13:00)

Reframing Health and Fitness in Post-Primary Physical Education - Pedagogical Perspectives, Practice and Policy

Elaine Murtagh

Health-related fitness remains a central, yet contested, component of post-primary Physical Education (PE). While contemporary curricula emphasise holistic health, lifelong physical activity

and student-centred learning, challenges persist in how fitness is conceptualised, taught and assessed in school settings. This symposium brings together research, practice-based enquiry and policy development to explore progressive approaches to embedding health-enhancing physical activity within PE in ways that are pedagogically meaningful, motivating for students, and aligned with current curriculum intentions.

The symposium will open with a short introduction that situates the session within contemporary curriculum reform, research on youth fitness and ongoing debates about meaningful and sustainable approaches to health-related activity in Physical Education. This will be followed by Presentation 1, which examines Irish secondary school PE teachers' perspectives on incorporating muscle strengthening exercise (MSE). Drawing on the COM-B behaviour change framework, this study highlights widespread teacher support for MSE as a lifelong physical activity, alongside systemic barriers such as facilities and limitations in pre-service and in-service professional development. These findings underscore the importance of teacher capacity building to support meaningful curricular change.

Presentation 2 shifts focus to pedagogical practice within the Junior Cycle, presenting an exploratory self-study of integrating Health-Related Activity (HRA) into gymnastics. This work illustrates how embedding health concepts within movement contexts can enhance student engagement, reduce performance pressure and support applied understanding of fitness, offering practical insights for curriculum enactment.

Presentation 3 takes the form of an interactive workshop contributing to the development of the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) position statement on fitness testing. Participants will engage with current evidence and policy, and collaboratively inform best-practice guidance that reframes fitness testing as a learning-oriented and inclusive process.

The final portion of the session will consist of an open question-and-answer discussion, inviting audience reflection on the implications for teaching, teacher education and policy. Collectively, the symposium aims to advance dialogue on how health and fitness can be more effectively positioned within post-primary PE to support meaningful learning and lifelong physical activity.

Schedule:

5 mins	Introduction to the symposium Elaine Murtagh
15 mins	Presentation 1: Teachers' perspectives on incorporating muscle strengthening exercise in physical education Brendan O'Keeffe
15 mins	Presentation 2: Embedding Health in Movement: Integrating Health-Related Activity Through Gymnastics in Junior Cycle PE Elaine Murtagh
15 mins	Workshop: PEAI Position Statement on Fitness Testing John Murphy
10 mins	Q&A

Teachers' perspectives on incorporating muscle strengthening exercise in physical education

Brendan O'Keeffe, Darragh Collins, Niamh O'Loughlin, Angeliek Verdonschot, David Lubans, Elaine Murtagh

Muscle strengthening exercise (MSE) refers to the use of bodyweight exercises, resistance bands, weight machines or free weights for the purpose of increasing muscular strength. MSE are among the most popular activities among adolescents and schools present an ideal environment to introduce MSE during Physical Education (PE). The purpose of this study was to examine PE teachers' capability, opportunity, motivation and behaviour (COM-B) (Michie et al., 2014) to deliver MSE in secondary school Physical Education (PE) in Ireland. PE teachers (n = 104) from a nationally representative sample of secondary schools in Ireland completed an online survey. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of six participants. Almost all teachers (97%) integrated MSE in their classes, with 95% citing MSE as a valuable component of the PE curriculum. Prevalence of integration did not vary significantly based on teacher gender, school sex (single sex vs mixed) or a school's designated disadvantaged status. Teachers rated their perceived knowledge (M = 8.06, SD = 1.51) and skills to teach MSE (M = 7.94, SD = 1.77) highly on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Interview data supported these findings and added context, revealing that participants attributed their knowledge to their participation in high level sport rather than pre or in-service teacher education. Over two-thirds (69%) of teachers cited a lack of facilities as a barrier to integrating MSE in their PE programmes. Inadequate pre-service and in-service continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities on integrating MSE was noted in both surveys and interviews, with 92% of participants noting an interest in further CPD. A stronger focus on lifelong physical activities in PE, such as MSE, is crucial for promoting continued participation in physical activity beyond adolescence.

Embedding Health in Movement: Integrating Health-Related Activity Through Gymnastics in Junior Cycle PE

Elaine Murtagh, Alana Ní Chuinneagáin, Brendan O'Keeffe

In contrast to previous practice, the Junior Cycle Physical Education specification (NCCA 2022) requires Health-Related Activity (HRA) to be integrated with other physical activity areas. This study aimed to (1) design a unit of learning that integrated HRA within a gymnastics unit aligned with the Junior Cycle specification, and (2) conduct a preliminary evaluation of teacher experiences of this integrated approach.

This study adopted an exploratory collaborative self-study of preservice teaching practice, characterised by systematic reflection and sustained engagement with co-authors as critical friends. A preservice teacher (ANiC) designed and implemented a unit integrating health-related and performance-related fitness components within gymnastics. Prior to implementation, co-authors reviewed the unit, providing feedback on learning intentions, assessment alignment and pedagogical coherence with the Junior Cycle specification for both HRA and gymnastics. The PST completed post-lesson reflections guided by Brookfield's (1995) model of reflection. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Analysis indicated that integrating HRA within gymnastics supported high levels of student engagement and motivation through a student-centred, active learning approach. Embedding health concepts within meaningful gymnastics activities was viewed as more effective than teaching theory as a standalone component, enabling students to develop practical understanding through movement. Integration was identified as particularly motivating for students with lower confidence, reducing pressure and competitive emphasis. Key pedagogical insights included the importance of scaffolded and clearly defined tasks, explicit rationale linking fitness components to performance improvement, and careful selection of a limited number of fitness components to avoid cognitive overload. Data also highlighted the value of recapping rather than repeating theory, using consistent resources across varied activities, and clarifying terminology where conceptual overlap existed between gymnastics skills and fitness components.

Integrating HRA within gymnastics offers a pedagogically meaningful approach that may enhance student engagement, motivation and conceptual understanding, while positioning theory learning as applied, accessible and contextually relevant within Junior Cycle Physical Education.

PEAI Position Statement on Fitness Testing

John Murphy, Brendan O'Keeffe

Fitness testing has long been embedded within physical education (PE), yet its implementation in school settings remains highly variable and, in some cases, poorly aligned with contemporary pedagogical principles, student motivation, and educational purpose. Concerns persist regarding the over-emphasis on performance outcomes, negative student experiences, and the limited translation of test results into meaningful learning. At the same time, a growing body of research highlights the value of health-related fitness as an important marker of current and future health. In response, this initiative aims to develop an evidence-informed position statement for the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI), providing best practice guidance for integrating fitness testing within PE in a pedagogically sound, developmentally appropriate, and student-centred manner.

The proposed position statement will synthesise research on youth fitness, assessment for learning, motivation, and PE pedagogy, alongside international policy and recent consensus on valid, feasible school-based fitness tests. Central to the statement is a reframing of fitness testing as a learning process rather than a measurement exercise, emphasising formative assessment, inclusion, and the promotion of lifelong physical activity. Particular attention will be given to equity, student voice, teacher professional judgement, and the interpretation and communication of results.

This workshop will contribute to the development of the PEAI position statement on fitness testing in post-primary PE. The session will (1) briefly outline the evidence base and policy landscape, and (2) engage participants in a structured, interactive process to inform the content and direction of the statement. Participants - including teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and policymakers - will contribute to key areas such as test selection, pedagogical approaches, implementation strategies, and the ethical use and communication of results. Interactive tools (e.g., live polling and guided prompts) will capture perspectives and identify areas of consensus and tension.

Outcomes will directly inform draft iterations of the position statement, with participants acknowledged as contributing collaborators.