



SIP, SSE Report, 28 May 2024

Introduction

During the academic year 2023/24, Waterpark College continued to improve Learning and Teaching in several ways:

- 1) Engaged in the [TL21](#) programme
- 2) Introduced the tracking of results through Athena Tracker
- 3) Continued with PINS as a universal Reflective Practice Strategy for all Junior Cycle students.

The evidence-based findings in this SIP, SSE Report, are based on a collegial approach which helped the faculty of Waterpark College to make informed decisions together to bring about sustained improvement in Learning and Teaching. This was complemented with the introduction of whole-school semesterised exams (every 11 weeks) and the tracking of results.

TL21

Background

This year, four teachers in Waterpark College, Mr. Mark Dunne, Dr. Angela Goff, Ms. Noelle Murphy and Mr. Cormac Tierney, engaged with the TL21 Programme which is run as a partnership between Maynooth University, the Department of Education and our local Education Support Centre. TL21 promotes innovative pedagogic practice and professional learning communities in post-primary schools. It is research-led, and its two main aims are:

- to strengthen teachers' capacities as co-operative and self-critical authors of their own work.
- to enable students to take an active and responsible part in their own learning.¹

The TL21 team decided to implement Cara, a Buddy Programme, between first year and transition year (TY) students. The Cara Programme is based on school values and the code of behaviour. The aim is to encourage positive peer interaction by developing the social skillset of both groups of students which in turn should have a positive impact on their learning.

Initially for first years, it was to help make the transition from primary to secondary school as smooth as possible. This helped our new entrants to immerse themselves in the practice of school activities with the reassurance that they had the support and guidance of a positive mentor. The goal of the programme is that if a first-year student should experience difficulties or anxieties of any kind, that

¹ 'TL21 Professional Development Programme' <<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/TL21>> [Date accessed: 9 May 2024]



they can turn to their Cara Leader and find in them understanding, respect, advice and assistance. It is hoped that if they are happy in school that this will have a positive impact on their learning.

In addition, as Cara Leaders, the TY students can develop their interpersonal skills, undergo personal development, become assertive, deal with time management skills and engage in active listening skills.

All TYs were invited to submit an application for the Cara Leadership Programme. Following a formal interview selection, 24 TYs became mentors and role models for our first years. A core value of the ERST and our school ethos is nurturing and caring for the development of each unique child in every possible way as they immerse themselves in school life in Waterpark College. These Cara Leaders were given the opportunity to reflect and think critically how their participation affects others and come up with positive solutions as they took on a leadership role in the school. Gathering student-voice was done through weekly meetings with the leaders, such as what went well, and sharing their ideas on how we could progress. Table 1 below outlines a roadmap and a series of next steps for how Cara progressed this year.

Table 1: Trajectory for Implementation of Cara		
Date	Action	Next Steps
17/10/23	Team Meeting: Agree on Code of Behaviour, Contracts, logistics for implementing Buddy Programme	Agree on logistics Decide on a name for Buddy Programme
17/11/23	Cara – name agreed for Programme Confirm logistics & interview questions & grading system	Team assigned tasks to complete
24/11/23	Interview TY students for Cara	Review selection & clear grading process for selection Inform students of selection
06/12/23	Letter to parents explaining Cara Programme	Meet with Caras
08/12/23	Caras filled in surveys Caras informed of Code of Conduct Caras introduced themselves to 1 st Years	Get to know each other: ✓ Listen ✓ Agree on activities
13/12/23	1st Year Survey TY Contract signed	Plan activity for Christmas & weekly check-in with Caras
15/12/23	Activity: Caras (Games/Food in GP area)	Oral feedback on how they enjoyed it
21/03/24	Staff Meeting: Presentation on Cara Programme & progress to date & introduce ideas of Subject-hubs	Plan end of year activity with CARAs
Mar.-May 24	Subject Hubs introduced for core subjects where 1-2 Caras help students in 1 class per week (with teacher's guidance)	Weekly Monitoring of how it is going
26/04/24	Interviewed current 3rd years for 2024/5 CARA Programme	Informed successful students Set up new TEAM for CARA 2024/5



09/05/24	Visit by Tony Collison (Maynooth University/TL21 Coordinator)	
14/05/24	Staff Meeting: Presentation on progress Teacher-Voice survey	Collate survey data
16/05/24	Activity: Caras V Teacher Soccer Match 1 st Years attending/donating €2 to Irish Guide Dogs	Donate €2 to Irish Guide Dogs Thank you to CARAs
17/05/24	Surveys distributed to all Stakeholders	Collate data, review & plan for next year
21/05/24	All Caras to receive small trophy & certificate 1 Cara of the year award	Thank you to Caras
28/05/24	Meet future Caras re what is expected of them on returning to school in August	Finalise dates for: 1. Cara induction 2. Tony Collison visit 3. Caras meeting 1 st years

Next Steps

After collating the data from surveys that were issued to both 1st years and their parents, as well as to the Caras, we will review and update our plan from there. Please see Appendix 1a, 1b and 1c for survey data. A lot of positive feedback was gathered, a sample of which includes: 88% of the Caras stated that being a Cara was a good/very good experience, while 81% had good/very good quality of experience as a participant and 100% would recommend being a Cara. Areas to work on include more training for the Caras as 56% stated that they would have liked additional training, however most were sure of their responsibilities. Cara relationships with their buddies and with the Cara Co-ordinators were mostly positive, while 75% agreed that they spent sufficient time with their buddies and all Caras believed that they were 'somewhat helpful' to their buddies.

Regarding the first years, 78% believed that the Cara Programme was good/excellent and 89% enjoyed being part of the programme. Most first years would like a Cara mentor next year and 89% got on well with their Cara. 56% felt they learned new skills from their Cara and 62% stated that they were 'comfortable' talking to their Cara. Most felt that it helped them to settle into first year. Despite only eight parents responding to the survey, the feedback was positive with most stating that they saw their son/daughter 'becoming more confident'.

Reviewing this data in detail will aid in fostering a positive learning and teaching environment in Waterpark College.

Athena Academic Tracking

Background



To monitor improvements in Teaching and Learning, in 2022/23 Waterpark College decided to pilot an evidenced-based approach by tracking 3rd and 6th year exam results. Using Athena Tracker, which is an academic monitoring tool used to monitor student attainment in each subject, the 3rd and 6th year Christmas and Easter exam results were inputted into Athena Tracker. The software creates a baseline potential for the student in each subject and highlights when a student falls below potential and may need further support. The baseline is based on a statistical model built using the students own exam results, CAT scores, plus the exam results of all previous students' results on the software. Teachers can also input class test results onto the Athena tracker if they wish. It is also possible for students to set target grades in each subject.

The purpose is to highlight when a student's performance falls below this potential and/or target grade and may need further support. When a student falls below their potential in any subject, the teacher receives an alert and can investigate what is going on with the student and whether any additional support or intervention is required. Thus, ensuring no student gets missed in a very busy school system.

Table 2: Trajectory for introducing Athena Tracker			
Date	Action	Result	Next Steps
Feb. 2023	All staff to input 3 rd & 6 th year Pre-results on Athena	Transparent way to monitor progress	Discuss its effectiveness with staff
May 2023	Staff meeting – discussion of effectiveness of Athena	Agreement on its effectiveness & how it would be beneficial for all years	To implement it across all school years, except TY
Sept. 2023	Implemented Athena tracker for Christmas, Spring and Summer exams for all years (except TY)	Transparent way for all teachers to monitor student progress	Continue with tracking

Next Steps

To continue tracking all academic years for 2024/25 and re-evaluate its progress throughout the year.



PINS - Reflective Practice Strategy

Background

All stakeholders (parents, students and teachers) were informed about the universal reflective practice strategy PINS* in March 2020. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions its implementation with first year students was postponed until the academic year 2021/22. The aim was to develop and facilitate learner autonomy across Junior Cycle. It was introduced to first year students in 2021. After the collaborative approach of gathering student- and teacher-voice on its success, it has been continued with the new cohort of first years on each subsequent year so that it is currently practiced across all Junior Cycle class groups.

***P**ositives (identified by student/teacher);

Improvement (areas for improvement identified by student/teacher);

Next **S**teps (tasks/strategies recommended by student/teacher).

The aim was to further develop learner autonomy to complement current Waterpark College whole-school initiatives in Special Education Needs (SEN), Guidance (WSG – Managing Myself), Wellbeing and Reporting (including streamlined house exams and attainment tracking). The management of Learning and Teaching is also an integral feature of both the [Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter](#) and [LAOS 2022](#). The focus was on the dimension, Learning and Teaching, particularly the domain of Learner Outcomes where the standard for Waterpark College was to ‘promote a culture of reflection, improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment.’ (LAOS 2022, p. 15).

The form is titled 'STUDENT REFLECTION SHEET PINS' and includes a 'Date:' field. It has three main sections: 'Positives (identified by student using Green Pens - response to feedback)' with three blue stars, 'Improvement (areas for improvement identified by student)' with two yellow pencils, and 'Next Steps (tasks/strategies recommended by student/teacher)' with two green triangles. At the bottom, there is a line for 'Parent/Guardian signature:'.

By encouraging all stakeholders (parents, teachers and students) to work together, it is intended to promote a highly effective standard of practice ‘by supporting colleagues to become reflective practitioners’ and by enabling ‘all students to become active and motivated learners.’ (LAOS 2022, p. 16). Focusing on developing and facilitating learner autonomy, including self-directed learning, addresses the recommendation in the Quality of Learning and Teaching outlined in the Waterpark College SSE Report 2015 ([DES, Waterpark WSE-MLL Report 2015](#), p. 6). This included introducing the uniformed Reflective Practice to all Junior Cycle students during the academic year 2023/24 for the end of semester exams in November and February.

Next Steps

Teacher-Voice on the use of PINS

As the aim is to introduce PINS at Senior Cycle level, teacher-voice was gathered from a survey completed in May 2024. Please see Appendix 2 for survey results.



In addition to maintaining the current use of PINS (outlined in SIP Report for 2022/23), a collaborative approach has ensured that PINS continues to progress and will reach Senior Cycle in the coming academic year. Thus, the trajectory for Next Steps can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3: PINS Trajectory 2024/25		
Date	Action	Next Steps
May 2024	Staff survey on PINS	Collate data
Sept. 2024/ ongoing	Present PINS to incoming 1 st years Present PINS to 5 th years Continue with 2 nd & 3 rd years	Roll out with 5 th Years Continue PINS with all JC students PINS Letter to incoming 1 st Year parents Teachers explain to students the purpose of PINS & how to use it Include as part of WSG in Subject Plans Hard & Digital Copies of PINS



Sources

‘Framework for Junior Cycle 2015’ <<https://ncca.ie/media/3249/framework-for-junior-cycle-2015-en.pdf>> [Date accessed: 10 May 2024]

‘Looking at our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools’ <<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b1bb3-looking-at-our-school-2022/>> [Date accessed: 22 May 2023]

‘Ongoing reporting for effective teaching and learning’ <<https://ncca.ie/media/3465/reporting-booklet-1.pdf>> [Date accessed: 3 May 2024]

‘Our Charter Elements - Edmund Rice Schools Trust, <<https://www.erst.ie/our-schools/the-erst-charter/>> [Date accessed: 5 May 2024]

‘School Self-Evaluation – Post-Primary 2016-2022’ <[https://www.gov.ie - School Self-Evaluation - Post-primary 2016-2022 \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie - School Self-Evaluation - Post-primary 2016-2022 (www.gov.ie))> [Date accessed: 6 May 2024]

‘TL21 Professional Development Programme’ <<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/TL21>> [Date accessed: 15 May 2024]

‘Whole-School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL Report 2015). Waterpark College. <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Whole-School-Evaluation-Reports-List/report13_64940L.pdf> [Date accessed: 3 May 2024]



Appendix 1a

Responses from: CARA 2023/24 - End of year survey (CARAs – 16 Responses)

2. How would you rate the CARA programme?

Excellent	2
Very good	11
Good	3
Fair	0
Poor	0



3. How would you describe the quality of your experience as a participant of the programme?

Very good	6
Good	7
Average	3
Fair	0
Poor	0



4. Would you recommend volunteering as a CARA to future TY students?

Yes	16
No	0





5. Would you have liked additional training for your role as a CARA?

● Yes	9
● No	7



6. How clearly defined were your responsibilities as a CARA?

● Extremely clearly	3
● Somewhat clearly	10
● Neutral	1
● Somewhat not clearly	2
● Extremely not clearly	0



7. The CARA programme coordinators were accessible and easy to talk to and seek advice from when necessary.

● Strongly agree	4
● Agree	11
● Neutral	1
● Disagree	0
● Strongly disagree	0



8. How would you describe your relationship with your assigned 1st Year buddies?

● Excellent	3
● Good	8
● Average	5
● Fair	0
● Poor	0





9. Do you think that the time spent with your Buddies was sufficient?

Yes	12
No	4



10. Do you think that the time spent with your Buddies was helpful to them?

Very Helpful	0
Somewhat Helpful	16
Neither Helpful nor Unhelpful	0
Somewhat Unhelpful	0
Very Unhelpful	0



11. Did you gain personally from your relationship with your Buddies?

Yes	3
Somewhat	9
Not Much	3
No	1



12. I would have preferred to meet more regularly with my Buddies.

Yes	14
No	2





13. What did you find most satisfying about being a CARA?

16
Responses

Latest Responses

"Getting to know my Buddies"

"helping first years "

"the fact we were able to help first years"

14. What did you find least satisfying about being a CARA?

16
Responses

Latest Responses

"Not being there to support them from the start of school"

"It was hard to get to know them at the beginning "

"it was hard to get to know them as they didn't understand much abo..."

15. The CARA programme improved my overall experience of TY.

Strongly agree	3
Agree	6
Neutral	7
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



16. What adjustments/recommendations would you suggest for next year's programme?

16
Responses

Latest Responses

"Be more organised so CARAs can spend more time with their Buddies"

"More organised and more communication"

"explain to the younger kids what the program is about and make it ..."



Appendix 1b

Responses from: CARA 2023/24 - End of year survey (1st Years – 37 Responses)

2. How would you rate the CARA programme?

Excellent	4
Very good	9
Good	16
Fair	6
Poor	2



3. Did you enjoy being part of the CARA programme?

Yes	33
No	4



4. Would you like to have a CARA (mentor) again next year?

Yes	17
No	3
Maybe	17



5. Did you get on well with your CARA?

Yes	33
No	4





6. Did you think meeting your CARA was fun?

Yes	17
Somewhat	16
No	4



7. Would you have liked to meet with CARA more often?

Yes	21
A bit more	11
Not much more	4
No	1



8. Did having a CARA help you do better in school?

Yes	2
Somewhat	16
Not much	10
No	9



9. Did you learn new things from your CARA?

Yes	19
No	18





10. Did you feel comfortable talking to your CARA about things, either good or bad?

Yes	23
No	14



11. Did you find your CARA helpful?

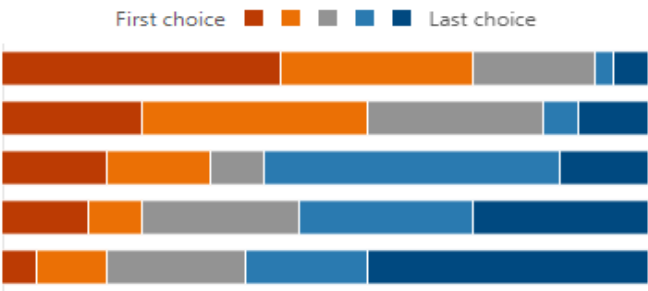
Yes	32
No	5



12. Please rank the areas where you found your CARA most helpful.

Rank Options

1	Settling in to school
2	Finding my way around
3	Helping me to get involved in ...
4	Helping with schoolwork/hom...
5	Making friends



13. Would you consider becoming a CARA in TY?

Yes	21
No	4
Maybe	12



14. Do you have any suggestions as to how to improve the CARA programme next year.

37 Responses

Latest Responses
"Take us outside more"
"Have them talk to you probably "
"Give the boys boy Cara's and the girls girl Cara's "



Appendix 1c

Responses from: CARA 2023/24 - End of year survey (Parents – 8 Responses)

2. Were you aware that the CARA mentorship programme was being run in the school this year?

Yes	6
No	2



3. Please rate your overall satisfaction with the CARA programme.

Very satisfied	0
Satisfied	5
Neutral	3
Dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	0



4. The CARA programme improved my child's experience of 1st Year.

Strongly agree	0
Agree	5
Neutral	3
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



5. My child's relationship with his/her CARA (mentor) was positive.

Strongly agree	0
Agree	7
Neutral	1
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



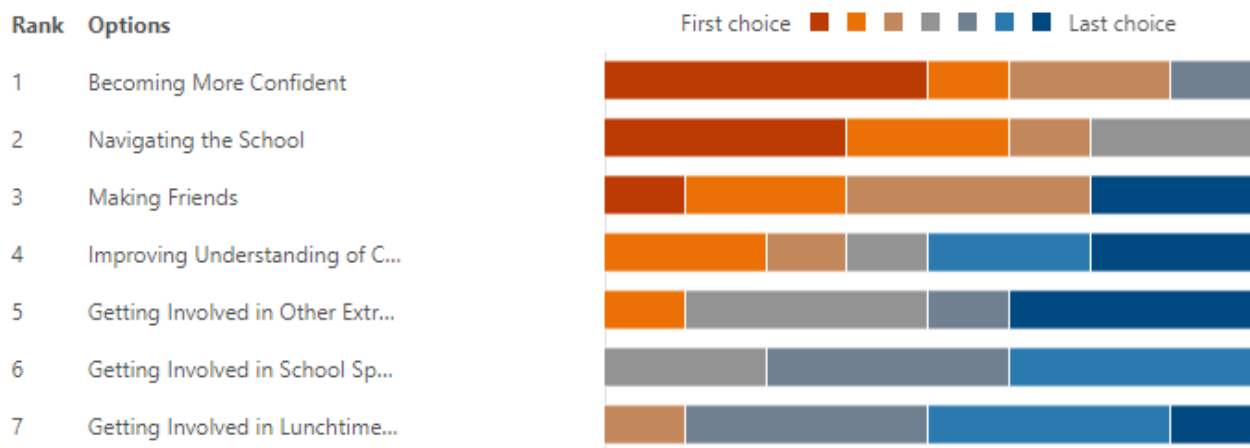


6. My child spoke about his/her CARA (mentor) at home.

Very often	0
Often	0
Sometimes	3
Rarely	3
Never	2



7. Please rank the ways in which your child's CARA (mentor) was helpful.



8. Are there any adjustments/recommendations that you would suggest for next year's CARA programme?

6
Responses

Latest Responses
"Information sheet. Planned interactions"
"Do more organised activities "

9. Other comments.

2
Responses

Latest Responses
"Marcus said that he only met his CARA once in the year."



Appendix 2

Teacher-Voice PINS Survey, 14 May 2024

