

Learner Support and Engagement Service





Supporting LGBTI+ Young People in Ireland



**Dyslexia Ireland** 

www.dyslexia.ie







# DYSLEXIA AWARENSS MONTH

October 2024

Awareness Understanding

Support



BLACK
HISTORY





# LEARNER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

Volume 2, Issue 4 October 2024

Welcome to the October issue of the Learner Support and Engagement Service (LSES) newsletter.

October is Dyslexia Awareness and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Awareness Month around the world and Black History Month in Ireland and the UK. This week (7 -13 October) is Mental Health Awareness Week here in Ireland. So, Enda McConnell is writing about Pearse College's ambition to become a dyslexia- friendly campus, Sneha is writing of her experience becoming a mental health first aider and we have a profile of Leon Diop and Black & Irish in anticipation of a future webinar on decolonising the FET curriculum.

In other articles, our colleague from the Psychological Service, Marie-Louise O'Reilly, writes about the work that has been going on across City of Dublin FET College on sexual consent.

Belong To CEO, Moninne Griffith writes about the national LGBTQ+ youth organisation's Stand Up Awareness Week which will be happening across the country in post primary schools and Youthreach centres as soon as the students are back from the mid-term break.



We have a report from AsIAm's annual conference, which we attended last Saturday (5 October) where the theme was "10 Years of AsIAm- Navigating the Journey towards the Same Chance", and from the Irish Times Higher Options Expo which we visited on 25 September.

Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) librarian Eva Hornung talks to us about her first book **Doing Phenomenography - A Practical Guide**, which has just been published while Adult Guidance Counsellor Karen Granville and Guidance Information Officer Jacqui Mythen write about their Academia study trip to Sweden.

Finally, in anticipation of our Learner Leadership Week in November, Deputy Principal at City of Dublin FET College Southwest Campus (BCFE), Kenneth Rea, writes about the important role Learner Voice plays in the college and how the student council is elected.

Plenty to get your teeth into then, before the vampires get theirs into you!

Happy reading and Happy Halloween.

John (john.poole@cdetb.ie or learnersupports@cdetb.ie)



# LEARNER SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT SERVICE

In this issue	Pages
News in Brief	3-4
Dates for your Diary	5-8
AslAm National Conference	9-12
Stand Up Awareness Week (4 - 8 November)	13-14
Becoming a Mental Health First Aider	15-16
Phenomenography – A "People" Approach to Qualitative Research	17-18
<ul> <li>Dyslexia Awareness Day, Week and Month At City of Dublin FET College Southwest Campus, Pearse</li> </ul>	19-20
Active* Consent and FET in City of Dublin ETB	21-22
<ul> <li>Academia Study Visit to Stockholm, May 2024 Lifelong Guidance for Lifelong Learning</li> </ul>	23-24
City of Dublin FET College at Higher Options 2024	25-27
Learner Voice in BCFE	28-29
Black History Month and the LSES	30-31
Calling all FET Educators!	32
The Archive	33

**Editor:** John Poole

Photo and Design Editor: Sneha Sarcar

### **NEWS IN BRIEF**

#### Sports and Cultural Council Calendar 2024-2025

Richard Kelly, Honorary Secretary of the Sports and Cultural Council (SCC) has kindly forwarded the council's calendar of events for 2024-25.

There is lots of interest to FET learners including table tennis and basketball tournaments, the annual public speaking competitions, a variety show, an art competition and a few fun runs. If you or your college are involved in organising any of these events, we'd be delighted to help you promote them beforehand and celebrate them afterwards.

Sports and Cultural Council Calendar Link

#### Dylan powers ahead

Readers met Dylan Ledden last February when we visited the Personal Development Programme run by Crumlin AES in Pearse College for learners with Down syndrome.

Dylan was very much the life and soul of that class, so we were unsurprised to learn from Head of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning at Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI), John Condon, that Dylan has used the personal skills and self-confidence acquired in Pearse College, as well as on the Skills Academy Programme in Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB (DDLETB) and DSI's National Employment Programme to find not one but two part-time jobs. Dylan is now working in the Maldron Hotel in Tallaght and UTS Technologies. He even nabbed himself an article in **Dublin People**.



#### <u>Ireland's Skills Academy - Dylan Ledden Article Link</u>

Meanwhile, four of Dylan's classmates from 2023- 24 are continuing on to Year 2 of the Personal Development Programme in Pearse College. Best of luck to them.

#### **Carrie moves on**

We were very sad to bid farewell to Carrie Archer who has left the City of Dublin ETB to take up a teaching professorship at the National College of Ireland (NCI). Carrie has been a great supporter of our newsletter, since its first issue, contributing articles on UDL, LGBTQA+ rights and cricket. We fully intend to keep flying the flag for the first and second; the third may be more of a challenge.

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

#### International Student Identity Card (ISIC) rollout well underway

This year's rollout of the ISIC across our FET colleges campuses is off to a great start

To date **3,573** students have received their ISIC registration link for their virtual card and following from that, **1,025** have received their

plastic ISIC.

Each college has also received ISIC registration promotional posters, both physical and digital to be displayed around campus.





#### **ADHD Awareness Month**

As well as being Dyslexia Awareness Month, October is also ADHD Awareness Month, dedicated to spreading awareness and acceptance to make the world understand ADHD from a variety of angles. If you are doing anything to mark ADHD Awareness Month, let us know and we will share it in our November issue.

**October ADHD Awareness Month Link** 

#### **Black History Month**

Black History Month was launched in Ireland on Saturday (5 October) in EPIC, the Irish Emigration Museum. Taking as its theme for this year "Unity in Diversity", the monthlong celebration seeks to highlight the history and impact of Black contributions in Ireland.

On the eclectic programme for the launch were distinguished African historian, **Emmanuel Kulu Jr.** (YouTube link) and Irish dancer Morgan Bullock (You Tube link).



#### **Learner Leadership Week 4-8 November**

Preparations for our Learner Leadership Week are underway. The expectation is that by the time colleges return from the mid-term break, they will have put their student councils in place. The LSES will be joining forces with the Outdoor Education Support Service to put on a teambuilding event for the newly chosen council representatives in St Anne's Park on **6 November**.

In November's issue of the newsletter, we hope to host feature profiles of some of the council members from each of the FE colleges.

#### Youthreach and AsIAm

The LSES in partnership with the national autism charity, AsIAm, has organised a learner training event for Youthreach learners. Facilitated by Finbar Horgan, Education and Training Officer of AsIAm, the training workshop will aim to provide learners with a deeper understanding of Autism, tackling common misconceptions about autistic people. The primary aim is to provide peer-to-peer support. The workshop is targeted at learners in leadership positions and those who can represent the learner population. Following the workshop, members of the LSES will be facilitating focus groups with the learners on topics around learner voice and learner leadership.

The event is scheduled to take place on **5 November** at City of Dublin FET College Northeast Campus, Ballymun Road, starting at 10 am.



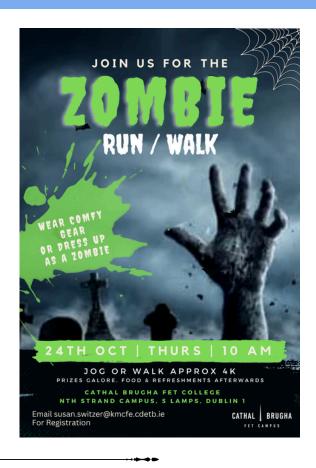
#### Stand Up Awareness Week (4 - 8 November)

Belong To (see **pages 13-14**) has sent out Stand Up Awareness packs to all our Youthreach centres. We are inviting all the centres to tell us about their efforts to make their centre a place where LGBTQ+ learners can thrive, which we will publish in our December issue.

#### SCC FET Zombie Run/Walk

Cathal Brugha FET College is hosting this year's SCC FET Zombie run on Thursday, 24 October starting at 10 am. Entry is open to all learners across the City of Dublin FET College. (email susan.switzer@kmcfe.cedetb.ie to register). Participants are encouraged to dress as zombies, but if ghoulish glamour is not your thing, you are welcome to come along in the comfortable clothes of your choice.

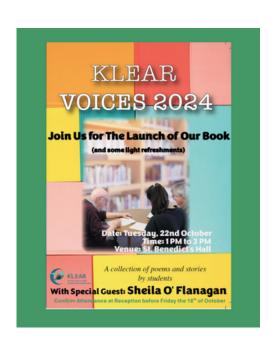
I have great memories of this event from when it was run by Marino College CFE as was. We would come out of our classrooms in the post primary school to find Fairview Park teeming with creatures of the night. What better way to get in the mood for the mid-term break and Halloween.



#### **KLEAR Voices 2024**

KLEAR, Kilbarrack's community-based adult education centre will be launching Klear Voices 2024, in St Benedict's Hall, beside the centre on 22 October.

The organisers are delighted to announce that celebrated Irish novelist Shelia O'Flanagan will be the guest of honour and will do a short Q&A, but the main event as always on these occasions will be the learners reading their poems and stories.



#### **AONTAS Star Awards 2025**

Nominations for the Aontas Star Awards 2025 close on 30 October 2024. You can nominate projects and initiatives in five categories:

- Global Citizenship Education
- Health and Wellbeing
- Learner Voice
- Social Inclusion
- Third-Level Access and Engagement

**Nominations Link** 



# Better Options – AHEAD's online fair for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties



Registration is now open for Better Options, a free online event designed for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties.

Better Options is a free event, taking place online on **Saturday 16th November 10am-1pm** with information on entry routes (DARE), guidance support, information around disability support, inclusive technology and how to get the most out of the college experience.

This event will include information to support students with disabilities make the most of their next steps in education in Higher Education, Further Education and Training, and Apprenticeships.

This event will also be of interest to guidance counsellors, parents and guardians of a person disability or anyone with a disability looking at returning to education. The event includes

information on educational options for students with intellectual disabiltiies.

**Registration Link** 

#### **AsIAm Employment Seminar**

The Department of Adult & Community Education in Maynooth University is hosting AslAm's employment seminar on 9 November. The morning session is open to autistic jobseekers, employers and anybody interested in creating inclusive workplaces while the afternoon session is specifically for autistic jobseekers.

For more information, contact <a href="mailto:employmentgroups@asiam.ie">employmentgroups@asiam.ie</a>



Sneha, Garreth and I were in The Grand Hotel, Malahide last Saturday (5 October) to attend AsIAm's National Autism Conference. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the theme for this year's conference was "10 Years of AsIAm – Navigating the Journey towards the Same Chance".



One of the first events Lorraine attended in her then new position as Head of the LSES, was AsIAm's 2023 Conference from which she returned, brimming with enthusiasm and keen that the whole team should get to experience it. The three of us were more than happy to forsake our Saturday morning lie-ins to go to this year's event. The consensus as you'll read below, is that it was well worth it.

Since its start the LSES has developed a very productive working relationship with AslAm, organising webinars and sensory audits, while endeavouring to make our own events autism aware. (Before attending the conference, we all received a digital visual guide, which provides an excellent example for anybody planning a public event such as an open day or graduation, on how to make it neurodiversity- friendly. (Visual Guide Link)

Welcoming the 400 people who were attending in person and the 100s of others who were watching on the live stream, founder and CEO, Adam Harris, was in buoyant mood. Listing some of the organisation's achievements in its decade of existence he proudly told the audience that the number of calls to AsIAm's information line had recently passed the 10,000 mark. He celebrated the fact that the Autism Innovation Strategy and Advisory Group had a majority of neurodivergent members and promised that AsIAm would be campaigning hard to ensure that the 83 actions called for in the Autism Innovation Strategy and published in August, were put on a statutory basis. He was also delighted to tell the audience that AsIAm would be hosting the 14th Autism Europe Congress in the RDS in September 2025.

The morning's key speakers, Dr. Luke Beardon, Senior Lecturer in Autism at Sheffield Hallam University and prolific author, and Dr. Damian Milton, Intellectual and Development Disabilities academic and consultant, had very different delivery styles, but were very much of one voice in

challenging the language around autism, its medicalisation as a disorder in need of a "cure", with both speakers highlighting the need to move from diagnosis to identification. In Dr. Beardon's striking phrase "Autism is a disadvantage rather than a disability". Reminding the audience that homosexuality was until the 1960s defined as a pathological disorder, he demanded who today would ask a person identifying as gay to go for a "diagnosis". There was, Dr. Milton noted, "a denigration of difference" in which "abnormal is conflated with pathology" in a neuronormative culture where autistics are encouraged to be "less autistic" to fit in.

The afternoon's first key speaker was Rosie King, activist, writer, voice artist and public speaker. Her highly personal story, embracing three generations of her family was delivered to much laughter but also many nodding heads of audience members who could easily identify with the challenges and ignorance Rosie and her siblings faced growing up in a working class family in the North of England.

From Adam's opening address, the audience was very appreciative of all the speakers but what brought them to their feet was Fiacre Ryan, a young Autistic non-speaking writer, poet and advocate. Communicating using an alphabet letterboard and typing his words vocalised by his mother, his ability to command so large a room, left everybody in awe.



The keynote speakers were interspersed with breakout sessions where we had the opportunity to explore a variety of themes in smaller rooms.

For my part before lunch, I attended a very interesting session on the importance of diversity in the workplace. Led by well-known advocate Marie O'Riordan, who counts among her many accolades the 2022 Gamechanger Progress Champion Award, the session was most interesting for the many contributions Marie elicited from the floor, from the young man who baldly stated he wasn't interested in diversity but a nice fat pay packet to the woman who had set up a lunchtime Pilates group in her workplace.

My afternoon session brought me to a whole new world Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), for what was a highly informative talk by Dr. Rachel O'Connor. If my initial reaction was dismissive, thinking "this is just teenagers being teenagers", I left having listened to Rachel and some of the parents of PDAers in the room astonished by the huge challenges these children and their families face on a daily basis.

#### **Garreth writes:**

The morning session that I attended was a very informative overview of "Supporting the Child and Family Neuroaffirmatively" facilitated by Niamh Mellerick and Lucinda Murrihy.

This was a pilot of AsIAm's Child and Family Support Programme, which provides evidenced-based, neuroaffirmative care and support to thousands of families across the country living with autism.

For the last 10 years AsIAm has been campaigning for a whole of life, neuroaffirmative strategy, that breaks down silos across government and society. The session talked about the challenges that families and children face accessing basic services such as primary health care and education while focusing on society's lack of knowledge and understanding of autism.

#### **Sneha writes:**

For the morning session, I got to attend an interesting and informative talk on "Advocating for Your Rights" facilitated by Gareth Noble and Alistair de Gaetano.

There were quite a few interesting takeaways, like how the word 'complaint' is not as dirty a word as it is often made out to be and that when addressing a problem around advocacy, one must diagnose the problem itself, not the solution, an error many people make. Similarly, a successful outcome and an acceptable outcome are often synonymous, if we outline our objectives and aims clearly.

The mantra when it comes to advocacy is - 'Highlighting - Persuading - Challenging - Pursuing'

A golden statement made at the very end of the session that really struck a chord with everyone there was: 'Most people in this room would be excellent advocates for others but appallingly poor advocates for themselves.'

For the afternoon session, I attended 'Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing' facilitated by Niamh Garvey.

Divided into 3 pillars -

- Work on your well-being
- Support your stress response
- Address daily challenges

Niamh spoke about the incorporation of the PERMA Model (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment), highlighting the co-relation between internal stress on the nervous system and auto-immune diseases. She shared statistics on mental illnesses and suicides in autistic people and spotlighted autistic burnout, highlighting differences between burnout and depression, where burnout is often misdiagnosed as depression or misunderstood as depression since the symptoms are so similar.

As with the morning session, there was a powerful statement that really resonated with the room: 'The journey from feeling broken to understanding oneself and realising that you are autistic, while still navigating a neurotypical world, is not for the faint of heart. So give yourself some grace and be gentle with yourselves.'

On the ground floor there was an exhibition space with stands by Safe Care Technologies, Headlit, Aspire, Sparkability, Thinking Toys, Specialisterne and Outside the Box. AslAm's own publications were available at the back of the main conference hall as well as their quirky range of branded goods.

Throughout the day, master graphic harvester Fintan Taite was flat-out recording proceedings in his highly distinctive style.



# Stand Up Awareness Week (4 - 8 November)



Moninne Griffith (she/her)
CEO of Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland

Each year, ever greater numbers of people are coming together to support young LGBTQ+ people by hosting Stand Up Awareness Week in Youthreach centres, schools and youth services across Ireland.

At Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland, we are so proud to see these communities across Dublin and in counties across Ireland where LGBTQ+ young people feel protected and respected to be who they are.

2024 will be the 15th annual campaign – 15 years of young LGBTQ+ people in all kinds of settings being made to feel seen and included.

However, the work is not done. Our recently published research, Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland, conducted by Trinity College Dublin, sets out the context for Stand Up Awareness Week. The research findings showed that in Ireland today, compared to the general youth population, young LGBTQI+ people experience three times the level of severe or extremely severe symptoms of depression and anxiety, three times the level of self-harm, and five times the level of suicide attempts.

The findings are upsetting, but there are some positives to be taken from the research; in particular, the important role of creating safe spaces for young people where they feel safe and included.

Once again, from 4-8 November 2024, communities across Youthreach centres, schools and youth services will come together to make LGBTQ+ inclusion and safety a priority, and celebrate and recognise LGBTQ+ identities

Stand Up Awareness Week is a time to recognise LGBTQ+ youth in all of their diversity

and to come together in support for LGBTQ+ young people. The campaign also acknowledges the harms of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, and makes clear to young people that this behaviour is both serious and unacceptable.

During Stand Up Awareness Week, LGBTQ+ young people and their allies learn about LGBTQ+ identities, take part in LGBTQ+ solidarity actions, and come together to create a safe and supportive environment for all young people.



Supporting LGBTI+ Young People in Ireland

# Stand Up Awareness Week (4 - 8 November)

This year, the theme of Stand Up Awareness Week is 'Standing Up in our Communities'. For I GBTQ+ inclusion and true to reduce discrimination and bullying, we need community-wide response. It is important that all of us, in all spheres of life, make LGBTQ+ young safe. From local people welcome and to our sports and cultural government communities - we all can join together and work for more inclusive communities which welcome and respect LGBTQ+ people.

We have now posted Stand Up Awareness Week packs to all Youthreach centres and schools across Ireland. These packs, as well as a range of additional resources to support the development of a Stand Up Awareness Week campaign, are also available for this year on our website at <a href="https://www.belongto.org">www.belongto.org</a>.

These resources include guides on activities and actions that your organisation can run as part of the week, sample lesson plans and posters which can be printed and hung in your building to help mark the week.

While today we still have a way to go to building an Ireland were LGBTQ+ young people are equal, safe and thriving, the continued support of Youthreach teams, school staff and youth workers across the country heartens us as, together, we're taking steps to make that vision a reality.

We are grateful to every school, youth service and Youthreach centre that joins Belong To for Stand Up Awareness Week and comes together to create a safer Ireland for LGBTQ+ young people.



# **Becoming a Mental Health First Aider**

Last December our colleagues in the Psychological Service, Melanie Billings and Pauline Fleming wrote about the Youth Mental First Aid Training course they deliver to staff across the City of Dublin ETB. Last week Sneha did the course, and it made a profound impression on her. Here, in time to mark Mental Health Awareness Week in Ireland (7–13 October) and World Mental Health Day (10 October) she writes about her experience.



#### **Sneha writes:**

Last week (30 September and 1 October), I had the incredible opportunity to partake in the Youth Mental Health First Aid training course, delivered by our very own psychologists, Melanie Billings and Pauline Fleming, in association with Mental Health First Aid Ireland.

The primary aim of this course is to equip its participants with the tools that would allow them to identify and assist young people who might be experiencing mental health issues. Focussing on five topics (Depression, Anxiety, Eating Disorders, Psychosis and Substance Abuse), this two-day course is extremely comprehensive, detail oriented and informative.

Bringing together participants from various service spheres and professions but tied by the common thread of engaging with young people, this course sharply but effectively brings to light how invisible and dangerous mental health issues can be. It highlights the severity of these issues if left unaddressed and places great emphasis on the importance of early intervention and how positively it could affect change.

I must admit, the topics covered were quite intense and heavy. You are forced to confront your bias, challenge your perspectives and navigate how these issues might reveal themselves in different environments (home, school etc.) and how, it might also present itself across your different relationships (parental, sibling, friendships and so on).

Divided into sections, each topic was addressed through theories, videos and case studies. Balanced perfectly with group work, the training course carefully teaches you how to assess a possible situation where someone is experiencing a mental health issue, approach and assist them. It also clearly outlines what a developing situation is and what might be considered a crisis and how the intervention and supports might alter accordingly.

For me, personally, it was the topic of eating disorders that was most shocking. Considered in some ways, the most dangerous of mental health issues, the stigma and shame attached to it and the many nuanced ways it could develop in people was incredibly unsettling and worrying.

# **Becoming a Mental Health First Aider**

During each session, we were provided with stats and figures specific to Ireland, contrasted against wider global/European figures and for the most part, it was comforting (in a perverse way) to learn that Ireland did not do badly for many of the issues.

For example, deaths by suicide in Ireland indicate a declining trend and although there was valid concern around mental health and the detrimental impact of isolation during Covid, data from the period of the pandemic did not indicate a rise in these numbers. On the other hand, rates of anxiety have doubled between 2012 and 2019 in the 'severe' and 'very severe' categories, for people aged between 12 and 19. Unsurprisingly, but still very disappointingly, it has been reported that alcohol abuse is the predominant manner of substance abuse, and the drinking culture of Ireland most definitely plays a part in this. (Tobacco, cannabis and inhalants were respectively the second, third and fourth most commonly abused substances) Cannabis featured heavily in almost all the mental health issues we focussed on. Despite being considered, for the most part, a recreational drug, cannabis plays an active role in depression, psychosis, anxiety and of course addiction.

I cannot stress enough how brilliant Melanie and Pauline were as facilitators. Besides being so knowledgeable, the way they actively listened to each participant, checked in with everyone and displayed such compassion, understanding and empathy, was incredible.

Although this training is very intense, at times triggering, and quite exhausting mentally and emotionally, it is one I believe in which everyone should partake. Regardless of your professional role, this course moulds you into becoming an ally for all the people you might engage with daily.

I cannot recommend this training course enough. All of us need to truly understand and absorb what it means to listen and observe actively, how profound the impact of early intervention can be and comprehend how dangerous and debilitating it is to suffer from a mental health issue.

If you can partake in this training course, don't think twice. Apply immediately. You'll thank yourself later, but also a word of caution. When the psychologists tell you to mind yourself and do something for yourself, take them seriously. It's all too easy to underestimate the weight of what you are undertaking until you step away at which point, it can all feel so overwhelming. And so, when the psychologists tell you for homework to do something nice for yourself (i.e. to self-care), do it! Your mind, body and heart will be grateful for it. As Melanie and Pauline repeatedly reminded us: you can't help others if you aren't making sure you're okay first.

I'd like to conclude with a statement that resonated strongly with every single person on the training course: 'While somebody can't help everybody, everybody can help somebody.'

# Phenomenography - A "People" Approach to **Qualitative Research**



Dr. Eva Hornung

Dr. Eva Hornung has been the librarian of the City of Dublin ETB's Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) since 2001, though as she explains in this interview her work there very often takes her outside what might be considered the traditional role of a librarian. Indeed, any of you who have visited the Irish Times Higher Options Expo, may well recognise Eva as one of the stalwarts of the City of Dublin FET College stand.

Last month Eva published her first book - Doing Phenomenography - A Practical Guide. Coauthored with Amanda Taylor Beswick and published by Policy Press, an imprint Bristol University Press in their Creative Research Methods in Practice series, it is a practical handbook for students who are new to phenomenography.

#### **Bristol University Phenomenography Link**

Eva kindly agreed to cycle over to Winstead last week to tell us about the book and more broadly her work in the CDU. I think you will enjoy the conversation. I certainly found Eva's enthusiasm infectious.

#### Part 1:

In the first section Eva talks about the history of the CDU, its connections with Trinity College, its evolving role within the City of Dublin ETB and her work as librarian



#### Part 2:

In this section talks about her own academic journey, the master's in UCD which first brought her to Ireland, a second master's in education and her doctorate in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for librarians.





The proud author on the steps of the CDU

# Phenomenography – a "people" approach to qualitative research.

#### Part 3:

In the third section I ask Eva about the impact of digitalisation, the move to online learning due to the COVID pandemic and her commitment to open access.



#### Part 4:

Here Eva explains what phenomenography is, gives a little of its history and some practical examples of the research method in action.

The librarian at her desk in the CDU Library

#### Part 5:

Finally Eva explains how the book came about and the pleasures and pitfalls of co-authoring.

Part 5 of Interview Link

# Dyslexia Awareness Day, Week and Month at City of Dublin FET College, Southwest Campus, Pearse



Enda McConnell

October is Dyslexia Awareness Month around the world, so now that we've settled into the new academic year after the hectic days of registration and induction, it is a good opportunity to reflect on what we are doing and can do here in Pearse College to increase our awareness of how our students with dyslexia learn and engage.

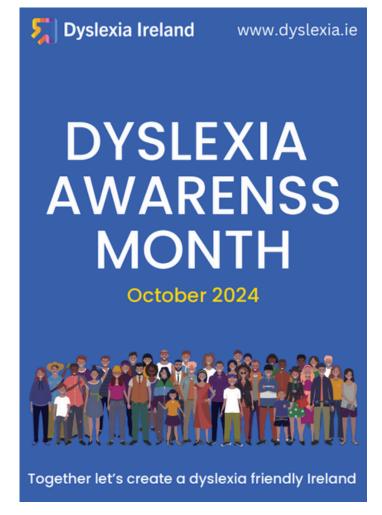
After completing the Diploma in Inclusion and Special Education at DCU last year and undertaking an elective in dyslexia, my wish is to use the month to shine a light on some of our practices dealing with students with

this learning disability. With this in mind, I hope to be able to complete several activities, which hopefully, will lead some way towards reaching a dyslexia-friendly college.

This work has already been commenced by our Deputy Principal, Suzanne Yarker, through a staff survey on teachers' attitudes to and understanding of dyslexia. The survey results illustrate that our staff has a good understanding of some of the difficulties learners with dyslexia face, including problems with reading, writing certain letters backwards, difficulties with organisational skills and issues with working memory.

On the other hand, most of the respondents reported that they had not received any specific training in dyslexia awareness which, they believed, ill prepared them for the classroom. Therefore, training in school-based assessment and identification of dyslexia would be welcomed.

Teachers were supportive of the learning support currently provided in the college for dyslexic learners including reasonable accommodations for these learners for assignments and at exam times. Providing learners with PowerPoint presentations and handouts before class was seen by most respondents as key to helping them through a



lesson. Barriers preventing our classrooms being more inclusive, the survey reported ranged from students with obvious difficulties with reading and writing not having a formal assessment to lack of specific teacher training in the area.

The first steps, therefore, in achieving a dyslexia friendly college will be to complete a

# Dyslexia Awareness Day, Week and Month at City of Dublin FET College, Southwest Campus, Pearse

a college audit of our current practices in dealing with dyslexia. The British Dyslexia Association has created a document 'auditing school practices' which can assist schools/colleges to identify any gaps in knowledge and service provision for learners with dyslexia. There are four key standards, which may help school/college managers, and staff to identify areas in which they can either recognize where development will be required or acknowledge and enhance existing excellent performance.

Standard one focuses leadership and on management, examining the school/college development plan. Standard two looks at teaching and learning ranging from assessment and identification to support and intervention, teaching methods (including differentiation), and whole school awareness training. Standard three explores climate for learning. classroom environment and measures to tackle bullying. Finally, standard four delves into partnership and liaison with parents and other stakeholders.

Through this audit and in partnership with management in Pearse, interventions can be implemented initially at school level; ensuring college policies reflect a dyslexia-friendly status. Next, it would be advisable for all staff, both teaching, and non-teaching, to attend a dyslexia-related training course. (A training course for teaching staff was arranged; to be delivered by Dyslexia Ireland, but unfortunately had to be cancelled at short notice last May.)

Following from this, teachers will be more aware of indicators of dyslexia and adjust their teaching strategies to reflect multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression in the classroom. The more module assignments reflect a Universal Design approach, the better

dyslexic learners can be supported.

Already providing small group work and collaborative learning at Pearse College is a big plus. We should now examine how these sessions may be better tailored to learners with dyslexia, while encouraging teachers and learners to embrace assistive technology such as Reader Progress in Teams and Immersive Reader in Microsoft Word.

Key is working closely with the learners themselves in shaping their approach to their learning, and in some cases, when the learners are under eighteen, communicating with parents/guardians, noting their concerns and/or requests; through encouraging them to engage with their child's development at college.

Finally, there will be a campaign of information on dyslexia throughout October with college onscreen and noticeboard posters as well as social media posts running throughout the month with a special emphasis on <a href="Dyslexia Awareness Day">Dyslexia Awareness Day</a> (8 October) and <a href="Dyslexia Awareness Week">Dyslexia Awareness Week</a> (7 -13).



One of the visuals on display in Pearse College

Have you been celebrating Dyslexia Awareness Month? Tell us about it and we will share it in our November issue.

# **Active\* Consent and FET in City of Dublin ETB**



Marie-Louise O'Reilly

Since 2021, City of Dublin ETB has partnered with the Active\* Consent programme to deliver consent education to our staff and learners across the scheme. As a member of the Active Consent National Advisory Group, along with Aideen Lyster, Guidance Counsellor in Inchicore CFE, I have seen the importance of collaboration and the need for champions to support the rollout of this vital education across our scheme.

To date, almost 500 staff across City of Dublin have been trained in the College includina whole-staff staff programme, awareness training, senior management and principals' briefing, learner workshop and video facilitation training, first point of contact disclosure skills training, live drama and CPD Level 9 training. Active\* Consent provides free access to lots of other engaging resources for both staff and learners on www.consenthub.ie, including an e-learning module for learners, workshops, peer learning, awareness campaign packs, poster packs, social media resources and more. To date, more than 1,500 FET learners across our FET College have received an Active\* Consent intervention. Most recently, Inchicore College hosted scheme-wide training for 22 FET College staff to facilitate the new Active\* Consent 20 minute video resource for learners' induction, facilitated by Sinead McGrath, Active\* Consent FET Outreach Co-ordinator.

Based at the University of Galway, the Active\* Consent programme has led the way nationally with evidence-based sexual consent education and ongoing research throughout Ireland, and aims to support centres for education with innovative ways to support healthy relationships, and prevent sexual violence and harassment. The programme ethos is that consent is Ongoing, Mutual, and Freely Given (OMFG) - for everyone, in all relationships, across genders and sexual orientations, and for each type of intimacy, if or when someone chooses to become intimate. The goal is to ensure that all centres for education support the prevention of sexual violence and promote healthy relationships, which contributes to a cultural change in attitudes awareness, and a safer society for all.



# **Active\* Consent and FET in City of Dublin ETB**

The 2020 Active\* Consent and USI Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) demonstrated that sexual violence and harassment is commonly experienced by young people in Ireland today, stark and shocking some including; 75% of surveyed students reporting experiencing some form of sexual harassment. In a 2021 survey by the HEA, 44% of students reported experiencing sexual violence since starting college. The Consent Framework, introduced in 2019 by the Department of Education, set out a vision for Higher Education (HEIs) to ensure they are safe, respectful and supportive environments with regard to sexual violence and harassment, and as a result of this and the SES, HEIs are now required to provide all students with mainstreamed consent education.

Now FET is seeking equality with HEIs in consent education, and at the recent launch of the report 'Active' Consent for HEIs and FET sector: recent highlights and goals for 2024-25', attended by City of Dublin ETB senior management, support staff and Psychological Service staff, we learned about the work in FET to date, and the next steps, including new research to inform new resources, expanding access to in-person workshops on digital intimacy, expansion of peer



education, and an increasing uptake of consent education in FET across the country. According to the report, ambitious targets should be set, such as: "having at least 80% of incoming learners engage in the induction programme and building multiple points of consent education into the student experience....freeing up time for staff members for take part in awareness raising or more intensive training...and for sustainability, supported by (consent education) being included in operational plans, institutional strategies and policies."

While there has been considerable progress made in actions that change the culture toward consent, sexual violence and harassment, unacceptable levels of violence and harassment are still occurring, along with the attitudes, behaviours, and cultural issues that perpetuate them. While the FET sector nationally is at an earlier stage of adopting consent education than the HE sector, it was proposed that like the HEIs have done, a framework and strategy should be agreed for the FET sector that provides a clear pathway for FET colleges and centres.

The next steps, collaborations, and strategic commitment necessary to achieve change was articulated by Taoiseach Simon Harris (then the Minister for Further and Higher Education) when launching the national five-year Active\* Consent programme in June 2023, in his remarks that "It is one of my top priorities to ensure that we create campus cultures which are safe, respectful, and supportive for all staff and students." We look forward to continuing our work with Active\* Consent and our FET College staff and learners over at least the next four years to help achieve this priority.

# Academia Study Visit to Stockholm, May 2024 **Lifelong Guidance for Lifelong Learning**



Karen Granville (Adult Guindance Counsellor/Co-ordinator) - Officer) - City of Dublin ETB City of Dublin ETB



Jacqui Mythen (Guidance Information

#### **Overview of the Study Visit:**

We were delighted to be given the opportunity to take part in the Academia Study Visit to Stockholm in May 2024. As we work in adult guidance, we were particularly interested to learn how other guidance professionals work in their country and learn from them. This was a 3 day programme which included participants from Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, Slovenia, Spain, Latvia and of course Ireland.

#### Where did we visit?

We visited a number of agencies in our time in Stockholm. These included the Swedish Council for Higher Education, the Swedish Employment Service. the Folk High School interest organisation and the Swedish Job Security Council. We also visited Stockholm University where we heard from their career counsellors as well as the academics who deliver career guidance education at the university.

#### What did we learn from our visit?

We received a lot of information from the above organisations, mainly in lecture style. Each participant also delivered a presentation to the group on their country's system of adult career guidance. We were guite surprised by how digitalised the Public Employment Service is in Sweden. This is necessary due to the geography of the country with very remote areas to the north, but we could see how accessing services would be difficult without digital literacy skills.

We also enjoyed learning about the Swedish Folk School system which seems similar to our Adult Education Services. Like our Adult Education Services, Swedish Folk High Schools

(independent adult education colleges), are for some a way to get back into studying and to gain the necessary knowledge to move on to other forms of education while for others, a folk high school will be their first real interaction with Swedish society, for example, Swedish as a second language. They are funded by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education.



# Academia Study Visit to Stockholm, May 2024 Lifelong Guidance for Lifelong Learning

This was our favourite session as the speaker spoke about the guidance approaches which she used with her clients such as developing a growth mindset and an empowering approach where people learn to help themselves.

#### What could have been better?

Although the study visit was extremely well organised, it was top heavy on visiting

organisations and state agencies. We would have loved to have met some people who availed of the guidance services provided in Stockholm or to visit a college in action, but perhaps the month of May was a bad time to do this. All in all, it was a super experience where we got the chance to network with other guidance colleagues from across Europe and broaden our minds. We would strongly recommend it.



There were participants from seven countries on this trip.

Page 24

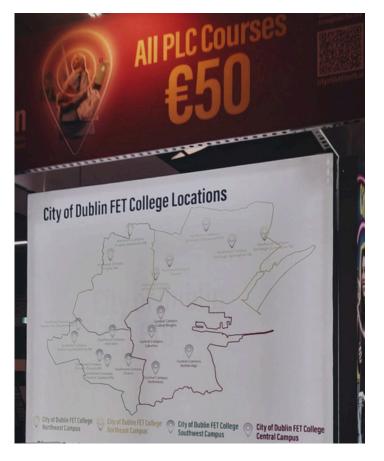
# City of Dublin FET College at Higher Options 2024



Summer is well and truly a memory when post primary students from across the country descend on the RDS in their thousands for the Irish Times Higher Options. The country's largest education expo, the exhibition took place from 25 to 27 September. I went along the first morning.

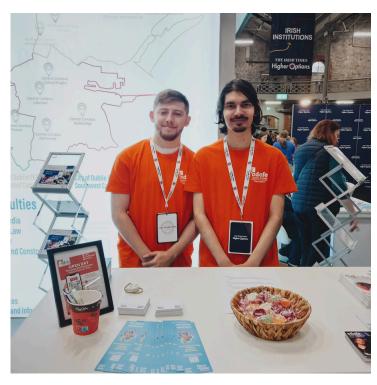
John Poole

This year's City of Dublin FET College's stand was surely its biggest, brightest and busiest Louise Fitzpatrick, ever. When Quality Assurance & CDU manager, said they'd "pushed things up a notch" this year, it wasn't an idle boast: I'd safely say several notches would be more accurate. On two sides of the brightly lit stand, staff and volunteers were busy handling general queries and distributing tote bags filled with promotional goodies; on the third side, beneath a large, illuminated map of City of Dublin FET College displaying its four campuses and 28 locations, Coláiste Dhúlaigh staff and students showcased the college and its courses. Other colleges including Coláiste Ide, Cathal Brugha and Ballyfermot would take over in subsequent slots. On the fourth side, students could pull up a chair and sit down to chat with an adult guidance counsellor.





# City of Dublin FET College at Higher Options 2024



Jordan McCarthy (L) and Naoise Patel , both Media Production students in Coláiste Dhúlaigh were doing a great job answering queries about their college

From the stand I went to Hall 4 and sat in on the first of a series of panel discussions on Further Education Opportunities. By the time I got there, almost every seat was taken which was in marked contrast to the equivalent panel discussion I attended last year, when there was almost nobody to hear Rathmines College alumna, the excellent Alison O'Kelly.

This year's panel was hosted by Irish Times Education Editor Carl O'Brien who was joined by Solas CEO Andrew Brownlee, Coláiste Íde alumna Chelsea Lyons and Irish Rail apprentice Grace Hickey.

Pointing out to the young audience at the outset that when it came to considering further education as an option it wasn't an "either or" situation, Carl made the point that further education was both a destination and a bridge that could lead either directly to the workplace or provide a pathway to higher education. Enumerating the advantages of further education, Andrew listed no points race and no fees as major pluses. Addressing the traditional status issue of further education where further education was seen as second best, both men felt confident asserting that this was changing. Anybody listening to Chelsea when she took the microphone was unlikely to disagree.



It was no surprise that Chelsea commanded her audience with such ease. She had made one of the outstanding contributions from the floor at our Voices for Change: Learners Leading the Way Conference in March from where she went on to speak at the Aontas Funding the Future: The Cost of Education Conference and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) FET Colleges Ireland Conference.

"When I did my Leaving, I had no aspiration to go to college", Chelsea began, "I was dying to earn a few bob." So, she found a job with Boyle's Sports. After working for a couple of years, she

# City of Dublin FET College at Higher Options 2024

began to think she might like to return to education, Chelsea went to her local Youth Resource Centre in Finglas where she was directed to Coláiste Íde.



Chelsea is an outstanding champion for FET

Delighted to find educational opportunities on her doorstep, Chelsea enrolled for the college's

QQI Level 5 course in Office Administration and Reception Skills, where she flourished. The course she said opened up the possibility of several careers from medical secretary to a job in the Civil Service.

However, now she had the study bug so instead she applied to DCU where she has just started her undergraduate studies in law. "Any PLC is a pathway to higher education", she pronounces which is what makes choosing further education "a no brainer".

Chelsea's Interview with the Irish Times Link

Grace is equally enthusiastic about her choice of an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) engineering apprenticeship. She explains that she'd had a difficult last couple of years in school and was unenthused by any of the traditional CAO options with which she was presented. Happily, the partnership with Irish Rail and Cavan Monaghan ETB (CMETB) which started in 2023, came along just in time. The qualification Level is a three-vear apprenticeship divided between on-the job training in an Irish Rail depot and off- the-job blocks on the Monaghan Institute campus. Listening to Grace speak enthusiastically about her apprenticeship, including the opportunity 'to earn and learn', you could only concur with the comment on Irish Rail's Facebook that she was "an excellent ambassador for both women in apprenticeships and in engineering".

Both speakers gave the young audience plenty to think about. It was all a big improvement from last year and hopefully the speakers at Wednesday afternoon's and Thursday morning's sessions had equally full audiences.

Page 27

## **Learner Voice in BCFE**



Kenneth Rea

At City of Dublin FET College, Southwest Campus (BCFE), enhancing the student experience isn't just a goal – it's a way of life. The entire community is committed to creating a campus environment that's vibrant, inclusive, and empowering. At the heart of this mission is student voice, a driving force that makes every student feel like they're a key part of the BCFE family. From day one, students are encouraged to share ideas, voice concerns, and take charge of their own education. This active participation doesn't just boost motivation and engagement – it creates a sense of ownership, making students feel truly invested in their learning journey.

Central to this dynamic student experience is the BCFE Student Council, a vital part of the college's culture. The council isn't just a group of elected reps – it's the beating heart of student life, acting as the ultimate bridge between students and staff. The council provides students with a formal platform to voice their opinions, share ideas, and offer feedback on important decisions with two members of the council also serving on the colleges' board of management. Whether it's advocating for better resources, organizing exciting events, or tackling issues affecting campus life, the student council ensures that the student body is always represented in the college's decision-making process.

The journey to forming the council begins right from the start, planting the seeds of involvement during induction. Students are encouraged to step up as student representatives, a role that's more than just a title – it's a chance to make a real impact. Each course at BCFE elects two student reps, meaning that with over 63 courses, around 120 reps are chosen. This process, supported by course coordinators, ensures that every course is well-represented, and that the student voice is diverse and powerful.



Come October, the excitement kicks into high gear. All student reps gather for a lively election, filled with passionate speeches, big ideas, and a lot of energy. Candidates make their pitch for one of the coveted positions on the student council, such as President, Vice President, Welfare Officer, Entertainments Officer, and more. It's a high-stakes, high-energy event, where students rally behind their peers and help shape the future leadership of the council.

## **Learner Voice in BCFE**

To keep things fair and transparent, BCFE introduced the Election Runner software in October 2023, ensuring a smooth and secure voting process. Each student receives a unique ballot link via email, and the voting is timed, making it an easy, accessible, and a reliable way to cast votes.

Once elected, the student council is at the forefront of initiatives that breathe life into campus culture. From the popular live mic sessions on Wednesdays in the Anna Brett Hall to a wide range of clubs and societies, the

council is all about creating a fun, engaging, and supportive environment. These initiatives don't just provide entertainment – they help foster a sense of community, making sure every student feels they belong.

Ultimately, the BCFE Student Council plays a crucial role in empowering students and shaping the future of the college. It enhances campus life, promotes well-being, and contributes to the holistic development of everyone involved. Through the student council, BCFE isn't just a place to learn – it's a place to grow, connect, and make a difference.



# **Black History Month and the LSES**

In our 2023 -24 Learner Survey 357 learners identified as Black, including 121 who identified as Black Irish, making up 12.8% of those who completed the survey. As we approach the first anniversary of last year's racist riots, it is surely a good time to be asking ourselves how well we are doing in serving not only our Black learners but all our learners of colour.

Last year we marked Black History Month with an article by Dr. Ebun Joseph, Special Rapporteur for the National Action Plan Against Racism and founder/CEO of the Institute of Antiracism Black Studies (IABS). This year we are delighted to be hosting a webinar on the themes of **Decolonising** the Curriculum in FET, Navigating Identity in Further Education and Belonging and Creating Inclusive Learning Spaces with co-founder of Black & Irish™ Leon Diop.

We had hoped to be able to run this during Black History Month itself but due to unforeseen circumstances we have now decided to postpone it until November, rather than doing a rushed job to have it happen before the mid-term. To whet your appetite, here is a little about Leon and Black and Irish  $^{\text{TM}}$ 

Born to a white Irish Catholic mother and a black Senegalese Muslim father, Leon told the **Irish Examiner** last December that growing up in Tallaght he experienced racist behaviour from both his white and his black peers "I wasn't black enough or white enough" he says. In one of the organisations first podcasts, he declared that racism was potentially around every corner.

A graduate of Maynooth, Leon won the International Education Services Teen and Young Adult Book of the Year at the An Post Irish Book Awards 2023 for Black and Irish: Legends, Trailblazers and Everyday Heroes, co-written with Briana Fitzsimons.

Black and Irish™, which Leon co-founded with Femi Bankole and Pierre Yim Bog is a non -for-profit organisation dedicated to enhancing the lives of Black and Mixed Race Irish people.

Black and Irish Website



Photo Credit: The Irish Examiner

They are perhaps best known for their podcast series, the first of which was posted almost four years ago when Leon chatted to hip hop artist Max Zang about their experiences of growing up in Ireland. With a total of 38 episodes to date, the series includes many prominent guests from the Black and Mixed Race community in Ireland talking freely about their success and challenges.

**Black and Irish - RTE Podcasts** 

# **Black History Month and the LSES**

In 2021 Black and Irish™ published a report entitled **Building a Black Inclusive Curriculum in Ireland**. Its preliminary audit of the current curriculum indicated that the curriculum areas of most subjects largely focus on historical figures, authors, and historical events that refer to white members of society. Information was gathered on curriculum subject matter as well as the disadvantages that a lack of representation and inclusion confers on Black and People of Colour in Ireland.

It also argued that the addition of anti-racism and anti-bias training for all school staff, would benefit all students in Ireland and not just those belonging to minority groups. The report focused on primary and post primary education; hopefully our proposed webinar will begin the process of bringing the same lens to bear on further education. (Building a Black Inclusive Curriculum Report)

In July 2023 Black and Irish™ organised its first Community Town Hall event in the Epic Museum. Titled Finding Your Voice, 60 delegates gathered to thrash out 10 point programme that could be put to candidates in the local, European and general elections. They also produced the **Black and Irish™ Handbook of Irish Politics**, a digital guide to how Irish politics works covering everything from voter registration to our voting system and the Oireachtas put together by their political coordinator Eric Ehigie.

#### **Black and Irish Politics Link**

If you would like to delve deeper into Black History Month, RTÉ has compiled a list of relevant programmes on its player.



**RTE Black History Month Link** 

# **Calling All FET educators!**

We would love to share examples of innovative practice happening in centres relating to learner supports and learner engagement.

We're always interested in hearing from practitioners so please do get in contact if you are interested in contributing to a future issue.

If you've contributed to, or led a project, initiative or event that is linked to any of the themes below, we'd love to hear about it and showcase it across the organisation. Or perhaps you've completed an assignment or research as part of studies you're undertaking that relates to learner support and engagement. If so, get in touch with us by emailing <a href="mailto:learnersupports@cdetb.ie">learnersupports@cdetb.ie</a> and we'll feature it in a future issue.

- Accessibility
- Disability
- Diversity
- Extracurricular/non-curricular events and initiatives for learners
- Inclusion
- Language
- Learner voice
- Learner leadership
- Literacy
- Universal Design (for Learning)
- Learner wellbeing

We can accept video, audio or text submissions.

Finally, if you are organising an event and would like us to cover it in a future issue, get in touch!

And remember, for the **November issue**, we would particularly like to hear from educators (and indeed learners!) who are involved in events related to Learner Leadership.

In December, we will be marking International Day of Persons with Disabilities. If any staff or learners would like to contribute their personal experience, this would be great.

#### **Guidelines for contributors:**

Short bulletin: 100-300 words Article: maximum 800 words

Please send any accompanying photos as attachments (don't include in the Word document).

Deadline for receipt of submissions for the next issue is **Friday 24 October** but please get in touch with me any time by email john.poole@cdetb.ie if you have an idea and want to discuss it.

### **The Archive**

We understand that it is easy to miss out on the newsletter amidst the many emails you must be receiving throughout the day.

It's also extremely tedious when you have to scour through emails, trying to find one specific email or embedded resource.

To make it just a little easier, here are all the newsletter issues and direct links for each.

#### Volume 1

- Click here for Issue 1
- Click here for Issue 2
- Click here for Issue 3
  - Included attachment: Fintan Taite Graphic Harvest
- Click here for Issue 4
  - Included attachment: <u>Learner Survey 2022-2023 Reports</u>
- Click here for Issue 5
  - Included attachment (1): South City Singers Reel
  - Included attachment (2): <u>Tracey Russell Interview Part 1</u>
  - Included attachment (3): Tracey Russell Interview Part 2
  - Included attachment (4): AONTAS Photo Gallery
- Click here for Issue 6
  - Included attachment (1): <u>Muslim students attending school during Ramadan</u>
  - Included attachment (2): <u>Rathmines International Mother Tongue Day</u>

#### Volume 2

- Click here for Issue 1
  - Included attachment: 'The Traveller Way'
- Click here for Issue 2
  - Included attachment: <u>Planes, Trans, and Automatic Freedom Podcast</u>
- Click here for Issue 3
  - Included attachment (1): <u>Sports and Cultural Calendar</u>
  - Included attachment (2): Eva's Interview Part 1
  - Included attachment (3): Eva's Interview Part 2
  - Included attachment (4): Eva's Interview Part 3
  - Included attachment (5): Eva's Interview Part 4
  - Included attachment (6): <u>Eva's Interview Part 5</u>