

Early-immersion Education in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Schools

What is early-immersion education?

Children are immersed fully in the Irish language. Irish is the language of learning for the entire curriculum.

Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools are permitted to delay the teaching of English until Christmas in senior infant classes, subject to approval by the Board of Management.

Reading will typically begin in Irish. After a certain period, the school will introduce reading in English in addition to Irish-language reading.

All native and international research findings confirm the advantages of introducing **early-literacy in the target language** (Irish) rather than in English.

What are the advantages?

- It is proven to be the **most successful approach to Irish-language acquisition**. It ensures that children learn Irish quickly and efficiently and thereby ensures that they can follow the entire school curriculum through the medium of Irish with greater ease. The results of the report *Irish in Primary Schools: Long-term National Trends in Achievement* in 2006 confirm the high standard of Irish in gaelscoileanna.
- Children will develop competence in both languages, with no negative impact to either language nor to any other curriculum subject.

- Research results produced by the Educational Research Centre, 2011, illustrate that **children in Irish-medium primary schools are performing well above the national average in English reading and above the national average in mathematics**.
- Early-immersion helps maintain a **robust linguistic environment** for Irish-language acquisition and it supports the use of Irish as **the language of communication between children**.
- Children will learn Irish first and subsequently **transfer the literacy skills acquired with ease to English**. They will, however, already have achieved some ability in English before the formal introduction of English. International experts point to the fact that literacy skills transfer with greater ease from a minority language to a majority language, as opposed to the reverse.
- For children from homes where Irish is not spoken, early-immersion helps them gain **greater educational benefit from all subjects** from the outset due to greater ability in Irish. Greater ability will invariably lead to **greater fondness for the language** also.
- For children from Irish-speaking homes, early-immersion ensures that they receive the opportunity for continued total immersion in Irish, which consequently increases their respect for themselves as Irish language speakers as well as respect for their native tongue.
- Immersion education is **suitable for all children, including those with Special Educational Needs**. Additionally, early-immersion is recognised as **the most successful model for children with disabilities**.
- Children attending Irish-medium schools in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage perform equally as well in English as children in English-medium schools.



Irish and international research findings supporting these facts are available on www.gael scoileanna.ie

An Luath-thumoideachas sna Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta

Céard é?

Tá páistí á dtumadh go hiomlán sa Gaeilge. Is í an Ghaeilge teanga foghlama an churaclaim ina iomláine.

Tá cead ag bunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge agus ag scoileanna Gaeltachta teagasc an Bhéarla a chur siar go dtí an Nollaig sna Naíonáin shinsearacha, más é toil an Bord Bainistíochta an luath-thumoideachais sin a chur i bhfeidhm sa scoil.

De ghnáth is i nGaeilge a chuirfidh páistí tús leis an léitheoireacht. I ndiaidh tréimhse áirithe ama cuirfidh an scoil tús le léitheoireacht an Bhéarla in éineacht le léitheoireacht sa Ghaeilge.

Léiríonn an taighde náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta go soiléir go bhfuil ciall le tosú ar an **luathlitearthacht sa sprioctheanga** (Gaeilge) seachas i mBéarla.

Cé na buntáistí a bhaineann leis?

- Is é an **córas is fearr do shealbhú na Gaeilge**. Cinnteoidh sé go bhfoghlaimeoidh páistí an Ghaeilge go mear agus go héifeachtach ionas go mbeidh siad in ann curaclam iomlán na scoile a leanúint trí mheán na Gaeilge. In 2006 léirigh *An Ghaeilge sna Bunscoileanna: Treochtaí Náisiúnta Fadtéarmacha in Inniúlacht* go soiléir go raibh caighdeán ard Gaeilge sna gaelscoileanna.
- Forbróidh páistí an dá theanga agus ní bheidh aon drochthionchar d'fhorbairt ceachtar teanga ná d'aon ábhar eile sa churaclam.

- Léiríonn torthaí taighde an Fhorais Taighde ar Oideachais, 2011, go bhfuil páistí i **bhfad thar an meán náisiúnta i léitheoireacht an Bhéarla sna scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge agus go bhfuil ag éirí leo thar an meán náisiúnta sa mhata freisin**.
- Is cabhair é an luath-thumoideachas chun **timpeallacht láidir theangeolaíochta** do shealbhú na Gaeilge a chruthú agus cothóidh sé an Ghaeilge **mar theanga chumarsáide na bpáistí**.
- Foghlaimeoidh páistí Gaeilge agus **aistreoidh siad na scileanna litearthachta go héasca go dtí an Béarla**, ach beidh cumas áirithe bainte amach ag páistí sa Bhéarla sula dtosóidh siad air go foirmiúil. Deir na saineolaithe idirnáisiúnta gur fearr a aistreoidh na scileanna litearthachta ó mhionteanga go mórtheanga seachas a mhalairt.
- I gcás na bpáistí nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu sa bhaile cinntíonn an tumoideachas go mbíonn siad in ann **tairbhe oideachasúil a bhaint as na hábhair eile** trí mheán na Gaeilge toisc gur láidre a bhíonn a gcumas sa Ghaeilge, rud a chothaíonn a **gcion ar an teanga chomh maith**.
- Cinntíonn sé go bhfuil páistí a thagann ó theaghlaigh lán-Ghaeilge ag fáil deis luathoideachas iomlán a fháil trí Ghaeilge, rud a mhéadaíonn a meas orthu féin agus ar a dteanga dhúchais.
- Tá an tumoideachas **feiliúnach do gach páiste, páistí le Riachtanais Speisialta Oideachasúla san áireamh**, ach na hacmhainní feabhais a bheith ar fáil. Anuas air sin, aithnítear an córas Luath-Thumoideachais Iomlán mar an **múnla is rathúla do pháistí faoi mhíchumais éigin**.
- Tá ag éirí le páistí Gaelscoile i gceantair faoi mhíbhuntáiste chomh maith céanna sa Bhéarla le páistí atá ag freastal ar scoil trí Bhéarla.



Tá fianaise taighde náisiúnta agus idirnáisiúnta ann a thacaíonn leis na fíricí thuas le fáil ar www.gaelscoileanna.ie