



SICAP Case Study 2024 - Lot: Wexford 14-1

“Turning New Pages: Inspiring Learning through Children, Creativity and Community”

The Elevate Project: a place-based, long-term approach to educational disadvantage in Enniscorthy

Target Group focus:	People impacted by educational disadvantage with a particular focus on children and families (Local Priority Target Group No.1)
Core area of work:	Lifelong learning and education (SICAP Goal 2)
Presentation:	Video case study with accompanying narrative analysis including in-depth interviews with <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ two parents and two young participants in Elevate▪ collaborative partners involved in the project including the local librarian and a Home School Community Liaison teacher from one of the two local DEIS primary schools involved in its delivery▪ a local children’s author who is one of the panel of tutors engaged in the project and▪ the SICAP Community Education Worker who developed and oversees the delivery of the project .
Synopsis:	This video case study showcases Elevate , a long-term, SICAP community education project which aims to better understand and address the impact of educational disadvantage in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford by focusing on children, young people and their families. The project commenced in 2021 with an initial intake of 25 sixth class pupils from two local DEIS schools. Currently there are 75 participants with the oldest group of students now in third year across three local post-primary schools.
Intended audience:	Funders and policy makers at local and national level as well as other local development companies and agencies with a shared interest in community work approaches to understanding and tackling the impact of educational disadvantage in rural towns such as Enniscorthy.



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WLD's SICAP Video Case Study 2024 – Accompanying Narrative

Context

The development of the Elevate Programme began in 2020 as a response to Census 2016 results identifying significant levels of educational disadvantage in the four main towns of the county, Enniscorthy, Gorey, New Ross and Wexford. Enniscorthy was selected as the location for the project as it had the highest level of population with primary or no formal education only (20.08%) and the lowest with higher third level (9.1%).

The WLD SICAP Education & Lifelong Learning team had a history of delivering programmes designed to counter educational disadvantage including homework & after-school clubs, workshops for pupils preparing to transfer from 6th class to post primary school, additional tuition for Leaving Cert students and bespoke training programmes for young people. Given the entrenched nature of educational disadvantage in Enniscorthy however it was decided that a more long-term approach was required.

With this in mind, WLD explored similar programmes offered elsewhere - the Challenger Programme, pioneered by Northside Partnership, stood out as being particularly relevant as it engaged with children from sixth class until sixth year in post-primary school.

However, while Challenger seeks to increase progression to third level, Elevate adopted a focus on fostering positive engagement with learning more broadly, particularly through creative activities. The members of the programme steering group recommended this approach to take account of the specific strengths and resources of Enniscorthy as a town, as well as to make a clear distinction between this community-based programme and school-based, academic learning.

Elevate got off the ground in 2021 and was developed, funded and continues to be coordinated by SICAP/Wexford Local Development in collaboration with local partners. It aims to champion and support educational achievement, working with pupils over a seven year timeframe to help them make a positive transfer from 6th class to secondary school, meet new people and make new friends, develop their creativity and problem solving abilities and achieve their full potential as lifelong learners both within and outside the formal education system.

Elevate students are encouraged to set the bar high and make strides personally, socially and academically. Activities take place outside of the school day and include a blend of small group tuition, STEM activities, arts workshops and outdoor education. Elevate also offers information and guidance to parents. 25 sixth class students are recruited each year from two local DEIS primary schools, St. Aidan's & St. Senan's.

Each cohort continues to be supported when they transfer to second level right up until their final year in post-primary education. There are currently 75 students involved. This number will eventually rise to 175 when the first intake of students reaches 6th year.



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Stakeholders

Elevate is a collaborative initiative developed and led by the SICAP Community Education Team in Wexford Local Development. The steering group established by WLD to design and oversee the programme also includes representatives from Waterford and Wexford ETB, South East Technological University, the Bunclody - Enniscorthy School Completion Project, the STAR educational initiative for Traveller and Roma children, St. Aidan's and St. Senan's primary schools and three post-primary schools – Enniscorthy Community College, CBS and Coláiste Bríde. Enniscorthy Library are a key stakeholder as both host and collaborative partner for the reading club and creative writing elements of the programme. The AstroActive Centre also hosts several activities. The students and their families are at the centre of the programme as their active participation in the programme is integral to the Elevate approach.

Contribution of SICAP

Elevate is an initiative of SICAP, developed and coordinated by the Community Education and Lifelong Learning team and delivered in partnership with local schools, the library and a panel of tutors. SICAP provides both the funding for activities and the expertise of Community Education Workers in developing and continuously expanding the programme and in bringing stakeholders together in the steering group to inform and guide its work. The programme aims to re-frame the negative narrative around education in the town by focusing on some key counterpoints such as

- Inspiring joy and creativity in learning, tapping into the potential that is there in children and also in the town of Enniscorthy.
- Promoting wellbeing and fun in learning as the birthright of each person no matter what their background, a deliberate turn away from the pressure cooker environment of mainstream education and the extreme focus on points in the Leaving Cert and progression to college as the measure of 'success'.
- Building confidence, self-awareness and critical thinking skills at a time when teenagers are facing the challenges of adolescence, complicated by the social media / online world and the attendant pressure to act, look or think in a certain way.
- Inspiring young people to 'be what they can now see' – working with authors, illustrators, drama teachers as well as with each other and becoming role models to other young people who see what they are doing, the material they are producing.
- Creating community from the ground up by investing in children over the long term as they grow up, building bonds of mutual respect and empathy within the groups of diverse children in each age cohort by working with their natural curiosity and openness.
- Collaborating at local level - bringing all the resources of the area to their full potential and engaging those who should/can enjoy and benefit from them, the library being the shining example here.
- Overcoming the legacy of the past and the negative experiences parents may have had in a less enlightened school system.



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- And building for the future – the oldest cohort in Elevate will shortly engage in activities focused on citizenship and Community Development facilitated by members of the wider WLD SICAP and Empowering Communities team, with the aim of building their awareness and understanding of the policies and decisions which shape their world. It is hoped that by taking this steady and deliberative approach, underpinned by Community Development principles and a rights-based approach, the community leaders of the future may well emerge to turn a new page towards a brighter educational path for Enniscorthy.

Elevate in Numbers

Elevate data is recorded against the ‘**children and families**’ beneficiary type on **IRIS**. The **collaborative approach** to this project, coordinated via the project steering group, is also recorded on IRIS against the relevant action.

A snapshot of the last academic year illustrates the breadth and depth of activities as well as the reach of the project across the different age cohorts that have joined Elevate to date. Significantly, there has been little or no attrition of participants since 2021, indicating the programme’s capacity to sustain engagement with students and their families.

A snapshot of the programme’s reach can be gleaned from a summary of activities over one academic year:

- ✓ **Between September and December 2023, 46 sessions** took place across three age groups (a total of **75 students** from 6th class Primary and 1st & 2nd year Post Primary). These included small group sessions of 5-8, medium groups of 12 and whole groups of 24 participants.
- ✓ Activities included Drama, Drumming & Percussion, Choir, Conversational Irish & STEM
- ✓ There was **one steering group meeting** in this period
- ✓ **Between January and July 2024, 71 sessions** took place involving the same age groups and group sizes. Activities included Reading Groups, Creative Writing, Outdoor Personal Development, Art & Illustration, Kayaking and Climbing.
- ✓ **Two steering group meetings** took place in this time period.

For further information on this Case Study please contact:

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