

An Chomhairle  
Mhúinteoireachta



The Teaching Council



# BEACONS

Bringing Education Alive for our  
Communities On a National Scale

The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for the teaching profession, which promotes and upholds professional standards in teaching in Ireland. The Council itself is a partnership structure with the voices of teachers, parents and national stakeholders represented at the governing board level.

Through its BEACONS process, the Teaching Council is leading a diverse group of stakeholders and people exploring new ways of supporting more and better conversations between teachers, parents and students at the local community level.

BEACONS is an innovative approach to building stronger school communities through promoting and facilitating more conversations between teachers, parents and students. BEACONS aims to foster a supportive education ecosystem for both teaching and learning.

### **How does BEACONS work?**

BEACONS takes place in a neutral space and under the direction of a skilled facilitator to ensure everyone's voice is heard. And then, in that safe and inclusive space, they explore issues that are of the greatest importance to them, the intention of which is to build relationships and feed new thinking into local and national actions.

Each process sees pupils from both primary and post-primary schools, their teachers, parents and principals, as well as other interested parties, sitting down together to share their views.

There is no set agenda and discussions revolve around topics brought to the table by individuals. Collectively, as a community, they own the issues, their conversations about them and their solutions to them. And their sense of agency in connecting their work with the national level is palpable and impactful.

The BEACONS mission is to provide a process for school communities to facilitate conversations between all relevant voices about the issues that are of the greatest importance to them. These events aim to facilitate open and honest conversations between a diverse range of participants and seek to give voice collectively to those at the front line of education. Conversations are intended to grow relationships and feed into local and national actions. In this way, BEACONS seeks to develop and grow a scalable model of conversations between principals, teachers, parents and students about things that matter to them.

### **Outcomes of BEACONS**

The outcomes that BEACONS ultimately seeks to achieve include more systematic innovation in schools; enhanced understanding and bottom-up insights for policy development and implementation; better relationships between teachers, parents and students that will enhance the quality of inclusive education; more effective utilisation of resources; and more organic and creative links between schools and their communities, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning for all.

BEACONS brings conversations about the education system to local communities.

Currently, there are almost 4,000 schools in Ireland serving over 1 million students and a register of over 109,000 teachers. Students, parents and teachers often share the same desires for education, yet their voices rarely meet in one place to help navigate areas of sensitivity such as inclusive education, bullying, climate change, curricular reform and the future of learning and education in Ireland. In this regard, participation, inclusivity, learning and innovation in education are hindered.

BEACONS has demonstrated how conversations to address these issues can be facilitated in safe spaces where trust grows quickly and culture changes.

BEACONS provides a conduit for people to connect impactful conversations at the community level with engagement in the national conversation.

In doing so, BEACONS provides a safe space for respectful conversation, developing perspectives, empathy, trust, positivity and progress within schools and the wider community. BEACONS is a process rather than a one-off project. It has the potential to bring necessary disruption to conventional ways of doing things.

There have been BEACONS events in six different communities across Ireland and we have received 21 requests for further events following an [information webinar](#) that was broadcast in February 2020.

**For more information on BEACONS please click on these links or contact [communications@teachingcouncil.ie](mailto:communications@teachingcouncil.ie):**

[Videos - Teaching Council](#)

[Here](#) are some thoughts from students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders about BEACONS.

Photos: [BEACONS Shared Learning Day, December 2019](#)