



Community NATIONAL SCHOOLS

OUR STORIES

A TERMLY NEWSLETTER FROM CNSS

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A Message from ETBI

CNS & ETB PATRONAGE DIRECTORATE

This is the second publication of the CNS Newsletter "Our Stories". This newsletter celebrates the ongoing work in Community National Schools to provide and promote excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect. Discover how two of CNSs are promoting wellbeing in the School Spotlight and Principal's Corner Features. Also, stay up to date with ongoing developments within the CNS model in News & Updates. Finally, learn more about the Family Project Approach to teaching the Beliefs and Religions strand of GMGY from Tara Malone, GMGY Coordinator in Scoil Choilm CNS. This article, which builds on Tara's master's research, provides meaningful points of reflection for teachers and school leaders.

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Community National School News & Updates

28th CNS to open in Tipperary September 2022

Tipperary's first multi-denominational primary school will open in Nenagh in September 2022. This exciting development will come about following a decision of St. Mary's Junior Boys School and the Diocese of Killaloe to transfer the patronage of the school to Tipperary Education and Training Board. This school will be the 28th to join a growing network of Community National Schools. For more information, visit the ETBI website [here](#).



3 CNSs among pilot schools undertaking SSE of ETB ethos



This year, 20 ETB primary and post-primary schools will pilot the first School Self-Evaluation of ETB Ethos under the leadership of the DCU Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection (EQI) and with ETBI. The process will run for the 2021-2022 school year and will be open for engagement by all ETB schools from September 2022. The three CNSs engaging in this process; Scoil Gháinne CNS, Phibblestown; Ard Rí CNS, Navan and Scoil Chliodhna CNS, Carrigtwohill; will

have the opportunity to work with experts in the field of school self-evaluation, namely Dr. Shivaun O'Brien, Director of Research in the DCU Centre for EQI as well as collaborate with other schools engaging in the process. For further information on the ETBI Patrons' Framework on Ethos, [here](#).

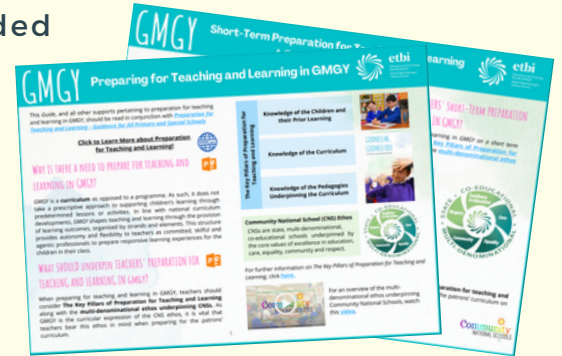
Student Teachers Upskilling in CNS Ethos and GMGY

Since September 2022, student teachers from Mary Immaculate College, Marino Institute of Education and Dublin City University have engaged in lectures on the CNS ethos and GMGY. The lectures delivered by ETBI in Colleges of Education aim to provide student teachers with an understanding of state, multi-denominational primary schools and the their multi-belief and values patrons' curriculum, ultimately supporting teaching and learning in CNSs into the future.



New Support Materials Developed to Support Teaching and Learning in GMGY

Following the establishment of a GMGY Support Material Advisory Committee, ETBI has published a number of support materials to support preparation for teaching and learning in GMGY. Building on "Preparation for Teaching and Learning: Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools", these materials aim to support CNS teachers' engagement in invisible, visible and recorded preparation for teaching and learning in the patrons' curriculum. ETBI looks forward to working with the GMGY Support Material Advisory Committee in 2022.



Access these materials below:

- [Preparation for Teaching and Learning in GMGY](#)
- [Short Term Preparation for Teaching and Learning in GMGY](#)
- [Short-Term Plans and Timetabling](#)
- [Learning Outcomes Glance Cards](#)



**Support
Materials
Section
of CNS
Website!**



Community National Schools Take 1

Take 1



Programme

Sustainable Development Education
in ETB Schools

In November, the CNS Principals' Network, accompanied by additional members of staff, engaged with Valerie Lewis from ETBI to learn about the Take 1 approach to embedding the Sustainable Development Goals in teaching and learning. They explored how "Taking 1" by teaching 1 goal, through 1 lesson for 1 one week can help raise awareness of and facilitate active engagement with the 17

SDGs. For more suggestions, have a look at the UN SDG Student Resources page.

[UN SDG RESOURCES HERE](#)

School Spotlight!

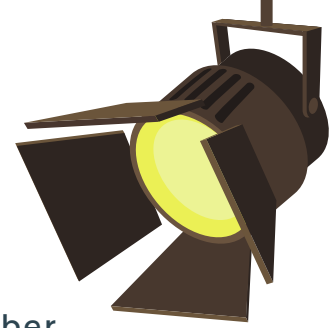
BY RIVER VALLEY CNS

Rivervalley CNS opened in September 2019 with 14 junior infant students in Swords Enterprise Park. We are now located in temporary accommodation on the Main Street in Swords and have 64 pupils ranging from junior infants to first class. We have 6 dedicated and enthusiastic staff members and a committed and innovative parents' association who have overcome the challenges of the last 18 months to launch some fantastic school initiatives such as our Culture Crawl, Active April and Capoeira workshops to name but a few. Our school motto is "Partners in Learning" and collaboration and partnership is central to everything we do and evident throughout our whole school community.



In May 2021 we were awarded our first Amber Flag. This was a very special day for our school community as all of our hard work and dedication

to promote positive mental health was acknowledged and rewarded. Our journey to achieving our first Amber Flag was a community effort and epitomised at every step our school's



commitment to the core CNS values of respect, care, equality and of course community. Everyone got involved - our students, parents, staff and the wider community.

"Our journey to achieving our first Amber Flag was a community effort and epitomised at every step our school's commitment to the core CNS values of respect, care, equality and of course community. Everyone got involved - our students, parents, staff and the wider community."

In February, while we were all learning from home we held a Health and Happiness Week. We ran an online drama and dance workshop in collaboration with Next Stage Theatre School, a family yoga and meditation class lead by Yoga with Laura, we engaged in mindful art activities and we even all took part in a healthy treat cook along which saw over 20 of our families cooking along online with Ms McArdle, our Principal and Ms Kildea, our junior infant teacher.



Our PA organised a fantastic initiative called Active April. They set weekly family challenges for the month including a really fun superhero challenge!

However, the pinnacle event in our bid to achieve our first Amber Flag was our 5 marathons in 5 days challenge. Our 42 junior and senior infants ran a kilometre a day for 5 days - running marathons from Tokyo to Cape Town, Dublin to New York. Our amazing students not only completed 5 marathons in 5 days and learned about different cities and cultures from around the world but also raised €1545 for Pieta House.

We in Rivervalley CNS understand that promoting positive mental health is a continuous process and we are currently planning initiatives for the 2021/22 school year which will continue to shine a light on the importance of well-being and positive mental health for our growing school community.

For more information on River Valley CNS, visit the school website [here](#).

Resource Suggestions for GMGY!

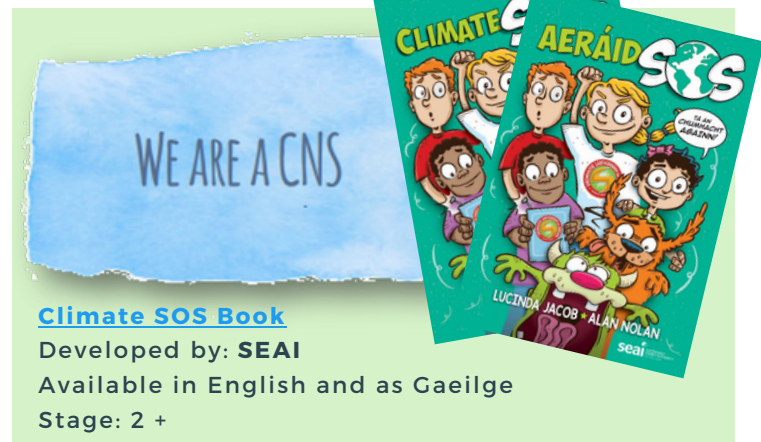


Coming Together: Talking Ethnicity, and Culture

MY STORIES

[ABCs of Racial Literacy Website](#)

Developed by: **Seesame Workshop**
Stage: 1 -2



[Climate SOS Book](#)

Developed by: **SEAI**
Available in English and as Gaeilge
Stage: 2 +



[Thinking Time Videos](#)

Developed by: **ETBI**
All Stages

THINKING TIME

[Belief Circles Lessons](#)

Developed by: **The Enquiring Classroom**
Stage 2 +

BELIEFS AND RELIGIONS



Principals' Corner

BY DARRAGH ROE
(ARD RÍ CNS, NAVAN)



Darragh with his three children, who attend Ard Rí CNS.

My name is Darragh Roe. I am the very proud Principal of Ard Rí Community National School in Navan. There were 63 pupils at Ard Rí when I joined the community in 2013. Today there are almost 300 pupils from 200 families and over 20 staff on the team. As a Navan man I am honored to be part of such a thriving and vibrant school, offering excellent, multi-denominational education to the families of my home town. My own three boys attend the school. The feeling I get watching them run up the avenue every morning never gets old.

Ard Rí is a buzzing little school. It is never quiet. We promote hands-on learning, lots of discussion and group work. I am a runner and I understand the importance of movement.



When you are running you can't do anything else, only run. You can't write an email, answer the phone or read a DES Circular. You just run. This to me is meditation and it keeps me well. We are a very active school. The younger children all have a pair of wellies at school and go for weekly trail walks and older classes run the Daily Mile. We have active transitions, sensory breaks, movement stations, games with rules on yard. We fill the bus going to football, swimming, athletics and cross-country.

We work closely with local clubs and every child has a lesson with an external coach every week. I am



doing my best to establish a culture of movement within the school and establish habits within the children which will last a life time.

Ard Rí is just out the road from the Head Office of our patron Louth and Meath ETB. From day one we have had a close working relationship with the team at Abbey Road. We benefit greatly from the professional patronage they provide. Through the Directors of LMETB I have been afforded great opportunities to get involved in projects at ETB level.

"I am doing my best to establish a culture of movement within the school and establish habits within the children which will last a life time."

I have really enjoyed working with the CE, Martin G O'Brien and Director of Schools, Fiona Kindlon on patronage competitions to establish new ETB schools in Louth and Meath. Three new CNS have been established since 2018 in Faughart, Ashbourne and Dunshaughlin along with new post primary schools Enfield Community College, Enfield and Coláiste Ríoga in Dunshaughlin. This expansion has given us great momentum. There is a strong network between school leaders in LMETB and the dedication of all stakeholders to develop the reputation of LMETB schools as centres of excellence is very powerful.

As Ard Rí has grown I have come to realise and appreciate the Principal does not and cannot be an expert at everything. I really enjoy distributing leadership among in-school management and staff members. I try not to tell staff how to do things and I am always amazed by the innovative approaches taken to solve challenges. It gives me great satisfaction to steer the school in a direction and then sit back and watch the sails fill with wind. The Human Resource is the most valuable resource in our schools and I am very lucky to have an excellent team around me. I see the greatest challenge for me going in to my 10th year is to continue to grow the people around me so they can reach their potential as leaders in their own right and continue to provide excellent, holistic education to the young people of Navan.

For more information on Ard Rí CNS, visit the school website [here](#).

Professional Development Materials for GMGY!

NEW!



The new page, accessible on the CNS website, provides professional development materials for teachers and coordinators to support the implementation of GMGY and includes pre-recorded webinars on the curriculum and each of its four strands!

WEBINARS



Reflections on the Family Project

TARA MALONE (GMGY COORDINATOR)

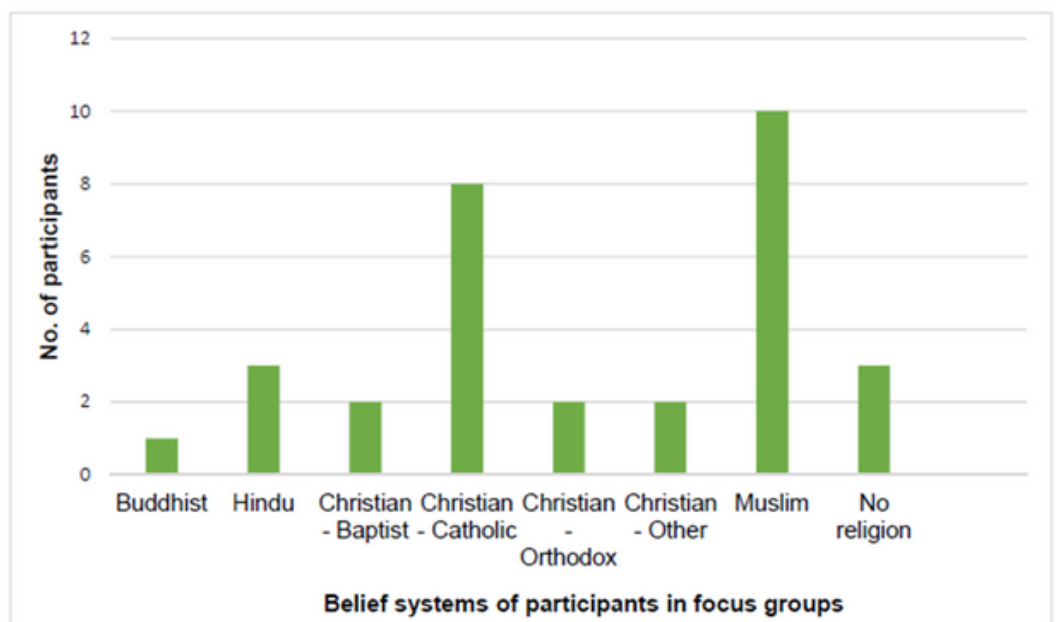
The Family Project is a methodology used in the “Beliefs and Religions” strand in the GMGY curriculum. Students learn about various religions and beliefs through a thematic approach presented by the teacher. They then engage in dialogue with their families based on this theme, and their completed Family Project is then presented to their classmates. Several years ago whilst teaching a Beliefs and Religions lesson to a Fifth Class, I experienced the Family Project in action for the first time. This new methodology struck me as a unique child-centred and identity-focused approach to multi-belief learning. I

Tara Malone has been teaching at Scoil Choilm CNS (Dublin 15) for the past 8 years. She has been a GMGY co-ordinator for 5 years and in 2019 completed a Masters in Intercultural Education. In this article, which is based on her thesis findings, Tara explores the opportunities and challenges of adopting the Family Project methodology from the perspectives of students.

witnessed first-hand how the Family Project enabled the students in my class to learn about and from the beliefs of their peers (Grimmitt, 1987). This led me to research students’ experiences of and perspectives on the Family Project. A selection of Fifth Class students from two CNS schools participated in the research with data gathered from questionnaires and focus-group interviews.



Demographic of Research Participants



The findings of the research indicated that students held both positive and negative views of the Family Project. Direct quotes from participants are italicised.

"This new methodology struck me as a unique, child-centred, identity focused approach to multi-belief learning"

Benefits of adopting the Family Project approach:

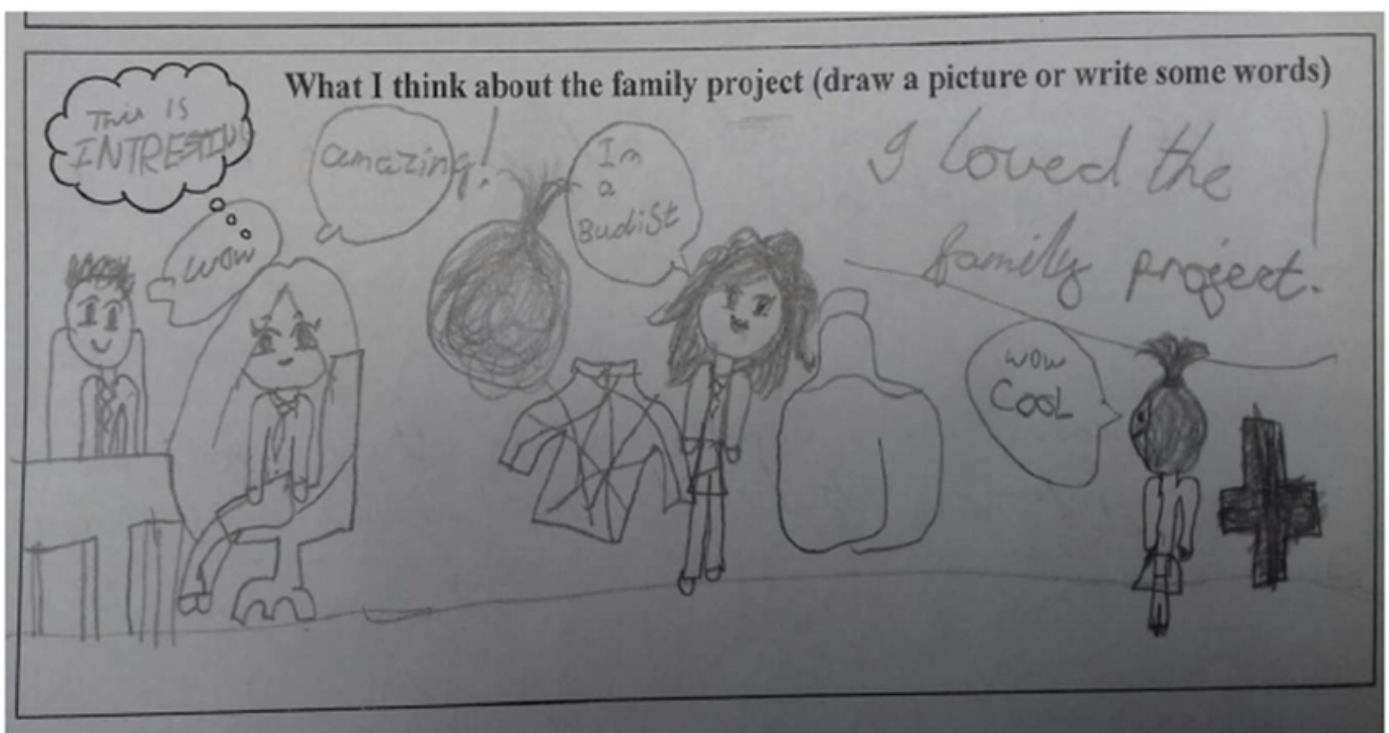
- Most students enjoyed learning about beliefs from listening to their peers, commenting that it is “fascinating”, “fun”, “educational” “I learned that many people have different beliefs and it’s just cool”
- Students found that the Family Projects developed their religious literacy: “I learned that there are more Gods, about other religions and the God that you believe in is not the only God”.
- Students were able to find similarities across religions.
- Students’ respect for others’ beliefs and identity increased: “it teaches us that we are all unique and different in special ways”
- Sharing beliefs enabled some students to strengthen their friendships with students from different backgrounds: “I think it’s fun because you like learn about your friend’s culture and like what they do at home.”
- Learning about beliefs from an “insider’s perspective” was regarded as beneficial by the students “you can ask more detailed questions because they actually are that religion so they know more.”
- The Family Project boosted some students’ confidence and self-esteem as they became the “expert knower” in their religion.

Challenges of adopting the Family Project approach:

- Many students felt shy and self-conscious “I’m afraid if people judge me and then I’ll get embarrassed”, “I don’t really enjoy sharing my personal info”
- Some students were aware that discussing their beliefs may leave them in a vulnerable situation: “there might be some people in the class that might not respect them, my beliefs, like the way I’m Muslim people might say like call me a terrorist and stuff like that”.
- Some students felt they lacked the religious knowledge to complete the Family Project and did not receive adequate help at home.
- A minority of students’ beliefs did not align with their parents, potentially creating conflict when completing the Family Project.
- Presenting the projects was sometimes repetitive and boring: “there are lots of people in our class that are Muslim so maybe there could be like four people talking about the same thing”
- For students from minority beliefs, the Family Project highlighted them as different, making some students feel excluded and self-conscious “I don’t feel comfortable because I feel people will start laughing when they hear what I believe in”.

The data shows that as a relatively new methodology, the Family Project is traversing new and complex territory because it has at its core complex and deep issues relating to students' personal identities. The role of the teacher therefore cannot be underestimated in adopting a sensitive approach to facilitating inter-belief dialogue. This can be achieved by:

- Encouraging students to help the teacher devise “ground rules” for inter-belief dialogue to create a safe space for students. This can include respect for one another’s beliefs, only one voice speaking at a time etc.
- Teachers can display the phrase **“We only respect beliefs that are respectful of others”** on the wall, and refer to it through inter-belief dialogue to remind students to be respectful.
- Offering students choices as to whether to present the Family Project to the class, possibly display the projects, teacher reads out the students’ work, or students present their projects in small groups.
- Adopting inclusive practices and engaging with students’ cultural expertise in different areas of learning, for examples promoting home languages, reading stories from various cultures etc.



The title of the paper is “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Multi-Belief Learning: Exploring Students’ Experiences of and Perspectives on the Family Project in the GMGY Curriculum”. This is available from Marino Institute of Education.

To learn more about the Family Project approach, visit <https://cns.ie/gmgy-family-projects/>

Links to Upcoming Events



The **IRISH YOUNG PHILOSOPHER'S AWARDS** is a philosophical initiative that invites students to reflect on philosophical questions and create a philosophical project which is judged by a committee of professional philosophers. Open to **5th and 6th class** children at primary level! A great opportunity to support teaching and learning in the Thinking Time strand of GMGY!

CLOSING DATE, 28th March 2022

The **OUR WORLD IRISH AID AWARDS** gives 3rd-6th class children the chance to learn more about the developing world and to speak out for a better future for all the world's people.



| AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER | JANUARY |
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| (12 th) International Day of the Girl Child (13 th) International Day of the Girl Child (14 th) International Day of the Girl Child | (1 st) International Day of the Girl Child (2 nd) International Day of the Girl Child (3 rd) International Day of the Girl Child (4 th) International Day of the Girl Child (5 th) International Day of the Girl Child (6 th) International Day of the Girl Child (7 th) International Day of the Girl Child (8 th) International Day of the Girl Child (9 th) International Day of the Girl Child (10 th) International Day of the Girl Child (11 th) International Day of the Girl Child (12 th) International Day of the Girl Child | (1 st) International Day of the Girl Child (2 nd) International Day of the Girl Child (3 rd) International Day of the Girl Child (4 th) International Day of the Girl Child (5 th) International Day of the Girl Child (6 th) International Day of the Girl Child (7 th) International Day of the Girl Child (8 th) International Day of the Girl Child (9 th) International Day of the Girl Child (10 th) International Day of the Girl Child (11 th) International Day of the Girl Child (12 th) International Day of the Girl Child | (1 st) International Day of the Girl Child (2 nd) International Day of the Girl Child (3 rd) International Day of the Girl Child (4 th) International Day of the Girl Child (5 th) International Day of the Girl Child (6 th) International Day of the Girl Child (7 th) International Day of the Girl Child (8 th) International Day of the Girl Child (9 th) International Day of the Girl Child (10 th) International Day of the Girl Child (11 th) International Day of the Girl Child (12 th) International Day of the Girl Child | (1 st) International Day of the Girl Child (2 nd) International Day of the Girl Child (3 rd) International Day of the Girl Child (4 th) International Day of the Girl Child (5 th) International Day of the Girl Child (6 th) International Day of the Girl Child (7 th) International Day of the Girl Child (8 th) International Day of the Girl Child (9 th) International Day of the Girl Child (10 th) International Day of the Girl Child (11 th) International Day of the Girl Child (12 th) International Day of the Girl Child | (1 st) International Day of the Girl Child (2 nd) International Day of the Girl Child (3 rd) International Day of the Girl Child (4 th) International Day of the Girl Child (5 th) International Day of the Girl Child (6 th) International Day of the Girl Child (7 th) International Day of the Girl Child (8 th) International Day of the Girl Child (9 th) International Day of the Girl Child (10 th) International Day of the Girl Child (11 th) International Day of the Girl Child (12 th) International Day of the Girl Child |

CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS CALENDAR DOWNLOAD

| SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER |
|--|--|--|--|
| CNS Professional Learning Calendar SCHOOL-BASED GMGY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR ALL TEACHERS From September 2021, school-based professional learning opportunities (SPL) will be available for all teachers. Schools should also avail of the GMGY Webinar. To receive a full list of opportunities, please contact your local GMGY Coordinator. | CNS Pop-Up 1 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | GMGY Webinar 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) GMGY Webinar 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | GMGY Webinar 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) GMGY Webinar 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) |
| SEPTEMBER Introduction for New CNS Staff 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | OCTOBER CNS Pop-Up 1 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | NOVEMBER GMGY Teach Meet 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | DECEMBER GMGY Reflection for Small Schools 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) |
| JANUARY GMGY Teach Meet 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | FEBRUARY GMGY Teach Meet 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | MARCH CNS Pop-Up 4 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | APRIL CNS Pop-Up 7 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) |
| MAY CNS Pop-Up 6 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | JUNE GMGY Teach Meet 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | GMGY Symposium 15.00.00 (Open-Agents) | All Teachers Live Webinar Facilitated by GMGY Coordinator Pre-recorded Webinar Optional Session/Support Reported Session |



To facilitate schools in the current COVID context, ETBI has scheduled a reduced number of professional learning opportunities this term. For more information, please see the updated professional learning calendar here.