

Preparing to deliver the Transitions Toolkit

Supporting young people to prepare for the transition to post-primary school is an important job and may seem quite daunting. The culture within your classroom setting can have a significant impact on how young people experience learning and how it becomes relevant for them in their lives.

Some things that you might want to consider in advance of delivering the Transitions Toolkit are:

Does anyone need to know that you are delivering this toolkit with your class?

You know your class well but it might be helpful to let other staff know that you are exploring the Transitions Toolkit with your class. They might have additional information about the young people in your class that could be helpful for you in planning your lessons. It might also be helpful to check-in with parents around how the young people that you teach are feeling about the transition to post-primary school as they will have insights about how their children are feeling. If you know that a young person is particularly anxious about the transition to post-primary school, it is a good idea to factor this in when asking particular young people for contributions during the lesson or when checking in after the lesson. It is important that the young people feel safe within your lesson and that they know that they will not be asked to contribute in a way that makes them feel

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uncomfortable. All of this will help you to gauge how best to approach the delivery of the Transitions Toolkit as it relates to the young people that you teach and will support a safe classroom culture.

Setting ground rules

It might be a good idea to set some ground rules before the delivery of this Toolkit or to revisit already established ground rules. You might negotiate these with the class, letting them know that it is important that everyone feels comfortable in the lesson. Some examples of ground rules might be:

1. Listen to each other
2. Only contribute things that you are comfortable sharing
3. Freedom to pass if you don't want to answer a particular question
4. Openness to other ideas.

Managing conversations and debate

An important part of mental health and wellbeing education is normalising conversations around mental health and developing mental health literacy. That is one of the reasons that class discussions and debates are such a useful tool in mental health education. However, it is really important for you as the teacher to ensure that these discussions remain balanced so that a negative or stigmatising idea about mental health is not reinforced.

You can do this by:



- Making sure that you understand the reason for the discussion and what key messages you are delivering
- Asking questions to explore further thoughts and ideas. These could include questions such as “why do you say that?” and “Why might someone disagree with that?”
- Playing devil’s advocate – take the opposite viewpoint and explain your reasons why with the class
- Reinforcing key messages at the end of the discussion.

Managing Disclosures

Disclosures about mental health difficulties can be a sign that young people feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with the class but it is important to manage a personal disclosure effectively so that it does not leave young people in the class in a vulnerable situation. If a young person begins to make a personal disclosure about their mental health, you might want to use “protective interrupting”. This is where you validate what the young person has said (*“It sounds like you have a lot of insight into this”*) and then redirect them

to a more appropriate topic (*“What do you think about this idea?”*). It would also be important to follow up with the young person after the lesson and if necessary, follow your schools' policies and procedures in relation to disclosures.

Support options

It is important that you are aware of the relevant and appropriate support options available to young people both in your school and wider community so that you can make the young people that you teach aware of these and if necessary, their parents. These could be primary care mental health services, child and adolescent mental health teams, listening ear services such as Childline, online supports or their local GP service.

For more information on the support that Jigsaw can offer visit jigsaw.ie.

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