

**BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY
IRELAND**



Business Action on Education

Time to Count Evaluation 2019



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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Executive Summary

Improving numeracy skills plays a crucial role in the educational journey of a child, leading to their full participation in the educational system and to their inclusion in society as a whole. In 2019 the Time to Count Programme supported the existing work of 3rd class teachers in 10 schools and showed success in the programme's four stated aims, the details of which are summarised in the following table:

Answer Options	Increased a lot / increased somewhat		Remained the same		Decreased	
	Teachers	Volunteers	Teachers	Volunteers	Teachers	Volunteers
Built children's confidence around number	100% (6)	84% (52)	0% (0)	13% (8)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Fostered children's enjoyment of number	83% (5)	86% (53)	17% (1)	13% (8)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Reinforced children's conceptual understanding of number	100% (6)	81% (50)	0% (0)	15% (9)	0% (0)	2% (1)
Supported the development of children's flexibility and perseverance in mathematical problem solving	83% (5)	84% (52)	17% (1)	10% (6)	0% (0)	2% (1)

It would appear that schools saw the programme as a meaningful addition to their education offering with improvements in numeracy being observed. The companies saw it as a really effective employee volunteering programme. Volunteers felt they had imparted some level of mathematical knowledge and love, while feeling rewarded and satisfied that they made a difference in a child's life.

The teachers identified improvements in children's recall of numerical facts, increased ability in reading the time, a greater practical sense of number and connections being made between what had been taught to what was used in a game. They particularly noticed improvements in attendance on the days of the Time to Count Sessions and found that the variety of the games went across the different mathematical strands, and had varying degrees of difficulty, so there was something for everyone. They found that the children loved the sessions, were eager to persevere and that they gained new skills regarding taking turns and playing fairly. Their net promoter score was 100. One particular school, which had members of the travelling community in the participating class identified how learning maths skills in the sessions, without the need for literacy skills, was particularly beneficial for them.

The principals gave a net promoter score to the programme of 88, with all of them noticing positive effects on the children and on the school. It gave support to the class teacher and they thought that the improvements and nurturing the children received will benefit them as they move through the classes, with barriers and attitudes of families also improved. The volunteers went in and out of the classes in a very efficient way, on time and enthusiastic, and when it was the children's turn to go to the workplace, the principals felt that this also had such a positive effect on them, in particular with seeing maths in everyday lives and careers, and seeing inside a company that was on their doorstep. They felt it contributed to the school Literacy and Numeracy Plan and identified benefits such as new voices, widening of approaches, working with successful business people, team work, social skills, as well as enjoyment while learning, during the programme.

The company coordinators were extremely satisfied with all the elements of the programme: the training session, numeracy sessions, feedback and support sessions, work place visits and the wrap up event. Having taken on board the feedback from last year, the games were staggered, changed and added to, so there was a marked increase in the opinion of the games with "appropriate with a good variety" going from 29% in 2018 to 60% this year. There was lots of evidence of the volunteers enjoying the experience, sharing their love of maths, improving their communication and management skills (albeit for a younger audience than normal). As highlighted in the table above, they visibly noticed the children's number skills improving and interestingly, a few commented on the change and improvement in team work and peer assistance, as the programme progressed. 100% said that it was a meaningful experience for them with some commenting that they'd love to do it again. They'd like more time with the games in order to be more familiar with them ahead of playing them with the children. They felt supported by the BITCI coordinator with 93% of them rating the welcome and support provided by the school as excellent. The net promoter score was 78 (up from 74 in 2018).

The programme continues to evolve and it's great to see that a doubling of the number of programmes has spread the benefits of it to more children and schools, while maintaining its very high standard of supports, benefits and impacts to employees and companies.



Dr. Eleanor Walsh, Assistant Education Manager, BITCI and Time to Count Programme Coordinator

Section 1

Introduction

Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI) is the network for responsible business in Ireland. Our purpose is to inspire and enable businesses to bring about a sustainable, low carbon economy and a more inclusive society where everyone thrives. We have a suite of educational programmes for primary and post primary schools. We aim to develop mutually beneficial partnerships between schools and businesses at local level and to support the Government's overall strategy on educational inclusion. We operate by matching individual schools that are targeted through the School Completion Programme with a large local company in partnership and we receive matching Government funds under the National Development Plan for our post primary programmes. To date over 400 partnerships have been established nationally since our inception in 2000. The programmes support students, principals, teachers, the STEM agenda, numeracy and children's literacy in primary schools.

Introduction of Time to Count

In 2016, we piloted a programme supporting numeracy called Time to Count. It was a structured opportunity for business volunteers to provide support on numeracy skills to primary school children. It aimed to help children develop a confidence with numbers, to enjoy playing games and doing activities which improved their numeracy skills. It was initially based on the successful Time to Read model, which is currently operating in 43 schools & businesses nationwide, but now has incorporated some changes based on feedback and reviews and in consultation with our numeracy experts Dr. Thérèse Dooley and Dr. Maurice O'Reilly from the DCU Institute of Education, . Since then, we have completed two rounds of pilot programmes and two years of national rollout of the programme, growing from five programmes to 10 this year.

Time to Count aims to support the Department of Education and Skills national strategy on Literacy and Numeracy. Experts agree that there is a need for initiatives in Ireland which support schools in finding ways

to raise expectations for children's literacy and numeracy achievement and to identify ways of helping families support their children's development in these areas (DES, 2011). Many children in Irish primary schools are not developing the necessary numeracy skills that allow them participate fully within the education system.

The Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 (LNLL 2011) strategy developed by the Department of Education launched a set of ambitious targets for literacy and numeracy in schools and completed an interim review in 2016. For the first time, specific targets for disadvantaged schools were Included with a general aspiration of a shift right (increasing) for all students, across the ability spectrum. Critical skills development was identified with focussed actions to be undertaken to build momentum behind ambitions for STEM, foreign languages, closing the gap in literacy and numeracy, and adopting the transformation of learning made possible by digital technology. We look forward to the review of the full plan next year.

The objectives of the Time to Count programme are:

- ✓ To build children's confidence around numbers
- ✓ To foster children's enjoyment of number
- ✓ To reinforce children's conceptual understanding of number
- ✓ To support the development of children's flexibility and perseverance in mathematical problem solving

The participants in 2019 were:

- ESB & St. Kevin's BNS, Finglas, Dublin 11
- Analog Devices & Our Lady Queen of Peace, Limerick
- IBM & Ladyswell NS, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15
- KPMG & St. Vincent's GNS, North William Street, Dublin 1
- Aviva & Bunscoil Sancta Maria, Synge Street, Dublin 8
- Workday & St. Paul's Primary School, Dublin 7
- ESB Group & St. Mary's NS, Fairview, Dublin 3
- Veolia & St. Joseph's NS, Fermoy, Cork
- Arup & St. Patrick's Girls NS, Dublin 4
- Aviva & Glasheen Girls NS, Cork

Acknowledgements

BITCI would like to sincerely thank the ten companies and their business volunteers, the schools, teachers and the children that took part this year. We wish to acknowledge their hard work, passion and belief in the potential benefits for the participants, throughout the entire process.

We would also like to sincerely thank the Department of Education who administered our Dormant Accounts Funding which is being used to expand and develop the programme and ESB Energy for Generation Fund who are funding an external evaluation and marketing resources to also support the expansion. .

“We believe Time to Count is a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to provide support on numeracy skills to primary school children. This year we were delighted to work with 3rd class children from St Kevin’s Boys National School in Finglas. Our volunteers thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the programme and ESB look forward to supporting this initiative in the future.” Diane Fannin, ESB Energy for Generations Fund

In 2018, we set up a Steering Group to provide advice and assistance to us to help achieve our programme outcomes. The current members are listed below and we are grateful for all their time and support, so generously given.

Dr. Thérèse Dooley	DCU Institute of Education
Dr. Maurice O’Reilly	DCU Institute of Education
Ms Diane Fannin	Group People and Sustainability Executive ESB
Ms Eibhlín McGarry	Principal, St. Mary’s NS, Fairview
Ms Germaine Noonan	Head of Education, BITCI
Dr. Eleanor Walsh	Assistant Manager, Business Action on Education, BITCI

Section 2

Teacher Evaluation

Six teachers in the participating schools completed an online evaluation. The evaluation form was divided into four key sections:

- 2.1 Programme Operation
- 2.2 Benefits and Impacts & Benefits
- 2.3 Service and Support
- 2.4 Recommendations

2.1 Programme Operations

In this section teachers rated and commented on different aspects of the programme's operation; from the materials and games provided to the process of the volunteers joining the classroom.

2.1.1. Programme Materials and Games

Five of the teachers said that the materials and games were **'very appropriate and a good variety'** and one said that they were **'appropriate but not enough variety'**. No one chose the final option which was **'not appropriate and not enough variety'**.

There was a wide range of games which covered lots of different strands on the maths curriculum. All games were interactive and child friendly. Every child was able to participate in the games.

The games tied in well with the third class curriculum.

The games allowed all levels of ability to enjoy them.

The children loved the games but did have their favourite games. This resulted in the tendency to continuously pick these preferred games, and avoid others that were too difficult / easy.

2.1.2. Volunteers Joining the Classroom

Teachers were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the volunteers coming in to the classroom for the Time to Count Sessions and all of them found that it worked very well.

Volunteers were very friendly and kind to the children. They showed an interest in getting to know each child. They worked well with their groups and adapted games for the children in their group.

The class really enjoyed the time to count programme and looked forward to it each week. Getting to know new people was also a bonus.

They were all very capable of interacting with and enjoying children's company.

2.2 Programme Impacts & Benefits

In this section we asked the school teachers to consider and evaluate whether the programme met its aims and objectives. The programme's stated aims are:

- To build children's confidence around number
- To foster children's enjoyment of number
- To reinforce children's conceptual understanding of number
- To support the development of children's flexibility and perseverance in mathematical problem solving

2.2.1. Objective One: To build children's confidence around number

The teachers indicated that the participating children's confidence around number had been improved:

- Increased a lot: 50% (3)
- Increased somewhat: 50% (3)
- Remained the same: None (0)
- Decreased: None (0)

All of the children did very well in their Sigma test this year and the program definitely had a hand in this.

The games taught, reinforced the different strands of the primary maths curriculum. Students learnt how to put the different maths operations into practice.

The children were showing a greater confidence in maths lessons after time to count sessions.

They would be a wide range of ability in my class and quite a lot of SEN. All children improved but some more than others.

Certain games have allowed children to practice and improve on skills / concepts and has helped their confidence in the given area.

2.2.2. Objective Two: To foster children's enjoyment of number

In considering the programme's second objective most teachers indicated that they have seen the children's enjoyment of number grow:

- Increased a lot: 83% (5)
- Increased somewhat: 0%
- Remained the same: 17% (1)
- Decreased: 0%

Students learnt how to turn take and the importance and use of number both inside and outside of the classroom on an everyday basis.

The children enjoyed it immensely. They loved playing games to consolidate their learning instead of using their textbooks!

All the children were excited and looking forward to time to count sessions every Tuesday. Attendance in the class improved on a Tuesday as the children didn't want to miss playing maths games with the volunteers. They thoroughly enjoyed playing maths games. They showed a greater interest in maths lessons after the time to count sessions.

To this day I am still asked if the volunteers are returning. However during the programme not one single child was opting out, in fact there were 2 absences over the 10 weeks out of 21 children.



A Veolia volunteer and children from St. Joseph's National School, Fermoy, Cork enjoying Time to Count

2.2.3. Objective Three: To reinforce children's conceptual understanding of number

When considering the programme's third objective teachers indicated that the children's conceptual understanding of number had:

- Increased a lot: 50% (3)
- Increased somewhat: 50% (3)
- Remained the same: None
- Decreased: None

Students' participation in maths games enabled them to get a more practical sense of understanding when using number.

Again there a wide range of ability and SEN in the class. All pupils could relate to number outside of the classroom as a result some even understanding Roman numerals.

Their understanding and ability to recall multiplication and division tables improved. They were better able to tell the time after playing maths games with their volunteers.

A small difference noticed in weaker children where they may have had a "light bulb moment" connecting what was being taught back to a time to count game.

2.2.4. Objective Four: To support the development of children's flexibility and perseverance in mathematical problem solving

In relation to the participating children's development of flexibility and perseverance in problem solving, the teachers were asked to consider the programme's fourth objective. The teachers indicated that this had:

- Increased a lot: 50% (3)
- Increased somewhat: 33% (2)
- Remained the same: 17% (1)
- Decreased: none

It is amazing when problem solving it turned into a game and has a competitive element how many pupils rise to the challenge and persevere. It was uplifting to see children's response.

The children were eager to persevere and use their problem solving skills when playing the games.

By participating in maths games, students learnt how to think more logically, to turn take and apply skills learnt in solving word maths problems.

Games did not seem to target the area of problem solving.

2.2.5. Qualitative Impacts of the Time to Read Programme

Teachers were asked to identify and comment on any individual child (without naming) where the impact of the programme has been particularly evident. Comments included:

I have several children from the Travelling Community in my class. Not one of them was absent, all were in class early and each of them was enjoying Maths. It suited their ability, didn't require literacy (which is a major stumbling block) and played to their competitive spirit. Most of all it was great to see them learning without them realising they were, especially without the use of books or copies which they would normally abhor.

One child struggled learning his multiplication tables and games such as Multiplication bingo and TriFacta were very beneficial for him.

There was 3 children in the class who were unable to tell the analogue or digital time apart from o'clock at the start of the time to count sessions. After playing the time bingo game over the weeks, all three of these

children are able to read every time on the analogue and digital clocks. I have seen a great improvement in all children's ability to recall multiplication and division tables - class test results have improved.

One child would have found it difficult to work in groups. I think time to count had a benefit for this child as they began to get involved without pressure and began learning the skills of turn taking.

All children gained in many ways from the intervention.

One child in particular learnt the importance of working as a team member and learnt how to play fairly.

2.2.6. Additional Impacts of the Time to Count Programme

Teachers indicated that the programme had a number of other impacts on the participating children.

Further impacts included:

Impacts	2019
Cognitive development	83%
Emotional engagement	83%
Social engagement	100%
Self-efficacy	67%
None of the above	0%
Difficult to say	0%
Other	0%

Teachers commented:

Time to Count was a very enjoyable, worthwhile maths experience for the students and they engaged both cognitively, socially and emotionally and it complemented all the strands on the maths primary school curriculum.

Pupils were capable of developing strategies to improve their performance especially for Eureka. Pupils were enjoying participating in every game and for some pupils losing was a lesson worth learning. It was great to see pupils participating in groups, developing turn taking skills and engaging with adults and fostering

relationships. The range of games allowed for all pupils to approach games with self-confidence and challenge others of higher ability on a level playing field.

When getting to know volunteers children's confidence and participation increased. Similarly to above, children learned basic skills of working with others and turn taking. Children also began to deal with patience and believing in themselves more. Instead of giving up straight away on something they may have found challenging, they slowly got involved and realized they were capable

2.3 Service and Support

Each teacher was asked to rate and comment on the service received from the BITCI coordinator, as well as the communication with the volunteers and to describe the partnership between the school and the company. The rating options were: excellent, very good, fair or poor.

2.3.1. Service provided by BITCI

The service provided by the BITCI coordinator was rated as **excellent** by all teachers who responded.

Comments included:

Our coordinator was a wonderful co-ordinator and I look forward with anticipation to working with her in some capacity again. An excellent organiser and trainer, it was very clear to see that a lot of time and training went into developing the volunteers. I cannot speak highly enough of them, it was always a pleasure to meet, discuss and spend time in their company. The level of organisation and ease of implementing the programme is truly down to her diligence and conscientiousness. She was always available to discuss matters needing attention and I can't wait to work with her again.

The coordinator was a pleasure to work with, she was very accommodating and helpful.

I was always able to contact if needed and always got a fast response. Any problems that arose were dealt with immediately.

2.3.2. Communication & Information Sharing with Company Volunteers

All respondents indicated that there was **sufficient communication and sharing of information** with the volunteers during the programme.

Yes there was lots of meetings and emails exchanged, everyone was on the same page.

Excellent feedback session. Outline of maths curriculum objectives given to volunteers.

Volunteers filled out forms after each session. Some information was left out and only brought up at the feedback session after a number of weeks. It would have been handier if this was written down and the problem could have been dealt with sooner.

2.3.3. The Partnership between the School and Company

The partnership with the link company was evaluated as **excellent** by all six teachers who completed the survey.

I am certain that this has been the beginning of a long lasting fruitful relationship.

Very positive excellent communication links.

We have an excellent relationship. Work visit was planned extremely well. The volunteers were friendly and caring. It was brilliant to work with ESB and the volunteers.

2.4 Recommendations

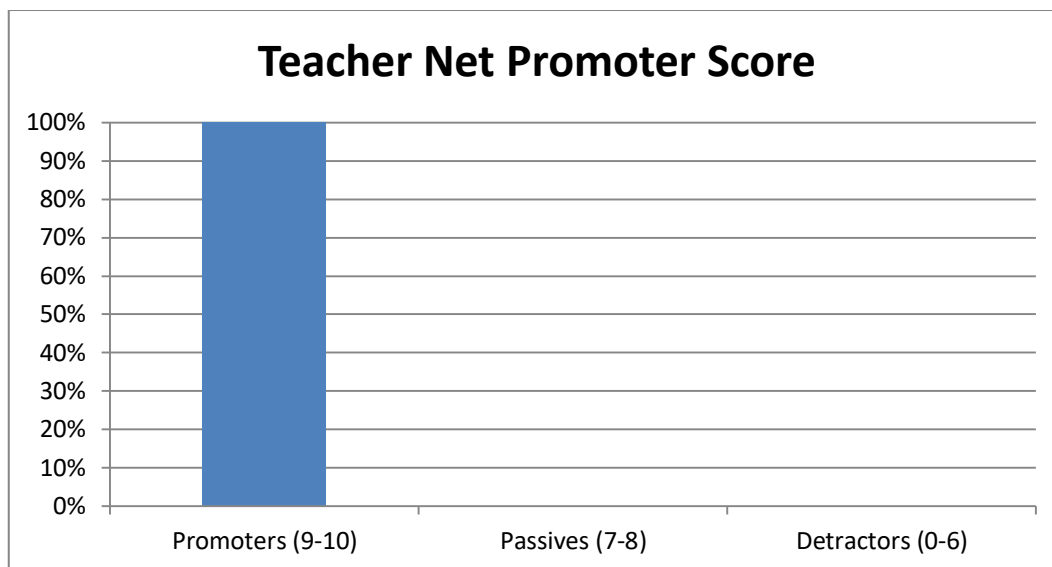
2.4.1. Recommendations

In this section we asked teachers an open ended question, asking if they had any recommendations to improve the programme going forward. They are detailed below:

Keep doing what you are doing. It is a wonderful programme empowering volunteers, pupils and helping the wider community benefit as a whole. Pupils are motivated, adults having a positive impact on children and developing pupils holistically.

2.4.2. Recommending the Time to Count Programme

The teachers were asked to rate the programme on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 meant they were not at all likely to recommend the programme to 10 which indicated that they were extremely likely to recommend it. All of the teachers scored it a 10. So the **Net Promoter Score was 100.**



Please note all teachers gave permission for their feedback to be used for the benefit of the programme.



Children from St. Paul's Primary School, Dublin 7 with their Workday volunteers during their Time to Count work place visit

Section 3

Principal Evaluation

Eight principals completed the survey. The evaluation was divided into four sections:

- 3.1 Programme Operation
- 3.2 Programme Impacts and Benefits
- 3.3 Service and Support
- 3.4 Recommendations

3.1 Programme Operations

3.1.1. Weekly visits to the school

The principals were asked for their levels of satisfaction with the weekly visits by the volunteers to their school. The range of levels from which to choose were: Worked very well, worked well, and did not work well, very disruptive or cannot comment. All of the principals said it worked **‘very well’** or **‘well’**. The comments included:

The programme was really smoothly run, excellent communication between partners, volunteers were very engaged yet professional.

The volunteers arrived on time every week. They were friendly and enthusiastic. They engaged really well with the kids and everyone seemed to enjoy the programme.

Very organized, great communication and volunteers were fantastic with children.

The mentors arrived each week, on time, enthusiastic and ready to work. The girls looked forward to the maths games as they saw it as fun.

3.2 Programme Benefits & Impacts

In this section we examined what principals thought were the main benefits to their school and to the children taking part in the programme. We also asked the principals to consider what they felt the impacts of the programme were.

3.2.1. Overall Impact of the Programme on Children who took part

Principals were asked to rate the overall impact on the children. All of them rated the impact as **‘positive’** or **‘very positive’** commenting that the maths games and interaction with the volunteers was very impactful.

The children really enjoyed the fun side to consolidating their number strand, ideal break in the week from their regular Maths lessons.

The pupils loved playing the games, there was great excitement in the room and high quality active learning.

It helped improve test scores throughout a variety of strands.

Adult supervision helped the pupils negotiate difficulties that may have arisen. The games were enjoyable while the girls were also learning.



3.2.2. Overall Impact of the Programme on the School

Regarding the impact of the programme on the school, again all of the principals rated the impact as **‘very positive’** or **‘positive’**.

The programme fitted very well into our School Self Evaluation and Improvement Plan objectives, of offering more engaging and real world Maths to our pupils.

It brought fun into lessons and supported the class teacher.

And hopefully the children's level of maths will have improved which should benefit them as they move up through the school.

Great to see boys nurtured and there was always an excited positive atmosphere on a Tuesday morning.

3.2.3. Overall Impact of the Programme on the Families

The principals were also asked for the perspectives on any impact on families as a result of their children participating in Time to Count. Four indicated it was **'very positive'** and one indicated **'no impact'**.

Comments included:

Parents inspired to play Maths games with children and it broke down certain barriers and attitudes.

It is hard to quantify but feedback from parents has been positive.

Parents commented that their sons really enjoyed the maths games.

Hopefully the children went home happy after engaging in the programme and encouraged their own families to play more of these types of games together.

3.2.4. Impact of the Workplace Visits

Each class group was brought on a workplace visit. This involved being taken on a tour of the business and engaging in some activities. The children saw the actual workplace of their volunteers and learned more about their roles in the companies. The aim of the visit is to expose the children to a real-world working environment and raise their career aspirations.

The principals were asked to rate the impact of this visit on the same scale as the overall impact question. All of them thought this had either a **'very positive'** (6) or **'positive'** (2) impact on the children.

The children got to see the importance of Maths in everyday lives and careers.

The girls were able to build a robot in a relatively small time frame and this was amazing for them as there were plenty of volunteers on hand to help too. They also had a chance to look around the offices and see the types of work that go on in the company.

The children were amazed by this company that is on their doorstep. It showed them what could be available to them in the future in terms of a career and what a workplace is really like.

It was extremely well organised and it gave the boys a first-hand experience of office life, they loved it!

This is often the highlight for the girls. They love going out and being welcomed and made feel special.



Children from Ladyswell NS, Dublin 15 visit IBM on a Time to Count workplace visit

3.2.5. Impact of Programme on School Literacy and Numeracy Plan

All of the responding principals felt it contributed to the schools Literacy and Numeracy plan.

All of the games had a focus on number. The children had to use mental maths and a variety of maths strategies in playing the games. It gave them the opportunity to work in small groups with someone guiding their learning.

Every little helps. I think the benefits are around social development, turn taking, following rules and instructions. These are all valuable life lessons.

Yes, it was brought into our weekly plans, station teaching and will do the same next year.

3.2.6. Main Benefit of Time to Count in their School

In an open ended question principals were asked to identify what they thought were the main benefits of the programme in their school:

*Having the variety and **new voices** had the biggest impact as the children were engaged and in small groups to facilitate the learning outcomes.*

Widening of approaches and methodologies in the teaching of Maths. The opportunity for children to work with successful business people and the positive encouragement that brings.

I really liked the Time to Count programme as its objective is to improve children ability and enjoyment of maths, which is so important. There was lots of variety in the games and it showed how maths is a part of so many things. The children got to work in small groups, they worked as teams and as individuals. They had guidance and attention from the volunteers. They learned how to be gracious in winning and losing.

Extra support, a positive attitude to maths, an opportunity to engage in games and get enjoyment while learning.

3.3 Service and Support

Each principal was asked to rate and comment on the service provided by BITCI, as well as the partnership between the company and the school. The range of levels from which to choose were: excellent, very good, fair or poor.

3.3.1 Service Provided by BITCI

100% of the principals rated the service levels of BITCI as **‘excellent’** or **‘very good’**. Comments included:

Training of staff, reviews and checking in, good support for all involved.

Our coordinator was very involved. She explained the programme well and linked school and company together with ease. She made regular contact and was always on hand to answer any questions.

Professional, excellent communication at all times.

3.3.2. Partnership between the School and Company

All eight principals rated the partnership between the school and company as **‘excellent’** or **‘very good’**.

This was a new relationship for us - everyone was very enthusiastic and worked well with the girls.

The volunteers were so cheerful and happy. It was lovely to see them every week.

I could not praise our company coordinator and all volunteers enough for their help and positivity and for supporting our boys and school.

3.4 Recommendations

In this section the principals were asked for any recommendations or changes they would make to the programme along with improvements in feedback and support.

3.4.1. Recommendations and Suggestions

The principals were asked in an open ended question for any recommendations or suggestions that they had, there was just one comment:

Please come back to us! Thank you so much for giving our school and boys such a lovely experience.

3.4.2. Expectations of the Programme

All principals indicated that the programme was what they had expected.

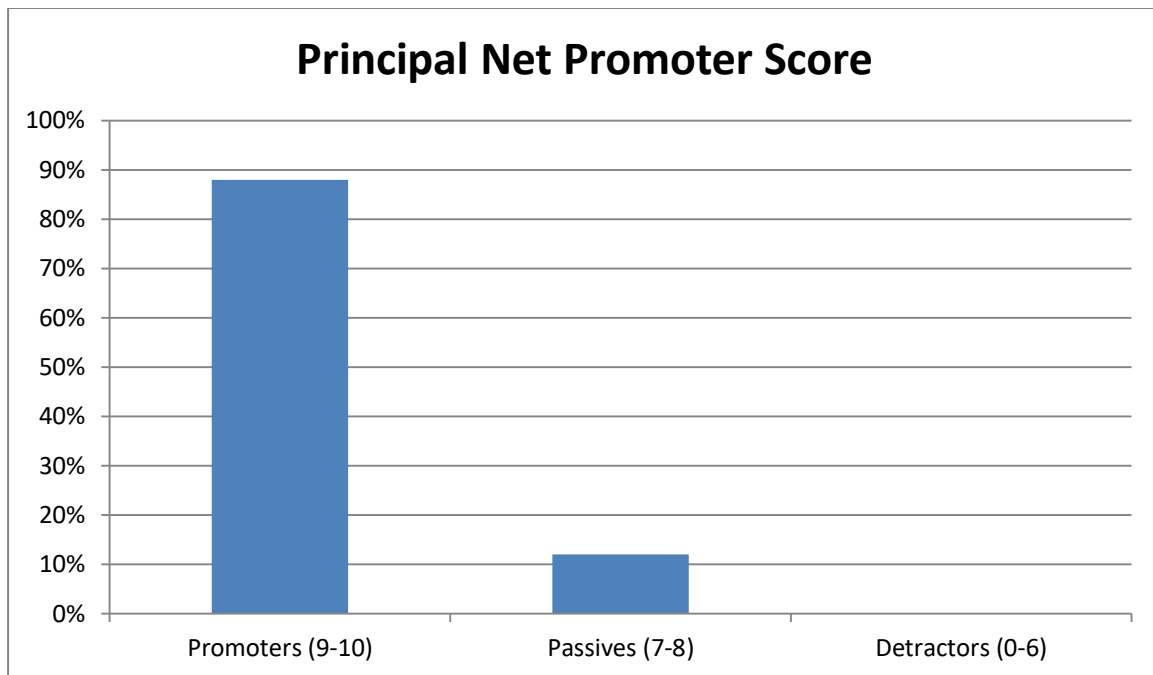
Celine clearly outlined exactly what the programme would entail and delivered on every aspect.

I knew if it was half as good as Time to Read then it would be a success. Super organised and fun!

I didn't really know what to expect from the programme as we had not taken part before but it was extremely successful and enjoyed by all.

3.4.3. Recommending the Time to Count Programme

The principals were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 meant they were not at all likely to recommend the programme to 10 which indicated they were extremely likely to recommend it. The net promoter score was 88 comprising seven principals rated the programme as 10 and one rated it an 8.



Please note all principals gave permission for their feedback to be used for the benefit of the programme.



Children from St. Patrick's GNS, Dublin 4 during their Time to Count work place visit to Arup

Section 4

Volunteer Evaluation

63 company volunteers completed the Volunteer Evaluation. The evaluation was divided into five sections:

- 4.1 Programme Operation
- 4.2 Programme Impacts and Benefits
- 4.3 Training, Support and Service
- 4.4 Recommendations
- 4.5 Volunteer Experience

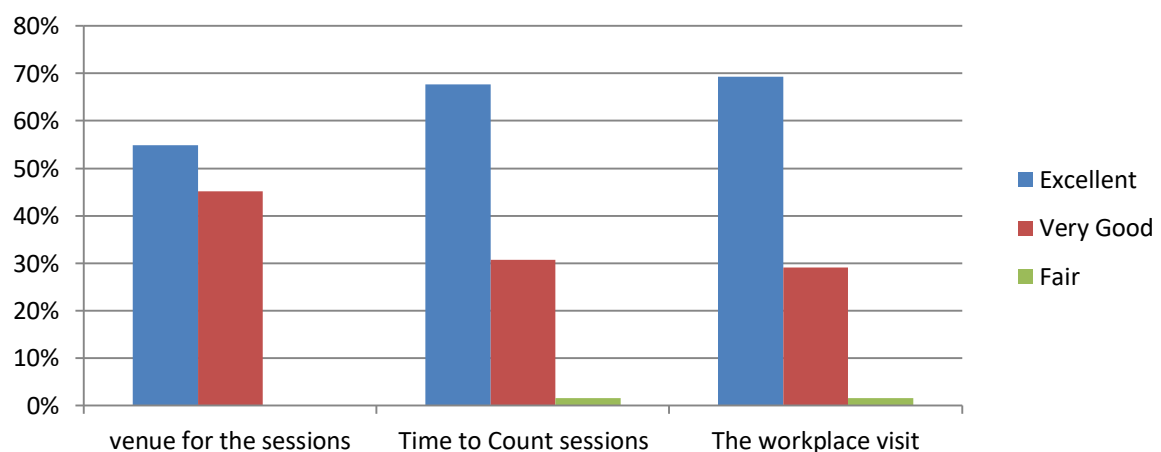
Volunteers were asked to rate and comment on their satisfaction with the operational aspects of the programme.

4.1 Programme Operations

4.1.1. Aspects of Time to Count Programme

Volunteers were asked to rate the venue for the sessions, the actual sessions themselves, and the workplace visit. The chart below portrays the ratings.

Chart: Programme aspects and volunteer ratings



100% of the volunteers rated the venue for the sessions as **'excellent'** or **'very good'**, 98% rated the sessions themselves as **'excellent'** or **'very good'**, and all but one person rated the workplace visit as either **'excellent'** or **'very good'** (98%). The following valuable comments were received:

Everyone was so pleasant and easy to work with. The children seemed to really enjoy it and improved over time. Wonderful to be a part of.

Having not volunteering in a school environment before, I was a tiny bit anxious before the programme commenced. Thankfully, any fears I had proved irrelevant, and I really, really enjoyed the Time to Count programme! It was a lovely volunteering experience and the girls I was meeting and playing with each week were a joy! I laughed so much.

An all-around great experience and good fun for both us and the kids.

Location of school relative to our office was ideal - children were very enjoyable to have in to our office and they seemed to enjoy their visit as well!

School was very close to our offices which made it easy to get to and from in the mornings. The school classroom was well laid out to accommodate the sessions (the tables were already arranged in groups of 4). We had lots of materials to work with and the kids seemed to like them. Workplace visit went very well.

While the venues made sense they were quite loud, it can become easy for the children to get swept up in the excitement and this can cause distractions and delays in actually starting the sessions.

It was done in the place where kids spend their day so, regardless the venue, it was great to do it there and see their day to day reality. So the sessions and the workplace were full of energy and enthusiasm.

Super programme. So privileged to be involved.

It was nice having all the children in the one room, it gave a great atmosphere. The students coming [to the company] was interesting and insightful for all involved. it was great getting to know the students away from the class room.

I think the kids really enjoyed the workplace visit. They talked about it for weeks afterwards, and demonstrated to them what an office work environment is like.

4.1.2. Programme Materials and Games

Volunteers were asked to rate the Time to Count materials that were provided. BITCI had received advice from educational experts around the selection, but even these experts felt that it will take constant examining and adding/subtracting games to the box, before the selection gets to be 'just right'. The views of this year's volunteers were:

- **60%** found the games and materials **very appropriate with a good variety**
- **40%** indicated that they were **appropriate but not enough variety**
- **0%** indicated that the games were **not appropriate and not suitable**

Comments included:

Most of the games were great as the kids were enjoying themselves so much a lot of the time they didn't even realise they were doing a maths lesson. The games were also good for getting them to work together and help each other.

Games were great fun with great learning principles.

As the programme progressed there were definitely particular games that emerged as favourites among the girls (Zingo, Sum Swamp, Dr. Eureka). I think we had enough games (just about) to last the 10 week programmes, but a little more variety wouldn't have gone amiss. During the last 2 or 3 weeks, there was much competition among the groups at the start of the class as to who would play "the good games" that week.

By the time of the last few Time to Count sessions, my group had exhausted most of "the good games" and were getting a little restless. It would be a good idea to introduce new games at the halfway point of the programme.

Sometimes the games took a little time to get to fully understand, so if we had a bit more introductions to them with high level explanations, it might make it easier for us to bring kids through all the games in the class room!

Lots of games and a good range of maths covered by them. Different levels of ability catered for also. The boys seemed to like most of the games.

Few favourite games that the kids got stuck on and fought over. Did not like the time based games although I think they would be some of the most beneficial games to play.

There was a good variety but a lot of competition for some of the favourite games (particularly Pay Day), especially near the end. Some advice on handling this (e.g. rotate which group chooses their game first or have a more formal rotation system) would have been helpful.

Most of the games were great and the kids enjoyed them, however at times the children got bored because they thought the games were too similar or else they found one or two games too difficult.



Volunteers from Analog Devices with 3rd class children from Our Lady Queen of Peace, Limerick

4.3 Programme Impact & Benefits

4.2.1. Overall Programme Enjoyment

Company volunteers' experience of the programme was overwhelmingly positive. The volunteers were asked to rate their overall enjoyment level from a choice of very enjoyable, enjoyable or not enjoyable. **84%** of volunteers found the programme '**very enjoyable**', the remaining **16%** found it '**enjoyable**'. Volunteers commented:

It was great fun, very interactive and you could see the girls improve over the length. My only complaint would be that it was too short!

It was really frightening at the beginning, but then you see appreciation from them, and it's the best feeling.

A radically different experience from my day-to-day role ... but all the better for it.

It was great to see the girls enjoying the number games and gaining confidence each week. It was good to give time back to the local community and spend some time helping the children in a local school.

4.2.2. Impacts

Volunteers indicated that the Time to Read Programme had a number of positive impacts. Each of these impacts was higher than the previous programme's percentages. Multiple answers were allowed.

	2019
Improved my self-confidence	31%
Improved my communication skills	61%
Improved my self-awareness	62%
Improved my interpersonal skills	53%
Allowed me to share my maths skills/love of maths with others	71%
Allowed me to think differently around problem solving within my own work	31%
None	0%
Other	5%

'Other' included: Conflict management skills/de-escalation of situations, got to know new people in my organisation, can help my own children better.

Definitely think it helped me to adapt how I communicate about maths and pitch my message to a different (very much younger!) audience.

If the girls weren't getting along or weren't enjoying a game I had to come up with solutions on the spot - this is definitely something that will help me going forward.

As I got to know the group I became better at leading the sessions and knowing how to mix it up to keep it interesting.

4.2.3. Achieving Programme Objectives

Volunteers were asked to indicate whether they felt the programme met its aims and objectives: to build children's confidence around number, to foster children's enjoyment of number, to reinforce children's conceptual understanding of number and to support the development of children's flexibility and perseverance in mathematical problem solving. The numbers in brackets indicates how many volunteers chose the answer.

Table 4: Achieving Programme Objectives

Answer Options	Exceeded its objective	Met its objective	Partially met objective	Did not meet its objective	Cannot comment
Built children's confidence around number	26% (16)	58% (36)	13% (8)	0%	3% (2)
Fostered children's enjoyment of number	52% (32)	34% (20)	12% (8)	0%	2% (1)
Reinforced children's conceptual understanding of number	18% (11)	63% (39)	14% (9)	2% (1)	3% (2)
Supported the development of children's flexibility and perseverance in mathematical problem solving	24% (15)	60% (37)	10% (6)	1% (1)	5% (3)

Volunteers commented:

The girls helped each other (most of the time) on problem-solving, and the more mathematically-inclined girls gave advice to those children whose abilities were not as strong. I definitely noticed they were answering basic adding/subtracting and some simple multiplication puzzles more quickly and accurately. But, mostly I just tried to keep the sessions fun and lively.

I noticed a big improvement in their number skills.

The girls were collaborating much more to help each other solve maths problems and thus make progress in the games.

Kids were very engaged in some games and got better each session, sometimes a bit too much competition crept in!

Often, the kids just had a lot of fun. This I am sure delivered benefits, it is probably just not as easy to evidence as I would have thought going into the programme.

Perhaps groups were too big or there were too many people in the room to enable proper focus.

You could see the girls gain confidence each week and they had a better understanding of the games by the end of the sessions.

4.3 Training, Support & Service

4.3.1. Training

Volunteers attended a two hour training session presented by their BITCI Coordinator and were given training manuals so they could review the material before and during the programme. Volunteers were asked if the training provided by BITCI prepared them for the volunteering experience. 97% volunteers said 'yes' whilst 3% said 'no'.

32% of respondents provided recommendations to improve the training. These recommendations were around more time with the games, more background about the students to provide context and about the record keeping logs.

Comments included:

As mentioned, perhaps some guidance on game rotation and choosing appropriate games. Perhaps some more advice / practise on group management as well. I'd also recommend a more flexible rotation system than the 5 week / 5 week approach. My buddy and I did one week on, one week off, which worked much better for us and meant that we more likely to be available to cover for others as well.

I think we were all agreed it would be beneficial to have more time to play more of the games - and familiarise ourselves with each games instructions - at the initial training.

More help around games, as it can be daunting facing into class of kids without much experience of the games!

More information on how to handle chaotic situation and/or children who do not follow the rules or listen.

4.3.2. Feedback and Support session

89% of volunteers felt that the feedback and support session was of help to them with 11% saying that it was not helpful. 10% who selected 'no' further commented that they didn't attend the feedback session. The specific comments included:

This is the keystone. It communicates with the volunteers, gives them a forum for questions, allows sharing of experiences and puts newcomers at ease. For adults to be dealing with children there can be apprehension, especially in this day and age. These sessions allay a lot of fears. Vital Vital Vital!!!

The principal took our concerns on board and put in place rules as a result of the feedback session. I noticed a huge improvement in the girls' behaviour and participation after this.

Great forum to raise any issues around discipline & get advice from the Principal on handling them. It was helpful to have the BITC coordinator on hand to give feedback on the games.

Very useful and will add value going forward. Fine-tuning a few small things such as advancing to trickier games later in the sessions.

It gave an insight on how the course progressed and how important the programme is to the school and families of the children. The children's feedback was so positive and gave a great sense of achievement to me personally that they gained so much from the programme.

Unfortunately I was away for this support session so I did not attend. I provided my feedback to another volunteer to pass on, this was a good opportunity to catch up and be on the same page as all others doing the programme.

I felt the session was more of a report back on what we thought of the program. Saying that I am not sure any of us needed support - volunteers seemed confident and we had been well trained before starting

4.3.3. Volunteer's experience of the school's welcome and support

100% of the volunteers rated the welcome and service provided by the school as excellent (93%) or very good (7%). Comments included:

They couldn't have been nicer or more helpful to us volunteers.

They were very obliging and willing to help out where they could. They were very encouraging of us and made us feel very welcome.

The teacher was very supportive and although I didn't need any intervention I felt she was available, which was reassuring.

The teacher was particularly helpful in assisting with any behavioural issues throughout the sessions.



ESB volunteer & St. Kevin's BNS, Finglas 11

4.3 Recommendations

Volunteers were asked an open ended question to provide any recommendations or changes they would make to the programme. The following are the observations of this year's volunteers:

Make more Pay Day games available. Some games more suited to students than others - they had good level of maths and some were too basic/easy for them.

Time of the school visits.

4.4 Volunteer Experience

4.5.1. Volunteer Experience of Time to Count

Volunteers were asked if Time to Count was a meaningful experience for them. **100% said that it was** and their comments on why are below:

Totally - I would sign up again in a heartbeat.

Felt good to work with the kids and try to help them enjoy numbers!

Nice change from the office and good to give back to the community.

I enjoyed getting to see the girls learn and grow in confidence with their maths skills.

Could see the improvement in kids' confidence with numbers as the weeks went on.

Yes, it was rewarding and time well spent. The opportunity to do something different away from the desk and normal job was rewarding and increased my motivation when back at work.

Yes absolutely. It was my first time doing something like this and I would do it again in a heartbeat.

Yes. I loved the experience and to be back at a level of a child in 3rd class who has a whole life ahead of him/her and if the programme gave them a sense of encouragement and self-belief that they can succeed then it's valuable. At times through the programme I used to think if we had the same facility in our school

time (all those years ago) would some individual/ company that volunteered have encouraged me to follow a career like them.

4.5.2. Volunteer Expectations of Programme

85% of respondents indicated that the Time to Count Programme was what they expected. 15% stated that it was not what they had expected.

The experience was very satisfying to see the positive impact it had on the children's confidence and ability.

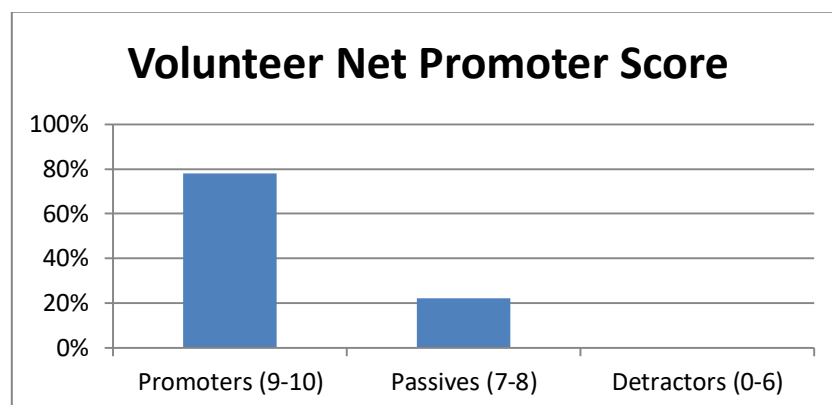
I was more impressed with how fun and engaging it was.

Even better - so much fun and rewarding, I also made new friends within my own company.

The programme was different to what I expected as I thought we would be supporting the children more directly with their maths work in school rather than doing it through playing games. I think the games were a good idea and can understand the rationale for using them but I also felt like I could have and would like to have provided more support to the children around their numerical skills in a practical way as well as just playing the games.

4.5.3. Recommending the Time to Count Programme

The volunteers were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 meant they were not at all likely to recommend the programme to 10 which indicated they were extremely likely to recommend it. The overall **Net Promoter Score was 78** . The scores were:



Please note that all the feedback provided here has been published with the permission of the relevant volunteers.

Section 5

Company Coordinator Evaluation

Each participating company had a designated person coordinating the programme on behalf of the business.

Six coordinators completed the evaluation. The evaluation survey was divided into five key sections:

- 5.1 Programme Operation
- 5.2 Programme Benefits and Impacts
- 5.3 Service and Support
- 5.4 Recommendations
- 5.5 Company Experience

5.1 Programme Operations

5.1.1. Company Satisfaction with programme elements

Companies were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the various parts of the programme such as the actual Time to Count Sessions, the work place visit, the wrap up event and the feedback session. The results are charted as follows. As can be seen, the results are exceptional.

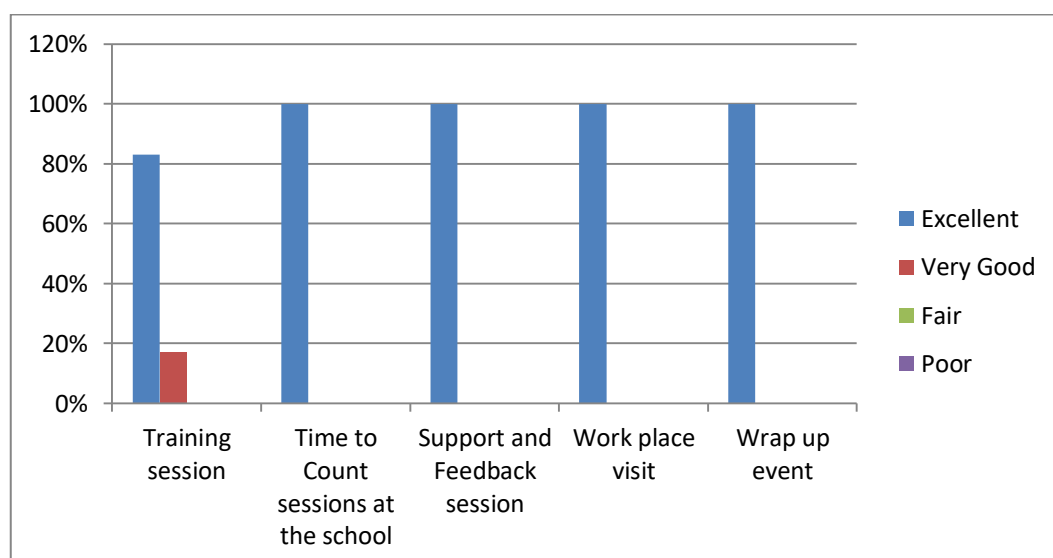


Chart: Programme aspects and volunteer ratings

The school and Melanie are brilliant, very easy to work with and flexible.

Everything was well organised, thought through, useful and worked very well.

5.2 Programme Impacts & Benefits

5.2.1. Benefits of Participation to Employees

All six company coordinators felt that **being able to make a difference in a child's life**, having the **opportunity to be involved in a project outside of normal working hours**, **increased employees' awareness of their local community**, and a **feel good factor** were very beneficial aspects of Time to Count for company employees. Four felt that it and **improved employees' motivation/job satisfaction**. Five felt that it **improved their interpersonal skills** while three thought that it would have **raised the employees' profile within the company**.

5.2.3. Benefits of Participation to the Company

All six company coordinators **strongly agreed** that this programme provided an enjoyable and meaningful volunteer opportunity for their company and that it makes a contribution to the local community. Other benefits were also observed:

Table: Programme Benefits to the Company

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Provides an enjoyable & meaningful volunteer opportunity	100%	0	0	0	0
Makes a contribution to the local community	100%	0	0	0	0
Contributes to our CSR agenda/ STEM strategy	83%	17%	0	0	0
Assists employee skills development	67%	33%	0	0	0
Helps to raise the company profile locally	67%	16%	17%	0	0
Supports education locally	83%	17%	0	0	0

5.3 Service and Support

Companies were asked to rate and comment on the service received from the BITCI coordinator, as well as the communication with the school coordinator and the partnership between the company and the school.

5.3.1. Service Provided by BITCI

100% of the companies evaluated the service provided by the BITCI coordinator as **'excellent'**. Feedback and comments included:

Our coordinator was well organised and kept me informed of upcoming sessions and ensured things ran smoothly.

I've been working with our coordinator for about 4/5 years on these programmes and she's excellent. Very easy to work with, nothing is any trouble, very approachable and happy to accommodate us and the school in any way she can.

5.3.2. Partnership between the Company and the School

The partnership between the company and their link school was evaluated as **'excellent'** by 100% of the respondents. Comments included:

I think we have a really great relationship with the school. The principal and the teacher were great. We're hoping to support them with other STEM initiatives in the future.

The school were very accommodating and helpful. They were welcoming and friendly, gave positive feedback and were responsive on email.

5.4 Recommendations

The company coordinators were asked an open ended question to provide any recommendation or suggestion for the programme. When asked what aspect of the programme their recommendation referred to two selected games and one selected 'selecting the games'. However there were no comments to expand on their recommendations.

5.5 Company Experience

5.5.1. Company Expectations of Programme

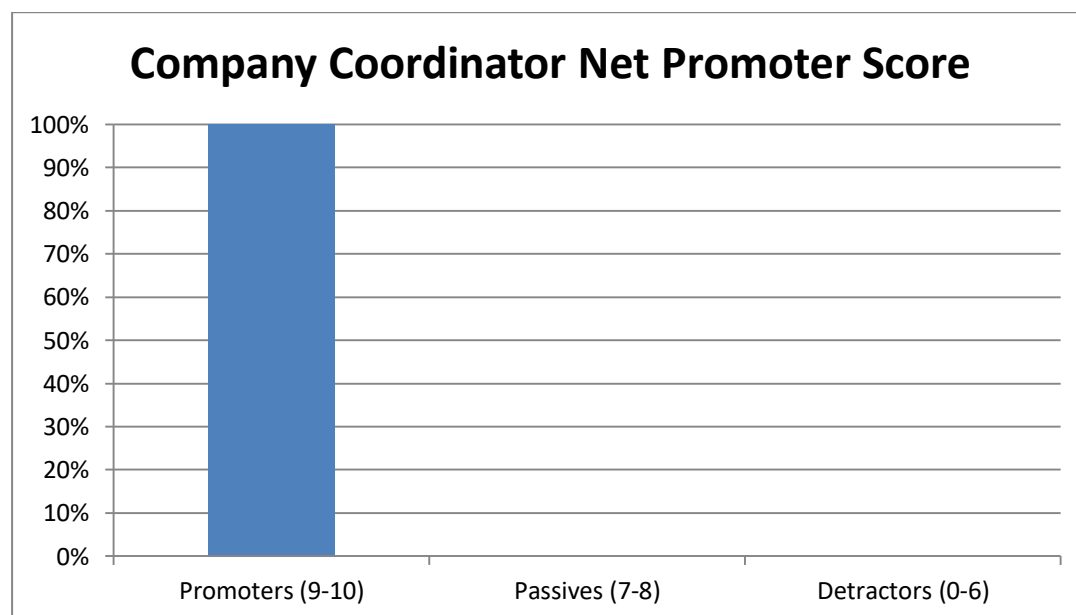
All companies indicated that the Time to Count Programme was what they expected. Comments included:

And more, it really is an excellent way to get kids working with maths without them even knowing it. The games make it fun and engaging for them.

Yes, as this was the second year of the company's involvement in Time to Count, and having previously partaken in Time to Read, the experience of volunteers from the first initiative were beneficial in assisting any first time volunteers this year.

5.5.2. Recommending the Time to Count Programme

The coordinators were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 meant they were not at all likely to recommend the programme to 10 which indicated they were extremely likely to recommend it. **As all coordinators gave it a score of 10, the Net Promoter Score was 100.**



Please note all company coordinators gave permission for their feedback to be used for the benefit of this report.

Find out more

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