

Education

Our BITCI's Schools Business Partnership was born of conversations between business and education leaders around how to address Ireland's educational dropout rate. Our earliest education programme in 2001 was **Skills@Work** with 4th and 5th years.

Our portfolio of education programmes now has critical mass and has expanded nationwide to include primary and post-primary programmes. The Department of Education/TUSLA came on board as a funding partner in the early years and is still a major funder. Moreover, the Schools Business Partnership tackles educational disadvantage by working with targeted School Completion Programme and DEIS schools.

How our partnership approach works

Our education programme model is based on a long-term partnership approach, in which a company and a local school partner to support the school and provide business insights as well as offering employee engagement opportunities.

It also ensures the approach can be flexible so it delivers the best benefits to students while enabling volunteers to develop their own soft skills as they deliver programme components.

As experts in programme delivery to educationally disadvantaged students, our policy is to innovate and develop, pilot and evaluate new programmes along with continually improving established programmes. Our team of over 20 regional coordinators and our programme administrators ensure the programmes are delivered effectively and efficiently to the highest standards.

Our education programmes

Our Skills@Work programme became **World of Work** in 2020, engaging with the younger 2nd year cohort in post-primary schools where we also have a 1:1 **Student Mentoring** programme for senior cycle students.

Primary programmes include **Time to Read** (literacy supports via 1:1 paired reading) and **Time to Count** (a numeracy games-based programme with engagement in small groups).

Newer post-primary programmes include **Time to GROW**, a work experience pilot programme for 4th and 5th year students as well as a **Summer Work Placement Programme** for post-school leavers, targeted at the North East Inner City area and funded by industry companies.

Our newest programme is another pilot, **Next STEP**, which seeks to engage students in senior cycle with special needs in considering transitions to post-school education and employment.

Table 1

Programme	School cohort	Duration	Delivery
Time to Read	Primary: 2nd class	16 weeks	8 or more volunteers 1:1 paired reading to targeted individuals
Time to Count	Primary: 3rd class	10 weeks	5 or more volunteers Whole class split into small groups
World of Work	Post-primary: 2nd year	5-6 sessions over 3-4 months	4-7 volunteers Whole class group
Time to GROW	Post-primary: 4th & 5th year	Flexible	Flexible
Student Mentoring	Post-primary, 5th & 6th year	1 or 2 years	6 or more volunteers 1:1 paired mentor sessions once a month
SWPP23	Post-primary school leavers	6 weeks in summer (paid experience)	Summertime, post-school leaving (6th years)
Next STEP	Post-primary: 5th & 6th year	Flexible, tailored	Flexible depending on needs

Finally, we offer programmes for educators in the form of **Management Excellence for Principals**. This engages business to provide insight to school leadership in areas such as:

- PR/branding
- communications
- leadership
- personal effectiveness
- teamwork.

The **Industry Insights for Teachers** programme offers opportunities such as workplace visits and tours to educators and career guidance counsellors. It's at the forefront of advising schools on:

- apprenticeships
- industry needs
- employment opportunities
- training requirements
- the future jobs market.

The extensive impact of our programmes

The impact of these programmes is recorded locally and nationally. This includes hugely positive outcomes relating to:

- soft skills development
- raised confidence and ambitions for future careers and training
- retention in full-time education
- insights and experience of workplaces
- more awareness of specific roles and careers.

Primary programmes have directly improved fluency and confidence in literacy and numeracy. Their approach involves making sessions enjoyable while students learn in a positive and supportive environment.

Businesses also report huge benefits including:

- the feel-good factor for all involved
- making a difference in the lives of young people
- engaging with their local community
- improving employee engagement through these programmes as CSR initiatives.

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