

Speech delivered by Mr Tony Barry, Principal of St Kevin's Community College on the launch of the DEIS Connect Project, February 4th 2022.



Good morning and welcome to you all. I want to especially welcome An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Caitriona Murphy Chief Executive of DDLETB, and Monsignor Dan O'Connor education representative for the Archdiocese of Dublin. I also want to welcome all the teachers and students watching online.

Many of you here have been a part of everything that it has taken for us to get to this moment. And all of you here, have, in some capacity, supported, and continue to support, the work of St. Kevin's Community College. I want to take this opportunity to extend, not only my deepest appreciation and thanks, but also the gratitude of our Board of Management and the DDLETB, to each and every one of you here today.

Many people have been involved in bringing this bold and innovative plan to fruition.

DEIS Connect is a plan for every one of St. Kevin's students, teachers, parents, guardians, the wider community and all of those who will be a part of our school into the future.

DEIS Connect is a wonderful opportunity and I am confident that any challenges we face will be overcome, because I know and trust the tremendous ability and potential of every staff member of our school.

We go forward today, continuing to put student learning at the heart of everything we do here in St. Kevin's. We want to continue to ensure that student learning, both in and with the world, is our priority. We want to prepare our students to have the capacity and agency, to be sustainable learners.

To this end, we are providing the opportunity for our excellent and wonderful staff, to continue to be and to grow, in their roles as enablers of transformative education – especially in today's digital environment.

DEIS Connect will expand the capacity and opportunity for all learners to engage in the use of digital technology in both teaching and learning. It is an innovative solution to tackle the digital divide and to benefit learners

As leaders in education, we are charged with the task to educate to the best of our ability for the world we live in, and that world is fast changing. I feel it is imperative that we all continue to support this project to the best of our ability.

The experience of the pandemic has shown all of us here in St. Kevin's, and the whole school community, just how quickly the way we do things can be changed. The digital world is now a part of the fabric of our everyday lives.

Our aim is not only to work with our students but to ensure that their parents and guardians are also supported in their digital literacy journey. This is vital as we know it boosts confidence of those who have been digitally excluded.

Following extensive school funding through Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB (Digital Connect and DEIS Connect Initiatives) and their partnerships with Microsoft, Power2Progress (UCD/Zurich), Digital Wealth Project (Re-Think Ireland), Clondalkin Access Network, South Dublin County Partnership, St. Vincent de Paul and the Trinity Access Programme, we will continue to be able to support digital inclusion of the whole community.

I would also like to thank An Taoiseach for the continued Digital grant and acknowledge its enhancement for DEIS schools. The lockdowns have shown us the need to put devices into the hands and homes of our students.



Taoiseach, as you know, Minister Simon Harris TD, in late 2021, launched Adult Literacy for Life – a 10-year adult literacy numeracy and digital literacy strategy. This project aims to ensure that everyone has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills to fully participate in society and fully realise their potential.

The key aim of this programme, is said to be able to see a decrease the share of adults in Ireland without basic digital skills from 47% to 20% as measured by DESI the Digital economy and society

index. Given the old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, today's launch ensures that our students will be supported in school, to build digital literacy skills for the future and, we as a school will be addressing the Literacy for life goals.

Digital technology is changing peoples lives and being able to access and use this technology is becoming just as essential as reading and writing. DEIS connect ensures that our students have access to a device, it puts the device in the hands and homes of the students. DEIS Connect provides i-pads for all our first, and, second year students and laptops for all our remaining students including our adult learners on our BTEI programme.

Every student coming to St. Kevin's now and into the future regardless of means will receive a digital device to assist them with learning – to prepare them for further education, college, and to ensure that they are workforce ready.



An Taoiseach, earlier this week, your Government also launched 'Harnessing Digital' - the digital Ireland framework, to drive and enable the digital transition across the Irish economy and society. For this to be a reality for all in Irish society, the provision of devices for DEIS schools is hugely important.

I say all this, to show that we have a common goal. And to help to realise this goal, we hope for/request the continued and ongoing support through the Department of Education. And we thank you for the support to date.

Finally, I want to express my renewed thanks to all of you here today who have made DEIS connect a reality. I would especially like to thank the DEIS Connect team, Mr. Paul Byrne, Jessica Sheekey, Ann Coady, Frances Gibson, Mary T Lynam, Caitriona Cleary, Ciarán Duffy and John O Callaghan. Thank you all for your leadership – you are a part of something Great. Thank you also to our Patron, Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB, and in particular our CE Caitriona Murphy and our Director of Schools, Adrian Flynn for your constant support through the Digital Connect Initiative and DEIS Connect Programme. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our teachers of whom I am immensely proud for the manner in which you have adapted to all the changes this past two years.

It has been an honour to work with you all, to help make the lives of our students better now and into the future. Thank you for listening