

SUAS



LITERACY CHANGES EVERYTHING

LITERACY IS...“THE ABILITY TO READ, WRITE AND USE NUMERACY, TO HANDLE INFORMATION, TO EXPRESS IDEAS AND OPINIONS, TO MAKE DECISIONS AND SOLVE PROBLEMS.” HELPING CHILDREN TO DEVELOP LITERACY SKILLS GIVES THEM THE TOOLS TO BREAK GENERATIONAL CYCLES OF POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE.

Photos: Malcolm McGettigan





Since 2012, using trained volunteers, Suas has helped over 5,500 children from the most disadvantaged communities in Ireland to improve their reading and math skills through one-to-one mentoring and smart learning materials. Over the past two years alone, with support from The Ireland Funds Australia and The Ireland Funds, it provided one-to-one support to 3,208 children and recruited over 1,000 volunteer mentors.

Worryingly, one-in-three children in disadvantaged schools in Ireland experiences serious literacy difficulties. The consequences of failing to equip these children with literacy skills are stark. Teenagers with poor literacy are much more likely to experience anxiety and depression and to use drugs. Poor literacy skills restrict a range of life-choices, particularly employment. Early school leaving is highly correlated with poor labour market outcomes and ill health.

The good news is, unlike so many of the other massive and intransigent social problems Ireland faces, this challenge is solvable. With support from The Ireland Funds, Suas has developed smart, proven and simple solutions that improve children's reading and math scores. The model has already demonstrated positive outcomes in the most testing of environments.

*Last year, children on the reading program had an average rate of improvement of **210%** relative to the national average and a **215%** average rate of improvement on the maths program.*

The Suas program is also easily scalable and that's good because the demand is great and urgent. Childhood doesn't wait. There are bright eight-year-olds in primary school right now who won't survive second level education because of poor reading and math skills. With The Ireland Funds' support, we can continue to change that.

— John Logue is the CEO of Suas, Ireland's leading children's literacy charity.



"People mightn't realize how powerful it is. Having an adult that sits down and gives them real attention—one-to-one time. The confidence building that happens, the rise in self-esteem, is palpable. It's about making them feel and believe that 'I'm an important person' – it's therapeutic on so many different levels. It makes coming into a library, reading, attending school — fun and very positive."

"Some kids are so behind, one-to-one is pure gold dust. It makes the most impact. Especially if it's someone from outside the school environment who wins trust and develops a good relationship with the student."



TESTIMONY FROM TEACHERS ON THE IMPACT OF SUAS



"I've seen first-hand, here on the ground, in classrooms, in the library, the impact of this work. How can you put a value on that? It's priceless. And whatever it costs, it's money so well spent. It's such a lean model anyway. The amazing Mentors are volunteers. So it's all about training them well, getting them here so they can work magic, and making sure they come back. So in that sense, every euro is put into the child's problem and the child's potential to solve that problem."



THE IRELAND FUNDS HAS SUPPORTED THE WORK OF SUAS SINCE 2005. SINCE THEN, SUAS HAS RECEIVED \$300,000+ IN SUPPORT FROM THE IRELAND FUNDS. OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS ALONE, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE IRELAND FUNDS AUSTRALIA AND THE IRELAND FUNDS OF \$80,000, SUAS HAS PROVIDED ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT TO 3,208 CHILDREN AND RECRUITED OVER 1,000 VOLUNTEER MENTORS. THANKS TO SUPPORTERS OF THE IRELAND FUNDS:

- 97% of children said they enjoyed literacy sessions
- 85% of children agreed they were better at reading
- 73% said they enjoyed solving maths problems
- 81% said they are happier to take part in maths class

WHAT ARE THE SUAS STEPS?



- 1** Find the children most in need of reading and maths support by working with teachers in disadvantaged schools
- 2** Recruit and train a fantastic team of volunteer mentors to work 1-to-1 with children most in need of support
- 3** Deliver evidence-based literary and numeracy support interventions to those children most at risk.
- 4** Put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation process to ensure mentors and funding are being used in the most effective way possible.