

Presented To
Our School Community Network

FUNDING PROPOSAL
FEBRUARY 2025

The CEIDE Project

A Centre of Excellence in Ireland for Democratic Education



Faughts
Dunally
Co. Sligo
F91DR13

Prepared By
**Maura Duignan
and Gayle Nagle**
Founders, Trustees, Staff

Dear School Community Members and Friends,

The CEIDE Project is at a critical moment, and we need your help to bring it to life. With no government funding, we are turning to our community—parents, friends, and supporters—who believe in our vision for self-directed education. Your support will enable us to expand, enhance our facilities, and establish Sligo as Ireland's first Centre of Excellence for Democratic Education.

This isn't just about a school—it's about shaping the future for our children and the local community. By helping to fund this project, you'll be part of something transformative: creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and making Sligo a hub for progressive education.

We need to raise €1.5 million to launch the CEIDE Project, which will serve 240 students and staff, train educators, and influence education policy nationwide. This is a rare opportunity to invest in a model that nurtures innovation, leadership, and adaptability—essential skills for today's world.

As a founding supporter, you won't just be funding a building; you'll be shaping a legacy. Your contribution will help create a space where young people take charge of their learning, grow into changemakers, and thrive in life.

If you or someone in your network is in a position to support this project, we would love to connect.

Please contact Gayle at 087 7981889, gayle@sligosudburyschool.com or Maura 087 9735065, maura@sligosudburyschool.com to explore how you can be part of this exciting venture.

Together, we can make this vision a reality.



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About Us

Sligo Sudbury School is Ireland's largest democratic school and one of the largest in the world. Founded in 2017 by former school principal Gayle Nagle and home-educating parent Maura Duignan, we set out to address critical gaps in Ireland's education system. Like the Educate Together movement, which transformed schools through diversity and inclusion, we are redefining education through self-directed learning, student empowerment, and strong, supportive school communities.

As a democratic school, we give students aged 5 to 18 the freedom to take charge of their own education. There are no compulsory lessons or standardised curricula—students learn through real-world experiences, personal interests, and meaningful collaboration. This model fosters confidence, independence, and a lifelong love of learning.

Built entirely through private philanthropic support, with no state funding, we have created a thriving school community, trained educators, influenced policy, co-founded Democratic Education Ireland, and helped launch three additional democratic schools.

Now, with 82 students enrolled and growing demand, we are expanding. Our next step is The CEIDE Project—the first Centre of Excellence in Ireland for Democratic Education. This will allow us to serve 240 students and staff while strengthening our national impact. More than just a school expansion, CEIDE will put Sligo on the map as the go-to destination for progressive education, a hub for pioneering educational models, teacher training, and policy innovation.

Over the next 90 days, we aim to secure €1.5 million in funding partnerships to make this vision a reality. Long-term, we are committed to democratising education—making it more accessible, student-centred, and future-focused—so every child can receive a personalised, values-driven education that prepares them for life.



An Innovative Solution

The current education system is failing to equip students for the modern world. Its rigid, one-size-fits-all structure stifles creativity, individuality, and personal growth, leaving many students disengaged, disillusioned, and unprepared for future challenges. This is reflected in low university progression rates and a growing demand for alternative education, with more families turning to homeschooling or independent schools. The need for a more adaptive and personalised approach to learning is urgent.

Most people can relate to the fact that their deepest and most valuable learning experiences come from what they have discovered for themselves. This is the foundation of self-directed learning—when students have the freedom to explore their interests, they develop a strong sense of self along with critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-motivation skills that prepare them for life, not just exams.

Our solution is democratic education—a model built on choice, freedom, and self-directed learning. Students take ownership of their education in a way that is meaningful to them, fostering independence, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning.

The CEIDE Project will establish Sligo as Ireland's national hub for democratic education. With expanded resources, we will scale this model, empowering families and educators to reshape education and give more children the opportunity to thrive.

"If we are to raise democratic citizens capable of shaping the future, education must teach students not only academic skills but also the ability to participate meaningfully in public life. Schools should be the first place where children learn democracy by practicing it." Baker, J; Lynch, K; Cantillon, S; Walsh, J. (2004) Equality: From Theory to Action. Palgrave MacMillan.



The CEIDE Project People

The CEIDE Project is an initiative of North West Democratic School, trading as Sligo Sudbury School. We are incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) and hold Charity Status. We are registered under the Charitable Donation Scheme for tax-efficient donations. Companies and Foundations can benefit from donating to us, by reducing tax liability and boosting their Corporate Social Responsibility profile.

Board of Trustees



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An Education System for a Changing World

Self-Directed Learning

We prioritise self-directed education over memorisation-based methods. Our approach enhances critical thinking, personal growth, and emotional intelligence, preparing students for success in a rapidly changing world. By fostering autonomy and emotional well-being, we build resilience, motivation, and life satisfaction.



A Global Movement with Proven Impact

Rooted in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), our approach empowers students to take charge of their learning. Research shows that self-directed learning deepens engagement, while promoting resilience and creativity. The Sudbury model nurtures academic success, personal growth, and confidence in navigating life.

Personalised Learning Paths

We reject the one-size-fits-all approach of traditional education, allowing students to design their own learning journeys. This fosters creativity, curiosity, and problem-solving, while connecting students to their passions. The result is a deep, lasting connection to knowledge and adaptability for an unpredictable future.



An Education System for a Changing World



A Community Built on Trust, Respect, and Inclusion

We create a supportive, inclusive environment where students feel valued and respected, celebrating diverse learning styles and backgrounds. Education is about relationships, and we ensure every student has the space to grow at their own pace. Our community fosters trust and mutual respect among all members.

Real-World Skills for Lifelong Success

Our approach integrates Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), equipping students with skills like conflict resolution and self-awareness. These tools help students succeed in personal and professional life by navigating challenges with confidence. SEL prepares students for real-life success beyond academics.

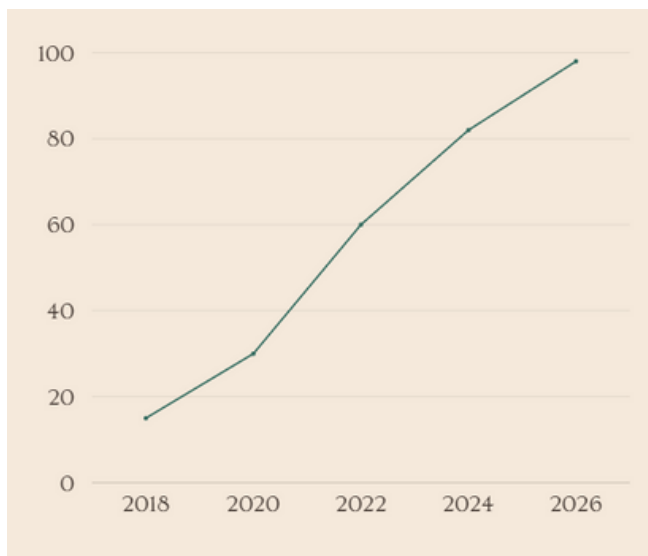


Empowered Learners, Inspired Lives

Our evidence-based model prepares students for life, not just exams. By trusting students to direct their own learning, we cultivate resilience, creativity, and self-motivation. This empowers learners to face future challenges with confidence and unlock their full potential.

Our Impact

We have had a huge impact on educational provision both in Sligo and nationwide in a very short time. The graph below shows our student numbers by year. We have had strong growth and retention since opening in 2018.



Revitalising Local Economy and Community

Our school has helped reverse rural depopulation by attracting 35 families to Sligo, contributing to local economic growth and meeting the goals of the Department of Rural and Community Development.

Empowering Learners, Strengthening Communities

We provide a personalised, democratic learning environment that caters to students' unique needs, fulfilling the promise of the Education Act 1998.

Creating Sustainable Employment

We have created 10 permanent jobs since our founding and aim to generate 12 more, supporting local economic stability and providing long-term meaningful employment in the rural area.

Supporting Families and Society

By fostering an environment where students thrive, we create positive ripple effects, strengthening families and communities and contributing to a healthier, more engaged society.

Shaping the Future of Education

We support the growth of democratic education in Ireland, offering training and resources to emerging schools and promoting learner-centred practices across the country.

Lives Changed



The family is the natural community, and the first and most important unit of society. Aristotle

"Without a shadow of a doubt, our family life is incredibly better since our children started at Sligo Sudbury School. It has been the best decision we ever made for our boys and our family as a whole."

Words cannot express how happy we are after her first week at Sudbury. Today was the first Monday in forever that she's looked forward to the day ahead! She gets up happy and excited, she comes home happy and excited. The knot in our tummy that we've had for years now is finally dispersing. Her anxiety has dramatically improved. I can come home after dropping her off and not spend the time worrying, for the first time in years. It's been utterly life-changing."

Our daughter (14 years old) is the happiest she has ever been (and we were going to very good traditional schools before). The community is vibrant and we're looking forward to the next months and years at Sligo Sudbury."

What sets Sligo Sudbury apart is its ability to provide a level of fulfillment and happiness for students that traditional schools often fail to offer. For parents who have tried conventional routes, the joy their children experience here is something they never anticipated—and it's a joy they now look forward to every day.

Wider Societal Impact

As children today inherit an increasingly complex and uncertain world, they must be equipped not just to cope, but to solve the pressing challenges of the future. However, a narrow and inadequate vision of education persists, leaving many ill-prepared. A recent Irish study revealed that only 13% of employers believe graduates are adequately prepared for the workforce. Employers highlight the importance of “soft” skills—communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and work ethic—which are essential for the future but often lacking in students due to a disconnect between what is taught and what is needed. Smyth, E., Banks, J., O’Sullivan, J., McCoy, S., Redmond, P. & McGuinness, S. (2019) Evaluation of the national Youthreach programme. Research series, Number 82, Dublin: ESRI

Serving the Broader Local Community

Our facilities provide shared spaces for workshops, sports, and community engagement, enriching the wider Sligo area.

Positioning Ireland as a Global Leader in Education Innovation

We are establishing Ireland as a leader in sustainable, innovative education, inspiring and supporting global change in education, alongside the Sudbury International network.

Supporting a Stronger, More Informed Democratic State

By fostering active participation, we prepare students to be engaged, responsible citizens who uphold democratic values.



Wider Societal Impact

The CEIDE Project will train educators, share resources, and expand democratic education nationwide. It is more than just a place of learning—it is a catalyst for positive change in education and the broader community. By supporting our vision, you will help to create a ripple effect that stretches far beyond the classroom.

Supporting Families and Society

By fostering an environment where students thrive, we create positive ripple effects, strengthening families and communities and contributing to a healthier, more engaged society.

Preparing Students for 21st Century Challenges

Our model equips students with creativity, leadership, and problem-solving skills to navigate an evolving world.

Raising Awareness of Alternative Learning Models

We promote flexible, personalised education models that empower families to choose what best supports their children.

Addressing the School-Related Mental Health Crisis

Our student-centred, non-coercive model prioritises well-being, resilience, and a stress-free learning environment.



Proposed Timeline

PHASE 1

The Planning Phase
2021-2024 Complete

PHASE 2

Build Phase 1
2025

PHASE 3

Build Phase 2
2026



Build Phase 1: Sports & Arts Centre, Pitch & Track, Parking, Playground, Gardens

- Feb 2025: Fire Safety and Disabled Access Certificates issued
- Mar 2025: Completion of Stage 5 documentation (Architect and Engineer)
- Apr 2025: Cost projections (Quantity Surveyor)
- May 2025: Tender action (Stage 6)
- June 2025: Tender returns
- July 2025: Construction begins (Stage 8)
- Nov 2025: Completion and handover

Partner with us to Build a Brighter Future for Education

Our Immediate Financial need for 2025
Build Phase 1 - €1.5 million

Sports & Arts Centre, Pitch & Track, Parking, Playground, Gardens		Cost
Sports & Arts Centre		€1,105,186
Pitch & Track, Parking, Playground, Gardens		€296,899
Architect & Professional Services		€100,000
TOTAL		€1,502,085



We would like to invite you to partner with us as major donors for Phase 1.
With funding secured, we will be ready to break ground in **June 2025**.

Partner with us to Build a Brighter Future for Education

Future Need for January 2026

Build Phase 2 - €2.1 million

Phase 2 – School Extension	Cost
School Extension	€1,587,391
Unheated Covered Spaces	€281,033
Covered Connections	€82,387
Refurbish Existing School Building	€45,536
Fixtures and Fittings	€50,000
Architect & Professional Services	€100,000
TOTAL	€2,146,347



This will complete the project and equip our school with integrated indoor and outdoor spaces, community spaces for sport, dining, social, performance, arts, STEAM, language, construction, gaming rooms, auditorium, black box, music rooms, recording studio, woodland, orchards and wilderness spaces.

Once funding for Phase 1 is secured, we will be inviting philanthropists, local individuals and families, and corporations to partner with us as major donors for Phase 2.

With funding secured for Phase 2, we will be ready to break ground in **October 2026**.

Your Support is Crucial

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for all the good you do.

Childhood is precious—we only get one chance at it.

We send this to you with the hope that you can help us take this next step—one that has the power to transform education, not just for our children today, but for generations to come.

We would love to speak with you about how you can be part of this vision.

Please contact Gayle 087 7981889, gayle@sligosudburyschool.com or Maura 087 9735065, maura@sligosudburyschool.com to explore the possibilities.

Together, let's build something that will change lives for years to come.

