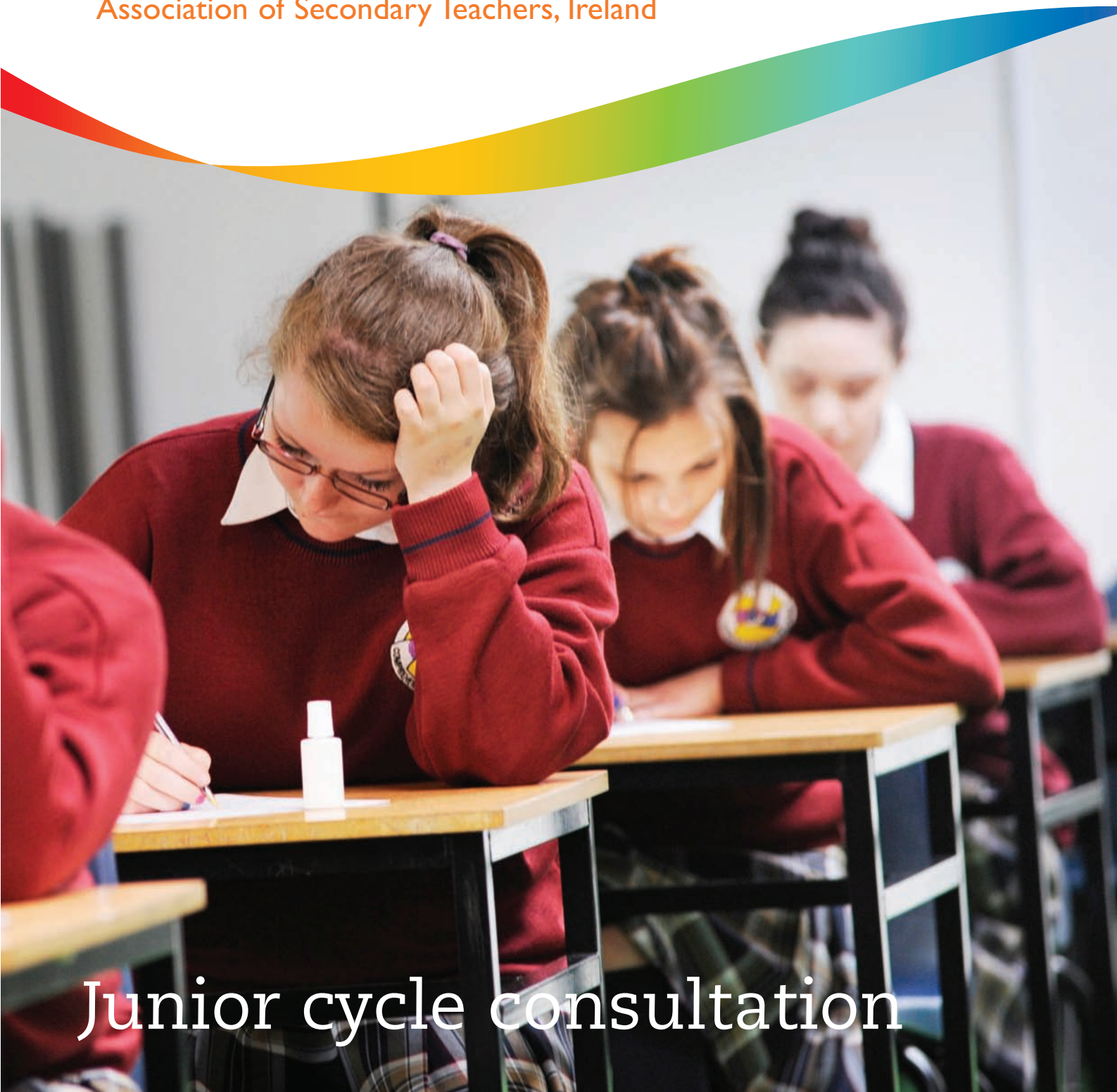


Volume 31: Number 1: January 2013
ISSN 0790-6560

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ASTIR

Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland



Junior cycle consultation

Budget 2013

New teachers speak out

Making the internet safer



School of Education UCD

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**Please see website for closing date for applications for this course*

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Cover image: Pictured are students from Trinity Comprehensive School in Ballymun as they sit their first State Exam in English on the first day of the exams.

Photo: Sasko Lazarov/Photocall Ireland

ASTIR is published five times annually by the Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland. The opinions expressed in ASTIR are those of individual authors and are not necessarily endorsed by the ASTI. While every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure information published is accurate, the ASTI cannot accept responsibility for articles or advertisements. The ASTI reserves the right to edit all material submitted for publication.



The ASTIR Editorial Board is interested in receiving feedback on ASTIR. Members can email astirfeedback@astir.ie or text 087-9349956.

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All submissions will be considered by the ASTIR Editorial Board. Email astir@astir.ie.

New year

Another new year begins with teachers weighing up the impact last month's budget will have on their students, working conditions and finances. While the ASTI pre-budget campaign had success in protecting the pupil-teacher ratio in most schools, the damage wrought on schools and students in previous budgets continues to be felt. We know that schools are struggling to cope. Now, at a time of increasing student numbers and of mounting demands on schools, our education service needs investment, not austerity. Austerity is simply not working – not for our schools and not for the country. That is the message the ASTI will communicate throughout 2013, in particular on Saturday, February 9, when we will join with our trade union colleagues in a day of action. I hope that as many ASTI members as possible will join me in taking part (page 13).

The future

A new year is a time for positivity and, despite pressures, we in the ASTI do have good reasons to be positive about the year ahead. During 2012 we undertook a comprehensive examination and review of our union to gauge how effective it is in meeting the needs of members, how well it reflects your views, and how we might improve structures and systems. With over 100 years of history and more than 17,000 members, 500 schools and 56 branches to consider, it has been a complex process, but I am very positive about the work we are doing. Following extensive consultation with members, proposals are being finalised and will be considered by members at a special convention in April. The opportunity this review presents is great and important; I look forward to contributing with you to the development of a strong, responsive union that all members can be proud to be a part of.

Junior cycle

We know that you want to be involved in your union. We know this because of the unprecedented response we have had to the ASTI junior cycle consultation process to date. I am encouraged to see such enthusiasm, which demonstrates what I already know to be true: that teachers are highly motivated about their profession, hugely engaged in their work, and want the very best for their students and for Irish education. The consultation is ongoing (page 10) and will culminate with a day of debate dedicated to junior cycle proposals at this year's Annual Convention. I look forward to hearing your views and ideas, because it is you, teachers in the classroom, who best understand what students need and what can be achieved through education and considered reform. We will be proactive throughout 2013 in reiterating that message and making sure your voice is heard.



Gerry Breslin
ASTI President

More austerity?

By the time this *ASTIR* reaches schools, teachers and their students will be well into the second school term and many will be preparing for Junior and Leaving Cert project and portfolio work. This means that despite the fact that more than four years of education cuts have affected almost every aspect of school life, from late January teachers will be so pre-occupied with teaching and learning that for some Budget 2013 will be a distant memory.

Nevertheless, I am asking all ASTI members to reflect on the impact of Budget cuts since 2009 on their school and to consider the following question: Can your school take more austerity? If the answer is no, I am urging you and your colleagues to participate in a national day of action on Saturday, February 9. On this day, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is holding a series of demonstrations to highlight the effects of the ongoing austerity programme being forced on Ireland by the EU/ECB/IMF 'Troika'. Our demand to the leaders of the EU must be an end to the programme of austerity that has been forced on us in order to prop up the European banking system. It is vital that as many teachers as possible contribute to this message of resistance to continued austerity. The demonstrations in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Sligo and Waterford coincide with Ireland's EU Presidency term – a period during which Ireland will be on European and world media radars.

Painting the picture – with your help

Teachers and schools have experienced a range of cuts, including an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio in 2009, the loss or reduction of specialist teaching supports and services, and reduced funding per student. The fact that teachers and schools continue to work to deliver the best possible education to their students means that some of the cracks in our education service created by cutbacks have been covered up. But it also means that schools are now under severe stress, with many at breaking point. All of this threatens to negate the role of schools in fostering a sense of stability in the lives of young people, their families and their communities. This role is increasingly important given the upheaval caused by social and economic turmoil and uncertainty. A key focus of the ASTI's work in 2013 will be to examine the impact of cutbacks on student wellbeing. Budget decisions such as the moratorium on posts of responsibility and the inclusion of guidance counsellors in schools' general teacher allocation have diminished the capacity of schools to deliver pastoral care programmes. As always, it is stories from individual schools, teachers and/or pupils that best capture public attention. If you or your school think you may be able to help with this ongoing work, please contact us here at Head Office.



Pat King
ASTI General Secretary

Three surveys show schools start the New Year on top

Irish schools rank among the best in the world

The Irish school system ranked 11th in the world in a new report conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), an international research firm headquartered in London. The Learning Curve Report took into account a range of factors, including government spending, school entrance age, class size, teacher salaries, literacy levels and graduation rates. Ireland scored particularly well in literacy and graduation rates, coming fifth after South Korea, the UK, Finland and Poland.

The report found that there is no substitute for good teachers, and that having a better teacher is statistically linked to students' higher income later in life, as well as to a range of other social results.

Successful school systems, the report noted, find culturally effective ways to attract the best people to the profession; they provide relevant, ongoing training; they give teachers a status similar to that of other respected professions; and the system sets clear goals and expectations but also lets teachers get on with meeting these.

Research says teachers are highly trusted

Teachers are among the most trusted people in Irish society, according to independent research carried out on behalf of the Medical Council. Almost 90% of those surveyed said they would generally trust teachers

to tell the truth. Teachers ranked second only to doctors in terms of trust, and ranked above Gardaí, judges, journalists, clergymen, business leaders, TDs and politicians.

The Behaviour & Attitudes survey asked a nationally representative sample of almost 1,000 adults if they would trust a list of different types of people to tell the truth. Some 89% of those surveyed said they would trust teachers to tell the truth.

Education is the best thing about living in Ireland, say young people

Education is the number one aspect that those aged 13-18 identify as good about being a young person in Ireland, according to a national consultation. Of more than 12,000 young people surveyed, 27% said they considered education a good aspect of their lives. Education ranked well above the next most popular aspect – sport, at 16% – and above aspects such as friends, activities and Irish identity. The 'Life as a Child and Young Person in Ireland: Report of a National Consultation' issued by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs late last year found that young people are happy with the quality of the education they receive and feel privileged to get an education.

ASTI events this term

The ASTI has a busy calendar ahead this term, with a number of events for members scheduled.

Principals' and Deputy Principals' Seminar

A seminar for ASTI members who are principals or deputy principals will be held on Wednesday, March 6, in the Raddison Hotel, Athlone. 'Schools and Data Protection' is one of the themes of this year's seminar, which will be addressed by Data Protection Commissioner Billy Hawkes. All ASTI principals and deputy principals are invited to attend. If you would like to register or get more information, contact Caroline, Tel: 01-604 0175, or Email: caroline@asti.ie, or visit www.asti.ie.

Retirement seminars

ASTI retirement seminars continue around the country this term. Events are planned in Dublin, Kilkenny, Cork, Limerick and Galway. Find out more at www.asti.ie or register with Eileen, Tel: 01-604 0170, or Email: Eileen@asti.ie.

Convention 2013

Convention 2013 is a central event in the ASTI calendar. It is where ASTI policy and priorities for the year ahead are decided by members. Find out more at www.asti.ie or on page 30. Find out more about upcoming events in the events section of the ASTI website.

ASTI education journal – out soon

We asked national and international experts to contribute their views on how Ireland's second-level education system can best contribute to national recovery and long-term social development. These are compiled in a new *ASTI Journal*, edited by Fintan O'Toole and featuring contributions from:

- Brigid McManus, Chairperson, NCCA;
- Dr Kevin Marshall, Academic Programme Manager, Microsoft Ireland;
- Roddy Doyle and Sean Love, co-founders of Fighting Words;
- Catherine Day, Secretary-General of the European Commission;
- Dr Sheelagh Drudy, Professor Emeritus, Education Department, UCD;
- Dr Tony Bates, Founding Director of Headstrong;
- Andreas Schleicher, OECD Deputy Director for Education;
- Edna Jordan and Dr Rory O'Donnell, NESC;
- Damini Kumar, Director of Design and Creativity at NUI Maynooth;
- Eamon Stack, former Chief Inspector;
- Mary Lou Nolan, Country Manager, Cisco Ireland;
- Dr Selina McCoy and Dr Emer Smyth, ESRI; and,
- Pat King, ASTI General Secretary

Each school will receive copies of the *ASTI Journal* this spring. Extracts from the *ASTI Journal* will appear in future editions of *ASTIR*.

New teachers' salary point

When the cut to new teachers' allowances was announced in September, following the review of public sector allowances, it was also announced that the starting salary of teachers affected would be adjusted to take some account of the cut. At the time of going to print, a new Department of Education circular was due to issue on this matter. See www.asti.ie for more information. Read page 26 on new teachers' pay.

Have you found us on Facebook?

The ASTI is on Facebook at [Facebook.com/astiteachers](https://www.facebook.com/astiteachers). News, event updates and important information about your job are posted regularly. You can keep up with us on Twitter too: find us @astionion.

Join the debate on junior cycle at Convention

This year's ASTI Convention will include a day of debate dedicated to junior cycle changes. Decisions made on this issue and others at Convention will affect all teachers. You can play an important role in deciding policy and have your voice heard by attending Convention as a delegate.

Even if you can't attend Convention yourself, it is important that you attend branch meetings and let your delegates know your views so that they will be represented at Convention.

For more information on Convention, see www.asti.ie.

ASTI stalwarts honoured by Dublin South County



Paddy Pender (centre) is pictured receiving the Thomas MacDonagh Medal, with ASTI General Secretary Pat King (right) and Michael O'Flaherty, Branch Chairperson (left).

The highlight of a Dublin South County retirement function held in November was the presentation to 30 recent retirees from St Laurence College, Clonkeen College, Loreto Foxrock, Loreto Dalkey, Holy Child Killiney and Cabinteely Community School.

ASTI Immediate Past President Brendan Broderick gave a very genuine tribute to guest of honour, and ASTI stalwart, Paddy Pender. Paddy's contribution to debates was referred to, and how his eloquence and logic could sway those undecided on issues. 'Game-changer' Pender was an inspiration to Brendan and others in becoming more involved in the union and more committed to the cause of teachers.

Sean O'Neill, Branch Secretary, echoed Brendan Broderick's sentiments after Paddy was presented with the Thomas MacDonagh Medal by ASTI



At the Dublin South County retirement event were (from left): Michael O'Flaherty, Branch Chairperson; Patricia Wroe, former ASTI President; and, Gerry Breslin, ASTI President.

President Gerry Breslin. Sean remembered the first time he heard Paddy speak at a conference, selflessly arguing the case for lab assistants: what was particularly impressive was that Paddy was not a science teacher. Paddy had many roles over the years, including steward at St Laurence College, branch chairman, CEC member and member of the Benevolent Committee. Even in retirement he is still passionate about education, and his views on, for example, Junior Cert reforms, have been eagerly sought. The Branch wishes Paddy and the other retirees all the best in their retirement. Among those attending on the night was former ASTI President Patricia Wroe.

More photos of the Dublin South County retirement function are available on <http://astidublinsouthcountyretirementdinner.blogspot.ie>.

This issue in numbers...

89%

Number of people surveyed who trust teachers to tell the truth (page 5)

13

Number of new second-level schools planned in 2013 (page 9)

One Book One Finglas



Home school community liaison co-ordinators associated with the schools in the Finglas area are working together on a project called 'One Book One Finglas' to improve literacy and bring reading from the classroom into the home and community. Pictured at the launch of the project are: Back row: Home school liaison co-ordinators Shay McGovern; Mark Shaw; Maria Stafford; Aileen Kelly; Lisa McGleenan; and, Doireann Ni Loingsigh, along with Anna Daly, TV3 (centre), who spoke at the launch. Front row: Mairin McGrath; Marie O'Sullivan; Imelda Burke; and, Verna McEvoy.

Changes to teachers' maternity and adoptive leave

Changes to teachers' maternity and adoptive leave entitlements were announced in Budget 2013, without consultation. Under the new arrangements, teachers will not be entitled to accrue days in lieu for planned school closures that occur after May 1, 2013, and overlap with maternity or adoptive leave. The union has since been pressing the Department to clarify a number of issues relating to the change. At the time of going to print, the ASTI is awaiting legal advice on the equality implications of the changes, including entitlement to leave in lieu of public holidays occurring during leave. Members are urged to visit the ASTI website for updated information. For more information on maternity leave changes and Budget 2013, see page 12.

Register now to protect your pay

The ASTI is urging members who are not currently registered with the Teaching Council, or who have let their registration lapse, to submit an application as soon as possible. Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act is due to commence in the 2012/2013 school year. Its commencement will make it a legal requirement for teachers to be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from Oireachtas funds.

Once commenced, unregistered teachers will no longer receive pay from the Department of Education and Skills or the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). It is vital that ASTI members who are not registered begin the Teaching Council registration process immediately.

23:1

The new pupil-teacher ratio
for fee-paying schools after
Budget 2013
(page 12)

38

Number of ASTI members
who have participated in Global
Schoolroom since 2006
(page 24)

ASTI prizes at Maynooth



Pictured is Grainne McCluskey (centre), winner of the ASTI Award for the best overall PDE grade at NUI Maynooth in 2012. Grainne is pictured with Dr Aidan Mulkeen, Head of the Education Department at NUI Maynooth, and Dr Celine Healy. Grainne is currently working in St Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk. As a teacher of history and English, she is particularly enthused by the renewed drive for literacy in schools and is looking forward to using imaginative ways to expand on this interest during her career. She has started by setting up a creative writing club in her school.



Pictured at the NUI Maynooth Prizes and Scholarships Awards Ceremony are (from left): Majella Dempsey, Course Leader, BSc Science and Mathematics Education; Joann Dempsey, recipient of the Vernier Prize for the student with the best overall BSc Science Education result; Professor Philip Nolan, President, NUI Maynooth; Fionnuala Cleary, recipient of the ASTI Prize for the BSc Science Education student with the best overall education result; and, Dr Aidan Mulkeen, Head of the Education Department, NUI Maynooth.

UNESCO education report launched

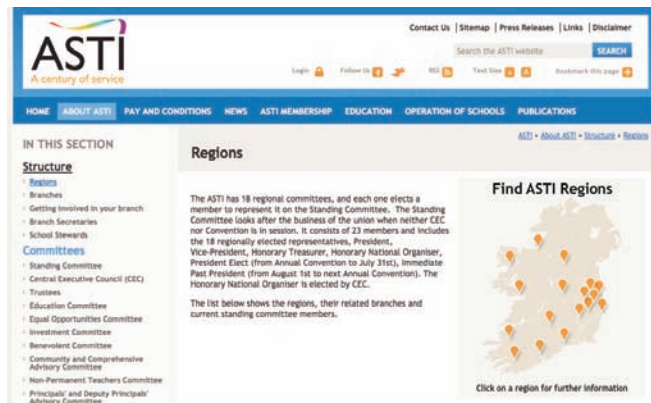


An independent report commissioned by UNESCO shows that millions more children are now accessing quality education in the developing world. Pictured at the launch of 'The Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012' are (from left): John O'Brien, INTO, Chairperson of the ICTU Global Solidarity Committee; Peter Hamilton, Director, Digital Content World Ahead INTEL Education Programme; Joanna Harma, UNESCO; Joe Costello TD, Minister for Trade and Development; Moira Leydon, ASTI, Chairperson of the Irish Coalition for Global Campaign for Education; Noel Ward, INTO; and, Vincent O'Neill, Irish Aid. The Irish launch of the report was co-organised by the Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), of which the ASTI is a member.

ASTI Diary – important update

Please note: the information on teachers' maternity leave entitlements included in the ASTI Diary was finalised before Budget 2013 made changes to leave in lieu arrangements. Full details of new arrangements are available at www.asti.ie.

Make the most of the ASTI website



As well as offering access to hundreds of pages of information and regular news updates, you can use the ASTI website to find details for your ASTI representatives and branch officers. Simply click the regions map or the login button on the homepage – www.asti.ie. You will be asked to supply a username, member ID and password. Your username is likely to be your first name and second name with no spaces, e.g., joebloggs. Your member ID is your ASTI membership number. Your password, if you are logging in for the first time, will be your ASTI membership number.

When you first log on you will be asked to choose another password, which you can use for future logins.

If you forget your password, you can click the 'forgot your password' button and enter your email address. Your password will be emailed to you.

If you have any difficulties logging on to the ASTI website, contact ASTI Head Office, Tel: 1850-418400, or Email: info@asti.ie.

School building projects announced but no funding for upkeep

In December, Minister for Education and Skills Ruairí Quinn announced the planned construction of 50 school projects this year. The major projects scheduled to proceed to construction in 2013 include 13 new schools and three extensions at second level. These projects form part of the €2 billion five-year capital investment programme launched by Minister Quinn last March.

The ASTI welcomed the construction plan, which will provide school places to cater for a projected rise in second-level enrolment by 25,000 by 2017. But the union is very concerned that funding for ongoing repairs and maintenance has not been allocated, while capitation funding has once again been cut.

Capitation funding for second-level schools was cut by 2% this year, following an announcement in Budget 2012 that capitation funding would decrease by 2% in 2012, 2% in 2013, and a further 1% in both 2014 and 2015. In addition, the Summer Works Scheme, which allowed schools to apply for funding for repair works, has been suspended.

ICTU austerity protest

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions will hold a series of mass anti-austerity protests on Saturday, February 9. The protests aim to highlight the austerity programme imposed on Ireland by the European authorities and the failure to honour promises made on the alleviation of Ireland's debt burden. All ASTI members are being asked to attend the demonstrations. Venues will include Dublin, Cork, Galway, Sligo, Limerick and Waterford. For more information, see page 13 or visit www.asti.ie.

Fair Shop Campaign

The ASTI supports The Fair Shop Campaign, which supports and promotes quality employment in the retail sector by encouraging trade union members, their families and supporting organisations to make an informed choice to use Fair Shop designated retail outlets. Fair Shop will encourage you the consumer to use unionised shops rather than non-unionised shops. Fair Shop will also help to reward retailers that recognise and do business with Mandate Trade Union by increasing their business and market share. Find out more at www.fairshop.ie.



Department circulars

Department of Education and Skills circulars set out important information about teachers' entitlements and conditions of employment, and in relation to school management and education. All Department Circulars relating to second level are available on the ASTI website in the pay and conditions section.

ASTI global solidarity

The ASTI is affiliated to two movements that work to secure free quality education for all: the Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education; and, Education International.

Current global solidarity action appeals

Campaign for the release of Bahraini union leaders

Two leaders of the Bahraini Teachers' Association (BTA) were arrested in 2011 after supporting calls for reform in Bahrain. Following calls from Education International, among others, one of the teachers, Jalila Al-Salman, has been released. Education International is now calling for the immediate and unconditional release of her colleague Mahdi Abu Dheeb.

Education rights in Pakistan

Following the shooting of 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai in Pakistan, who was targeted for taking a public stand for girls' education, ASTI members are encouraged to voice their support for the right to education for all in Pakistan by writing to the Pakistani Ambassador to Ireland.

For more details on how you can get involved in these campaigns, see the ASTI's Global Solidarity Campaigns page in the campaigns section of www.asti.ie.

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Junior cycle consultation – the next steps

Following an unprecedented response to the ASTI junior cycle consultation, the next stage will be to form policy based on your views.



What's happened so far?

ASTI members were shocked when the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, unveiled his plans to do away with a State exam for junior cycle students and replace it with his Framework for Junior Cycle. A key cause of concern among teachers was that they were not consulted about the Minister's plans.

Following the Minister's announcement, the ASTI decided to undertake a consultation process with its members in order to ascertain teachers' views. The findings of this consultation exercise will be communicated to the Minister and to the partners in education.

The ASTI has undertaken a consultation process with its members in order to ascertain teachers' views on the Minister's Framework for Junior Cycle.

November/December 2012

School stewards were asked to organise junior cycle meetings for ASTI members. A list of topics for discussion at the meetings, along with feedback forms, were circulated to school stewards. The same material was also sent to ASTI branches, which were asked to hold a discussion on junior cycle reform at their November/December branch meeting. More than 310 (out of 522) schools and 35 (out of 56) branches participated in the consultation. This huge response demonstrates the depth of feeling among second-level teachers regarding the Minister's Junior Cycle Framework. It provides the ASTI with rich evidence of teachers' views on the planned changes to the junior cycle. ASTI representatives have also discussed the implications of the Junior Cycle Framework for schools, students and teachers with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Department of Education and Skills, the Joint Managerial Body (JMB), The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) and the Inspectorate.

There has been a huge response to the ASTI's consultation on the junior cycle, demonstrating the depth of feeling among teachers about the proposed changes.

January 2013

The ASTI Central Executive Council (CEC), which represents members in every part of the country, dedicated a special session to discussing the Junior Cycle Framework at its meeting on January 12, 2013. The views of the CEC will also inform the consultation process. In late January, the ASTI Education Committee will consider the consultation process to date, and will present the formal and considered views of the Committee to Standing Committee.

February 2013

Standing Committee will consider all views and submissions from schools, branches, the CEC and the Education Committee. It will develop a number of proposals on junior cycle reform based on the consultation process. These proposals will be debated by Annual Convention on Tuesday, April 2. The decisions reached by Convention will form the basis of ASTI policy and strategy on junior cycle reform.

March 2013

ASTI branches will receive a document from ASTI Head Office containing the findings of the consultation process along with Standing Committee's recommendations.

April 2013

In order to facilitate a full debate on the junior cycle, ASTI Convention will begin one day early on Easter Monday, April 1. The debate on junior cycle reform takes place on Tuesday, April 2.

Teachers are central to any reform process and must be listened to on education and resource issues.

ASTI insists to Department that teachers must be heard

Since the Minister's announcement, the ASTI has met with representatives from the Department of Education and Skills in relation to the junior cycle. The union set out its concerns about the manner in which the junior cycle announcement was made, and the lack of consultation with teachers in advance. We insisted that teachers are central to any reform process and must be listened to on their educational concerns as well as on fundamental resource issues such as required continuous professional development, assessment and administration arrangements, and safeguarding equality in the system. The Department representatives agreed that the reform would only succeed if teachers engage in the process and that teachers know best for their students in terms of course design and teaching. They indicated that details of the junior cycle plan may have to change as the review is rolled out, and assured the ASTI that the Department will meet with the unions as often as unions wish during the process.



St Patrick's College
Drumcondra, Dublin 9

A COLLEGE OF DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Doctorate in Education

Applications are invited for the Doctorate in Education (EdD) at St. Patrick's College, DCU. The Programme will commence in July 2013. Modules will be delivered on campus and online. Coursework will extend over two years on a part-time basis with a Dissertation being completed during the subsequent two years. The Programme has a Policy and Research focus and will enable candidates to pursue their interests in one of the following specialisations (contingent on student choices):

- Ethical Education and Schooling (in partnership with Educate Together)
- Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Curriculum
- Research and Evaluation (Co-ordinated by staff from the Educational Research Centre)
- Special and Inclusive Education
- Teacher Education (a fee bursary is available on a competitive basis)

Applicants should normally have an honours Masters degree or equivalent. Candidates will be interviewed prior to places on the programme being allocated.

Application forms and additional information may be accessed at www.spd.dcu.ie/pg or on request from: Admissions Office, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9 Telephone: 01-8842025/8842096; Email: courseinfo@spd.dcu.ie

Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday, 1 March, 2013

Coláiste Phádraig, Droim Conrach, Baile Átha Cliath 9
COLAISTE DE CHUID OLLSCOIL CHATHAIR BHAILE ÁTHA CLIATH



Budget blues

Education services will experience €90 million worth of cuts this year as a result of Budget 2013. Schools will have to cope with further diminution of resources as they enter into their fifth year of cutbacks.

The ASTI wishes to thank all teachers who lobbied their politicians in advance of Budget 2013 on issues such as the pupil-teacher ratio.



PTR maintained in most schools

In advance of Budget 2013 the ASTI mounted a significant campaign against education cutbacks. A key campaign message was that schools had already suffered and that many schools had dropped subjects and amalgamated classes. Another increase in the pupil-teacher ratio would therefore force schools to again cut minority subjects from the curriculum, including physics, accounting and German.

Campaign activities during 2012 included:

- a national survey of school principals on the impact of education cuts on their schools undertaken by Millward Browne Lansdowne;
- a protest rally outside Dáil Éireann in October organised by the ASTI, INTO and TUI; and,
- a political lobbying campaign, including face-to-face meetings with TDs and senators.

Campaign continues

While the pupil-teacher ratio has been maintained at 19:1 for schools in the free education scheme, Budget 2013 did nothing to address the appalling damage done to second-level education in previous budgets. In addition, second-level schools will continue to experience cuts in 2013, including an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio in fee-charging schools, a decision that will result in reduced teacher numbers and redeployment for these schools.

Cuts to schools in 2013 include:

- an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio in fee-charging schools (from 21:1 to 23:1);
- a 2% cut to the capitation grant; and,
- a reduction in the number of English language learning teachers in schools.

Maternity leave

Changes to teachers' maternity and adoptive leave were imposed unilaterally without any consultation with the ASTI. At the time of going to print the ASTI and other teacher unions had brought the matter before the Teachers' Conciliation Council, and were awaiting clarification on a number of issues. The ASTI has also sought legal advice on the equality implications of the changes (see www.asti.ie).

“Budget leaks suggest an increase in class sizes. But the Department has accepted the argument advanced by the ASTI and TUI that cuts in class size at second level would limit subject choice and generate huge practical problems for smaller schools.”

Irish Times, November 12, 2012.

Budget 2014

The Department of Education and Skills has stated that it will be making further cuts – amounting to €44 million – in 2014. The ASTI is extremely concerned that further cuts will be imposed on second-level schools at a time of significant growth in the school-going population. Up to 10,000 additional students will enter the second-level school system this September. We need more investment, not less, to meet

extra demands on schools. Further cuts will mean that schools will no longer be able to deliver the quality of education expected by society. The ASTI is planning a number of activities in 2013 as part of its attempt to communicate this serious message.

“In secondary schools with fewer than 300 pupils, if one disimproves the pupil–teacher ratio, one could potentially remove a subject from the menu of options.”

**Minister for Education and Skills
Ruairi Quinn TD, October 2012.**

Day of action on debt burden



Hundreds of new teachers took part in a pre-Budget rally against education cuts organised by the ASTI and other teacher unions in October.

The ASTI is asking all members to participate in a day of action on Saturday, February 9, to demand an end to the pointless programme of austerity forced on Ireland by the EU/ECB/IMF ‘Troika’.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is organising demonstrations in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford. The world media will be invited to cover the event and hear about the impact of Troika-imposed austerity on ordinary Irish people. It is vital that the voices of second-level teachers are heard.

The overwhelming burden of banking debt is the core cause of draconian budgetary austerity. It is because of it that our Government is unable to borrow the money to run the country in the world financial markets. Therefore we have to rely on the Troika to fund us. Their cash comes with a heavy price tag – endless austerity. Debt is causing a vicious spiral of decline for Ireland. About one-third of our national debt of approximately €192 billion is directly attributable to the banks. While the guarantee of September 2008 has been disastrous for Ireland, it probably headed off a banking collapse in Europe. We must insist on a restructuring deal in return. It is not enough simply to leave it to the Government to negotiate it. We must all get out and demonstrate the demand for it. For full information visit www.asti.ie.

Highlighting pay and conditions

The ASTI continues to comment in the media on matters relating to teachers and education.

ASTI General Secretary Pat King defends teachers’ performance following comments made by Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Brendan Howlin

“I accept that in all walks of life there are people who are in difficulty. Teaching is no different. It’s a very stressful and demanding job and it can take its toll on people over the years. But there are good systems in place for dealing with teachers who are in difficulties ... There are very few more public jobs; teachers are up in front of 30 students hour after hour, their work is on public display, every year there are examination results, they are accountable to so many different levels be it principal, be it department, be it Inspectorate.”

Newstalk Breakfast, December 27, 2012

“Most Irish teachers are motivated by the vocational aspect of their work. They care for, and want the best for their students. This is despite the fact that Irish schools are seriously underfunded and under-resourced.”

Irish Daily Mail, December 28, 2012

The ASTI makes clear that the restoration of pay for new teachers is a central aim of the union

“Teachers’ unions are preparing a legal challenge to the education minister’s decision in September to abolish qualification allowances for new entrants to the profession ... The ASTI confirmed last week that the unions are separately preparing cases among their members with a view to arriving at an agreed test case, which, subject to legal advice, will be lodged with the equality tribunal early in the new year. ‘We have a situation where one teacher leaves a class and another comes in to do the same job on €8,000 less,’ the ASTI said. ‘In the main this is affecting young and female teachers, and we strongly believe it constitutes discrimination on the grounds of age and gender.’”

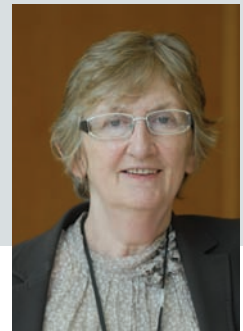
The Sunday Times, December 30 2012

“We are very concerned about pay cuts for new teachers ... It is unacceptable, it’s unfair. Teaching is a very, very demanding job and new teachers will soon realise that they are being paid second-class wages ... we want to achieve a single salary scale for all teachers, a system where there are no second-class teachers.”

General Secretary Pat King interviewed on Newstalk Breakfast, December 27, 2012.

ASTI helps members achieve CIDs

The ASTI offers professional industrial relations support to all members. Here are some recent cases taken by the ASTI on behalf of members.



The teachers were represented by Maire Mulcahy, ASTI Assistant General Secretary.

ASTI proves 'general' objective grounds not valid to deny CID

Successful claims taken by the ASTI on behalf of two members proved that generalised objective grounds, not specific to those teachers, could not be relied upon to deny contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs). The members had been employed in the same Leinster school on successive fixed-term contracts for in excess of four years. The school argued that they were not entitled to CIDs because objective grounds to deny such had been included in their contracts. In one case, an adjudication decision had previously awarded a CID to the teacher, but the school refused to implement the award.

In separate cases taken to the Rights Commissioner in October 2012, the ASTI argued that the objective grounds set out in each teacher's contract related to the school's general staffing situation and allocation, but were not linked with the particular members and, therefore, did not meet the criteria demanded for a ground to be accepted as an objective ground. The Rights Commissioner found in favour of the ASTI members, in one case stating: "I find that these objective grounds were non-specific and general in nature. I cannot concur that they were addressing a specific need, appropriate and necessary in the circumstances. [The member] was not directly linked to any of the grounds specifically".

In both cases the Rights Commissioner stated that to appoint the teachers on a series of fixed-term contracts for what could be an indefinite period of time, pending developments that might have implications for school staffing, is what the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003 was designed to prevent. His findings quoted the Labour Court case, FTD 1232: "It is not appropriate to use fixed-term contracts to avoid a contingent liability that might arise at some point in the future".

The Rights Commissioner required the school to reinstate both teachers on CIDs from the date they should have been applied, and he awarded each teacher €1,000 in compensation.

ASTI case succeeds in adding fixed-term hours to CID

A Leinster teacher succeeded in having hours she taught under a fixed-term contract added to her CID, thanks to an ASTI-supported case taken to the Rights Commissioner.

The teacher was awarded a CID in 2009, having been employed in a school on continuous fixed-term contracts for in excess of four years. The CID was for 10.3 hours and the teacher was awarded a further fixed-term contract for 11.25 hours; these hours, she was advised by the school, were linked to a job-sharing contract and did not qualify for a CID. Her fixed-term contract was renewed for 11.6 hours in 2010 and each year thereafter. From 2010, the contract was no longer linked to job-sharing hours.

In 2011 the teacher sought to combine her CID and fixed-term contract hours under a CID for 22 hours. The school refused and this refusal was upheld at adjudication. Supported by the ASTI, the teacher appealed to the Rights Commissioner.

At the Rights Commissioner hearing, the teacher's ASTI representative argued that, based on the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003, the teacher was entitled to a CID for all of the hours she taught. She quoted Section 9.1 of the Act, which states: "Where on or after the passing of this Act a fixed-term employee completes or has completed his or her third year of continuous employment with his or her employer or associated employer, his or her fixed-term contract may be renewed by that employer on only one occasion and any such renewal shall be for a fixed term of no longer than one year".

The ASTI case noted that the teacher had reached this point in her employment in September 2009. She had, in fact, been working the contested hours for seven years when the Rights Commissioner case was taken, and was in her eighth fixed-term contract. The case further argued that no evidence existed to suggest that there would not be a continued need for the concessionary hours covered by the fixed-term contract.

The Rights Commissioner found that the teacher had been employed for a full 22 hours since September 2006 and that the claim for a CID for 22 hours was well founded.

The 'Casework' section of the ASTI website provides further information on cases taken by the ASTI – www.asti.ie/asti-membership/services-and-benefits/asti-casework.



Transition Year students from Larkin College, Dublin in the Irish Aid Centre.

www.irishaid.gov.ie



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Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Right place, wrong time

In the week following their graduation, *ASTIR* asked teachers Caoimhe O'Donnell and Marian O'Neill how they are finding their new careers.



Marian (left) and Caoimhe talk about their first year as qualified teachers. Pictures by Tommy Clancy. Thanks to Ubode Caf , Dublin.

How does teaching match your expectations?

Caoimhe

I have wanted to be a teacher since I was in school. I was terrified starting off – the school is so big and before this I had only taught girls – but I've settled in so much. I like the mixture of groups. I like the dynamic: no day is the same and I love working with young people – they can be hilarious. There are always challenging days, but some days it's even better than I thought it would be. I am angry about how we have been treated, but I'm still glad I went into teaching. I don't mind doing as much as I can, if I get something back, some recognition.

Marian

Teaching was always my goal too, and then as soon as I got there, things changed. I am working hard, and I am taken up with it, but I enjoy what I do. There are challenges but everyone has those on a daily basis. They don't bother me as much as the bigger things like being appreciated for what I do. I feel like I'm in the right place at the wrong time.

How do you feel about the cuts to new teachers' pay?

Caoimhe

The pay cuts have created a two-tier system in staffrooms and the thing is we are being asked to do more for less – the NQT meetings that were

voluntary two years ago, for example, are mandatory for us. You don't mind when there's a cut across the board, but we were singled out – it's just not fair.

Marian

The Government tried to sneak it in, under the radar – we were vulnerable because when you enter a profession, you don't know all the ins and outs, what you should be entitled to, or what's been taken away. You're caught like a deer in the headlights. Brendan Howlin said recently that public sector workers have to work longer and in more clever and smart ways; that absolutely infuriated me and my colleagues. I thought: I can't work any longer because I'm only getting paid for about a third of the work I do as it is, and I am working clever – I was judged on that during my PDE.

Have you found it difficult to find work?

Marian

I was lucky enough to be called back to the school I did my teaching practice in, but I only have 10 hours a week. My sister, who is also a teacher, has just left for London to find work. She's 29 and has been qualified since she was 24, but there was no work for her here. She's been offered much more attractive terms, she has her choice of schools, and there are jobs left, right and centre. It'd be a last resort for me to leave but if you're valued more, paid better, and have better conditions, it's hard not to consider it.



Caoimhe

Last year we were bombarded with emails from places in England looking for teachers – the college itself was sending them out. A lot of our classmates have gone to the UK, a couple have gone to the Middle East and they feel much more valued. I think that new teachers have good ideas and we're assets to the country but that just doesn't seem to be recognised. I don't mind working harder if it's appreciated. I wouldn't be afraid of that. I want

hours! I was covering a sick leave for two months and I've been subbing in the school since. I'm hopefully going to be getting some teaching hours after Christmas but I don't know how many because they've only just been sanctioned.

What do your friends think of your career choice?

Caoimhe

People do think you have it easy. Before they even say anything, I'm defending myself, telling them it's not as simple as saying "Open your books to page 44" and reading aloud. It's not like that at all: the preparation is huge. I will never again defend why teachers are off for the summer. You physically could not teach for the whole year – you give so much, you're performing all the time: you can't have an off day.

Marian

People mention 'taxpayers' money' a lot; they seem to think of

teaching as a vocation, but it's a profession and a school is a workplace and any workplace has costs. Teaching is a major responsibility as well: there's a classroom of 30 kids in front of you, nine times a day.

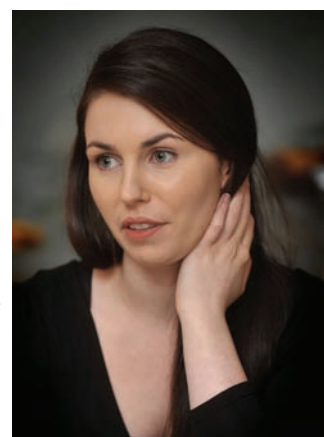
Caoimhe

Parents trust you with their kids; you are the second most familiar adult to them. The amount of students who have come to me with personal problems is unbelievable. It's such an important job.

Have you settled in to the hours culture?

Marian

Even though I'm only contracted and paid for 10 hours, I'm in the school from 8.30am to close – a minimum of 30 hours a week and then after-school activities. The staff in my school were exceptionally friendly from the very beginning, but I see teachers with an hour or two a week, and I don't even know who they are. For people like that it must be like no man's land; it's not a nice feeling when you go into a place and you feel like you're not part of it.



Caoimhe

You feel like you've come out of the diploma, you've made it – you're finally there. You hope you'll be a little bit settled, have a little bit of a routine. But it's not like that when you only have hours and no guarantees. You don't see ads saying "Garda wanted: 10 hours a week, extra shifts if you're lucky". It would be laughable. But you do get that in teaching. It shouldn't be a part-time job. I have to say, even though they are so busy, the other staff are so nice and I do feel I have settled in.

What thing would you most like to change about your situation?

Marian

I think stability is the thing I'd like most. I could be in this school this year, another school next year, and other schools for three years after that, but that experience doesn't stand for anything. I think one good thing the ASTI is trying to move along at the moment is a panel system. I think that would be great – this year would count to something and I could look to the future and know that.

Caoimhe

I always had a plan. Nothing is definite but you have a bit of a plan of where you're going and how you'll get there. Now it's like you don't know anymore. If we could know that any work we get in the next five years will count, that would give a more positive outlook. If there's hope, people will stay.

Caoimhe is teaching in Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, Dublin.

Marian teaches in St Raphaela's Secondary School, Stillorgan, Dublin.

Reasonable accommodation for teachers

MAIRE MULCAHY looks at how equality legislation impacts on teachers with a disability and their schools.



The ASTI is committed to promoting equal treatment for all members under the nine grounds laid out in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2004.

Disability is one of the nine grounds. The Act endows employees with a disability with a statutory protection against less favourable treatment than that given to an able-bodied employee. It goes further and enables employers to apply special measures, sometimes known as 'reasonable accommodation', to promote equal treatment, including affording opportunities to remain in the workforce.

Reasonable accommodation is the term used to describe the employer's obligation to enable a person with a disability to stay in the workforce. In essence, it urges employers to focus on an employee's abilities and not on his/her disability and, where possible, to match the job to the person's abilities.

Reasonable accommodation is the term used to describe an employer's obligation to promote equal treatment, and enable a person with a disability to stay in the workforce.

What is a disability?

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2004 use a very wide definition of disability. They cover a wide range of medical conditions, including physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive and emotional disabilities. They also incorporate mental health difficulties.

Any disability coming within the remit of the Acts – and it is the prerogative of the employee to classify their impairment as a disability – cannot be used to deny access to employment, promotion, training or a return to work where an employee, apart from the disability, is capable and competent to do the job and, with accommodation, could continue to do the job.

The employer or school may reject the classification of the particular illness or impairment as a disability, but ultimately it is the call of the member to refer his or her complaint and classification to the Equality Tribunal, which can decide whether the condition complained of by the employee is a disability within the meaning of the Acts and deserving of or meriting special measures.

The employer's obligations

An employer who is on notice of a disability is obliged to make reasonable accommodation or take reasonable measures to enable the employee to stay in the workforce. This obligation is qualified so that the adjustment or measures do not result in a 'disproportionate' cost to the employer. There is no universal definition of disproportionate other than to state that it depends on the cost of the adjustment when balanced against the resources available to the employer.

Entitlement to stay in the workforce

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2004 confer an entitlement on employees who require an adjustment in their working arrangements or in their work environment to make their case to their employer. They oblige the employer to make reasonable accommodation for the employee where that accommodation does not entail disproportionate costs.

Reasonable accommodation in the school setting

The ASTI has surveyed members to establish what reasonable accommodation has been made for members. Examples include adjustments to the built environment such as the location of classrooms on the ground floor, parking spots near access points, and wheelchair-accessible entrances and exits. Adjustments have also been made for teachers with a visual impairment or hearing impairment. In some instances, timetables have been adjusted and job-sharing arrangements have been provided.

What the ASTI can do to assist members:

- discuss with the member the nature of the disability and how it impacts on his/her capacity to do his/her work;
- identify any supports the member may require to enable him or her to continue in the workplace;
- establish what steps the school needs to take to maintain the teacher in the school;
- put the case to the school to implement those measures deemed necessary to maintain the teacher in school;
- in circumstances where the school is unwilling to take the necessary measures, or where the school has been unsuccessful in obtaining funding from the Department of Education and Skills, the ASTI can explore the pursuit of a claim to the Equality Tribunal; and,
- advocate for the member at the Equality Tribunal, should they decide to use that route.

Useful resources

- ASTI-ACCS Code of Practice for Employees with a Disability – www.asti.ie.
- National Disability Authority guide: Retaining employees who acquire a disability – www.nda.ie.
- See Change, an organisation dedicated to eliminating the stigma surrounding mental health problems, offers a free six-step workplace programme to support employers and employees in creating workplaces that are supportive and assist employees to work to their full potential – www.seachange.ie.
- The Equality Authority – www.equality.ie.



Maire Mulcahy

Maire is ASTI Assistant General Secretary: Industrial Relations/Equality.



Funding for a wide range of activities for schools, educators and pupils



Comenius School Partnerships: pupils, students and staff from schools across Europe work together on joint projects over two years. Deadline for applications: 21 February 2013

Comenius Regio Partnerships: local and regional authorities with a direct role in school education, schools and other actors in education, work with European partners on topics of mutual interest. Deadline: 21 February 2013

Comenius In-Service Training: training for staff involved in school education. Deadlines: 30 April, 17 September 2013. Each deadline relates to a specific period.

Comenius Assistantships: encouraging intercultural awareness and language learning among future teachers. Deadline: 31 January 2013.

Contact Seminars and Preparatory Visits: opportunities to meet potential project partners and prepare for partnerships.

Study Visits: networking opportunities for education and vocational training specialists. Deadlines: 28 March, 15 October 2013. Each deadline relates to a specific activity period.



The community for schools in Europe: a free and safe platform for teachers to connect, develop collaborative projects and share ideas in Europe.

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www.leargas.ie



Making the internet safer

Ahead of Safer Internet Day, we look at how schools can be supported to promote online safety among students.



According to research from the Anti-Bullying Centre in Trinity College Dublin, cyberbullying affects one in five young people in Ireland, either as a victim, bully or both. How can schools address this and other online privacy and exposure concerns that occur beyond the school gate?

Acting responsibly

Fundamentally, it's about persuading students to act responsibly, says Simon Grehan, internet safety project officer with the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), who is co-ordinating a new 'Connect with Respect' campaign as part of this year's Safer Internet Day: "Often young people don't realise the consequences of what they are doing online – they don't understand that simply liking something on a Facebook page can contribute to bullying and its effects, for example. We want to encourage students to be part of change, to reinforce to bystanders that it's not ok to do nothing, to have them intervene in a positive way. Our message is: if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem". The 'Connect with Respect' programme involves visits to schools by Gardaí, who are, says Simon, well placed to address the necessary issues because

they know the school, its policies and its community. But one workshop visit won't solve the problem, Simon acknowledges; what is needed is a whole school response that integrates with the curriculum – an approach that encourages students to think about the consequences of their behaviour and adjust their attitudes.

“Young people often don't realise the consequences of what they are doing online ... we want to encourage students to be part of the change, to intervene in a positive way.”

Former second-level teacher Seán Fallon of the National Anti-Bullying Coalition agrees: "Online activity is difficult to address while it's happening, so what is really helpful is removing the intent in the first place, through

awareness raising. Taking that approach, you don't have to be specific to the technology or to the content, but you can be proactive in persuading students to behave differently, to understand what it's like to be on the receiving end and to make responsible decisions based on that attitude".

Taking it online

What happens online or on mobile phones is a reflection of general behaviours among students, say both Simon and Seán, but that does not negate the need to address the online aspect explicitly. As Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Education and Research, explains: "Schools can and do empower young people to deal with conflict and adversity, to be vigilant regarding safety concerns, to act responsibly in society. But students are used to supervision limiting or guiding their actions and offering them protection to a certain degree – that supervision is lacking online, so we do need to reinforce the message that the online space is not fully private, that the same responsibility rules apply, that students can seek help for what happens there in the real world and that online misbehaviour will be taken seriously".

“You can be proactive in persuading students to behave differently, to understand what it’s like to be on the receiving end, and to make responsible decisions based on that attitude.”

Teaching the teachers

When actions take place outside of school, they can of course be difficult to pinpoint if they are not reported – and frequently they are not. Signs to be vigilant for include students who seem uncharacteristically upset or under pressure, or exhibit changes in demeanour or academic achievement. The big problem, Seán says, is that teachers often don't feel equipped or confident to deal with the issue: "Many teachers are petrified to do the wrong thing; they worry that if they do, they might make the situation worse. They really need training in a system that works to give them that confidence".

The Minister for Education and Skills last year convened a working group on bullying to focus on changes to existing practices and policies that would help schools and teachers to tackle bullying. Funding for an anti-bullying campaign with a specific focus on cyberbullying has also been set aside. This is very encouraging, says Moira Leydon, but schools can only do so much: "The promotional posts that have been lost over the last number of years mean pastoral care and management systems are at risk. Schools have had to cut back on guidance provision significantly since last year. These are the very systems that were in place to identify and respond to child safety and welfare concerns".

Online safety is not just an issue for schools; they can only play a part, along with parents and the Government. That is acknowledged by most, including the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which urges parents to become better informed about online safety and to talk to their children about the rules and boundaries of internet usage, including protecting privacy and being vigilant about who they talk to online.

Any serious instances of bullying or online safety concerns that schools become aware of should be reported to the Gardaí and/or the HSE Children and Family Services, in accordance with procedures outlined in the Children First Guidelines.

Safer Internet Day 2013 takes place on February 5. This year's theme is online rights and responsibilities. Actions and events include talks in schools and a social media campaign – visit www.webwise.ie to get your school involved. Safer Internet Day is part of a global drive to promote a safer internet for all users, especially young people.

Find out more about a free anti-bullying programme for schools, developed by Seán Fallon and Mary Kent, at www.antibullyingcampaign.ie.

Guidelines on mental health promotion and suicide prevention will be issued to all second-level schools shortly. The publication 'Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention' is currently being finalised.

Keep informed

You can keep up to date with important news and information about your job and your union at www.asti.ie

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What's the point?

Will changing the points system really tackle our education concerns, asks ASTI member BRIAN WALL.



The points system should be examined on its own merits and in terms of its own aims and intentions.

There has been much debate over the last number of years about alternatives to the points system for third-level entry. This debate seeks ways to ensure that students receive a rounded, embedded education, while reducing Leaving Cert pressure and shifting the focus away from 'learning off'. But is the points system really the right place to seek solutions to these issues?

Higher order thinking versus learning off

The accusation has been made that the points system rewards rote learning. This implies that changing the points system will shift the focus away from rote learning. But any changes to the points system will have little impact on rote learning culture because the format of Leaving Cert exams drives that culture.

A new draft chemistry syllabus for senior cycle is currently proposed. It aims to shift focus from learning off to higher order thinking. While the changes in the syllabus are welcome, the desired shift may not succeed – as many similar initiatives have not – unless the method of assessment changes.

While I agree that reforming the syllabus aims and content, changing teaching style and implanting different forms of assessment are necessary, without a radical reform of the format and make-up of terminal exams and assessments there will be limited or no change to

learning outcomes. It could be argued that we could achieve a shift towards higher order thinking simply by using imaginative, relevant ways of designing a terminal exam.

A move to continuous assessment, project work or practical assessment may partly shift the focus to higher order learning, but as long as a large component of the terminal exam continues to test memory work, we will still have a system focused on learning off to the detriment of higher order thinking.

Subject perception and uptake

There is a perception that some subjects are 'easier' than others. Indeed, statistics show that a higher proportion of students achieve As in certain subjects each year, but it is not the points system that drives the perception of subjects as easy or difficult – it is the grades achieved in terminal exams. Whether the points system is in place or not, some students will continue to choose subjects they perceive as 'easy' – wouldn't we all?

The aim to increase the number of third-level graduates from science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) courses is understandable. However, bonus points will not add one extra student to STEM courses if

the number of course places does not increase, and awarding students bonus points for certain subjects does not automatically mean that those students will become interested in the subjects. The focus needs to shift away from incentivising through the points system and towards stimulating genuine interest in subjects through teaching.

Discussion on any new mechanism for third-level entry needs to ask: "What are we trying to fix?" If the answer is issues like rote learning, assessment, and STEM uptake and achievement, the points system is the wrong place to seek solutions. The points system should be decoupled from those issues and examined on its own merits and in terms of its own aims and intentions.

Alternatives bring their own concerns

Alternatives to the current points system do pose their own concerns. Two reports recently published regarding entry to third-level education list several alternatives to the current points system.

A form of pure random selection from students who reach predetermined minimum requirements has been suggested. I believe this would introduce greater disadvantages than the current system. If students with lower grades obtain places, while those with higher grades lose out, one wonders what the effect would be on standards at third-level and student motivation.

Other options include weighted random selection or weighting of

subjects. In an ideal world that might be the way to go, but students select their Leaving Certificate subjects at a stage when, in my experience, the vast majority do not know what they want to do when they leave school. Their cognitive, emotional and psychological development has not yet reached that level. A system that rewards decisions made at that stage in students' lives would be unfair.

Other suggestions propose additional testing through, for example, interviews, personal statements or CVs. Any new system of this kind must be completely objective and, certainly, the mass introduction of aptitude testing should only be considered after the advantages and disadvantages of the HPAT have been studied.

A system I believe worthy of further study is awarding points based on percentile rankings. The data exists to allow a dry run using previous years' results. This would be a valuable exercise that would allow the advantages and disadvantages to be discussed.

It's not about the points – it's about how they get them!

Brian Wall

Brian is a teacher of maths and chemistry, and a practising guidance counsellor in St Mary's College, Dublin, with 20 years of experience in the secondary school system.

Now Enrolling



Hibernia College is now enrolling for its primary and post primary teacher education programmes. Both are academically accredited by HETAC and professionally accredited by the Teaching Council. Because the programmes are delivered through a blend of online and onsite tuition, they are ideal for anyone who wishes to structure their study around personal and work commitments.

HIGHER DIPLOMA IN ARTS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Established in 2003, graduates from this programme now work as primary school teachers and principals around the country. The programme currently includes three blocks of school experience and teaching practice, three weeks in the Gaeltacht and onsite workshops at weekends.

PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMA IN EDUCATION (PDE)

Based on our highly successful Primary Education programme, this programme was established to encourage a broader range of people to consider post primary school teaching as a career. The programme currently includes three blocks of school experience and professional practice and onsite workshops at weekends.

KEY FACTS

- Professional accreditation: The Teaching Council
- Academic accreditation: HETAC [Level 8]
- Intakes: spring and autumn
- Duration: 2 years
- Delivered online and onsite at regional centres throughout Ireland



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Live. Learn.

My Indian summer

ASTI member CLARE MCCARTHY writes about making her fourth trip to India with charity Global Schoolroom last summer.



Indian teacher Joyceline Kharumnuid now works as a part-time tutor and mentor with Global Schoolroom.

Irish teacher Michelle Sheehan discusses school leadership with a group of Indian teachers.

While the uniforms may be immaculate, this basic classroom is typical of the classrooms in some of the remote schools in which Global Schoolroom works.

Last summer marked my fourth trip to the northeast of India with Global Schoolroom, while for my fellow volunteers – many of them ASTI members – it was the first trip. Despite my previous Indian experience, I shared in some of the nervous excitement. I was travelling to a new destination with two other Irish teachers to facilitate Year Two of the three-year university Diploma in Teacher Education, accredited by UCD.

New destination, renewed commitment

This time I was going to Jongksha, where we would meet with Lumlang Shadap, an Indian colleague who had already completed the Diploma, and who travelled to Ireland for further studies in 2011. Lumlang, along with three other Indian Global Schoolroom graduates, is now a part-time tutor on the programme.

It was evident from the outset that the 69 local teachers in attendance were completely committed to the programme. They were ambitious to succeed: keen to learn new classroom skills, consider new ideas, share with us their own practices and explore the application of new learning in the challenging environment in which they live and work.

Many teach in poorly built schools, with no facilities or teaching resources other than what the physical environment can provide. For the majority, the arrival of the Global Schoolroom programme was their first experience of any formal teacher training.

The teachers' enthusiasm to progress in learning about their own profession was infectious. While teaching the modules of the programme for Year Two, I found myself once again revisiting and confirming my own fundamental beliefs in the value of education, the importance of sharing knowledge with others, and my reasons for spending all of my professional life to date as an educator.

Wonderful and worthwhile experience

Global Schoolroom teams comprise two, three or four tutors, who work in a number of locations in the states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. While

the volunteer teachers come from a variety of backgrounds in education, we share a common purpose and commitment to the programme. Some of my fellow volunteers had volunteered overseas before but the majority had not. We work hard, and the climate can be challenging ranging from extreme heat and humidity to endless rain! The living conditions are basic but the sense of doing something that is worthwhile for ourselves and others is overwhelming. Friendships develop between Irish and Indian teachers that extend beyond the programme's duration. Even in the brief four-week period, village life offers invaluable opportunities for us to become part of the local community, with visits to local houses, sharing a meal with a family, eating fresh pineapple on the side of the road, walking in the rice fields with the smiling children proud to show us their place, or attending village events and learning about how life is lived so far from home.

I had a wonderful experience and I am proud to be associated with Global Schoolroom, the teachers of Northeast India and, in particular, the teachers of Jongksha village.

Making a difference

In one school where Global Schoolroom has worked the number of children who have passed Class 10 has risen from 20% to 85% over the period of involvement. Enrolment has tripled and former students are now studying teaching, nursing and even medicine.

Clare McCarthy

Clare teaches in St Joseph's Secondary School, Rochfortbridge, Co. Westmeath. She has travelled with Global Schoolroom on four occasions and this year was team leader in Jongksha – one of two centres funded by the ASTI through its Development Aid Fund. Since 2006, 38 ASTI members have participated in Global Schoolroom. Find out more at www.globalschoolroom.net.

RETIREMENT SEMINARS FOR ASTI MEMBERS RETIRING IN 2012 OR 2013?

In order to facilitate members who are considering retirement during 2012 or 2013 the ASTI is providing seminars for those who have **not** yet attended an ASTI retirement seminar.

This two evening programme is for members considering retirement during 2012 or 2013.
Attendance is required on **both** evenings from 4.30pm to 7pm.

You must pre-register with Eileen O'Rourke on 01-6040170 or eileen@asti.ie

VENUE	DAY 1	DAY 2
DUBLIN Clarion Airport Hotel	Monday 5 November	Monday 12 November
You must attend both days		
TULLAMORE Tullamore Court Hotel	Tuesday 6 November	Tuesday 13 November
You must attend both days		
SLIGO Radisson Hotel	Monday 26 November	Monday 3 December
You must attend both days		
CARRICKMACROSS Nuremore Hotel	Tuesday 27 November	Tuesday 4 December
You must attend both days		
DUBLIN Stillorgan Park Hotel	Monday 21 January	Monday 28 January
You must attend both days		
KILKENNY Newpark Hotel	Tuesday 22 January	Tuesday 29 January
You must attend both days		
CORK Silver Springs Hotel	Monday 4 February	Monday 18 February
You must attend both days		
LIMERICK Southcourt Hotel	Tuesday 5 February	Tuesday 19 February
You must attend both days		
GALWAY CITY Carlton Hotel	Monday 25 February	Monday 4 March
You must attend both days		

TEA/SANDWICHES WILL BE AVAILABLE ON ARRIVAL

You may only attend if you have pre-registered with Eileen O'Rourke on 01-6040170 or eileen@asti.ie

ASTI RETIREMENT SEMINARS

ASTI
A century of service

What should I be paid?

Many new teachers have contacted the ASTI with queries about salary scales, starting points and allowances. This guide may help to clear up the confusion.

At the time of going to print, the Department of Education and Skills was drafting a circular clarifying payment rates and allowances. The following material is based on the information suggested to the ASTI thus far.

What you are paid will depend on:

When you first started teaching

Below is a table explaining the starting salary rates for teachers who were first employed in an Oireachtas-funded teaching position after January 1, 2011. Full salary scales are available on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie. Qualification allowances are only payable to those who were employed as teachers in Oireachtas-funded positions prior to February 1, 2012. For those who began teaching between December 5, 2011, and January 31, 2012, qualification allowances are paid only to a maximum of €4,426.

Your contract and hours

The type of contract you have will determine how much you are paid per week. Non-permanent teachers are paid based on an hourly rate. Check the

chart below to find out how to calculate your weekly salary. All Department-paid teachers are paid fortnightly.

Your experience

Teachers progress up the salary scale in increments. Teachers may apply for incremental salary credit for previous teaching or other relevant service. More information on qualifying and applying for incremental credit is available on the ASTI website.



Full-time starting salary. First employed...					
January 1, 2011 to December 4, 2011		December 5, 2011 to January 31, 2012		On or after February 1, 2012	
€27,814 plus allowances		€27,814 plus allowances up to max €4,426		€30,702 No allowances payable	
Allowance rates					
Degree (Pass)	Degree (Hons)	PDE (Pass)	PDE (Hons)	Masters (Pass)	Masters (Hons)
€1,658	€4,426	€532	€1,112	€4,426	€4,946

Weekly salary				
Permanent/CID>18hrs	CID<18hrs	Regular part-time	Non-casual part-time	Casual part-time
Paid for full year	Paid for full year	Paid for full year	Paid for duration of contract	Paid for hours worked
Divide full-time salary by 52	Divide full-time salary by 52.18 Divide again by 22 Multiply by number of hours per week	Divide full-time salary by 52.18 Divide again by 22 Multiply by number of hours per week	Divide full-time salary by 735 Multiply by number of hours per week	Multiply hourly rate by number of hours per week The hourly rate for teachers first appointed between January 1, 2011, and January 31, 2012, is €40.10. The hourly rate for those appointed on or after February 1, 2012, is €38.87.

New RSTA website

In celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation in 1962, the RSTA has commissioned the design of a new logo and website.

New RSTA logo



The new logo is understated in style and hopes to communicate simply and intuitively the values that the RSTA aspires to represent. The main focus is on the acronym 'RSTA', with an explanatory tagline in lower prominence to the right. Drawing lightly on the symbol from the existing RSTA website of a hand holding a torch, the new logo suggests a flame rising from the 't', the only character rising above the level of the others. The dark blue colour hints at traditional educational values. The blue letters frame the warm, light-giving and dynamic qualities of the orange colour to indicate the friendly and life-enhancing aspects of RSTA membership.

New website

The RSTA is also in the process of redesigning its website, which will be available at the new address – www.rsta.ie.

The style and colours of the new logo have been carried through to the design of the website. The design brief was to build a site that would be visually appealing, uncluttered and user friendly, with sufficient functionality to expand the services the RSTA offers to members, as it sets out confidently on the next 50 years of RSTA growth.

The new site will be lively, engaging and effective in the advocacy of the RSTA's interests. Among the community of retired secondary teachers there is a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasms that can now be channelled through this new website.

Join the RSTA today!

Thinking about retiring? Are you recently retired?
The RSTA specifically promotes the interest of retired secondary teachers.

So join today and make your voice heard. Complete the application form below and return to the National Treasurer, Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo

Retired Secondary Teachers' Association

www.rsta-ireland.com

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Mobile: _____ Email: _____

RSTA Branch: _____ See * below for list of branches.

Annual subscription €24. Subscription payment options:

Deduction from pension Direct debit Online bank transfer Cheque Cheques should be made payable to "RSTA"

Members are encouraged to pay by deduction from pension, where possible, to keep administration and banking costs to a minimum.

Mandate for deduction of annual subscription from pension

I hereby authorise the Retired Teachers' Payroll Division of the Department of Education to make a deduction directly from my pension of the annual subscription as notified to it by the Retired Secondary Teachers' Association on my behalf. I understand and agree that the Retired Secondary Teachers' Association has the right to alter the rate of subscription from time to time and to advise the Department of the changed rate.

Pension Payroll No: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please return the completed application to: Mrs Muriel McNicholas, RSTA Hon. National Treasurer, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.

*RSTA Branches: Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Mayo, Midland, North-East, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford, Wicklow.

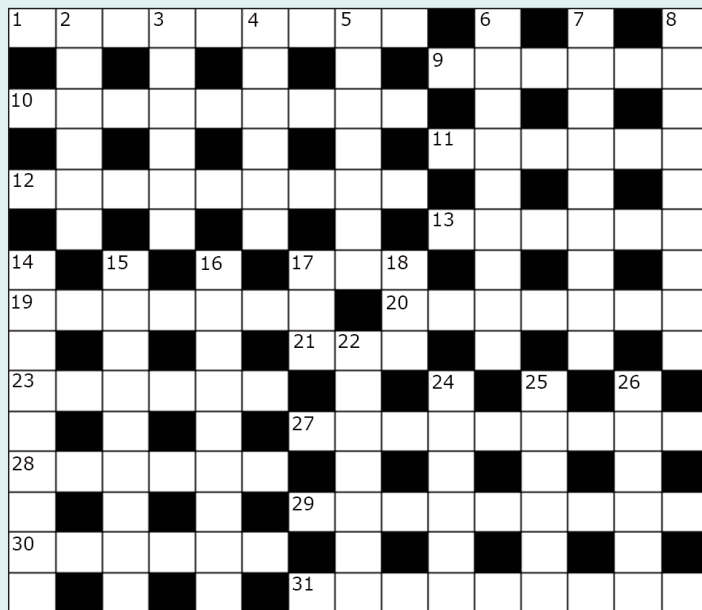


Sponsored by ASTI Credit Union

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 1301

The winner will receive €200

If you wish to keep your copy of *ASTIR* intact you may send a photocopy of the crossword. One entry only per member.



Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: Astir Crossword No. 1301, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday February 8, 2013

CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 The young are not too keen on early part of the year (9)
- 9 A hair raiser of a dessert! (6)
- 10 A rogue star could serve as a substitute (9)
- 11 Sound choice (6)
- 12 They might throw spanners into the works! (9)
- 13 Little to eat 'n sacks (6)
- 17 White robe found in a lab (3)
- 19 You might find in Kerr and soccer special tasks (7)
- 20 Listens to the way one joins forces (7)
- 21 She is in charge of the public health service in Ireland (I.I.I.)
- 23 Spotted cat (6)
- 27 A rum nun puzzles the doc (9)
- 28 In such a neat environment he is a goddess (6)
- 29 Moving in favour of the proposal (9)
- 30 Greets the herons (6)
- 31 "Rest, rest spirit" (Hamlet) (9)

CLUES DOWN:

- 2 The gal with the fur is thrifty (6)
- 3 Rows or suchlike can bring sadness or grief (6)
- 4 Austere Gretta could have second thoughts (6)
- 5 Unaffected – could be musical sign (7)
- 6 Unvarying, humdrum (9)
- 7 Send to Coventry (9)
- 8 Take back (9)
- 14 Set off to meet a girl outside a public school (9)
- 15 A naive person, a mix of blue and yellow (9)
- 16 Disguised – ring for a gin and tonic (9)
- 17 Has dieback disease changed? (3)
- 18 Pollen collector (3)
- 22 Calamity cause (7)
- 24 Add it to the top by the sound of it (6)
- 25 Ted or I could be at head of newspaper (6)
- 26 Frenzy, fur flying (6)

Solution to ASTIR Crossword No. 1205

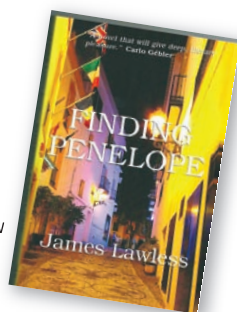
Across	Down
1. Eucalyptus	1. Etch
6. Harp	2. Crabapple
10. Chair	3. Lurid
11. Alexander	4. Prattle
12. Mandated	5. Upended
13. Raneer	7. Auden
15. Riposte	8. Perversely
17. Ditches	9. Narrator
19. Trellis	14. Oratorical
21. Cordial	16. Silences
22. Robin	18. Hairpiece
24. Antelope	20. Startle
27. Carpenter	21. Coterie
28. Spear	23. Beret
29. Late	25. Liszt
30. Relentless	26. Eros



Congratulations
to the winner of Crossword No. 1205: Séamus Ó Faoláin, Coláiste Mhuire, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. Mullingar Branch member.

Teacher's new novel

Former ASTI member James Lawless has published his fourth novel, *Finding Penelope*. James is the author of three other well-received novels and now works as a full-time writer. Find out more or order the book at <http://www.centralbooks.co.uk>.



New RSE resource

The Department of Education and Skills and the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme have launched a new teaching resource for RSE. The resource is supported by a website – www.b4udecide.ie – which aims to encourage young people to make healthy, responsible decisions about relationships and sexual health. Before U Decide is provided free of charge from www.healthpromotion.ie.



Interested in volunteering overseas this summer?

Vincintian Lay Missionaries (VLM) requires volunteer teachers for various projects in Ethiopia for one- to three-month placements. VLM is a signatory of Comhlámh's Volunteering Options Code of Good Practice and is a registered Irish Charity. Visit www.vlm.ie, or contact Mary Anne Stokes, Projects Co-ordinator, Tel: 01-810 2570, or Email: info@vlm.ie for more information.



Intercultural module

Laura Dooley, a qualified English teacher and PhD student, is conducting research entitled 'Comparing "Others": An investigation into the representation of immigrants in fiction and its impact on the education of second-level students in the Republic of Ireland'. As part of her research, she would like to deliver a free module to transition year classes in Dublin. Visit <http://tyinterculturalmodule.wordpress.com>, or Email: laura.dooley3@mail.dcu.ie for more information.

RE21: Religious Education in a Global-Local World

A conference on religious education will take place on August 29-30, 2013, in University College Cork. Teachers are invited to attend or to submit a paper for the conference by February 28, 2013. For more information visit <http://www.ucc.ie/en/studyofreligions/research/re21>.

CSPE action project initiative

The Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) is inviting CSPE students to make the human rights of people in Ireland the focus of their CSPE action project and to create images that express what human rights in Ireland mean to them for display at a national exhibition running in February. Full details are available on the IHRC's website – www.ihrc.ie/cspe – or by contacting Fidelma Joyce, Tel: 01-858 9601, or Email: expressyourself@ihrc.ie.

Teachers Musical Society show

The award-winning Teachers Musical Society will perform Bryan Flynn's *Michael Collins – A Musical Drama* as their main show for 2013. The production will run in the Tivoli Theatre during the week commencing March 4. For more information, Tel: 087-263 1186, or Email: teachers.ms@gmail.com.

'Young Senator' student challenge

Transition year students are invited to enter a new challenge to broaden their knowledge of and interest in Ireland's parliamentary process and tradition. Students can submit a written or video speech they would give to Seanad Éireann on either: 'Do you think the Leaving Certificate prepares you for life?'; or, 'The challenges that face Ireland and does my future lie here?' The closing date for receipt of entries is Friday, January 25. More information is available from studentchallenge@oireachtas.ie or www.oireachtas.ie.



Help update educational resources

The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice is an NGO that focuses on social issues. The organisation is currently updating its online educational resource WhyCare? and is looking for teachers and recent graduates to get involved in the project on a voluntary basis. See www.jcfj.ie and www.whycare.ie for more information.

Show Racism the Red Card

Show Racism the Red Card produces anti-racist educational resources and organises school workshops. The charity also runs a creative competition and a summer camp. You can find out more, or register for the charity's education pack, at www.theredcard.ie.

CLASSIFIED ADVERT

LCG Teacher Search, a Dublin-based recruitment company, places teachers in international schools overseas. We have a number of exciting opportunities with generous remuneration packages. Register now at www.lcgteachersearch.com.



Come to ASTI Convention 2013

Whites Hotel, Wexford Town, Monday 1st April – Thursday 4th April

Play an important role in deciding your union's policy and have your voice heard on important education issues by attending ASTI Convention. New delegates are always welcome!

What's involved?

Convention covers a range of topics relating to your profession, your union, and education. Many important debates will be held over the four days but you can prioritise the items that are most important to you and your branch.

What will it cost?

The cost of your travel to and from Convention is covered, and an overnight allowance is paid to cover your accommodation costs. There is a registration fee of €30 per person, which is paid by your branch.

Can I bring my family?

Play centre facilities for delegates' children will be available each day during Convention hours. Places must be reserved in advance not later than Friday 1st March 2013. Make sure to check out the tours and day-trips we have organised at www.asti.ie.

Nighttime entertainment

There will be plenty of time to meet up with colleagues outside of Convention hours. One of the best opportunities is at the Convention Dinner, which will take place on Tuesday 2nd April in Whites Hotel.

The cost of a Convention Dinner ticket is normally €45.00 but if your Branch reserves a table of ten before Friday 22nd March, it will cost only €350.

Your branch can join with another Branch and book a table under one name. Email info@asti.ie, reference "Annual Convention Dinner". Payment for reserved tables must reach ASTI Accounts Department on or before 27th March 2013. Tickets will also be on sale from 2.30 - 3.30 pm in the Main Foyer, Whites Hotel, Wexford on Tuesday 2nd April at a cost of €45.00.

If you have been a member of the ASTI for one year or more, you can be nominated as a delegate.

Book your accommodation

Accommodation at Whites Hotel is on a "first come, first served" basis. Delegates are asked to book in pairs or to indicate the person with whom they will share; a limited number of single rooms are available. Family rooms (up to max 3 children) are charged at a double room rate. Children under 12 stay free when sharing with parents (meals not included); children over 12 are charged at full price.

Book by contacting Whites Hotel at 051-9122311 or info@whitesofwexford.ie. The hotel will provide you with a reservation number. Include this number on the form below and return to: ASTI Annual Convention Reservations, Whites Hotel, Wexford.

Reservation No. Arrival date Departure date

Please tick whichever room you require Single €90 per night Double/Twin €130 per night Family room See above

Please reserve one room for:

Name
Address
Tel. No.
Email

Name
Address
Tel. No.
Email

Child/children's name(s) and age(s)

Credit card details

Cardholder's name

Credit Card No. Expiry date:

Booking forms without a reservation number will not be guaranteed. A credit card number is essential to guarantee booking. Information on other hotels, guest houses and bed & breakfasts in the area can be found at www.asti.ie.

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* Terms and Conditions Apply

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Kellogg's

FUN RAISE

4 KIDS



Get your school involved

Get your school or class together to create a fundraising event in aid of Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin.

Simply come up with some fun, creative & exciting ways to raise funds.

© Kellogg's Fun Raise 4 Kids helps to raise vital funds to go directly towards improving care facilities and improving vital equipment to treat kids & teenagers suffering serious illnesses.

We need teachers & students to come together to help make a difference!

Visit www.funraise4kids.ie to find out more & to apply for an information pack.

Why not get the whole school or community involved?



In aid of...

The Children's Medical & Research Foundation

Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin