

ASTIR

Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

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CONTENTS

4	From the President's desk <i>Education reform</i>
4	General Secretary's update <i>An unbelievable year</i>
5	News
7	News features <i>Refuge in the classroom</i>
8	<i>Campaigning union</i>
10	Feature <i>Pink and Blue Power saves lives</i>
12	ASTI in the media <i>For the profession</i>
14	Features <i>New year – new you</i>
14	<i>Irish schools' proven performance</i>
16	<i>Artful learning</i>
18	<i>Managing a critical incident</i>
20	<i>What is the ASTI Central Executive Council?</i>
23	<i>ASTI supporting privately-paid teachers</i>
24	
26	FAQs <i>The ASTI Sickness Benefit Scheme</i>
27	Convention preview <i>ASTI Convention 2017 – all you need to know</i>
28	RSTA news
29	Noticeboard
30	Crossword



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Media and Communications Officer:

Gemma Tuffy

www.asti.ie

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Editorial: Ann-Marie Hardiman, Paul O'Grady and Colm Quinn
Design: Tony Byrne, Tom Cullen and Niamh Short
Advertising: Paul O'Grady

ASTI
Thomas MacDonagh House,
Winetavern Street, Dublin 8
Do8 P9V6
Tel: 01-604 0160
Fax: 01-897 2760
astir@asti.ie

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EDUCATION REFORM

The ASTI has a long and proud history of campaigning for sound reform of Ireland's education system. We were a key advocate for free second-level education. We have a strong track record of campaigning for resources to support moves such as the mainstreaming of students with special education needs in our schools. We were to the forefront in conducting valuable research on the impact of austerity budgets on schools and have engaged in consistent advocacy for reinvestment in education. More recently, we have stood up for standards, equity and fairness for students in Junior Cycle reform.

The ASTI's Junior Cycle reform campaign has continued for a number of years. Public debate about our education system is always a good thing and if the ASTI has encouraged this, then the union has done a service to society. However, one aspect of this debate that concerns me is the presentation of practices that are already well-embedded in our classrooms as "reform".

Creative teaching

For example, a recent article in *The Irish Times* stated: "The new classroom-based assessments are aimed at capturing key skills such as teamwork, creativity and managing information". This creates an impression that these skills are currently absent from teaching, learning and assessment in second-level schools. As every teacher knows, nothing could be further from the truth. When I was studying for my Inter Cert back in 1975, I had teachers who were keen advocates of teamwork and their work, as well as ours, was well captured in school reports and fed into the learning that was assessed by the Inter Cert exam. For today's students, team-based experiences are plentiful and include curricular and extracurricular activities. Teamwork is already alive in second-level education.

As for creativity and managing information, anyone who visited the recent BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition would have seen the efforts of students in planning and managing projects, conducting research, devising solutions, and presenting their outcomes to the public. Walk into any school in the country and there is an abundance of examples of innovation, ingenuity and astuteness. Through the Student Enterprise Programme, students have set up businesses, run campaigns and launched initiatives, which have positively influenced their school community, sometimes even the wider community and beyond. This has happened not because the right words appeared in reform proposals or curricular instructions, but because dedicated and committed, teachers are working every day to enhance the lives of their students.

For education reform to be successful it must be rooted in reality, not in hollow words. Outside of the realm of reform initiatives teachers and schools must (and do) continually adapt to a changing world. Instead of negating the current system, advocates for change should seek to identify those aspects of teaching and learning that serve our young people as well as those which do not.



Ed Byrne
ASTI President

AN UNBELIEVABLE YEAR

The Christmas/new year period provided an opportunity to reflect on much of what happened during 2016. There were many events and issues of note that ranged from the painful to the sublime. The 1916 celebrations, particularly events that the ASTI staged in the context of one of our founding fathers being a signatory to the 1916 Proclamation, were certainly top of the latter category. Watching the Minister for Education and Skills wrestling with his vocabulary, seeking to extract a formula of words that would facilitate his avoidance of saying he favoured equal pay for equal work for teachers, was very painful indeed.

Locked out

However, it is obvious that the stand out moment for all was the events on November 7. None of us could have imagined what a lockout of workers, such an emotive term in an Irish context, would look like in 2016. It was one of those days that when one looks back, one asks if it really did happen. Did teachers really arrive at their workplaces to be met by padlocked gates and closed premises? That it happened is astonishing in itself, but given the manifest change that has debased the way in which industrial relations have been conducted in the public service since the advent of the recession, perhaps it is less so. has proven to be nothing short of legislative coercion, and the sooner it is removed from the fabric of our democracy, the better.

Pushing their luck

Indeed, one of the more striking aspects of what transpired last year was the extent to which the Department was willing to overstep the provisions of FEMPI. Reneging on the agreement hatched under the Haddington Road Agreement on supervision and substitution in schools was a case in point. Those duties had been agreed for the long term but unfortunately the Department saw fit to resurrect the battle. Some may also remember a time when those within the education sector referred to teachers as partners, and sought to perpetuate the idea that we are all equals in the general scheme of things. It is difficult to accept such proclamations now.

Looking forward

Despite all of this, the horizon is perhaps not as bleak as the foregoing might suggest. There was hardly an interview I undertook during our dispute where it was not put to me that the ASTI was haemorrhaging members. I can report that ASTI membership has increased by 729 members this last year to the highest ever figure of 18,372. For teachers, joining a union is more important than ever.

Finally, ASTI members who are part of our Salary Protection Scheme are being offered free breast and prostate assessments as part of an initiative called Pink and Blue Power (see page 10 for more information). If you are eligible, I urge you to take this opportunity to look after your health in 2017.



Kieran Christie
ASTI General Secretary

Award winners



Professional Master in Education (PME) graduates Peter McDunphy and Jennifer Moynihan received the ASTI prize from Ger Curtin, ASTI Vice President, at the Trinity College Dublin (TCD) Winter Commencements. Peter also received the Crawford Memorial Prize. Pictured are (from left): Ger Curtin, Dr Ann Devitt (School of Education, TCD), Peter McDunphy (PME graduate), and Melanie Ni Dhuinn (School of Education, TCD).

Focus Ireland seeks tutors



Could you help a young person to stay in school by volunteering to give one-to-one tuition? Focus Ireland is looking for volunteers for Education Matters, a service for young people aged 12-17. Volunteers support students over their final year in primary school and with preparation in certain subjects at Junior and Leaving Certificate level. Volunteers give three to five hours a week of their time and professional knowledge to help to make a difference in young people's lives.

Please call Bernie Boyle, Education Matters Programme Co-ordinator, on 086-855 4347 to find out more.

Develop and increase your school's connections with Europe through Erasmus+, the European Union's programme for learners and educators.

Erasmus+ offers funding for projects designed to improve education provision across Europe, through staff training, job shadowing or teaching assignments (KA1); or strategic partnership projects between schools only (KA219) or involving other organisations (KA201).

Check www.leargas.ie or email schoolsvetunit@leargas.ie

KA1: Deadline 02 February 2017
KA1 Application Workshop: Galway, 14 January 2017

KA201 & 219: Deadline 29 March 2017
KA201 Application Workshop: Dublin, 8/9 Feb 2017
KA219 Application Workshop: Dublin, 04 Feb 2017

Take the first step to cooperation with schools across Europe with eTwinning: www.etwinning.ie

Education the best public service in Ireland

A European-wide survey examining trends in public sector development has found that education tops the league of Irish public services. The survey is contained in a report by the Institute of Public Administration, 'Public Sector Trends 2016', which looks at the shape, size and direction of the public sector. It also looks at its size and cost, the quality of public administration, efficiency and performance, and levels of trust and confidence. According to the survey, the perceived quality of public services in Ireland is just below the European average. In terms of sectoral performance, education is seen as the best public service, and health the worst:

- the 2012 OECD PISA survey shows that Ireland has a higher ranking than the European average in maths, science and reading
- Ireland delivers a reasonable level of educational efficiency when comparing reading and maths performance to spending per student across Europe
- the opinion of executives that Ireland's education system meets the needs of a competitive economy remains above the European average.

The survey also shows that satisfaction with Ireland's education system is among the highest in Europe. Data for satisfaction with the education system and schools refers to the percentage of 'satisfied' answers to the question "in the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the educational system or the schools?" The level of satisfaction with the education system and schools in Ireland, at 83% in 2014, is the second highest of all the European countries surveyed.

In 2015, Ireland's public spending as a percentage of GDP, at 35%, was joint lowest of the EU28 along with Lithuania. Ireland's score on an indicator ranking the upholding of traditional public service values such as independence from political interference, reliability and administrative fairness shows Ireland well above the European average.

Read the complete report at www.ipa.ie/pdf/PublicSectorTrends2016.pdf.

AVC Plan

ASTI members who are members of the ASTI (Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC) Plan should note that, in accordance with pension scheme regulations, a full copy of the Irish Life Trustee Services annual report for the year ending March 31, 2016, is available for examination by contacting the Honorary Treasurer of the ASTI.

Do we have your up-to-date contact details?

If you have changed postal address, email address or telephone number recently, please let ASTI Head Office know. If you have not received any communications from the ASTI in the past six months, please contact our membership department at 01-604 0162, or email membership@asti.ie to ensure that your contact details are up to date.

ASTI at the Oireachtas



Pictured at the Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs were: back row (from left): Éamon Ó Cuív TD, Ed Byrne (ASTI President), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Senator Fintan Warfield, and John Boyle (INTO Vice President). Front row (from left): Deirdre O'Connor (INTO Assistant General Secretary), Moira Leydon (ASTI Assistant General Secretary), and Michael Collins TD. ASTI representatives made a presentation to the Committee regarding schools in rural communities.

Schools stand up



Schools around the country took part in Stand Up! Week 2016 in November, an awareness week against homophobic and transphobic bullying organised by BeLonGTo, the national organisation for LGBT young people.

Pictured are students and teachers from Deerpark CBS, Cork: Kevin Barry (Principal), Aaron Wolfe (Deputy Principal and ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee member), and Clodagh O'Rourke (resource teacher), with pupils Conor Foley, Cian Crowley, Jamie Bulman, Zak Nawaz, Jamie Geasley, Tomas Moloney, Stephen Cullinane, Matthew Keane, and Jordan Madden. Picture: Eddie O'Hare.

REFUGEE IN THE CLASSROOM

A new website offers guidance to teachers and their unions on promoting the education rights of refugee children and young people.

Across the globe, nearly 50 million children have been uprooted, migrating to find a better and safer life, according to a recent UNICEF study. Twenty-eight million of these children have been forcibly displaced by conflict and violence. Children and young people who have left or have been forcibly displaced from their homes often lose out on the benefits of migration, such as education – a major driving factor for many children and families who chose or were forced to migrate. A refugee is five times more likely to be out of school. Where refugees attend school, they are more likely to encounter discrimination, including unfair treatment and bullying. This is compounded when students arrive in a new country without their parents. In 2015, over 100,000 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in 78 countries.

Education4refugees.org

Teachers and their unions can play an important role in protecting and promoting the education rights of migrant and refugee children, according to Education International (EI), an umbrella body for teacher unions all over the world. EI has developed a new website – www.education4refugees.org – to help unions develop policy platforms at national and international levels, and to help teachers of migrant and refugee children.

What can unions do?

By campaigning for increased investment in public education, teacher unions can improve children's access to an appropriate and quality education. However, unions also need to campaign for investment in specific resources for refugee children. Such resources include specialist language teachers and additional guidance/counselling services. Teachers also need access to CPD to help them with new challenges such as teaching in a multilingual classroom and fostering the socio-emotional development of children who have witnessed or experienced extreme violence or conflict.

What can you do?

Teachers play a crucial role in supporting integration and in educating all young people about diversity and tolerance, according to EI. To support teachers in this work, the website includes a section called 'Refugee's Education Toolkit', which contains a wide variety of guides and classroom resources for teachers, including:

- information on countering intolerance in the school (e.g., name calling)
- lesson plans suitable for a variety of subject areas, including citizenship education and religion
- videos and case studies for class discussion

- guides focused on specific communities, e.g., there is a guidebook entitled 'Teaching Somali Immigrant Children'.

"Teachers and those leading their unions have the means to mobilise and make visible abundant professional knowledge about what are the relevant questions that need to be addressed in educating refugees, and to propose ways forward in addressing them. We can't excuse inaction in lack of knowledge about what to do."
Fernando M. Reimers, Professor of the Practice of International Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Refugees in Ireland

- 1,026 people, nearly all Syrian, have been resettled from Lebanon since September 2015. Resettled means that people have been recognised as refugees by the United Nations.
- 240 Syrian people have been relocated from Greece to Ireland since September 2015. Relocated means that they are people who have lodged an application for asylum in Greece and a decision will be made on the application in Ireland.
- Ireland has committed to relocating and resettling 4,000 people by the end of 2017.

The above figures do not include people who arrive in Ireland in other ways, of whom there are approximately 1,752.*

*Source: Irish Refugee Council, December 2016.



CAMPAIGNING UNION

As 2017 begins, the ASTI continues its campaigns on behalf of teachers and their students.

As this edition of *ASTIR* goes to print, ASTI members are balloting on proposals that emerged from talks between the Department of Education and Skills and the ASTI on a number of separate issues:

- recently-qualified teachers' pay
- the worsening of ASTI members' pay and conditions (as a result of the repudiation of the Lansdowne Road Agreement)
- Junior Cycle reform.

The ASTI Central Executive Council (CEC) has recommended that members reject the proposals. The ASTI is mandated to engage in industrial action on all three issues.

Recently-qualified teachers' pay – campaign timeline

2011:

- new teachers' pay cut by 10%
- new teachers appointed to the first point of the pay scale instead of the third point.

2012:

- qualification allowances for new entrants abolished.

2013:

- partial pay restoration for 2011 and 2012 entrants
- pay gap remains – up to 14% pay gap between those on 2010 scale and those on 2011 scale
- pay gap remains – up to 21% pay gap between those on 2010 scale and those on 2012 scale.

2015:

- ASTI rejects Lansdowne Road Agreement.

2016:

- ASTI announces it will ballot on strike action over recently-qualified teachers' pay
- INTO and TUI agree further restoration for 2011 and 2012 entrants as part of Lansdowne Road Agreement, but gap remains
- ASTI members vote to take strike action over recently-qualified teachers' pay
- ASTI members take two days of strike action over recently-qualified teachers' pay
- ASTI enters talks with the Department, chaired by Anna Perry of the Teachers' Conciliation Council
- proposals emerge
- CEC decides to ballot members on proposals and recommends that members reject the proposals.

The worsening of ASTI members' pay and conditions – campaign timeline

2015:

- ASTI votes to reject the Lansdowne Road Agreement
- Lansdowne Road Agreement is ratified by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

2016:

- ASTI members vote to withdraw from the Croke Park Hours on conclusion of the Haddington Road Agreement
- Department threatens range of sanctions if ASTI repudiates Lansdowne Road Agreement
- ASTI issues directive to members to withdraw from the Croke Park Hours
- Department implements range of measures for ASTI members, including freezing of increments and non-payment of monies in recognition of supervision and substitution work
- ASTI members vote to withdraw from supervision and substitution over Department's measures
- ASTI members withdraw from supervision and substitution for one day (Monday, November 7)
- ASTI enters talks with the Department, chaired by Anna Perry of the Teachers' Conciliation Council
- proposals emerge
- CEC decides to ballot members on proposals and recommends that members reject the proposals.



TOP: A lunchtime protest on Junior Cycle reform at St Flannan's College, Clare.

ABOVE: Michael Berigan (left), Yvonne Rossiter and Michael Broune teach in the same school and are on three different pay scales.

Junior Cycle reform – campaign timeline**2014:**

- ASTI and TUI run joint campaign of opposition against Junior Cycle reform proposals announced by then Minister for Education and Skills (Ruairí Quinn)
- ASTI and TUI members vote for industrial action over Junior Cycle reform
- ASTI and TUI issue a directive to members prohibiting co-operation with the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle
- ASTI and TUI members take one day's strike action in December 2014.

2015:

- ASTI members take one day's strike action in January 2015
- second set of proposals emerges in February 2015, which are rejected by ASTI Standing Committee and TUI Executive
- third set of proposals emerge in May 2015 from discussions between the ASTI, the TUI, the then Minister for Education and Skills (Jan

O'Sullivan) and the Department of Education

- TUI members vote to accept proposals, ASTI members vote to reject proposals.
- ASTI continues with its directive on non co-operation with the Framework for Junior Cycle.

2016:

- ASTI enters talks with the Department, chaired by Anna Perry of the Teachers' Conciliation Council
- proposals emerge
- CEC decides to ballot members on proposals and recommends that members reject the proposals.

Updates on all ASTI campaigns can be found at
www.asti.ie/news/campaigns/.

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 or call Louise on 01 6778880

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PINK AND BLUE POWER SAVES LIVES

The ASTI's new Pink and Blue Power initiative offers free health assessments that could save lives.



Announcing Pink and Blue Power were (from left): Ray St John (ASTI Honorary Treasurer), Kieran Christie (ASTI General Secretary), Dr Jennifer Kerr (Consultant Breast Radiologist, Lead Radiologist for Quality Improvement, Beaumont Hospital), Roisin Kelly (Head of Risk Operations, Irish Life), Roddy Murphy (Managing Director, Cormmarket), and Ed Byrne (ASTI President).

This year the ASTI will be the first teaching union in Ireland to offer the Pink and Blue Power initiative to eligible members of its Salary Protection Scheme.

In this innovative and potentially life-saving initiative, eligible members are invited to attend free breast or prostate health assessments. Pink and Blue Power offers the possibility of early detection of breast cancer for women and prostate cancer for men, which could greatly improve outcomes for those diagnosed.

Pink and Blue Power was rolled out for members of the INMO Income Protection Scheme in 2012. Almost 4,000 people availed of the programme and nine people were diagnosed with cancer as a result of their assessments. Due to early intervention, their outlook is positive. ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie and ASTI Honorary Treasurer Ray St John sought a similar initiative for ASTI members. Speaking about Pink and Blue Power, ASTI General Secretary Kieran Christie said: "I am delighted that the ASTI will offer this free service to eligible members. Most of us know someone who has been affected by cancer, and we have seen the challenges of coping with, and hopefully beating, this difficult disease. I would urge people to attend their assessment when they are invited".

DID YOU KNOW?

25% of claims from the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme in 2014 were cancer related.

Common cancers

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers among women in Ireland, and can affect women of any age. As the national BreastCheck service is available for women over 50, the Pink Power campaign will be made available to eligible female members under 50. By taking this opportunity to look after their health, members will receive a free breast health assessment, with a referral if necessary. In Ireland, prostate cancer is the second most common cancer in men after skin

cancer; however, there is a very good chance of recovery. Early detection and treatment are important. Men aged between 40 and 65 who are members of the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme will be invited to an assessment.

EXPECTED ROLLOUT DATES	
Dublin City	mid-January
Leinster	mid-February
Munster	mid-March
Connacht and Ulster	mid-April

What to expect

Eligible members will receive an invitation to their assessment by email and by post in early 2017 (see panel to find out when your region can expect to receive invitations). Information on how to book your assessment will be in your invitation. An online booking system will allow you to book your assessment quickly and easily. At your assessment, you will be examined, and receive a personal report with the findings. If necessary, you will be referred to a private hospital with access to a consultant and a mammogram, ultrasound and biopsy (Pink Power), or MRI, CT scan and biopsy (Blue Power).

The assessment is free and takes less than half an hour but could be life saving. All assessments are free and results are strictly confidential to you and your medical team.

"As teachers, we are often struggling to do the best we can for our students with limited time and resources, sometimes under immense stress. However, it is important that we do not forget to look after our own health", said Kieran Christie. This initiative is sponsored by Irish Life, supported by Cormmarket and Breast Cancer Ireland, and delivered by Full Health Medical, Beaumont Private Clinic and Bon Secours Hospital, Dublin.



Edco Learning

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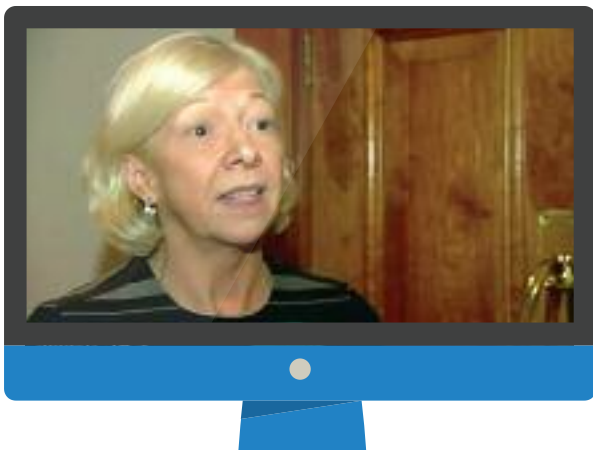
The Educational Company of Ireland

Ballymount Road, Walkinstown, Dublin 12, Ireland
Ph: 01 4500 611, Email: info@edcolearning.ie

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FOR THE PROFESSION

In the media, ASTI members conveyed the need for fair levels of pay to maintain the high standard of teachers and teaching in Ireland.



Máire G. Ní Chiarba, Immediate Past President, being interviewed for RTÉ Nuacht and TG4 Nuacht following CEC's recommendation to reject the proposals arising from the DES and ASTI discussions.

"Rolling strikes is one option ... but we want to minimise disruption to our students. We will look at disrupting the Department of Education, rather than students. We co-operate with the Inspectorate and school inspections, for example; we might have a look at inconveniencing the Department rather than anything that will affect students."

Ed Byrne, ASTI President, *The Irish Times*, December 4

"Teachers have suffered savage cutbacks to education resources, attacks on their pay and conditions, and recently-qualified teachers have been singled out for additional cuts. This has included the removal of improved access to job security for young teachers, the removal of payment in recognition of supervision and substitution work, and the threat of redundancies. However, despite this CEC is of the firm belief that the proposals are not acceptable, and should be rejected by members."

Ed Byrne, ASTI President, *Irish Examiner*, December 4

"The best type of schools are those which provide a broad and holistic education to students of all kinds of ability and from all kinds of backgrounds."

Kieran Christie, ASTI General Secretary, *Evening Echo*, December 7, speaking about league tables

"Teachers who are on the new salary scales have had six years now of inequality and if we don't change that it's looking to be another seven, eight, nine, ten years until they get equality and we don't think, and they don't think, they should have to wait. They've already waited six years; they don't want to wait another four or five years for pay equality."

Mark Walshe, ASTI Standing Committee Representative, *Near FM*, November 15

"I am very impressed by the calibre of people coming into the profession but I think there is a real risk now that we are going to lose that up and coming generation of fine young people who are willing and have a desire to teach but won't because of the new pay rates. It's an old-fashioned word but I firmly believe that these people have a vocation to teach – it's more than a profession, it's a calling – I would hate to lose those people to the profession and they will go to other countries to teach and they will be rewarded elsewhere for their hard work."

Miriam O'Donovan, ASTI member, *The Irish Times*, November 8

"A lot of the issues we have don't actually need money. The one issue we do have that is right across the public sector is the issue of pay for new entrants. But I think that with a bit of imagination we could look at putting together a framework for dealing with that problem. I think it's unfortunate, as I said, that there isn't even a commitment in principle to equalising pay."

Diarmaid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary, *Today with Sean O'Rourke*, RTÉ Radio 1, November 8



JUNIOR CYCLE FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

ASTI Ballot

In a ballot counted by the ASTI Auditors on **24 September 2015** ASTI members voted in favour of continuing industrial action up to and including strike action in the event that the negotiated document entitled "Junior Cycle Reform – Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation (including the appendix)" was not accepted by members. Members voted by 55% to 45% to reject the document and by 70% to 30% in favour of industrial action.

DIRECTIVE TO MEMBERS

At its meeting on 25 September, 2015, ASTI Standing Committee decided to direct ASTI members in all schools, including Junior Cycle Network Schools, to continue their withdrawal of co-operation with the introduction or implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework proposals as follows:

- 1** Not to attend CPD organised in connection with the Junior Cycle Framework Proposals.
- 2** Not to attend meetings associated with the Junior Cycle Framework Proposals.
- 3** Not to attend any planning or participate in any planning activities organised in connection with the Junior Cycle Framework Proposals.
- 4** Not to engage in any aspect of school based assessment for the purpose of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).
- 5** Not to engage in any development of or delivery of Junior Cycle Framework Short Courses.
- 6** Not to engage in any event or function related to points 1 to 5 above.



SUPPORT ASTI'S JUNIOR CYCLE CAMPAIGN:
For Standards, Quality, Equity and Fairness
in Junior Cycle education



NEW YEAR – NEW YOU

Get yourself into some good financial habits in 2017.

As we usher in the new year, it's time to consider how we can improve our financial health. The old adage "if you want to get out of debt then spend less than you earn" may sound like common sense, but we all know that it is a lot easier said than done.

So, let's not beat ourselves up about our bad habits and instead focus on a few key areas where we could make some small changes that should improve our financial well-being and set us on a new path toward healthy spending and saving in 2017.

Credit card debt

Christmas has taken its toll and credit card bills are due to make landfall this month. If you are fortunate enough to be able to clear the outstanding balance before the due date, then you will not be charged any interest. If, on the other hand, you are unable to clear the balance you will be charged interest, and in most cases this will accumulate from the date of purchase. For example, if you spent €2,000 and only make a payment of €500, it is likely that you will be charged interest on the full €2,000 until the €500 payment is received by the credit card company. After that date, you will be charged interest on the €1,500 that remains unpaid and on any new purchases you make. You should check with your provider first to see how interest is charged and read your terms and conditions very carefully.

You should be aware of the interest rate that you are being charged. Different credit card providers charge different rates, ranging from 13% APR to 22% APR. Clearing your credit card debt at these high rates of interest can be very difficult, with many people just managing to service the debt rather than eliminating this onerous monthly bill.

You may wish to consider switching credit cards to avail of a lower APR. Some providers will offer new customers a lower interest rate charge for a period of time. If this is something you wish to do, be sure to check how long the lower rate will apply for and, in particular, what rate will be charged when the special rate period is finished.

You should also consider if it would be more appropriate to clear your credit card debt by taking out a personal loan. Personal loan rates are extremely competitive and the credit union in particular is a good place to

start. Remember though that the purpose of debt consolidation is to make your repayments more affordable and to ease the repayment burden. You need to make a new year – new you resolution not to use your credit card in future unless you can afford to repay the full balance before the due date.

Tax refunds

There are a number of tax refunds which you can use to claw back some of your hard-earned salary from the Revenue Commissioners. However, it is up to you to take the initiative to make claims for these refunds.

Education

If you have undertaken a third-level course in the past year, or if you have paid for a child to do a course, you may well be entitled to claim tax relief. Tax relief is available for qualifying third-level courses if you have paid the tuition fees. The standard rate of 20% applies. The maximum limit on such qualifying fees for the academic year 2015/2016 is €7,000 per individual per course.

Health refunds

You may also qualify to claim a refund on certain health expenses and non-routine dental expenses that you have paid for for yourself or your children. A claim for tax relief must be made within four years after the end of the tax year to which the claim relates. Therefore, to claim for 2012, you must submit your claim before the end of 2016. Revenue now has a facility where you can log your health expenses as they occur throughout the year, which is a great way of keeping track of expenditure as it occurs and ensures that you do not forget or lose receipts. It takes a little discipline to take the time to claim tax refunds, but it is certainly well worth doing and a payment from Revenue in the new year could well be used to pay off any outstanding credit card bill.

Health insurance

In recent years, health insurance has almost become a luxury for many as incomes have fallen and outgoings increased. If you do have health

insurance then it makes sense to check that you are getting the best deal available. The most important step you can take is to start your research before your policy comes up for renewal. Talk to your insurer and ask them if they are giving you the most competitive deal. Talk to other insurers in the market and ask them for the closest equivalent plan. It takes time and energy to research the most appropriate, cost-effective plan but it is certainly worth the effort as it is possible to save a great deal of money and is all part of the new year – new you approach.

Remaining on the subject of health, be sure to investigate the cost of prescription charges from a range of pharmacies. You will be surprised at the difference in charges depending on the pharmacy and there are savings to be made, particularly if you are on long-term medication.

Financial health check

Finally, and this is the toughest job, sit down and work out your budget. This will give you a clear idea of your financial situation and will help you to identify areas where you may be able to make savings. This involves detailing your total monthly income; be sure to include additional items

like children’s allowance. You then need to detail your monthly expenditure, including everything from mortgage and loan repayments to utility bills and everyday expenses. If you have a little left over consider saving a small amount as an emergency fund.

The advantage of doing this financial health check is that you are taking control of your finances and identifying ways to make improvements. It is recommended that everyone should do this exercise at least once a year. There are many websites that provide budgeting templates and there are lots of tips available on www.consumerhelp.ie.

Remember that you are better off being aware of your financial health status, even if at the end of the exercise you feel that you are overstretched. Remember also that you have the capacity to make small adjustments that will reap longer-term rewards. My advice is simple: take the plunge and make a start on a new year – new you resolution where you take control of your hard-earned salary!

Selina Gilleece, CFP® Professional, QFA, Manager,
ASTI Credit Union Limited

Holocaust Education Trust Ireland
Learning from the past. Inspiring the future.

Berlin Study Visit

18-21 April 2017

Memorial to the Wannsee Conference

A visit to the city of Berlin, where National Socialism originated. It includes an overview of Jewish Berlin and its history and also visits to authentic Holocaust sites. Working with Holocaust scholars and educators, the programme allows participants to grasp the enormity of the Holocaust and its resonances within the city.

Visit includes:

- Tour of Jewish Museum; Topography of Terror Exhibitions; Walking tour with a focus on Jewish historical sites and contemporaries of Nazi victims; Memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe; House of the Wannsee Conference; Grunewald Deportation Site; Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp; The Anne Frank Centre; Otto Weidt House and the Silent Heroes Archive

Cost: €995 (inclusive of travel, hand luggage, hotel and entrance fees)

For information see www.berlinstudyvisit.org or contact us on 01 660 70 466

Holocaust Education Trust Ireland, Clifton House, Lower Fitzwilliam Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.
Tel: + 353 1 6680969 Email: info@holocaust.org www.berlinstudyvisit.org

Certificate in Holocaust Education

Continuous Professional Development

Special Purpose Award of NPFL Level 7 (envisaged 2017/28)

Trinity College Dublin
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

A certificate in Holocaust education for post-primary teachers, providing in-depth tuition on the historical, significance and contemporary resonance of the Holocaust. The programme provides participants with information, tools and skills to address this subject in their areas of work, and to devise pedagogic strategies to complement their knowledge. The programme is divided into four modules, all of which must be completed by participants.

Source: Shalvaite One year part time

Accreditation: The Certificate in Holocaust Education is awarded by Trinity College Dublin, standardised by the EU and acknowledged internationally.

Enrolment: Prior to commencement of modules 1, 2 or 3.

1. **Teaching the Holocaust: (August)** Intensive three-day summer programme for teachers that addresses the complex subject of the Holocaust and how to teach it in the classroom.
2. **Learning from the Holocaust: (October)** Six-day programme that includes a four-day study visit to Krakow and Auschwitz, Birkenau. The programme is supported by two separate corner days, one in preparation for the study visit and one on return on afterwards.
3. **Iritk Seminar at Yad Vashem International School, Jerusalem: (July)** Eight-day programme for teachers at Yad Vashem International School for Holocaust Studies.
4. **Assignments:** Teachers to be assigned to be completed on the programme.

Fees: €1,500 for registered teachers which includes university registration, air travel, travel and accommodation (paper). For other applicants who do not qualify for sponsorship, the fees is €2,500. The programme is open equally for the Aged and New Entrants.

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Tel: + 353 1 6680969 Email: info@holocaust.org www.berlinstudyvisit.org

IRISH SCHOOLS' PROVEN PERFORMANCE

MOIRA LEYDON reports on two international reports that contain further evidence of the high quality of Irish education.

In the last issue of *ASTIR*, we published the key findings from the annual OECD 'Education at a Glance' report. The key messages from that report were that Irish second-level schools are performing at better than average levels across key indicators, despite marked underinvestment in the system. Since then, two more international reports have been published which provide further evidence of the high quality of our education system – the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in November and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in December.

Irish students' performance in maths and science

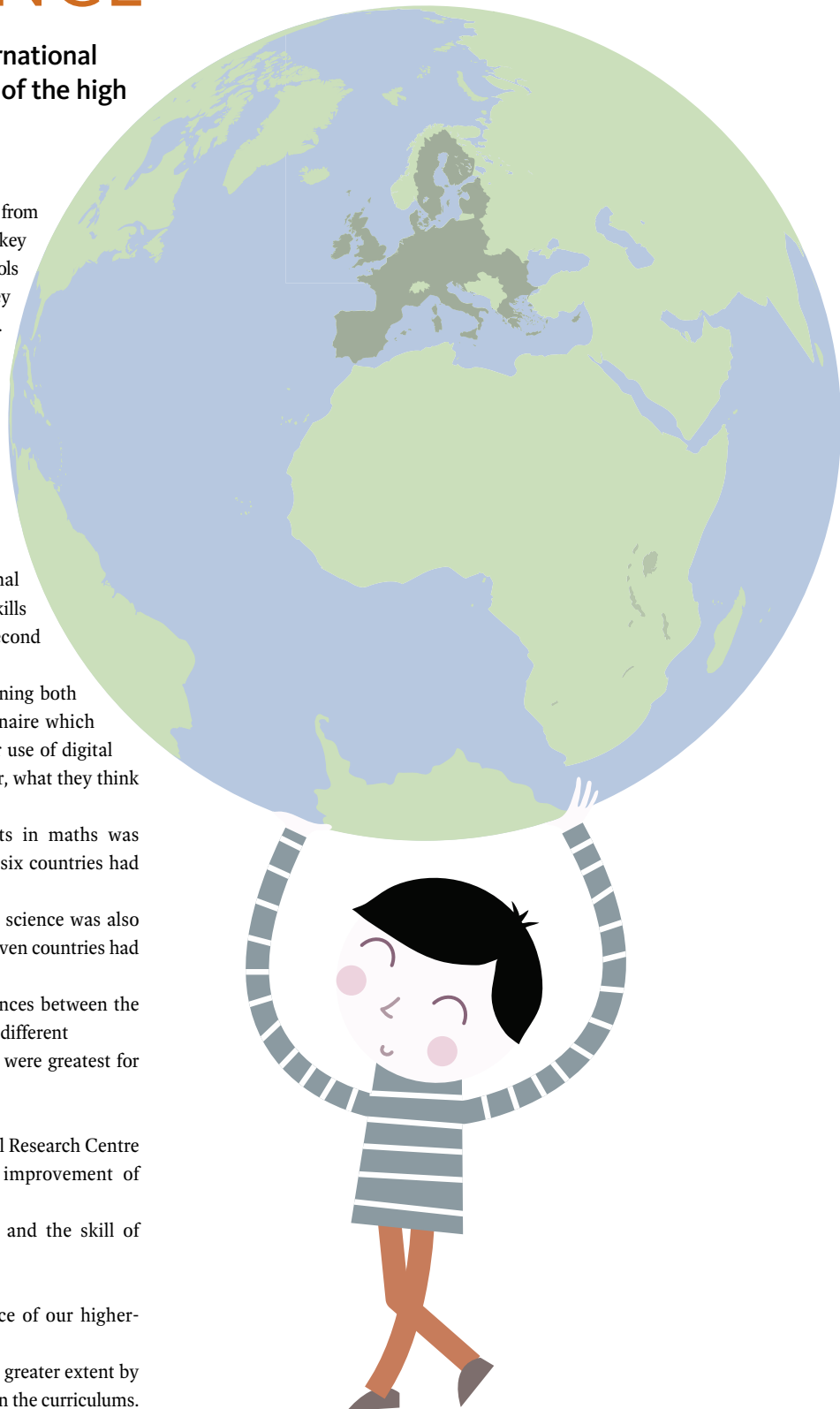
TIMSS is the world's largest study of educational achievement. It assesses the mathematics and science skills of students at fourth class in primary school and in second year at post-primary school across 57 countries.

Students were asked to complete a test booklet containing both maths and science questions, and a student questionnaire which asked questions about the student's background, their use of digital devices, what they think about school and, in particular, what they think about maths and science. The initial results found that:

- at 523 points, the average score of Irish students in maths was significantly above the TIMSS centre point of 500 (six countries had higher scores than Ireland)
- at 530 points, the average score of Irish students in science was also significantly above the TIMSS centre point of 500 (seven countries had higher scores than Ireland)
- in both maths and science, while there were differences between the scores of boys and girls, these were not significantly different
- improvements in scores from earlier TIMSS studies were greatest for students in the lower-achieving categories.

The TIMSS national report prepared by the Educational Research Centre strongly recommended a number of ideas for the improvement of education in Ireland including:

- putting a greater focus on geometry and algebra and the skill of applying maths concepts to concrete questions
- strengthening the teaching of the physical sciences
- putting more effort into improving the performance of our higher-performing students
- focusing on developing students' cognitive skills to a greater extent by concentrating on skills development, as provided for in the curriculums.



IRELAND IS DOING WELL

2ND AMONG
EU COUNTRIES IN READING LITERACY



6TH AMONG
EU COUNTRIES IN SCIENCE



9TH AMONG
EU COUNTRIES IN MATHS



Irish students' performance in literacy, maths and science

The results of the sixth cycle of PISA were published in December. PISA covers 70 countries, involving over 500,000 15-year-olds. In Ireland, 5,741 students in 167 schools completed the test, which, for the first time, was conducted fully online. With the exception of what is now regarded as an aberration largely due to methodological issues in 2009, PISA 2016 provides evidence of the consistently high quality of education in Irish schools. The study showed that:

- at 503 points, the average score of Irish students in science was significantly higher than the OECD average of 493 – Ireland is ranked 13th out of 35 OECD countries for its performance in science
- at 521 points, the average score of Irish students in reading literacy is significantly above the OECD average of 494 – Ireland is ranked third out of 35 OECD countries for its performance in reading literacy
- at 504 points, the average score of Irish students in maths was significantly above the OECD average of 490 – Ireland is ranked 13th out of 35 OECD countries for its performance in maths.

In this PISA cycle, science was the 'domain' for the main focus of analysis. A more in-depth examination of Irish students' performance in science found that:

- across the seven levels of proficiency, lower-performing Irish students performed better than their OECD peers, while higher-performing students were at a level similar to that of their peers
- 7.1% of Irish students performed at or above Level 5 – broadly in line with the OECD average of 7.7%
- there was a decline in the number of Irish students performing at or above Level 5
- overall, the gap between lower- and higher-performing students is lower in Ireland
- boys outperformed girls on the overall science scale for the first time
- Irish students performed less well on the new items specifically designed for online testing.

The PISA national report prepared by the Educational Research Centre highlights a number of areas for consideration in relation to overall education policy:

- Irish students' performance on new interactive online assessments in science was lower than their international peers, highlighting the fact that Irish students are disadvantaged by patterns of computer usage in schools
- Irish students report low involvement in using computers for educational/homework activities, especially for science

- the importance of science enrichment activities needs to be recognised and supported in policy
- Ireland has one of the larger gender gaps in maths with boys outperforming girls at all levels, especially at Levels 5 and 6.

In the next issue of *ASTIR*, we will look at the report of the STEM Education Review Group, published in November 2016, to continue an analysis of the policy implications of PISA 2016.

Moira Leydon, Assistant General Secretary, Education and Research, of the ASTI



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ARTFUL LEARNING

New research shows the importance of the arts for all students and subjects.



Students from St Mary's Secondary School in Glasnevin at the Creative Engagement exhibition in the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

Recent ESRI research, 'Arts and cultural participation among children and young people – Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland study' found that exposure to the arts has many positive effects on young people, such as improved cognitive development and academic self-image, and that schools have a significant role to play in the exposure of children to culture and the arts. The report also notes that as children enter second-level education and choices are made about Junior Cycle subjects, their exposure to the arts decreases and suggests that exposure can be increased through extracurricular activities.

Engaging students

The Creative Engagement programme, which was established in 2005, offers schools the opportunity to engage with local practitioners of a variety of art forms including film, sculpture, painting and dance. It is administered by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and funded by both the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

St Mary's Secondary School in Glasnevin has been taking part in the programme for several years. This year teachers from a number of subject areas in the school, including art, music and English, worked with local artists

to help students to create projects which remembered the women of the 1916 Rising. This included staging a production of a play, *Rising Voices*, written and performed by the students with the help of theatre professionals John Delaney, Conal Kearney and Terry O'Dea. Puppeteer Niamh Lawlor provided a puppetry workshop for first year students. They then used the puppets and music created with composer Aoife Moriarty to tell the stories of children from 1916 in a short film entitled *Whispers*. Transition year students also worked with ceramicist Isobel Egan to create porcelain roses to represent the women of the Rising.

Cathy Kavanagh and Nadine McDonogh-Cunningham, art teachers in St Mary's, said that students find the programme hugely beneficial as it gives them new ways to express themselves through art and they also gain practical skills from working in groups and planning projects. Their confidence improves from learning from working artists and seeing their work exhibited outside of school. The programme has likewise been useful for Nadine and Cathy as practitioners themselves; for example, they learnt how to work with porcelain from Isobel Egan and are now able to advise students who wish to create projects from porcelain for their exam projects. Dermot Carney, administrator of Creative Engagement, said that in order to



LEFT: a student from St Mary's among the porcelain butterflies Creative Engagement project called 'Flight'. RIGHT: students from St Mary's in front of 'Unique', a porcelain installation of large handmade buttons, a permanent Creative Engagement installation in the school, at the launch of the ATAI's State of the Art campaign. Photographs: Naoise Culhane.

ensure that all students benefit, arts should “percolate right across the school” and not just be confined to art or music classes. This will give all students opportunities to experience the arts: “There are many ways this can be done; for example, in English class instead of just discussing a Shakespearean play, students can be brought to see a performance of that play or even stage a performance themselves”.

Using art for change

Nadine is the current President of the Art Teachers' Association of Ireland (ATAI), and she and Cathy have shown how this can be implemented in their school as part of the ATAI's '#stateoftheart' campaign. On October 26, with the support of their principal, the art department organised a day of cross-curricular lessons in the school. For example, science classes explored colour through chromatography and English classes illustrated a section of the novel they were discussing to further their understanding of it. Students also made postcards, as did students in schools around the country, which they sent to the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, asking for the implementation of a new curriculum for Leaving Certificate art. Nadine said the current curriculum, which has been in place since 1972,

is totally unsuitable for 21st century schools: “Contemporary technologies such as film are not included in the art curriculum in the same way as they have been included in the English curriculum. It is essential that the curriculum is updated to reflect the world our students live in”.

The fact that the art curriculum has not been updated in so long is indicative of a bigger issue in Irish education according to Dermot, who said that the arts are often overlooked in favour of STEM subjects. While these subjects are important, he said that policy should focus on STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths: “The big multinational companies who we are saying need stronger STEM skills from Irish graduates, also want creative and imaginative people, which is why the arts need to be included right across the curriculum. When we have that, we will get the most benefit from the things that the report is discussing such as improved literacy and numeracy and improved academic self-image”.

For more information on the ESRI report visit
<http://www.artscouncil.ie/News/Children-engaged-in-arts-go-on-to-have-better-academic-self-image-and-more-positive-attitudes-to-school---landmark-Arts-Council/ESRI-study/>.

MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Updated NEPS guidelines on responding to critical incidents contain valuable advice on how schools can prepare for and cope with tragedy.

We use the term 'school community' to reflect the holistic role that schools play in students' lives, and at no time is this sense of community more evident – or more necessary – than when a tragedy occurs. School communities deal with tragic events on a regular basis, but occasionally an event takes place of a particular seriousness. When these critical incidents occur, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) of the Department of Education and Skills is available to offer support. NEPS recently published 'Responding To Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools', which brings together its previous documents and resources, updated to reflect current best practice and change brought about by advances in social media. The guide defines a critical incident as "any incident or sequence of events, which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school". There is now strong international evidence on how best to support schools in these circumstances, and the NEPS guide uses this to provide advice on prevention, a plan to follow in the immediate aftermath of an incident and on a more long-term basis, and a range of sample documents and resources. It also contains specific sections on road traffic accidents, suicide, coping with the media, and critical incidents that occur during State examinations.

Prevention

Although the guide is about responding to critical incidents, it places a strong emphasis on prevention. Many of the recommendations are already in place in schools, whether through the SPHE programme, or simply a clear health and safety policy, but the guide provides a checklist of things that schools can do, such as making sure that staff have received appropriate training and resources to help them identify students at risk. Sharon Eustace, senior psychologist with NEPS with national responsibility for critical incident response, explains: "It's about putting systems in place to look after vulnerable students. For example, we encourage schools to develop links with agencies in their immediate community. NEPS is a school-based, not a community-based service, so there is a need to link with the HSE and other services. There should be a good referral pathway, and these agencies should be included on an emergency contact list, which is clearly displayed in the school".

Having a plan

No matter what preventive strategies schools put in place, critical incidents happen, and having a critical incident management plan (CIMP) is the key to coping when the unthinkable happens. According to the guide: "Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited". NEPS psychologists can help schools to develop a plan, including setting up a critical incident management team (CIMT) to implement it.

According to Sharon Eustace: "This ensures that if a critical incident happens, it doesn't all land at the principal's door – no one is overburdened". Roles on the CIMT might include a team leader, someone whose role it is to contact the Gardai or other outside agencies, and a media spokesperson. The CIMP will take account of the resources already available in the school and local community, and will set out in detail the steps to be followed from the moment the school is notified that a critical incident has occurred, including assessing whether it is appropriate to contact NEPS.

Action

If the school does contact NEPS, Sharon explains that the first steps are all about getting the facts: "Every incident is unique and distressing. We will meet with the CIM team as soon as possible and the first priority is to establish what has happened, and which other agencies, if any, have been contacted".

Contacting the family or families involved is important, and the CIM team should include a person designated to take on this role. It is vital to find out what information families wish to make public, particularly where a suicide is suspected or confirmed. Once as much information as possible has been gathered, the school staff will be informed, after which staff are in a position to share accurate and relevant information with their students. Said Sharon: "This is because the evidence tells us that at times of critical incidents it is best for students to be with people who know them well, who are there for the long term. We don't go in to take over – we take the lead from the principal. It's about empowering schools". Best practice also recommends maintaining, as far as possible, the normal school routine: "Our aim is to help the school get back to normal as soon as possible while acknowledging what has happened".

One of the most important aspects at this stage is identifying vulnerable students, e.g., those directly affected by the incident, or students with learning difficulties, who may need additional care. It's also crucial to respect the culture and traditions of all students, particularly when planning memorial services or gatherings. Sharon says that schools tend to be very aware of these issues.

In the news

We've all seen the footage of cameras and reporters at the school gate after a tragedy occurs, and the NEPS guide contains a chapter on dealing with the media. It recommends nominating one member of the CIMT to be the media spokesperson. The guide also recommends preparing a press statement, and offers guidelines as to what should be included. Sharon says that despite appearances to the contrary, the presence of the media is not always a negative: "The media can be very useful in getting the message out to parents and the community that while this is a tragic event, the school is coping. The NEPS team will help to prepare people for media contact, including mock interviews if required.

ONE SCHOOL'S STORY

ASTIR spoke to a teacher whose school has experienced a number of critical incidents.

Some schools seem to experience more than their fair share of tragedy, and this school in the east of Ireland has dealt with serious traffic accidents, and a number of deaths by suicide. The teacher we spoke to explained how the school's approach has changed over time, as their experience has developed: "Each critical incident is so different, and impacts on the school differently. Each of these incidents overwhelmed our school community".

And it doesn't necessarily get easier with experience: "Each critical incident brought different levels of distress".

However, there are a number of things they have learnt along the way: "The first is that schools definitely need a critical incident plan. Without a plan, these events are very difficult to manage. Secondly, all members of the school community need to know what their roles and responsibilities are – who speaks to the media, who goes to the home, etc. Thirdly, gather the facts; don't rely on rumour or hearsay. Finally, maintaining routine is crucial. In the beginning I did not fully understand the reasoning behind this, but I realise its importance now. Try to maintain as much routine as you can, bearing in mind that you don't know what students may be going through. There is no need to do class work – read a statement that explains what is known and appropriate to share and give the opportunity for discussion. It might just be a conversation about the person who has died, a sharing of memories. Students generally don't want to go home – they want to be with friends".

She welcomes the updated NEPS guide, in particular its recognition that teachers know their students best, and are best placed to identify their needs, with advice and support from NEPS as appropriate. She highlighted a number of features in the guide, such as the emphasis on creating a psychologically safe environment: "This is really important, and I know most schools are doing this already because they care so much about students".

She also praised the proposed agenda for key personnel, which covers all of the issues that need to be addressed in the aftermath of an incident, and the advice on regular review of the plan. In her own school, staff turnover down the years means that many staff have never experienced a critical incident, and this highlights the need to review the school's CIMP, and in particular the contact lists and roles of responsibility.

"They are very well-thought-out, well-written guidelines, that will be a great help to schools".

The NEPS document 'Responding To Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools' can be accessed at <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/Responding%20to%20Critical%20Incidents.pdf>.

The Employee Assistance Service for teachers is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and can be accessed by calling 1800 411 057.

"Bear in mind that the media has very strict guidelines on reporting of suicide and reporters will often allow editing of reports before they are printed/broadcast".

Caring for everyone

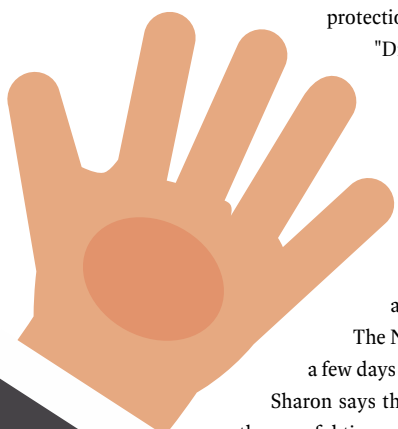
Of course, teachers are likely to be deeply affected by a critical incident too, and may be worried about how they will cope with speaking to students, or about students seeing them upset. Sharon says that it's ok to let students see how they are affected: "It's important for students to see that what has happened has really impacted on everybody. Obviously if the teacher is extremely upset they may need support in their classroom. The Employee Assistance Service is also there for teachers who feel they need additional support".

Prevention remains part of the response throughout. For example, encouraging teachers and students to gather at the school after a funeral is an important means of continuing to offer support, and protection, to vulnerable groups.

"Distressed students, following a funeral, may not have anywhere to go, or may not have the support they need, particularly if the incident involves a suicide. There is a heightened risk for all students at those times so it's vital to make sure that we are vigilant, that support is available, and that other agencies are involved."

The NEPS team usually stays in the school for a few days and will continue to liaise with staff, but

Sharon says that schools are fantastic in dealing with these awful times: "I think sometimes we forget how good schools are at this. There have always been critical incidents in schools. Their complexity is definitely increasing, and with social media, etc., many are now very high profile. But teachers are amazing at critical incident response. They go above and beyond the call of duty".





DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FUNDING AND AWARD

The WorldWise Global Schools (WWGS) Programme is a 'one-stop-shop' for all **post primary schools** that want to engage in Development Education (DE).



FUNDING

Call for applications opens: 7th March 2017

Deadline for applications: 7th April 2017

Development Education (DE) grants are available to all post primary schools in the Republic of Ireland to apply for, with categories of grant funding ranging from €600 up to €2,000.

How much can our school apply for?

- **Starter grants (up to €600)** – schools that are relatively new to development education
- **Established grants (up to €2,000)** – schools that are experienced in development education and previously engaged with WWGS

Successful applicants will be supported to integrate development education into curricular and extra-curricular activities as well as school life, ethos, management and policy.

Examples of activities that may be funded include:

- Teachers' planning and learning time for DE
- Student-focused activities and engagement (Eg. DE debates, workshops and research projects)
- Peer learning initiatives that encourage a critical approach to teaching and learning.
- Whole-school activities and events to raise awareness of global justice issues

GLOBAL PASSPORT AWARD

Deadline for applications: 26th February 2017

The Global Passport Award is a Development Education (DE) quality mark, which offers schools a framework to integrate DE into their teaching and learning.

It is a self-assessed and externally-audited accreditation for DE that is open to all post primary schools in the Republic of Ireland.

AWARDS

There are 3 different types of Passport you can apply for depending on your school's level of engagement:

- **Special Passport** - for exceptional engagement with Development Education
- **Diplomatic Passport** - for established engagement with Development Education
- **Citizens Passport** - for emerging engagement with Development Education

HOW DO I APPLY?

Visit www.worldwiseschools.ie/register-your-interest/ to register your interest or contact us (details below) for more information.

 **Irish Aid**
An Boinn Gnáthai Eacnamaíoch agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

WWGS is being implemented through a consortium comprising: [Gorta](http://www.gorta.ie), [Concern Worldwide](http://www.concern.org.uk) and the [City of Dublin Education and Training Board](http://www.cdetb.ie) (CDETB) Development Unit.

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WHAT IS THE ASTI CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL?

Members may have heard the ASTI Central Executive Council mentioned in the media lately. ASTIR explains what CEC is and how it functions.



In order to celebrate Thomas MacDonagh's role in the foundation of the ASTI, and to commemorate the 1916 Rising, the Central Executive Council held its January meeting in the Mansion House, Dublin. The Mansion House was the venue for the foundation meeting of the ASTI in July 1909.

The Central Executive Council (CEC) is the supreme governing body of the ASTI when Annual Convention is not in session. CEC consists of 180 members of the ASTI from all around the country, who are elected to CEC by their branches. The President, Vice-President, Immediate Past President, Honorary Treasurer and the regionally elected members of Standing Committee are also members of CEC. CEC is a democratically-elected body with representatives from all 56 branches of the ASTI.

Elections to CEC

Each year, branches are asked to elect members of their branch to represent them on CEC. In order to be eligible for election to CEC, you must have been a member of the ASTI for three consecutive years prior to your election. The number of representatives a branch may elect depends on the size of the branch. Branches with fewer than 50 members may elect one person, branches with 50 to 99 members may elect two representatives and branches with 100 members or more may elect three representatives.

Meetings of CEC

At the commencement of each Annual Convention, the newly-elected CEC comes into office. It is required that they have a meeting in May and that they meet at least once more during the year. This second meeting is usually held in January. If necessary, a Special Meeting of CEC can be called by the General Secretary in order to discuss matters of urgency. For example, when a ballot is to take place, a Special Meeting of CEC could be called to decide if it will

be a school-based or a postal ballot. The General Secretary can be instructed by either the President or by correspondence signed by 25 members of CEC to call a Special Meeting.

When Annual Convention is not in session, CEC manages the business of the ASTI and makes decisions as necessary on behalf of the Association. A quorum is required for decisions taken at CEC, which must not be fewer than one-third of the total number of members of CEC. If necessary, CEC may take a ballot of all members of the ASTI. For example, it is required that any final salary offer be referred to CEC, although CEC may not accept an offer without a ballot of all members of the ASTI.

Sub-committees

There are two sub-committees of the CEC – the CEC Appeals Sub-Committee and the Business of CEC Sub-Committee. The CEC Appeals Sub-Committee is elected annually by CEC and considers appeals against decisions made by Standing Committee. The members of this sub-committee are Sinead Corkery, Bill Lonergan, Tony McGennis, Liam O'Mahony and Jimmy Staunton.

The Business of CEC Sub-Committee is also elected annually by CEC and its role is to consider motions being put forward to CEC. The members of this sub-committee are John Byrne, John Conneely and Jimmy Staunton.

For more information and to find out who represents you on the Central Executive Council, visit www.asti.ie.

ASTI SUPPORTING PRIVATELY-PAID TEACHERS

The Privately Paid Teachers' Committee is investigating the situation of ASTI members who are privately paid.



The Privately Paid Teachers' Committee. Front row (from left): Brendan Broderick, Diarmaid de Paor, and Jimmy Staunton. Back row (from left): Philip Irwin, Joe Moran, and Colm O'Gaora.

The ASTI Privately Paid Teachers' Committee was established as a result of Motion 97, which was adopted at ASTI Convention 2016. During the debate on the motion at Convention, speakers stated that there are a number of ASTI members on privately-paid contracts who are treated differently in their terms and conditions from teachers paid by the Department of Education and Skills. For example, their pay, sick leave or pensions arrangements may be poor in comparison to a teacher who is employed publicly.

The Privately Paid Teachers' Committee was established in order to investigate the extent of the problem and report its findings to ASTI Convention 2017, along with policy recommendations in this regard.

The Committee plans to do research in schools to try and gather an estimate of the number of privately-paid second-level teachers within the ASTI membership and to discover how their conditions differ from those of their publicly-paid colleagues.

MOTION 97

That the ASTI establish a committee to oversee the pay and working conditions of privately-paid teachers and to make policy recommendations in this regard; this committee to report back to Annual Convention 2017. Such committee to be elected at Annual Convention 2016.

If you are a privately-paid teacher and you wish to take part in this research, please contact DCullen@asti.ie.

OUT IN THE COLD

An anonymous teacher of modern foreign languages, working in a fee-paying school on a fixed-term contract, told ASTIR about their experience as a privately-paid second-level teacher.

I am in my twelfth year of teaching and should be on point 14 of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) salary scale, earning €55,505 per annum with allowances included. However, as a privately-paid teacher I am currently being paid the DES hourly casual qualified rate of €41.23 per hour, with the statutory four weeks' holiday pay of €5.62 per hour. This works out at €34,434 per annum.

I take my job very seriously and carry out my duties in a professional manner, just like my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less.

I make a big contribution to the school through extracurricular activities, and provide the pupils with opportunities to take part in academic and non-academic activities, just like my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less.

I spend a lot of time on planning, preparing and correcting, just like my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less.

I care about the welfare and well-being of all of my pupils, and do my utmost to help them to achieve their potential, just like my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less.

I attend every staff meeting and parent-teacher meeting, just like my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less.

I attend every school concert or musical, open evening, graduation, all school events and CPD sessions after school or on a Saturday, like some of my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less.

I do the same job as my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less.

I'm as devoted and passionate about my job, and as conscientious and enthusiastic, as my DES-paid colleagues. I'm paid less. A lot less.

Complex problem

The school management is unwilling to compromise in any way regarding holiday pay or fair pay for me as a privately-paid teacher. To just get another job is in my view a simplistic solution to a complex problem. Personal circumstances mean that changing jobs, and more than likely relocating, isn't a straightforward option for me. Some level of fairness, or even compromise would be preferable. Even something as simple as paying increments for years of service, or supplementing social welfare payments would be of huge benefit without costing the school too much. I understand the financial constraints of running a private business such as a school, but inequality of pay for members of staff who should be as valued as their colleagues should not be the solution. I'm happy that the ASTI is shining a light on this problem and I wish the union all the best in its efforts to achieve fairness and equality of pay for all members.



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THE ASTI SICKNESS BENEFIT SCHEME

Did you know that ASTI members can claim back expenses incurred due to illness, for optical and dental treatments and for hearing aids?



One of the benefits of ASTI membership is the ASTI Sickness Benefit Scheme. Under this Scheme, those who are continuous members of the ASTI for two years (24 calendar months) may claim a benefit in respect of: (a) illness, or (b) optical treatment, dental treatment and hearing aids which have been prescribed to them. The Scheme is administered by a committee of seven ASTI members, appointed at Annual Convention.

How do I apply to the Scheme?

Sickness benefit claim forms are available on the ASTI website, from your school steward and from ASTI Head Office. You must fill out this form completely, giving details of your ASTI membership and the nature of your: (a) illness, or (b) optical, dental or otological treatment prescribed by a qualified medical practitioner, and the expenses incurred. If you have any queries as to how to fill out the form or whether you are eligible for this benefit, please contact Rebecca Kelly on 01-604 0164.

You must also include receipts and certified statements of expenses incurred with your form. Only one type of treatment can be included on each form. For example, if you wish to make a claim in relation to an illness and also in relation to dental treatment, you will need to fill out two forms.

Your claim must then be sent to ASTI Head Office, where it will be considered by the Sickness Benefit Committee, which meets five times a year to consider such claims.

Illness

How long must I have been ill for in order to claim from the Scheme?

In order to receive a payment from the Sickness Benefit Scheme, your illness must have caused you to be absent from school for seven consecutive days or more. You may include Saturday and Sunday when calculating the number of days you were absent. If the illness occurs during official school holidays, benefit will be paid as long as the receipts show that the illness lasted for seven or more days.

How often can I claim from the Scheme in respect of an illness?

You will only receive benefit once for the same type of illness within a period of three years. You must also have been a member of the ASTI continuously for the 24 months prior to your claim. You must make your claim within six months of the end of your illness or treatment.

What is the maximum amount I can claim from the Scheme in respect of an illness?

The maximum benefit amount you can receive from the Scheme in respect of an illness is equal to the annual full ASTI membership fee plus €50 in any calendar year, which at the moment equates to €387.

Are there any illnesses which are not covered by the Scheme?

The Scheme does not cover accidents or illnesses resulting from accidents. It also does not cover maternity or pregnancy, or illnesses arising from maternity or pregnancy.

Optical treatment, dental treatment and hearing aids

How much can I claim for optical or dental treatment or for hearing aids?

You may claim a maximum of €165 for optical treatment, dental treatment or hearing aids in a five-year period. For example, if you claimed €165 for optical benefit in 2015, you will be unable to benefit from the optical, dental and hearing aid fund until 2020. However, claims can be broken up over the five-year period; for example, it would be possible to claim €50 in 2015 and €50 in 2016. In order to receive the full €165 benefit, your expenses must total €180 or more. No claim for less than €15 will be considered by the Committee.

For more information on the Sickness Benefit Scheme and other financial benefits of ASTI membership visit www.asti.ie or contact Rebecca Kelly in ASTI Head Office on 01-604 0164.

ANNUAL CONVENTION 2017 – ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Every Easter, approximately 500 ASTI members attend the Annual Convention to discuss and vote on the Association's policies for the year ahead.

This year, ASTI Convention will take place in the INEC Killarney Convention Centre, Killarney, Co. Kerry, from April 18-20.

Where can I get information about Convention?

The ASTI website – www.asti.ie – is where you will find all of the information you need about Convention 2017. Go to the Events section, where you will find the Convention 2017 page.

Attending Convention

Delegates to Convention are selected at branch meetings, usually in January. Each branch is entitled to send a number of delegates to Convention, depending on the number of members in their branch. Branches must submit the names of their chosen delegates to ASTI Head Office no later than January 31. In addition to branch delegates, members of the ASTI Central Executive Council and Standing Committee also attend Convention as delegates.

If you wish to attend Convention 2017, you should go along to your next branch meeting. If you are unsure about when or where your branch meets, ask your school steward for your branch's meeting schedule. When attending Convention, you must be either a delegate or an observer. Please note that only delegates are allowed to speak and vote on Convention motions.

Costs

The cost of travel and an overnight allowance are paid to all delegates attending Convention. There is also a registration fee of €30, which is paid directly to ASTI Head Office by delegates' branches.

Where to stay

Accommodation for delegates to Convention 2017 is available at the Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney, which is adjacent to the INEC. Convention hotel accommodation is limited and is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. You can book accommodation in the Gleneagle Hotel by contacting them directly by phone on 064-667 1550, or by email at info@gleneaglehotel.com. Please mention ASTI Convention 2017 to avail of the special rate. Please note that the Gleneagle Hotel shuttle bus will meet all trains arriving to Killarney on Tuesday, April 18. There are several other accommodation options in the surrounding area to the INEC, details of which are available on www.asti.ie.

Childcare

The ASTI play centre is available for delegates' children aged between two and 12 years. The play centre will be run by an

experienced, fully-qualified primary school teacher, who has experience in running a play centre. If you are attending, please book your place(s) as early as possible. Registration forms are available on www.asti.ie and must be returned to ASTI Head Office before March 24, 2017.

Convention dinner

A Convention dinner is organised for Tuesday, April 18. The cost of a banquet ticket is normally €48, but if your branch reserves a table of ten before Friday, March 31, it will cost only €380 – a saving of €100. If your branch wishes to join with another branch for a table, please book under one branch's name by emailing info@asti.ie, referencing "Annual Convention Dinner". Book early to avoid disappointment.

Teachers in the spotlight

Key debates on education, teachers' terms and conditions and the ASTI's role as a trade union take place during Convention. The Convention attracts significant media attention and provides opportunities to highlight some of the key issues for second-level teachers, for example, conditions for recently-qualified teachers. Coverage focuses on key speeches made during Convention, including the President's address on Tuesday evening, and on key debates throughout the conference.

Topics for debate

Topics for debate are dictated by motions, which are submitted and selected at ASTI branch meetings. In other words, ASTI members get to decide what is debated at Convention. Motions are presented to Convention and delegates speak to these motions. Branches normally decide on the topics they would like to see discussed at Convention at their November branch meetings.

The Convention Steering Committee, which consists of classroom teachers elected at Convention each year, prepares a list of motions received from branches. The list is circulated to all branches before January 7. Branches are asked to prioritise motions for inclusion on the Convention agenda not later than January 31. They can also propose amendments to any of the motions circulated. Motions and amendments are considered again by Steering Committee in early February and a final agenda is drawn up.

Connect at Convention

The ASTI encourages the use of social media during open debates (some debates are closed sessions and delegates may not discuss these debates on social media). Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook allow the ASTI and delegates attending Convention to spread news to their colleagues who cannot attend, and to highlight important Convention issues to their followers.

RSTA RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN FOR 2017

Joining helps us fight on behalf of retired teachers.

The RSTA is working with the ASTI and the Retired Workers' Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) in seeking to further its three priorities. These are: the accelerated restoration of pensions; the right to formal representation for public service pensioners in future national negotiations; and, maintaining the policy of pension parity, so that increases to salaries of public servants are applied to pensions of retired public servants.

The RSTA needs the commitment of every retired secondary teacher to progress these issues. The cost is minimal and the issues are extremely urgent. It is in the best interests of retired secondary teachers to belong to the RSTA. Please join and encourage your colleagues to join also. Once again, the RSTA wishes to express support to its serving colleagues in the ASTI in their campaign for justice.

RSTA Membership Application/Renewal

First Name: Surname:

Address:

Home Phone: Mobile:

Email: RSTA Branch:

Annual Subscription €24. Payment options:

1. Standing Order: Please complete the set-up form below and send to the RSTA National Treasurer.
2. Cheque: Please make the cheque payable to "RSTA" and send with this form to the RSTA National Treasurer.
3. Online Bank Payment: To make a transfer or set up a Standing Order online please refer to the Standing Order Form below for details of the RSTA Bank Account.

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TO:

RSTA National Treasurer: Mrs Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.
 E: rstatreasurer@gmail.com M: 085-118 1330.

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS using black or blue pen.

To The Manager: Date:

(Name of Member's Bank)

Bank Branch and Full Address:

I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT my account.

Bank Account No: National Sort Code (NSC):

Account Name: with the amount of €24. Amount in words: **Twenty Four Euro**

Frequency: **Annually Until Further Notice** Start Date for payment:

And to CREDIT the account held in the name of: **Retired Secondary Teachers' Association, AIB Bank, Sutton Branch**

NSC: 93-23-61 Account Number: 12729-080 IBAN: IE55 AIBK 9323 6112 7290 80 BIC: AIBKIE2D

Member's Name & RSTA Branch:

(To identify the member's payment on the RSTA bank statement)

Member's Signature: Date:

(You can cancel this Standing Order instruction at any time by writing to your Bank. The amount of the payment authorised above may not be altered except by your instruction to your Bank.)

Anti-racism competition

The anti-racism organisation, Show Racism the Red Card, is inviting second-level classes to register for the Anti-Racism Creative Competition 2017. Schools must register online in order to receive a DVD education pack. Participants are then invited to create written, visual or audiovisual entries on the theme of the DVD. The awards showcase will take place on Tuesday, May 2, 2017 in the Aviva Stadium.

For more information visit: www.theredcard.ie/competition.

Maths Counts 2017

Maths Counts 2017, a national conference for all post-primary mathematics teachers, will take place on March 3 and 4, 2017 in Maynooth University. Professor Akihiko Takahashi returns to Maths Counts in 2017, with live demonstration lessons on teaching geometry through structured problem solving. The event also includes a presentation by the maths inspectorate, an opportunity to connect with the Project Maths Development Team, and interactive problem-solving workshops led by teachers involved in Lesson Study. Attendees will also receive a digital pack of problem-solving lessons developed by 250 Irish teachers from over 100 participating schools. The conference is open to maths educators, as well as newly-qualified teachers and prospective maths teachers.

For more information visit: www.projectmaths.ie.

Fantastic Flix

The Audi Dublin International Film Festival (ADIFF) presents Fantastic Flix, an exciting line-up of high-quality Irish and international films programmed exclusively for young people aged four to 16, addressing themes of friendship, bravery, creativity, love and loyalty.

Taking place this February 10-18 in cinemas throughout Dublin, the programme also includes a very special visit from beloved children's author Dame Jacqueline Wilson, as well as workshops and side events.

The varied programme offers something for secondary school students of all ages, providing them with access to a greater range of cultural cinema and film-making experiences.

Some film screenings will also come with an educational pack for the teacher's use.

Workshops (February 18-25) will include a storyboard workshop with Cartoon Saloon, the creators of Oscar-nominated *Song of the Sea*, and a Brick Flicks stop-motion workshop where participants can make their own Lego animation movie.

Fantastic Flix is expanding year on year, engaging schools and families alike. We invite you to join us on this exciting journey to build the next generation of film fans.

Film tickets cost €5 per student or €4 for DEIS schools. Workshops are priced between €11 and €16.

For enquiries or to book, please call 01-687 7974 or see www.diff.ie/.

THINKING ABOUT VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS? CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE COURSE



Designed to assist teachers and education workers, Comhlámh's short webinar series will guide and encourage you to think critically about your motivations for volunteering overseas. We invite you to engage in debate around education and development issues and the connection with responsible volunteering.

We will introduce approaches to development, the Code of Good Practice for Sending Agencies and examine the Volunteer Charter and explore how action for development continues after an overseas experience.

Each week, you will have the opportunity to offer your thoughts and reflections on the topic raised, engage with online participants in a community of learning and five registered participants of the webinar, to receive feedback from Comhlámh staff based on your submissions. Webinars take place live/online on Tues 25th, Dec; Thu 6th and Dec 8th 13.00 to 15.15pm

SIGN UP NOW AT WWW.COMHLAMH.ORG/WHERE



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- FRSI
- Debriefing
- #VOLCUS
- Planning your travel
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- Visa
- Budgeting
- Packing list
- Welcome pack

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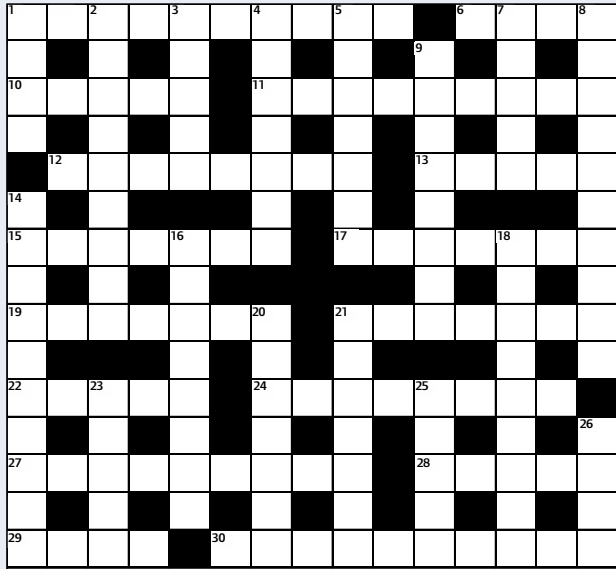


Sponsored by ASTI Credit Union

ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 1701

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. 1701, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, February 17, 2017

CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 See 24 across
- 6 "Leading innovation in education for living, learning and working in a changing world", is its mission statement (1,1,1,1)
- 10 Changing palms show the way (5)
- 11 They're uplifting! (9)
- 12 See cards sent out with touching affection (8)
- 13 Articles in the Times! (5)
- 15 See 24 across
- 17 You're looking at one! (7)
- 19 Intros (7)
- 21 China in Germany? Where could that be? (7)
- 22 Lisa's dad and author of the Iliad but definitely not the same person! (5)
- 24 across, 15 across, 1 across and 8 down: In short, six across (8,7,10,10)
- 27 Owing to (7,2)
- 28 See 29 across
- 29 and 28 across: Chair of Teachers' Conciliation Council (4,5)
- 30 Sends a plea to re-establish walkways by the sea (10)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1 "When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang Upon those boughs which shake against the" (Shakespeare) (4)
- 2 A mere ruse to ascertain the dimensions of again (9)
- 3 Give out (5)
- 4 Could be a device I lent us in the kitchen (7)
- 5 Turned over and finished at last (7)
- 7 Tedious job (5)
- 8 See 24 across
- 9 Looked like the older you get the more you engage in repartee! (8)
- 14 High on anxiety? (10)
- 16 Lure chef to be of a happy disposition (8)
- 18 One of the Three Amigos met this Mary on the way to the fair at Dingle! (3,6)
- 20 Male offspring nabs short poems (7)
- 21 Conscientious and responsible (7)
- 23 A wine region in central France, or the heart of Georgia (5)
- 25 Painter or writer? (5)
- 26 Affirmatives (4)

Solution to ASTIR Crossword No. 1605

Across

- 1. Arcane
- 5. Senate
- 10. Fuchsia
- 11. Emperor
- 12. Tear
- 13. Yeats
- 15. Edit
- 17. SMS
- 19. Dodder
- 21. Poison
- 22. Foghorn
- 23. Fueled
- 25. Ethics
- 28. Pro
- 30. Gobi
- 31. Sean O
- 32. Span
- 35. Lorient
- 36. Diocese
- 37. Nectar
- 38. Ernest

Down

- 2. Richard
- 3. Also
- 4. Erases
- 5. Scents
- 6. NEPS
- 7. Tirades
- 8. Ofsted
- 9. Bruton
- 14. Amphora
- 16. Defer
- 18. Month
- 20. Rod
- 21. Pre
- 23. Foghlu
- 24. Ed Byrne
- 26. Impress
- 27. Senses
- 28. Pester
- 29. On edge
- 33. Rest
- 34. John

Did you miss?

- Financial advice for 2017 14
- Arts in education 18

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 1605: T. Caulfield, St Louis CS, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo, Mayo West Branch.

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