

# ASTIR



Junior cycle review update

What teachers have given

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## ASTIR

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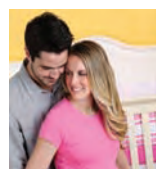


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All submissions will be considered by the ASTIR Editorial Board. Email [astir@asti.ie](mailto:astir@asti.ie).

# Allowances threat

ASTI President Brendan Broderick highlights issues around teacher pay and junior cycle reform.

As I write, the threat to teacher pay in the form of a cut in allowances has the potential to collapse the Croke Park Agreement (see page 24). At its meeting in February, Standing Committee unanimously adopted the following resolution:

“Noting that the Public Services Agreement 2010-2014, section 1.15, states that – There will be no further reductions in the pay rates of serving public servants for the lifetime of this agreement – Standing Committee reiterates that allowances are an integral part of teachers’ pay. In the event that the Government breaches the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement by cutting teachers’ pay, a special meeting of CEC will be convened to decide on conducting a ballot of members on withdrawal from the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement”.

Should this eventuality come to pass it is our intention (where possible and within reason) to co-ordinate any response with the TUI and the INTO. Meanwhile, the fallout from Budget 2012 continues to dominate the education agenda. The new assault on the pay of new entrants to the teaching profession is particularly provocative. This demands a policy response from the teacher unions, which we hope to address at this year’s conferences, in the form of an urgent motion.

For more on ASTI Convention 2012 see page 17.

## Junior cycle review

The proposals contained in the framework for junior cycle were adopted by the Minister for Education and Skills at the NCCA Council meeting in November 2011. As part of its response, the ASTI hosted a series of education seminars around the country, in order to gauge member reaction and to inform future ASTI policy (see page 36). The feedback from these seminars closely mirrored the initial reaction of the union back in November. While most teachers recognise the need for reform of the Junior Certificate programme, three major areas of concern in relation to the framework document were identified:

## Resources

Teachers have no confidence that the necessary resources will be provided to successfully introduce the proposed Junior Certificate reforms. In the context of years of under-funding of the education system, even during times of large budget surpluses, this is entirely understandable.

The failure of the DES to publish a coherent and fully funded implementation plan to coincide with the implementation of junior cycle reform proposals is totally unacceptable to members.

The point was also clearly articulated that some schools have more financial resources and capacity to engage in curricular innovation than others. This will result in a widening of the gap between rich and poor in an already unequal society.

## Subject limits

Initially, the limiting to eight of the number of subjects to be taken in the Junior Cert examination was to be introduced in September 2012. However, mainly due to the intervention of the ASTI, this proposal has been deferred to September 2014. Teachers are very concerned about the future viability of many mainstream subjects as a result of this proposal. Also, nobody knows how this will operate in practice. For example, who decides what subjects a student will present for in examination: student, school or DES? If short courses are included, students will only have to present for as few as six terminal examinations.

Moreover, this change will result in classes consisting of three cohorts of student: those who are taking subjects for examinations; those who are not; and, those who are undecided. This will have serious consequences for classroom management and discipline.

## Assessment

The ASTI’s position on assessment is unequivocal. It is the priority motion for Annual Convention and those who attended the regional seminars clearly support the union’s position, which is that teachers do not assess their own students for certification purposes. Indeed, the introduction of any element of marking or grading of their own students (or students in their own school) for certification purposes is totally unacceptable to ASTI members. The grade a student obtains in State examinations must be based on valid, reliable and objective data. The best way to ensure this is by ensuring that all examinations are externally set, externally invigilated and externally corrected.

## Call for pause

ASTI Standing Committee has already called on the Minister to pause the proposals for reform of the Junior Certificate. In times of austerity, and in view of budgetary profiles for the coming years, it surely makes more sense to concentrate on bedding down the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy and Project Maths, which are already a huge drain on limited resources.



**Brendan Broderick**  
ASTI President

# Change in an era of cutbacks

Teachers are facing unprecedented challenges to their pay and working conditions, says ASTI General Secretary Pat King.

This year's ASTI Annual Convention will highlight the devastating impact of education cutbacks on second-level schools and the implications for young people, communities and society, and for the career of teaching. Since 2009 schools have had to cope with a wide range of swingeing cutbacks, including:

- an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio and the resulting loss of up to 1,000 second-level teaching posts from schools;
- a moratorium on posts of responsibility;
- withdrawal of resource teachers for Travellers;
- loss of English-language teachers; and,
- cuts to school funding.

As part of Budget 2012, the Government announced the abolition of the ex-quota guidance counsellor provision for second-level schools from September. This will result in the loss of almost 700 teaching posts. In addition, the capitation grant is being reduced (again), language support teachers are being cut and a number of DEIS and "non-DEIS" schools are losing supports in the area of learning support.

## "Radical reform"

In the middle of all this, the Minister for Education and Skills is talking about "radical reform" in second-level education. Anyone who spends their working days in the classroom recognises the need for continual reform and adaptation. Schools are microcosms of society and teachers work at the cutting edge of social, cultural, economic and technological change. Schools must respond to developments in national and international labour markets, social and cultural changes, technological advancements, progress in fields such as pedagogy and psychology, and emerging public concerns including health and environmental concerns. They must do all of this and more in a manner that nurtures and respects each individual student, regardless of ability, socio-economic status, or family background. This work continues despite the fact that schools have had to cope with three years of draconian cuts. Is it any wonder teachers are weary when they hear the Minister talk of "radical reform"? For teachers the term "radical reform" displays a lack of awareness of the

ongoing efforts by schools to adapt to an ever-changing world. It fails to recognise the context in which schools operate, including the fact that Ireland has consistently lagged behind other OECD and EU countries in terms of investment in education. Teachers want sound educational reform. But talking about "radical reform" in an era of swingeing cutbacks is a bit like expecting a hungry child to ace an exam. Teachers know that reversing the worst of the education cuts and allowing schools to thrive rather than survive would represent a giant step towards sound reform in education.

## New teachers

This *ASTIR* reports on the demonstration by student teachers in February following the freezing of qualification allowances for new entrants to teaching.

The decision to freeze allowances for "new beneficiaries" was taken without consultation with the teacher unions, and was contrary to normal industrial relations procedures and practices. It follows a number of Government decisions that have unfairly targeted new teachers, including a 14% pay cut and the imposition of an inferior pension scheme, which will see new teachers pay more towards their pension than they will ever see in pension benefits. Currently, we have the bizarre situation whereby newly qualified teachers do not know what rate of pay they will receive if and when they find teaching work. Equity of treatment is a cornerstone of the trade union movement. We must support our most vulnerable colleagues in their fight for fair and equal treatment. Solidarity is vital if we are to protect the teaching profession and our education service.



**Pat King**  
ASTI General Secretary

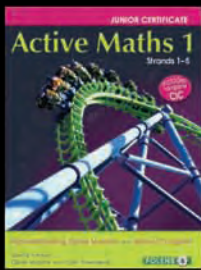
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**NEW**

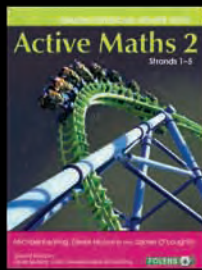
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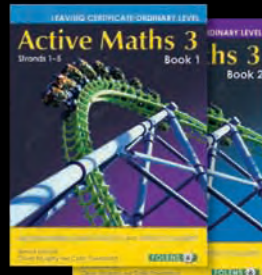
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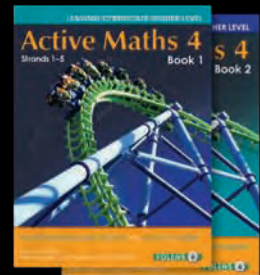
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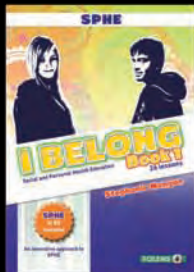
**MATHS** JC HL



**MATHS** LC OL



**MATHS** LC HL



**SPHE** 1ST YEAR



**FRENCH** 2<sup>ND</sup>/3<sup>RD</sup> YEAR JC



**GERMAN** 2<sup>ND</sup>/3<sup>RD</sup> YEAR JC



**ENGLISH** LC OL



**ORAL GERMAN** LC OL & HL



**ENGLISH POETRY** LC HL



**GEOGRAPHY** LC OL & HL



**HISTORY** LC OL & HL

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## Review of ASTI structures underway

A review of the structures, rules and organisation of the ASTI is currently underway. The review will examine the effectiveness of current structures and make recommendations on how the union might evolve to be more effective, democratic, and to best respond to the needs of members.

As part of the review process, a sample of members will be asked to participate in consultation through focus groups and a survey. The survey will be conducted online and will ask members to give their opinions on how effectively the union currently meets their needs and how they would like to see the services and structures evolve (see page 38). Member input to the consultation process is vital and will be greatly appreciated.

The review of structures is taking place in response to a motion adopted at Convention 2010. When complete, its recommendations will be brought to a special convention for consideration.

## ASTI seeks parity for new teachers

The ICTU Women's Conference has passed an ASTI motion calling on the ICTU to acknowledge that salary cuts and reduced pension benefits for new entrants impact disproportionately on young and female teachers, and this should be one element in any campaign to restore parity between different employees.

Proposing the motion to the ICTU Women's Committee last month, Máire Mulcahy, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, said that the motion was about trying to close the ever-widening gap between the earnings of new entrants and their more established colleagues: "The gap, starting at 10% and extending to 14%, for new entrant teachers, with allowances currently under scrutiny, impacts to a greater extent on women, as approximately 80% of new ASTI members are female. They, as new teachers, face fewer jobs, precarious employment, and further reviews. "As objectionable as the cuts themselves is the abandonment of any pretence to adhere to collective bargaining or wage-setting mechanisms. The cuts came via Government and Dáil decisions, with no apologies for bypassing these mechanisms. Were we to show the same disregard, imagine the outrage.

"Young female workers are no less alert to the needs of the wider trade union movement than any other group, but they do, austerity and obstacles notwithstanding, want to see the wider trade union movement advocate against any further inroads on new entrants' pay, recognise that they have taken additional hits and to campaign for the reversal – if gradual – of the extra pay cuts incurred by them".

Maire Mulcahy advised of the ASTI's readiness to take a claim against the pay cut incurred under the Employment Equality Act on age and gender grounds.

Seconding the motion, Mary Ohle, Chair of the ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee, spoke about the demoralising effect that the cuts were having on new teachers and of their expectation that efforts would be made to reverse the cuts. She recounted recent conversations with young teachers in her branch amazed that the principle of equal pay for equal work had been abandoned by the State.

The motion was passed unanimously.

See 'Equal pay for equal work' on page 18.

## CID appeals success

All contract of indefinite duration (CID) appeals cases taken to adjudication by the ASTI so far this school year have resulted in a successful outcome for the teachers involved. The ASTI supported members in nine successful cases that progressed to adjudication. Thirty-three further cases were dealt with without reaching the formal adjudication stage. A teacher who is refused a CID, or who is unhappy with the terms of a CID, may appeal to the adjudicator. For more information see [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie). If you need advice on getting a CID, contact ASTI Head Office.

## How does your staffroom compare?

Women account for nearly three-quarters of primary and second-level teachers in Ireland, according to figures recently released by Eurydice, which provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies.

The same publication showed that just 11% of Irish second-level teachers are aged under 30, as compared to 31% aged 30-39, 25% aged 40-49 and 32.8% aged 50+.

## Coming soon ... discounts for ASTI members



ASTI members will be able to avail of discounts from over 600 suppliers from May. The four teacher unions have negotiated a membership benefits programme, which will supply every ASTI member with a Membership Plus card entitling them to discounts from over 600 suppliers. Among the suppliers offering discounts are: the AA; Lifestyle Sports; Stena Line; hotels; golf clubs; retailers; restaurants; and, tourist attractions. ASTI members will receive their card in May 2012 and this card will be valid until the end of September 2013.

## ASTI makes donation to Vita Cortex workers

The ASTI recently made a donation for supplies to the 32 Vita Cortex workers who are engaged in a sit-in at the Cork plant. The workers are involved in a protest over the company's refusal to pay redundancy payments. Handing over the donation, ASTI representative and President of the Cork Council of Trade Unions, Ann Piggott, said: "An immense injustice has been executed here in Cork. Honest, hardworking and loyal employees have been prevented from getting their just entitlements; with no other avenue to secure their rights, they have been forced to live in a factory. This is not just about 32 people: it is also about the taxpayer, and it is about other workers who may be similarly exploited in the future. This injustice must be unravelled and it must never be allowed to happen again".

*From left: ASTI General Secretary Pat King; Ann Piggott; and, Honorary Treasurer Ray St John.*



## Department circular on guidance counselling is disingenuous, says ASTI

The ASTI's General Secretary has described a Department of Education and Skills circular requiring schools to manage guidance from within the standard allocation as disingenuous and aspirational. Circular 0009/2012 follows a decision announced in Budget 2012 and states that guidance provision remains a statutory requirement for schools but, with effect from September 2012, this provision must be managed by schools from within their standard staffing schedule allocation. The circular describes this measure as an extension of schools' autonomy. Speaking in reaction to the Circular, General Secretary Pat King said: "It is entirely disingenuous for the Department of Education and Skills to describe the axing of the guidance counselling teacher allocation to second-level schools as an exercise in greater autonomy for schools. Rather than providing greater autonomy for schools, the Government is tying the hands of principals, who are being forced to decide between reducing guidance counselling for students and dropping subjects from the timetable". Mr King added that the Department circular provides no assistance or guidance to schools that will struggle to meet their legal obligations to provide appropriate guidance to all students.

## Run for an ASTI committee

The committees up for election at this year's Convention are the Steering Committee, Rules Committee, Investment Committee, and Pensions Sub-Committee. The Pensions Sub-Committee is responsible for advising Standing Committee about matters relating to teachers' pensions. The Rules Committee is responsible for monitoring the Rules and Constitution of the ASTI. Steering Committee is elected to set the agenda for the following year's Convention, and the Investment Committee advises on how ASTI funds should be invested. In order to run for election, you must attend Convention as a delegate. If you want to put yourself forward for election, nomination forms will be available from Head Office staff at Convention on Wednesday April 11, from 2.30-5.00pm. Check your Convention Programme for more information.

## ASTI survey on disability

The ASTI is conducting an online survey on the employment experiences of teachers with disabilities/serious illness. The survey includes questions on seeking employment, returning to work, and how the school authorities responded to the disability/serious illness (e.g., did the school act to accommodate you, etc.). The survey only takes a few minutes to complete, and a link is available on the news section of the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

## ASTI Centenary Scholarship 2012

Each year the ASTI awards one scholarship worth €4,000 to assist an ASTI member in undertaking further third-level studies. Applications are now invited for the ASTI Centenary Scholarship Award 2012.



Any ASTI member who is currently in service, or who is on paid study leave, is eligible to apply. The scholarship is available to those undertaking or planning to undertake full-time or part-time courses.

The award will be determined by a Scholarship Selection Committee and the criteria for selection will include:

- relevance of the proposed course to the professional lives of teachers and to second-level education;
- potential for the study to inform the ongoing policy agenda and work of the ASTI; and,
- potential for the research to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

The closing date for applications is Thursday, May 31, 2012. Application forms are available in the services and benefits section of the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).



## ASTI clarifies that teachers assigned to wrong PRSI class will not lose out

Earlier this month, the ASTI had discussions with the Department of Education and Skills in relation to a number of teachers who were assigned to the wrong PRSI class. The Department has advised the ASTI that this error affects only a small number of teachers and significantly fewer than had originally been feared. The consequences of this error have meant that these teachers have been overpaying PRSI contributions and underpaying pension contributions.

This particular error relates to a small number of teachers who worked on temporary contracts prior to April 6, 1995, and who subsequently secured permanent contracts without a break in teaching service. Such teachers were correctly allocated to the A1 class for PRSI contributions while on temporary contracts, but should have been transferred to D rate PRSI when they became permanent with no break in service. In a small number of cases, this transfer was not made and the teacher was erroneously left on the A1 rate. Teachers who fall into this category should check that they are paying the correct PRSI rate.

The matter was brought to the attention of the ASTI some months ago when a member was informed by the Department of Education and Skills that she had been assigned to the wrong PRSI class. The Department had written to the member seeking additional pension contributions, as the amount paid in pension contributions relates to a teacher's PRSI class. In

representing this member the ASTI sought to ensure that she did not lose out financially because of a Department error. The outcome was that the shortfall in the member's pension contributions was rectified without her incurring financial loss. This involved the Department of Social Protection working with the Department of Education and Skills to offset PRSI overpayments against pension underpayments.

The ASTI can now confirm that the Department of Education and Skills is working with the Department of Social Protection in relation to other teachers affected by the error, to ensure that these teachers' pensions will be paid in full and they will not experience a financial loss. This error was also highlighted by the Pensions Ombudsman following a complaint by a teacher (also an ASTI member) after the Department of Education and Skills asked her to pay the shortfall in her pension contributions that had occurred as a result of her being assigned to the wrong PRSI class.

Any teachers affected by the error will have their pension underpayments rectified upon identification (typically at the time of applying to retire) by the Department of Education and Skills in co-operation with the Department of Social Protection. No teacher will suffer a financial loss or any loss of pension benefit due to this error. However, if you are affected by this issue, you can contact the ASTI for further information and advice, Tel: 01-604 0160.

## An bhfuil céim mhaith agat sa Ghaeilge? Ar mhaith leat cur le do dheiseanna fostaíochta?

Cuirfidh *Lárionad de Bhaldraithe do Léann na Gaeilge, Scoil na Gaeilge*, an Léinn Cheiltigh, Bhéaloideas Éireann agus na Teangeolaíochta, UCD, cúrsaí dioplóma iarchéime/máistreacht ar fáil i Meán Fómhair 2012 le freastal ar na deiseanna fostaíochta do chéimithe le sainscileanna Gaeilge:

- **Dioplóma Iarchéime/MA: Scríobh agus Cumarsáid na Gaeilge (Aistriúchán agus Ateangaireacht)**
- **Dioplóma Iarchéime/MA: Scríobh agus Cumarsáid na Gaeilge (Dlí agus Aistriúchán)**
- **Dioplóma Iarchéime/MA: Scríobh agus Cumarsáid na Gaeilge (Eagarthóireacht & Cóipeagarthóireacht)**
- **Dioplóma Iarchéime/MA: Scríobh agus Cumarsáid na Gaeilge (Iriseoireacht)**
- **Dioplóma Iarchéime/MA: Scríobh agus Cumarsáid na Gaeilge (Riarachán)**

Tá líon áirithe scoláireachtaí ar fáil do na cúrsaí seo.

**Spríoclá Iontrála: 30 Meitheamh 2012**

Gheofar eolas breise faoi na cúrsaí agus faoi na scoláireachtaí ó:

Kathleen Clune, Riarthóir na Gaeilge, nó Cathal Billings.

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*Is cúrsaí iad seo atá á gcur ar fáil mar chuid lárnach de gheallúint UCD chun oideachas ceannródaíoch ceathrú leibhéal a sholáthar agus a ndéantar comhordú orthu tríd an Scoil Iarchéime, Coláiste na nEalaíon agus an Léinn Cheiltigh, UCD. Tá na cúrsaí seo á gcur ar bun le tacaíocht ón Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta tríd an Údarás um Ard-Oideachas.*



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## Maths success



Alan O'Regan, a former student at Christian Brothers College in Cork, was the winner of the inaugural Irish Maths Teachers' Association (IMTA) award for excellence in mathematics. He is pictured above with Richard Southern from Accenture (left) and IMTA Chairman Dominic Guinan (right). The IMTA established the Accenture Analytics Mathematics Excellence Award to further their efforts to promote mathematics and to recognise excellence in maths at Leaving Cert level.

## New Department Secretary General



Seán Ó Foghlú has been appointed the new Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills. Mr Ó Foghlú has been an Assistant Secretary General in the Department for the past three and a half years and, prior to that, was the first Chief Executive of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.

## Attendance rates

According to figures compiled by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), the percentage of second-level school days lost through absenteeism in 2009/2010 was 7.9%. The number of student days lost in total in the second-level and primary sectors for 2009/2010 was 6.8% and is at the lower end for the five-year period from 2005 to 2010.

## OECD report shows link between teacher pay and quality

A new OECD spotlight report, 'Does money buy strong performance in PISA?', emphasises the importance of investing in the quality of teachers, and suggests that those countries with the best paid teachers perform best. ASTI General Secretary Pat King welcomed the acknowledgement that the strongest performing countries in the OECD invest in teachers' salaries, but said the report presents concerns for Irish education in light of recent cuts in teachers' pay: "In Ireland today, a new teacher starts on approximately 30% (or over €11,000 per annum) less than his or her counterpart of two years ago: this drop in salary will inevitably lead to teaching becoming a less attractive career and to a lowering in the quality of our teachers".

Read the full report at [www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org).

## Positive relationships with teachers impact on student outcomes

Positive day-to-day interaction with teachers significantly influences a range of student outcomes, including academic achievement, motivation, academic self-image, stress levels, and post-school pathways. This was among the findings of a recent ESRI report: 'Improving Second-Level Education: Using Evidence for Policy Development'.

The report discussed the large body of robust research showing that what happens within a school can make a significant difference to how students fare, even taking account of student characteristics on entry to the school. Among the policy recommendations made in the report are:

- the success of junior cycle reform will depend on the extent to which principals and teachers are supported in acquiring skills to develop active teaching practices;
- investment in continuous professional development is important to facilitate the creation of a positive school climate; and,
- continuous professional development should be provided to enable teachers to develop teaching methods that cater for the diversity of students in the classroom and to support effective differentiation.

For more, see [www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie).

## This issue in numbers...

**500**

**Number of ASTI members** attending ASTI Convention 2012. (P17)

**1,500**

**Number of protesters** who participated in the new teachers' protest in February. (P18)

## What if?

*Pictured is a dramatic presentation given by Colaiste Enda students at the annual Feile Bride conference in Kildare, organised by Afri (Action from Africa). The students spent several weeks after school exploring global issues and development themes and devising this piece, which is entitled 'What If?'*



## Teachers' All-Ireland win

A team of second-level teachers from Kilkenny were crowned All-Ireland inter-firms senior hurling champions for 2011-2012 earlier this month. The teachers overcame reigning champions Medtronic of Galway 2-19 to 1-11 in the final, which was held on March 3. The teachers' team was drawn from a number of schools, including Callan CBS, Castlecomer CS, Kilkenny CBS, St Kieran's College, Kilkenny Vocational School and Abbey Community School.

## Bill to protect LGB teachers

Details of a bill that aims to provide greater protections to lesbian, gay and bisexual teachers have been published. The bill proposes amendments to the Employment Equality Act that would mean schools could no longer claim that hiring a gay teacher would undermine their religious ethos. If the bill is enacted, schools will still be entitled to insist that staff members demonstrate respect towards their ethos and not actively seek to undermine it. The bill was published by Fianna Fáil. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to change the law, but to date the Government has not taken any steps to do so. The ASTI has been campaigning on this issue for a number of years, and submitted a motion on the issue, which was adopted, to ICTU's Biennial Conference 2007. The ASTI Gay and Lesbian Teachers' Network meets regularly to identify policies, procedures and agreements necessary to guarantee equal treatment. For more information, Tel: 01-604 0175 or 087-629 7727, or Email: [gayandlesbiannetwork@asti.ie](mailto:gayandlesbiannetwork@asti.ie).

## Stop the execution of Iranian teacher

Education International (EI) is calling on teachers and others interested in human rights to participate in an online campaign requesting the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to stay the execution of Prof. Abdolreza Ghanbari, a university lecturer sentenced to death for "enmity towards God". Prof Ghanbari has no known political connections. He was previously involved in teacher union activities until his union, the ITTA, was dissolved in 2007. He was arrested in 2010. A request for pardon was rejected on February 28 by the Commission of Justice in Tehran. This means that the authorities are allowed to proceed with his execution. To find out more or to participate in the online campaign, visit <http://www.ei-ie.org/>.

## Teacher Fee Refund Scheme 2011

Did you complete an in-career development course of study between September 1, 2010, and August 31, 2011? If so, you may be eligible for a partial refund of course or examination fees through the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme. Teachers paid by the Department of Education and Skills and registered with the Teaching Council are eligible to apply. To qualify, a course should be directly relevant and of benefit to schools, school management or teachers, and should ultimately impact positively on teaching and learning. See Circular 08/2012 for full details. The closing date for applications is Friday, April 20. Application forms and further information are available at [www.mie.ie/refundoffees](http://www.mie.ie/refundoffees).

€680m

**Public payroll savings made** in the first year of the Croke Park Agreement. (P27)

8,499.5

**Number of hours spent on extra-curricular activities** by teachers at Malahide Community School during the 2010/2011 school year. (P28)

## Teaching Council Act – Section 30 to be enacted

It is expected that the Education Amendment Bill will be enacted shortly. The Bill includes an amendment to Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, which will allow schools to employ non-registered teachers in a teaching capacity in certain and limited circumstances where no registered teacher is available.

The ASTI opposed this amendment. While the amendment is going ahead, objections by the ASTI and others have resulted in an instruction from the Department of Education and Skills that schools must be able to demonstrate that they exhausted specific avenues before employing a non-registered teacher (see Circular 0031/2011).

Once enacted, the Education Amendment Bill will allow for the commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, which requires that all teachers teaching in State-recognised schools whose salaries are funded by the Department of Education and Skills must be registered with the Teaching Council (except in the exceptional and limited circumstances described in Circular 0031/2011). Teachers who are not registered will not be paid by the Department except in the exceptional limited circumstances described in Circular 0031/2011.

### ASTI urges members to register with the Teaching Council

In light of the enactment of Section 30, the ASTI is urging any member who is not currently registered with the Teaching Council to contact the Council immediately and to begin the process of registration. For further information visit [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie).

## ASTI responds to Draft Code of Conduct

The Teaching Council issued draft revised codes of conduct in December 2011. The draft codes were considered by ASTI committees and a detailed ASTI submission on the draft codes was made to the Teaching Council in January.

The ASTI is in favour of a code of conduct for teachers, and welcomed the original code published in 2007. However, the ASTI believes the proposed draft code to be too prescriptive and to have deviated from purpose.

The Teaching Council is currently considering all feedback on the draft code. The ASTI thanks everybody who made submissions. Following this, a final draft of the Code will be made available for further consideration by the education partners. Check the ASTI website for further details – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

## Claim tax back on your Teaching Council fee

The Teaching Council registration fee is tax deductible but you must alert Revenue that you have paid the fee each year and wish to have the amount offset against your tax liability. Tax relief on your Teaching Council fee can only be provided when the fee has been paid in full and upfront.

## Renew your Teaching Council registration

Teachers returning to teach following retirement or after taking a period of leave from teaching should ensure that they continue to renew their Teaching Council registration. If you do not renew, your registration with the Teaching Council will lapse and your name will be removed from the Register. Should you wish to return to the Register, you will need to re-apply for registration at least four months in advance and undergo the full application process, including submitting relevant transcripts and Garda vetting.

For most teachers, the annual renewal date falls at the end of March each year. Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act is due to be enacted shortly. When Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act is enacted, non-registered teachers may no longer be paid from State funds, except in very limited circumstances (see left).

## Give your view on the CEPP

As required under Section 7 of the Teaching Council Act, the Teaching Council has prepared a draft policy on induction and probation. The proposed Career Entry Professional Programme (CEPP) aims to provide structured support to newly qualified teachers in their first years of teaching. These proposals represent major changes for schools.

The ASTI will make a detailed submission to this process, expressing its view that the current school system does not have the capacity to introduce the CEPP. The union is also concerned about the implications of the CEPP for principals. The role of the mentor teacher also needs further discussion. A structured induction and probation programme is required because:

- new teachers have particular needs, especially in relation to classroom management, students with special needs and differentiated teaching;
- newly qualified teachers need to develop an understanding of their broader professional role, which extends beyond classroom teaching; and,
- the quality of the profession will be promoted in the long term by providing better supports to newly qualified teachers.

The main features of the Council's proposals include:

- newly qualified teachers will continue to have conditional registration until the completion of the CEPP;
- each newly qualified teacher will have a personalised programme of professional development;
- the newly qualified teacher will have an in-school mentor;
- at the end of the process, the newly qualified teacher, their mentor and the principal will co-sign the final report;
- the principal will submit the final report to the Teaching Council, recommending full registration; and,
- there will be an option to refer the report to the Inspectorate.

A consultation document on the CEPP has been published, setting out the key elements of the proposed Programme. You can read this document and submit your feedback at [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie) until March 30.

## Are you considering e-books for your school?



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# Progress in teachers' federation

The four teacher unions are working on closer co-operation, writes JOHN O'DOWD.

Teachers and lecturers are facing unprecedented challenges on pay and conditions, as well as on education funding and 'restructuring'. Many challenges affect teachers and lecturers across all sectors. This raises the prospect of the four unions addressing some or all of these challenges together rather than separately. It is timely, then, that the ASTI, IFUT, INTO and TUI should now be discussing how they might co-operate more closely to the benefit of their members and sectors. These discussions have been ongoing since last September.

Just before Christmas the four executive committees met in Dublin in a unique workshop to discuss their attitudes towards closer co-operation. This workshop heard reports from earlier workshops at which each of the individual executive committees had considered this issue in some depth. Each executive committee had developed initial views on a range of matters, including: their overall stance on the idea of a federation of teachers' and lecturers' unions; the potential advantages and disadvantages of structured co-operation; possible barriers to closer working; and, what the unions valued in each others' organisations and memberships.

This was not a decision-making meeting. It was an opportunity for the leaderships of the four unions to articulate and debate their initial thoughts on closer co-operation in a 'round table' format. There was open, lively and wide-ranging debate on the issues that had arisen at the individual executive committee workshops. Participants said that they found the workshop very worthwhile as an opportunity to discuss key matters in an informal setting, and also as an opportunity for people to get to know each other better.

## Key issues

A few key points emerged on the day. It was clear that each union valued the existing arrangements whereby the leaders of the four unions meet monthly to discuss the issues of the day. All wanted to continue these arrangements. At the same time there was a concern that relationships between the unions needed to be strengthened as there was always a danger of disharmony over conflicting policy positions. There was a strong feeling that differences between the unions were more likely to serve the needs of the Government and education employers than the needs of members.

All of the unions envisaged similar benefits from closer co-operation, such as greater bargaining power and increased political influence. At the same time there were common concerns around retaining identities, staying close to members, and avoiding bureaucratic

structures. All of the unions wanted to continue the discussions, not least because of the current challenges facing members. They all wanted to develop greater trust between the four organisations. Needless to say, there were some interesting variations in the views of the four unions. Representatives from the ASTI and TUI had questions as to whether it would make more sense for them to start working more closely together in the short term. ASTI members stressed the importance of increased contact and co-operation between members and activists at local level. The IFUT delegation was anxious not to take up major agenda items before the unions had formally put new structures in place in which they could have confidence. TUI representatives were strongly of the view that the unions needed to begin working together in the short term around the current pay and conditions and wider education funding agendas. Participants from the INTO were keen to involve members in this initiative and to find out if teachers and lecturers 'on the ground' were as strongly in favour of closer working as leaders at national level were.

At this workshop the unions also made presentations to each other on their organisations, memberships and structures. These presentations were also followed by lively discussions.

The next step in these discussions was a series of information/consultation meetings involving representatives and members of each of the four unions, which were held in January. These information/consultation meetings were an important part of the discussion process, and outcomes from these meetings were reported to a further joint workshop of the four executive committees in late February.

A report is now being prepared for the annual conferences of each of the unions.

You can read more about developments on the federation project at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

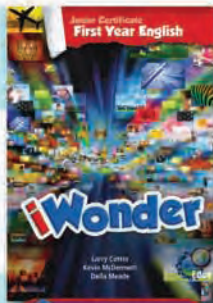
## John O'Dowd

*John O'Dowd is an independent consultant and facilitator who is working with the four teacher unions on the federation project.*

# NEW PUBLICATIONS 2012

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Larry Cotter \* Della Meade  
\* Kevin McDermott

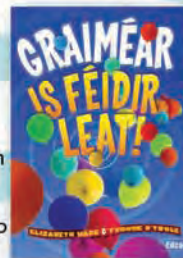


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## GRAIMÉAR – IS FÉIDIR LEAT!

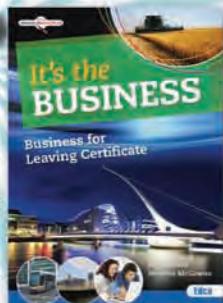
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Yvonne O'Toole \* Elizabeth Wade

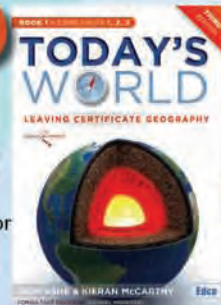


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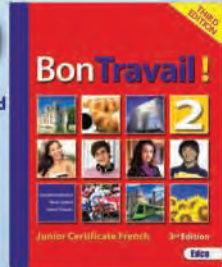


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Geraldine McQuillan \* Marie Stafford  
Carmel Timmins



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More than 150 ASTI members attended the seminar.

The Seminar was opened by ASTI president Brendan Broderick, who welcomed attendees before introducing the programme for the day. That programme began with an address by General Secretary Pat King and Deputy General Secretary Diarmaid de Paor on current issues facing the ASTI. These included issues arising from Budget 2012, such as the loss of teaching posts through the inclusion of guidance allocations within the quota, the cuts to fee-paying schools and the threat to allowances. Also discussed was the plight of new entrant teachers, issues arising from the implementation of the Croke Park Agreement, and attempts by the ASTI to increase flexibility with regard to parental leave, job-sharing and voluntary redeployment. A lively question and answer session and discussion followed.

Brendan O'Dea, Acting CEO of the Teaching Council, then outlined proposals for the new Career Entry Professional Programme, which is out for consultation until March 31. This initiative has major implications for principals and Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary with responsibility for Education and Research, outlined the ASTI's concerns about the proposals and urged principals, deputies and other interested parties to make submissions to the Teaching Council before the deadline expires.

After lunch, John O'Donovan, Chairperson of the Principals' and Deputy Principals' Advisory Committee, took the chair of the meeting and it was the turn of the NCCA to address the seminar. NCCA Chief Executive Dr Anne Looney outlined the background and the *raison d'être* for the ongoing review of the junior cycle. Her Deputy, John Hammond, then gave a detailed account of the proposed changes. Brendan Broderick, ASTI President, replied and voiced some major concerns that the union had around these proposals. In particular, he raised the issues of assessment, adequate resourcing for these changes, and the cap of eight subjects in the Junior Certificate exam.

The day's final contribution came from Hubert Loftus, Principal Officer with the Department of Education and Skills with responsibility for Teacher Allocation. He discussed DES Circular 0009/2012 – Staffing arrangements in post-primary schools for the 2012/2013 school year. This circular deals in particular with the requirement to manage guidance provision from within the standard allocation.

# Principals' seminar

One hundred and fifty ASTI members gathered in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Athlone on February 29 for the third Annual ASTI Seminar for Principals and Deputy Principals.

At the seminar, the Deputy General Secretary announced the membership of the newly elected Principals' and Deputy Principals' Advisory Committee. One Principal and one Deputy Principal are elected in each of nine regions, based on Standing Committee Regions. It is recommended that there should be gender balance, and that the Principal and Deputy Principal should not be from the same school. The term of office is two years and members serve a maximum of three terms. The new Committee will hold office until 2014.

## ASTI Principals' and Deputy Principals' Committee

### AREA 1 – Regions 1 and 2:

Leo Golden, Principal, and Michael Davitt, Deputy Principal.

### AREA 2 – Regions 3 and 4:

John Cleary, Principal, and Ellis Casey, Deputy Principal.

### AREA 3 – Region 5:

John O'Donovan, Principal, and Liam Murphy, Deputy Principal.

### AREA 4 – Regions 6 and 7:

Mary Keane, Principal, and Katherine Bulman, Deputy Principal.

### AREA 5 – Regions 8 and 9:

Shane Hallahan, Principal, and Michael O'Loughlin, Deputy Principal.

### AREA 6 – Regions 10 and 11:

Adrian Oughton, Principal, and Una Byrne, Deputy Principal.

### AREA 7 – Regions 12, 16 and 17:

Ciaran McCormack, Principal; the Deputy Principal position is vacant.

### AREA 8 – Regions 13 and 14:

Principal and Deputy Principal positions are vacant.

### AREA 9 – Regions 15 and 18:

Tim Kelleher, Principal, and James Anthony Carty, Deputy Principal.

Vacancies will be filled by co-option.





Delegates vote on a motion.



Delegates discuss the agenda at Convention 2011.

# A look ahead to Convention 2012

Next month more than 500 ASTI members will meet in Cork to discuss and determine ASTI policy and priorities for the coming year.

This year's Convention will focus on the long-term effects that cuts to education will have on schools, students and teachers. Priority issues for discussion will include education cutbacks, the situation facing new and non-permanent teachers, and curriculum reform.

You can keep up with what is happening at Convention on Facebook, Twitter and on the ASTI website.

## Delegates will debate motions calling on the ASTI to:

- negotiate to allow for the inclusion of extra-curricular hours and CPD in the 33 Croke Park Agreement hours;
- seek to reverse the inequity whereby new teachers are on point one of the salary scale;
- undertake that all terms of the Croke Park Agreement will become null and void if the agreement is broken by the Government;
- resist changes proposed in the Junior Cycle Review Framework until the necessary resources and in-service training are provided to ensure that all schools operate on an equal footing;
- engage in a campaign to increase awareness among parents of the implications of teachers assessing their own students; and,
- negotiate to ensure that serving teachers are given first priority in the appointment of SEC examination personnel.

A full list of motions will be published in *Nuacht* and on the ASTI website. Each ASTI branch will send delegates to Convention and each delegate has a vote, so make sure your representatives know your views on the important matters to be decided.

## Key speeches

The ASTI President will address Convention, giving his view of the situation facing schools and teachers, particularly in relation to budget cutbacks, vulnerable teachers and curriculum reform.

The General Secretary will report to Convention on the work of the union and developments in second-level education over the last year. He will also detail the priorities and actions planned for the coming year.

Key speeches will be streamed live on the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie) – from 4.30pm on Tuesday April 10.

## Elections

A number of important elections take place at Convention, including the election of the ASTI Vice-President 2012/2013. More information on the candidates for election is available in *Nuacht* and on the ASTI website.

## Keep up with what's happening

You can keep up with what's happening at Convention on Twitter and Facebook:

[www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie)



[www.twitter.com/astionion](https://twitter.com/astionion)



[www.facebook.com/astiteachers](https://www.facebook.com/astiteachers)

A full report on Convention will feature in the next issue of *ASTIR*.



*Enough is enough: student teachers march down O'Connell St in Dublin.*

# Equal pay for equal work

*ASTIR* speaks to two of the organisers of last month's protest by student teachers.

On January 31, without warning or consultation, it was announced that all allowances for new entrants to teaching would be suspended from February 1, pending a public service review of allowances. This surprise announcement followed a cap on allowances for new teachers imposed two months before, and a 10% cut to new entrants' pay applying from January 2011.

## Singled out

Within days of the announcement William O'Brien, a PDE student in UCD, and Yvonne Rossiter, a student at TCD, were mobilising classmates and setting a campaign of opposition in motion. They and their peers were being unfairly singled out, and William and Yvonne felt that someone had to make a stand.

Coming in the form of a formal circular letter to schools, and on top of several previous cuts, the move to abolish allowances initially prompted a muted reaction among his PDE class, says William: "It slipped under some people's radar. For others, it was simply an announcement about something

that they felt might or might not impact them. This generally reflects the level of confusion about the changes to new teachers' salaries".

The situation was similar in TCD, says Yvonne: "There wasn't a lot of reaction from the class but I was approached by a few individuals and asked was this definitely going ahead. I sent an email to the whole class asking if people wanted to meet up to discuss the matter further and to start to make a plan for a protest. Straight away I made contact with William to get UCD on board also".

Once the students realised that new teachers were to be hit with a cut of at least €4,000, on top of a 15% cut imposed the previous year, the campaign gathered pace. Yvonne and William put their college work on the back burner to concentrate on getting information out by social media and through college networks. Both had the long view in mind when they decided to prioritise the organisation of a protest to the potential detriment of their assignments and teaching practice. It cost them a few sleepless nights, but as William points out, what they were opposing had the potential to negatively impact their whole lives and



*Yvonne Rossiter (centre) and William O'Brien (far right) pictured with other student protesters outside Leinster House.*

*Members of ASTI Standing Committee pictured with protest organisers William and Yvonne (front). From left: Gerry Breslin, ASTI Vice President; Kieran Christie, Honorary National Organiser; Fintan O'Mahony; John Holian; Sean O'Neill; Neil Curren; Elaine Devlin; Sally Maguire; Colm O'Toole; and, Michael Barry.*

the futures of all newly qualified teachers: "Hard work is easy when the cause is just!"

The students had three weeks to organise the protest and it was intense work, says William: "There is no doubt that social media facilitates the rapid momentum that builds up behind an idea to protest. Contact was made through class mailing lists, in front-of-class speeches, and by word of mouth and Facebook. I would have been happy to protest outside Leinster House on my own. Happily, there were others who felt just the same as I did".

In fact, 1,500 others felt the same, and they travelled from all over the country to protest in Dublin on February 22, marching from O'Connell Street to Leinster House, where they demanded "Equal Pay for Equal Work".

### Success

The success of the event surpassed Yvonne's expectations. "It took a lot of people to make the protest work; there had to be constant contact between the college reps, the teaching unions and Government officials to try and get everything organised for the day. I had initially hoped for around 500 people to take part, so when the number on the day turned out to be 1,500 I was very pleased. Perhaps if we had a longer time frame to plan this we could have got more support, but once the date was set we had to just see who turned up on the day," she says.

The protest, which gained a lot of coverage in national and online media, was just the first step. The campaign is ongoing through online petitions and Facebook, where the students are looking for suggestions on the next steps to take. Yvonne says: "Both William and I have been balancing teaching practice and college work all year and we can only hope that all the time and effort we put into this protest will have some sort of positive result".

The ASTI has called for the ICTU to acknowledge that salary cuts and reduced pension benefits for new entrants impact disproportionately on young and female teachers and this should be an element in any campaign to restore parity between different employees. See page 17.

The ASTI is committed to campaigning against attacks on new teachers' pay, conditions and job prospects.

The targeting of new teachers is a key theme of this year's Annual Convention. For more see page 17.

## New teachers have been unfairly targeted

### First...

Budget 2011 slashed new teachers' salaries by 10%. Together with a change in the salary scale starting point for new teachers, this means an overall reduction in pay of over 15% for teachers appointed after January 1, 2011.

### Then...

Budget 2012 imposed a cap on the qualification allowances payable to those who entered teaching after December 5, 2011.

### Now...

It has been announced that all allowances above the basic salary scale will be suspended from February 1, 2011, for new beneficiaries, pending the outcome of a review by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.



# Online Master of Arts in Teaching & Learning



**Now  
enrolling**  
for spring 2012

## Overview

Hibernia College's M.A. in Teaching & Learning provides today's primary and post-primary teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to deal with current issues in the modern classroom. Specific areas covered include additional learning needs; diversity, development and disadvantage; i-learning and contemporary issues in education.

Delivered by experienced educators with a focus on application in the Irish classroom, the programme provides the tools and knowledge to enable teachers bring the latest innovations and best practice into the class setting. Because the content is based on strategies and techniques (rather than a particular classroom curriculum) graduates from the programme will be able to apply their new skills regardless of the age of the students with whom they work.

The programme consists of 14 modules plus a thesis. Each module represents 5 ECTS credits, is completed online and consists of 10 weeks of downloadable multimedia-enhanced lectures, self directed study and live online tutorials. A unique aspect of this programme is that each module can also be completed as a stand alone continuing professional development course.

## Key Facts

- Deals with current issues faced by today's teachers
- Focuses on application in the Irish classroom
- HETAC accredited to Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications ([www.nfq.ie](http://www.nfq.ie))
- Delivered by experienced educators
- Modules can be completed as stand alone continuing professional development courses
- Duration: 2 years taught plus thesis
- Relevant for both primary and post-primary teachers
- Now enrolling for spring 2012

## Entry Requirements Include

- A recognised teaching qualification  
OR  
A minimum of 2 years practical experience in a recognised educational context.
- An undergraduate honours degree (Level 8). Holders of a Level 7 qualification can also apply for entry to the programme through the recognition of prior learning. The College will assess such applications on an individual basis.



Hibernia College is a HETAC accredited online college offering quality assured, blended and online education programmes.



For more details or to register for an information webinar please visit:

[www.hiberniacollege.com/matl](http://www.hiberniacollege.com/matl)



# Supporting teachers' rights

The ASTI is re-issuing its Charter for Teachers in this issue of *ASTIR*. Find out why and what the Charter is about.

Read the full Charter overleaf



The ASTI Charter for Teachers sets out basic rights and conditions that teachers should expect from their job and workplace. These rights and conditions include the right to a safe working environment, the right to in-career development opportunities, and the right to teach free from disruption, intimidation and abuse from any source. The Charter is intended as a support to teachers, to remind them of their rights and to give them some reinforcement in pursuing their entitlements.

The Charter was first launched in 2004, as part of an ASTI campaign to promote a positive learning and working environment in second-level schools. Its aim is to put the welfare of teachers and their students at the core of school communities.

## Re-issuing the Charter

The ASTI is re-issuing the Charter now in reaction to concerns that education cutbacks, expanding class sizes and increasing workload have the potential to undermine teachers' professional well-being. "A positive work environment is central to the success of any organisation – schools are no different," explains ASTI President Brendan Broderick. "At a time when schools are being hit with successive cutbacks to resources and staffing, that positive environment is under obvious threat. That is why we are re-issuing the Charter to acknowledge teachers' entitlement to a healthy and supportive workplace, and their right to be recognised as professionals who should be supported in their important work. "Over the last 10 years second-level schools have adapted to massive changes, including socio-cultural, legislative and technological. They face these against a background of underinvestment in education, mounting bureaucracy, and inadequate continuing professional development and other supports. While we lobby for the proper funding of our education system at national level, the Charter is designed to take a proactive approach at the school level to promoting the need for quality teaching and learning environments in schools, and to inform teachers of their rights in this regard."

## Unique profession

The ASTI Charter recognises that teaching is an exceptional job with unique rewards and challenges. Within this context, the ASTI Charter recognises teachers' rights to:

### Professional autonomy and input

For example, the right to exercise professional judgement and to be consulted on policy matters in education and related areas.

### Protection from hazards in the workplace

For example, the right to protection from harassment, violence, negative behaviour or stress in the working environment.

### Adequate resources, time and reward

For example, the right to undertake a manageable workload in an adequately resourced school environment, in return for a salary commensurate with the professional status and the work of teachers, and opportunities for promotion and mobility.

### Professional development opportunities

For example, the right to participate in in-career development and to financial support and recognition for participation.

### Professional rights in Society

For example, the right to privacy and respect for teachers' personal lifestyles and the right to participate freely in civic, social and public life.

The Charter sets out teachers' rights and conditions in relation to:

- professional status;
- professional working conditions;
- professional teaching in the classroom;
- professional development; and,
- professional rights in society.

# ASTI Charter for Teachers

Teachers are the professional educators. Their role in society is vital, unique and far reaching. Teacher professionalism is central to the work of schools and to the achievement of broader social and economic goals. High standards of teacher professionalism require good working conditions, a supportive community and policies that support schools and the work of teachers. It is important for society to support the right of teachers to teach and the right of students to learn.

## I.

### Professional status of teachers

- i. The right to public recognition and support of the work of teachers
- ii. The right to exercise professional judgement in the discharge of their professional duties
- iii. The right to contribute to, and to be consulted on, policy matters in education and related areas
- iv. The right to privilege, acting in loco parentis and in good faith, when reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect

Teacher professionalism is central to the work of schools and to the achievement of broader social and economic goals.



## II.

### Professional working conditions

- i. The right to be protected from bullying, harassment, violence, intimidation and stress in the working environment
- ii. The right to a physically and psychologically safe working environment
- iii. The right to work in an adequately resourced school environment
- iv. The right to a manageable workload and to refuse an unreasonable workload
- v. The right to refuse to participate in non-contractual duties in the school
- vi. The right to a reduced teaching workload to discharge professional duties
- vii. The right to a salary commensurate with the professional status and the work of teachers
- viii. The right to the payment of salary on due dates
- ix. The right to natural justice, due process, impartiality and fairness when the subject of a complaint
- x. The right to a collegial and co-operative working environment
- xi. The right to a structured teaching career with opportunities for promotion and mobility
- xii. The right to family-friendly working conditions

## III.

### Professional teaching in the classroom

- i. The right to teach free from disruption, intimidation and abuse from any source
- ii. The right to support from school management and teaching colleagues when confronted with problems of negative student behaviour in the classroom
- iii. The right to teach in classrooms that are physically safe, hygienic and warm, and have proper ventilation and lighting

## IV.

### Professional development of teachers

- i. The right to quality pre-service education, induction and in-career development
- ii. The right to participate in in-career development, including in-service training, during the working day
- iii. The right to financial support and recognition for participation in continuing professional development

## V.

### Professional rights in society

- i. The right to privacy and respect for teachers' personal lifestyles
- ii. The right to participate freely in civic, social and public life
- iii. The right to the practice of cultural and religious beliefs

# What schools and teachers have given

Schools and teachers have had enough austerity.

Teachers have been hit with significant pay cuts coupled with additional duties, while schools have had to cope with the loss of teachers, restrictions on teaching and administrative resources, and reduced funding.

A range of cuts has had a serious impact on schools:	
An increase in the pupil–teacher ratio from 2009	= The loss of hundreds of teachers in schools
A moratorium on posts of responsibility imposed in 2009	= Schools struggling to cover pastoral care and administrative duties; promotional opportunities removed for the vast majority of teachers
Cuts in student capitation funding with more cuts looming until 2015	= Schools under pressure to pay bills and provide essential services
From 2012, schools must manage guidance provision from within their existing pupil–teacher ratio	= Restrictions on guidance provision; less subject choice; hundreds of teachers lost to schools
Range of support posts removed or abolished	= Students missing out on support from resource teachers for Travellers, English language teachers, and disadvantage support teachers
Supervision and substitution cutbacks	= Educational trips and extra-curricular activities curtailed.

## Teachers have paid for the economic crisis year after year:

### 2009:

- an average 7.5% pay cut in the form of the public service pension levy;
- non-payment of a 3.5% pay increase due under Towards 2016; and,
- curtailment of the supervision and substitution scheme, meaning significant losses to part-time and temporary teachers.

### 2010:

- a pay cut averaging 6.5% for all teachers; and,
- non-payment of 2.5% due under Towards 2016.

### 2011:

- a 15% pay cut for new entrants to teaching;
- a 4% cut in pensions for retired teachers;
- hundreds of teachers redeployed;
- an additional 33 hours of non-teaching work per year; and,
- an extra rota period for teachers doing supervision and substitution.

### 2012

- a cut in qualification allowances for new entrants.

The ASTI is currently conducting a comprehensive survey of the effects that budget cutbacks have had on second-level schools. The next edition of *ASTIR* will have a full report and results will be available on [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

### What the loss of teachers really means for schools and students

The loss of teachers at second level causes a ripple effect across a school, which can mean:

- restrictions on students’ subject choice;
- year groups and subject levels taught in the one class;
- larger classes; and,
- schools forced to drop subjects and programmes.

Read the results of an ASTI survey of how the loss of teachers in 2009 and 2010 affected schools at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).



# Allowances an integral part of pay

As this *ASTIR* goes to print, an announcement on the review of allowances and premium payments in the public service is imminent.



For the latest news on the public service-wide review of allowances, visit [www.osti.ie](http://www.osti.ie).

The review began in February, and allowances for “new beneficiaries” have been frozen since February 1. This includes qualification allowances for newly appointed teachers and teachers appointed to post of responsibility positions.

## First ...

The review was initially announced on December 5, 2011 (Budget Day). The Government stated that the review would take place in early 2012 and would lead to a 5% reduction in the cost of allowances in 2012. Further reductions are likely in subsequent years, according to the Minister for Public Expenditure.

On Budget Day the Government also announced a cap on qualification allowances for new entrants to teaching, and for existing teachers acquiring new qualifications, pending the wider review of the public service.

The teacher unions immediately sought clarification from the Department of Education and Skills with regard to the detail and scope of the proposed changes.

## Next ...

However, without engaging with the unions, and in a move contrary to normal industrial relations practices and procedures, the Department published a circular on the capping of qualification allowances shortly after the Budget. Circular 70/2011 is confusing and unclear, and has

caused uncertainty among ASTI members, particularly among members who are currently engaged in pursuing additional qualifications such as masters and doctoral qualifications.

## And then ...

On January 31, 2012, the Department of Education and Skills issued a circular stating that from February 1 teachers’ allowances would not be paid to new beneficiaries pending the conclusion of the public service-wide review. Again, in breach of normal practice, there were no negotiations or consultations with teacher unions about the Circular prior to its issue. The freezing of allowances affects new entrants to teaching who, from February 1, 2012, do not receive any qualification allowances or payment for participation in the substitution and supervision scheme. It also affects existing teachers appointed to a post of responsibility since February 1, 2012.

The ASTI has reacted angrily to these unilateral decisions, which were taken and implemented without any consultation. The ASTI and the other teacher unions have communicated their anger and dismay to the Department and have met with Department representatives on a number of occasions. The position of the teacher unions is that allowances are an integral part of teachers’ pay.

# Keeping education in the news

In recent weeks, ASTI representatives have spoken out on a range of issues.

## Suspension of allowances

“Pat King, Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland General Secretary, said young teachers who find work in the coming weeks will not know what they will be paid beyond the review, and teachers would not apply for middle management roles in schools if they are not going to be paid for the additional work.”

*Irish Examiner, February 1*

“Pat King, General Secretary of the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland, said the Department’s move represented ‘yet another disgraceful attack on vulnerable young teachers who are already facing uncertainty in relation to their employment and whose pay scales have been decimated. ‘The manner of this announcement – made without any consultation with the teacher unions who represent 60,000 teachers – demonstrates scant regard for the realities facing young teachers and defies normal consultation practices between the Department and unions, which have been in existence for decades.’”

*The Irish Times, February 2*

“The ASTI ... accused the Department of an outrageous betrayal of trust that shows contempt for agreed industrial relations procedures.”

*RTÉ News, February 2*

## Education cutbacks

“From September on, there are more severe cuts; there are about 700 jobs being taken out of second-level education in September. They won’t be replaced.”

Pat King, *The Last Word, Today FM, January 22*

“Pat King, General Secretary of the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland, said it was not the responsibility of teachers to put their hands in their pockets to pay for education. ‘Suggestions that teachers should pay give scant regard to the fact that one-quarter of our teachers are temporary and part-time, earning very low salaries.’”

*Irish Independent, February 2*

ASTI members Enda Whelton and Roland Rogers were interviewed as part of *The Irish Times* series ‘The squeezed middle’:

“Roland explained that pay cuts have left him weighing up whether he can continue to afford health insurance: ‘I’ve been paying into it for years, so it’s a difficult choice. And then, what happens if you need it? I’m getting older – I’m 42 – but my income is down at least 14%, and with the extra taxes and charges, it’s hard to find the money to justify it.’”

*The Irish Times, February 9*

Enda told the paper that lack of job opportunities had made him a ‘weekend dad’: “During the week Whelton – a 35-year-old secondary school teacher – lives in a rented house in Dublin with three others. Then on Friday evenings he drives to Co. Clare to see his wife and one-year-old daughter for the weekend. All too soon Sunday evening comes around and it’s time to hit the road again ... [Enda] estimates that a combination of pay reductions, the pension levy and tax increases means his salary is down by between 20 and 23% ... While reduced incomes are taking their toll, Enda says it hasn’t taken away from his enjoyment of teaching.”

*The Irish Times, February 10*

“The context we are working in at the moment is an era of cuts. It is the worst possible environment for reform. All of the cuts are demoralising teachers. They are cutting guidance, they are cutting resource teaching, they are cutting language support, they are cutting home school liaison teachers, and we are expected to reform [education] in this context.”

Pat King speaks to George Lee on *The Business, RTÉ 1, March 5.*

## Unfair treatment of new teachers

“ASTI President Brendan Broderick said that trainee teachers lucky enough to find a job would be treated differently to their colleagues because of the pay freeze. ‘Young teachers are the lifeblood of second-level schools’, he said. ‘After spending four or five years studying and training, today’s student teachers will enter schools with the same enthusiasm as previous teacher graduates, but keenly aware of the unfair treatment they are receiving. Entry to teaching and the retention of teachers will be affected. In the end students will suffer’, he said.”

*The Irish Daily Mail, February 23*

“Newly qualified teachers face a very bleak future, which includes emigration, unemployment and under-employment, and now on top of that we have this lower pay scale ... and their allowances are now under threat, as is their pension ... over 95% of new entrants to teaching next September will be in non-permanent positions ... This is the reality and I think the public out there are not aware of that.”

ASTI President Brendan Broderick on *Drivetime, RTÉ Radio 1, February 23*

# Defending the public service

The public sector in Ireland has come under increasing attack in the media. *ASTIR* sets the record straight.

## Myth: 'The Croke Park Agreement hasn't delivered anything and should be abandoned'

This line is used by those who believe that dismantling the Croke Park Agreement will pave the way for further cuts to the pay of public servants. Its proponents ignore the significant savings that have already been achieved across the public service, as verified by the Public Service Agreement Implementation Body.

The Agreement has led to significant reductions in the numbers of public service employees, and significant savings in the public service pay bill, as well as the benefits to the economy of industrial peace.

The latest figures show that public service payroll costs fell by 15.5% between 2009 and 2011. Payroll savings, non-payroll savings and "cost avoidance initiatives" in 2011 led to annual savings of more than €680 million in the first year of the Agreement. Already, payroll savings are ahead of target for 2012.

According to the Implementation Body's website, savings in education include:

- a reduction of 2,000 posts of responsibility in primary and second-level schools, with a saving of €10m annually; the ongoing moratorium on posts means that there will be further savings in 2012;
- the provision by teachers of 33 additional hours per school year (amounting to additional hours worked of 890,000 per annum) without diminishing tuition time, and flexibility in relation to changes in post of responsibility duties (the estimated value of these hours is €43m annually); and,
- new redeployment procedures for second-level teachers have been implemented, resulting in the redeployment of some 200 teachers with an estimated full year saving of €12m.

All of this means that teachers have delivered their part of the Agreement. In response to reports that the Government wants to renegotiate the Croke Park Agreement, Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore made the following statement in January:

"The Government is not seeking to unpick the Croke Park Agreement; the Government is committed to working the Croke Park Agreement and to honouring the terms of the Croke Park Agreement. When agreement is entered into between Government and trade unions, this Government will honour it and will make it work. The Croke Park Agreement is

delivering in terms of the reforms that are required in our public service." In February, Fine Gael Minister of State Brian Hayes said that the Croke Park deal has delivered and must continue to deliver. He said that the agreement "can make an important contribution to ensuring stability and certainty, the necessary foundations for a return to growth".

For more information on savings brought about by the Croke Park Agreement, visit [www.implementationbody.ie](http://www.implementationbody.ie).

## Myth: 'The public service is bloated and costly'

A report entitled *Public Sector Trends 2011*, published by the Institute of Public Administration in November 2011, reviews the cost and size of the public sector in Ireland over the past few years. It states:

- numbers employed in the public sector in Ireland, as a percentage of total employment, are not excessive by European standards;
- there has been a significant drop in the numbers employed in both the public sector and public service from 2008, with a drop of just under 6% in each case. Numbers employed in the public sector and public service in 2011 are just back below 2006 levels of employment; and,
- as numbers are reduced further to meet fiscal and economic targets, there is a need to closely examine and plan for the impact of retaining vital skills, knowledge and capacity in the public service.

In relation to the cost of the public sector, the report looks at public spending as a percentage of GDP (gross domestic product). The report states:

- historically Ireland is shown as having a very small share of public spending compared to most EU countries; and,
- the particularly large jump [in public spending as a percentage of GDP] from 2009 to 2012 is largely explained by the impact on Government expenditure of specific Government support to banks during the financial crisis, in the form of capital injections.

For more information, see [http://www.ipa.ie/pdf/Public\\_Sector\\_Trends\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ipa.ie/pdf/Public_Sector_Trends_2011.pdf).

# Service above and beyond

ASTI member PAT DUFF details a survey that he and colleague CATHERINE DUFFY carried out on teachers' extra-curricular activities in their schools



*Niamh McEvoy, Malahide Community School, in action against Anna Finnegan, Our Lady and St Patrick's, Belfast, in U19B Girls Schools League Basketball Finals. Picture Credit: Stephen McCarthy/Sportsfile.*

As all teachers know, hundreds of hours not measured or taken into account in any discussions about working hours are given to schools by teachers each year. In addition to 22 hours of teaching a week, teachers prepare lessons, gather resources, set and mark exams, and deal with the various issues that arise on a daily basis with students, parents and colleagues.

This is only part of the picture. Schools in Ireland have a considerable range of curricular and extra-curricular activities that are made possible by the hours that teachers and staff volunteer outside of the normal teaching day. The benefit of these activities to students is enormous.

## Measuring time

In most schools, this extra work is not being captured or measured. It can, therefore, be lost and forgotten in the debates and discussions about the job of teaching and all it entails. To address this, my colleague Catherine Duffy and I embarked on a pilot project to measure the time spent on these extracurricular activities in our school over one year: the academic year 2010/2011.

To ensure that the data was gathered in a uniform way, we developed a template for staff to complete, which captured: details of the activity; the number of students and teachers involved; and, the

	Activity	Teachers involved	Details	Total teacher hours
Sports	Sports fixtures and training	24 teachers training 37 teams	Preparation, games, etc. Each team has an average of six weeks' playing	2,220
Study/revision	Across the curriculum, extra time is given to students	21 teachers	Study, revision, counselling, mock exams, portfolio and project preparation, extra classes	978.5
School trips	14 school trips throughout the year	84 staff supervising 800+ students	Planning, preparation, organising and supervising trips	4,523
Music	Three musicals and a carol service	Eight teachers	Costumes, rehearsals, shows, auditions	518
Volunteering/ sponsorship	Sponsored sleepover and charity run	21 staff members working with 18 students	Planning and supervising events	162
Extra-curricular programmes	Gaisce, Young Scientist, DEFIB and CPR training	22 teachers working with 60 students	After school and lunchtime meetings	98
<b>Total</b>				<b>8,499.5</b>

number of hours. Not surprisingly, the final document collating the information is lengthy and detailed. We present here a substantially condensed version, and the full document can be viewed on the Malahide Community School website – [www.malahidecs.ie](http://www.malahidecs.ie). As members of staff were reporting after the event, in some cases the time had to be estimated. Where this applied, an underestimation of the amount of time was recorded. In the case of school trips, we allowed 12 hours per day, although in reality teachers are on duty for 24 hours during trips.

#### Importance of extra-curricular activities

All of the teachers concerned in these activities gave their time willingly and with a good heart. The intention and motivation was to enhance the school life of our students. We would encourage other schools to do a similar audit of the time volunteered by teachers and staff to their school. It is illuminating to see the variety and scale of the different activities.

In the UK in the 1980s there was a very bitter dispute between the teaching unions and the Government. Teachers were vilified by the Education Secretary. The unions imposed a work to rule and all extra-curricular activities stopped. The conflict was protracted and messy. When the dispute ended, many teachers did not return to their former activities. School sport was particularly badly hit. Former Prime Minister John Major is on record as saying that English cricket went into decline after this action. Now, at a time when there is an explosion in childhood obesity, the authorities in the UK are desperately trying to encourage more physical activity among young people, particularly in school.

#### Protecting commitment

In Ireland, a considerable amount of sport is provided in schools. Teams

are run on a voluntary basis by teachers with a passion for their sport. If we discourage this by short-sighted measures to 'increase productivity', or fail to acknowledge the time and effort required to run these activities, there is a very real danger that they will disappear over time. Sport is just one activity that can provide measurable beneficial effects. There are other important benefits that students gain from acting, music, and cultural and academic activities, including building confidence and self-esteem, personal development and growth. Our results show the number of hours spent; unfortunately, they cannot show the energy, enthusiasm, passion, dedication and commitment that also went into each and every activity. This is the truly immeasurable and invaluable input that must be maintained and nurtured.

The table above is a considerably condensed version of the research compiled. The full document can be viewed at [www.malahidecs.ie](http://www.malahidecs.ie).

A motion calling for the ASTI to negotiate for the inclusion of extra-curricular hours in the 33 additional hours agreed under the Croke Park Agreement will be debated at ASTI Convention next month. See page 17 for more information.

#### Pat Duff

*Pat Duff teaches in Malahide Community School, Dublin. See the full range of extra-curricular activities undertaken and time commitment given by teachers there at [www.malahidecs.ie](http://www.malahidecs.ie).*

# Celebrating science success

Two teachers tell us about the impact success in science has had on their school and students.

## Jennifer Dixon teaches science and maths in St David's CBS, Artane, Dublin:

There has always been an enthusiasm for science in St David's, but participating in SciFest, and having the confidence to go outside the school and take part in competitions, has added a new and exciting dimension to this enthusiasm. In just three years, participation in SciFest has grown from just one team of three students in 2009 to 15 teams and 40 students in 2011.

Three years ago, three energetic third-year students bounced into my lab saying that they had an idea and would like to enter SciFest. The idea involved presenting the SciFest judges with ducks, a maze and their project, which supported ducks possessing a memory. They received a 'Highly Commended' certificate for their work.

Their success encouraged the boys to return the following year, this time determined to compete at a higher level. Having been exposed to the best of the best at the previous event, they knew what was required and delivered an outstanding project. They had become confident and articulate in communicating in the language of science, presenting findings to judges, and reflecting upon their tasks and performances. It was terrific to see this growth in such a short space of time.

The hard work paid off and they were awarded the INTEL Best Project Award at DIT Kevin Street in 2011 for their research extension into correlating brain size to memory function in rodents and linking it with treatments for Alzheimer's disease. They also placed first in the senior biology category. It was an amazing day.

Having been given the opportunity to taste success, and now believing even more in their ideas, their research and their abilities, they were delighted to be put forward to go to INTEL HQ in Leixlip to compete against the other Intel Best Project Award winners from each SciFest exhibition. They were one stage away from representing Ireland and SciFest at the World Finals in the US at the International Science and Engineering Fair.

They didn't win this award, but they did win the pride of parents, grandparents, the school principal and their teachers. I was beyond proud of the journey I had the pleasure of witnessing; they now show incredible potential for the future.

Shane Boylan, Carl Burke and Cathal Fagan are just three examples of what participating in SciFest has meant for St David's. Other teams have also risen to the challenge and been highly commended, disproving the cliché of science being for the few as opposed to the many. All of the students involved became more confident in their abilities and appreciated every second of the process. The increase in confidence has also led to students from St David's becoming regular competitors at the BT Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition.

Enthusiasm for science in St David's has grown and grown. At this time each year another group of eager junior students will team up and explode into my lab with amazing levels of enthusiasm for scientific research. It's fantastic to see. With a few carefully chosen questions, their ideas and interests can be moulded into a hypothesis fit to test. They have now begun their individual and team journey to being



Synge Street CBS Young Scientist winners Eric Doyle and Mark Kelly, pictured with Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, and Colm O'Neill, CEO, BT.



Jennifer Dixon (left), pictured with Sheila Porter, SciFest Project Manager, and students Shane Boylan, Cathal Fagan and Carl Burke wearing their Intel Excellence in Science medals.

articulate in the field of science and scientific thinking.

SciFest is a truly inclusive competition that encourages all students across a diverse range of backgrounds and interests. SciFest also puts heavy emphasis on positive encouragement and it is a really lovely accessible day out, a great resource that should be supported.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sheila Porter, a former science teacher who originally set SciFest up, from all of the St David's students who have participated in SciFest over the past three years. It has been a tremendous journey to date.

**Kate Walsh teaches science in Synge Street CBS, the only school to have won the BT Young Scientist competition three times:**

Synge Street CBS has had fantastic success in the BT Young Scientist Competition in the past – since 2003 the school has won 24 awards, including winning the overall award an unprecedented three times. I haven't taught in the school for very long but Jim Cooke, who is now retired, did a lot of work with students on projects over the years.

I met with Jim to find out what was involved when the boys, Eric Doyle and Mark Kelly, approached me to ask me about supervising their project at this year's competition. I have to say the project was all their own work – I just answered any questions they had about maths or physics, proofread their results, and things like that.

They worked so hard all year round, even over the summer holidays. Their project was based on the 250-year-old Euler Two Fixed Centre problem, recently solved by Irish mathematician Diarmuid Ó Mathúna. The boys

wanted to expand on his work to improve on the accuracy of mathematical models that predict where a satellite is at any moment. They programmed Ó Mathúna's formulas and then ran simulations on existing algorithms, blocks of software for determining a satellite's location in space.

In layman's terms, they produced a means of accurately assessing where a probe sent into space will end up. Allowing for this higher degree of accuracy helps to reduce the need to burn fuel to reposition the satellite. Their algorithm is also smaller and faster than existing ones, and so would run more efficiently on board a satellite.

To have produced something like that aged 17 is very impressive. Both students are in sixth year at the moment and hope to study science in university; Mark plans to do theoretical physics and Eric wants to do chemistry.

Science subjects are very popular in the school; all students study science for Junior Cert and there is a high proportion of uptake at senior cycle. Everyone in the school – students and staff – are proud of the boys' and the school's achievements in the BT Young Scientist Exhibition.

SciFest was the brainchild of ASTI member Sheila Porter, who currently works as project manager of the competition. The competition involves a number of science fairs held in universities and institutes of technology around the country. It was launched nationwide in 2008 with the support of Intel Ireland and Discover Science and Engineering as project partners.

# A special crisis

ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee member KEVIN BROGAN looks at the impact the downgrading of special needs education is having on second-level schools.

The intention of the introduction of special needs services to schools, through the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004, was to encourage inclusivity, and to support the participation of students with special needs in the mainstream school system.

In 2006, there were about 6,000 special needs assistants (SNAs) in Ireland, compared with fewer than 300 in 1997. Today there is a cap of 10,575 on SNA posts nationally. However, despite the increase in SNAs in our schools, the recent cutbacks in education, especially restrictions in SNA allocation, are causing considerable anxiety for parents, students and teachers.

## Impact on students

The *Irish Times* of November 26, 2011, documented the case of a student with Down syndrome who has been unable to attend school because the school and his parents fear for his welfare. Despite a report from a psychologist, which stated that the child needed a full-time SNA, the school has been told that he will have to share an SNA with another child who also has Down syndrome. This is despite the Government's promise to parents protesting against cutbacks earlier this year that an SNA would be provided for every child requiring one, and the more recent promise by the Minister for Education that his Department would monitor the needs of schools in disadvantaged areas with the aim of ensuring that children with special needs would be catered for.

What is pertinent in the *Irish Times* report is that what was originally intended as one-to-one help for students with special needs has now become a support shared by students, each assigned a specified number of hours of help.

In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that parents are withdrawing their children from mainstream schools and trying to enroll them in special schools, preventing the very inclusivity that was the original purpose of the EPSEN Act.

## Teacher concerns

In my position on the ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee, I have examined the concerns of teachers in relation to special needs education in schools. A concern has emerged that because the onus is on the school to apply for SNAs, some schools may be able to put forward a stronger argument than others. At one ASTI branch meeting where the SNA situation was discussed, the view was expressed that because students with special needs are not receiving the

assistance that was previously provided, subject teachers' time is taken up helping students with special needs. This reduces the time given to other students, but the student with special needs is the person losing out most.

What was emphasised most in the discussion was the upset experienced by the student who, having been assessed, has had a dedicated SNA throughout his/her school life, and who has now to make his/her way without the SNA with the best efforts of the subject teacher. There are further reports from teachers of the upset and anxiety experienced by students with special needs and how this anxiety can impact on learning or, in some cases, manifest itself in behavioural issues.

It should be emphasised, therefore, that when there are a number of students with special needs whose educational needs are not being catered for because of the Department's SNA allocation policy, this disruption is increased, not just for the students with special needs, but for the whole student body.

## Impact on schools

The change in how SNAs work has an impact beyond the classroom; it affects the already overstretched pastoral care services in the school, which have also been depleted by the unjustifiable assimilation of guidance counsellors to within the quota, and increases the workload of the year heads and form tutors. Equally important is the detrimental effect this change in policy has on the SNA, who has been trained to help a student on a one-to-one basis, and who has informed him/herself of the many different needs of their student.

One such SNA has reported that because of changes in allocation, instead of assisting only her





student with his educational needs, her work now involves sitting in with different students in different classes on an ad hoc basis while also, at the request of management, asking teachers to write reports on different students with special needs whom she was responsible for and whom she met for a few classes a day, while also carrying round the bags of these students and making sure that they got to the classes assigned to them. I have heard anecdotal evidence of increasingly aggressive behaviour by students with special needs whose assistance has been reduced – in many cases this is directed at the SNA.

**Addressing the issue**

What can we in the ASTI do to counteract this situation, and to reverse a policy that discriminates against the most vulnerable students in our schools, impacts negatively on the education of all students, and endangers the health and safety of all students, SNAs and teachers?

The ASTI does not represent SNAs directly, but it does advocate for students, the quality of their educational experience and the assistance required in the classroom, and it could be argued that the impact of this policy, which changes the work description of SNAs, is having a detrimental effect on education in the classroom and on the workload of ASTI members. We must ensure that the needs of students with special educational needs are being met according to their initial assessment and SNA allocation, which aimed to include them equally in mainstream education. Each student should have equality of access to the curriculum.

## A teacher tells us how the loss of SNAs has affected their school

We had eight SNAs in our school last year, shared between 13 students. This year we have 15 students needing SNA support but we were only granted five SNAs. We appealed this decision to the NCSE last September. After filling in several different sets of forms, facilitating a visit from the SENO, and numerous phone calls, emails and letters, we were granted 0.5 of an SNA after mid-term in February. In the meantime we were trying to stretch the five SNAs we had to look after all 15 of those students, whose difficulties included: autism spectrum disorders; severe ADHD; serious emotional and behavioural problems; epilepsy; and, sight and hearing difficulties. It is still impossible for us, as a resource department, to care for all of those students' needs all of the time. It is equally difficult for class teachers to make adequate provision for these students in classes with larger numbers, an increasingly diverse student cohort and perhaps two or more levels of their subject. We have a particularly large number of students with special educational needs in our school, but if we do not have adequate SNA support, we may soon reach the stage where we will have to refuse entry to such students on grounds of health and safety.

**Kevin Brogan**

*Kevin Brogan teaches in St Joseph's CBS Drogheda, and is a member of the ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee.*

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# Maternity leave: what to expect

ASTIR answers your questions about maternity and paternity leave entitlements.



## What do I need to do before I take maternity leave?

You should submit the relevant application form (available on the ASTI website) to your principal, along with a medical certificate confirming pregnancy, and stating the expected week of the birth. The form and medical certificate must be submitted at least six weeks before the date on which you intend to go on maternity leave.

If you pay Class A PRSI you must also apply for maternity benefit from the Department of Social Protection on the MB10 form. Maternity benefit from this Department will issue directly to you and an equivalent salary deduction will be made from your salary by the Department of Education and Skills. You can check what class of PRSI you pay on your payslip.

## How do I calculate my maternity leave?

- All teachers who reach the 24th week of pregnancy are entitled to 26 weeks' paid maternity leave. A minimum of two weeks and a maximum of 22 weeks must be taken before the end of the week of the baby's expected birth. A minimum of four weeks must be taken after the week of the expected date of birth.
- Following this, you may opt to take up to a further 16 weeks of additional statutory unpaid leave.
- You are entitled to up to 30 days' leave in lieu for days of your paid maternity leave that overlap with days on which your school will be closed for holidays.
- You are also entitled to leave in lieu for all public holidays during your statutory unpaid leave.
- You may apply to the board of management to take further non-statutory unpaid leave to the end of the school year (August 31).
- You are entitled to leave in lieu for any public holiday occurring during the first 13 weeks of this non-statutory unpaid leave, to be taken when the school re-opens in September.

If the birth occurs before your maternity leave has begun, maternity leave must commence immediately and you must inform your principal.

## I am a fixed-term teacher, am I entitled to maternity leave?

Fixed-term contract holders are entitled to full maternity leave entitlement during the term of their contract. Maternity-related

entitlements will cease on the expiry of your contract, unless it is followed directly by another contract for a post funded by the Department of Education. If you have maternity leave in lieu remaining when your contract expires, you will be paid in lieu for this.

## Can I take time off for antenatal appointments?

Yes, pregnant teachers can take time off work, without losing pay, to attend medical appointments related to antenatal care, or to attend one set of antenatal classes in your working career. Two weeks' notice of appointments must be given to your employer.

Expectant fathers are entitled to time off work, without loss of pay, to attend the last two antenatal classes in a set attended by the pregnant mother.

## If I am ill because of my pregnancy, will this affect my sick leave entitlement?

A period of pregnancy-related sick leave will not be counted in determining a teacher's entitlement to paid sick leave. If you develop a pregnancy-related illness, you should immediately inform your principal that your illness is to be treated as pregnancy related. The principal may then refer you to the Occupational Health Service.

## Can I take any paternity leave?

Fathers of newborn or adopted children can take three individual or consecutive days' leave within four weeks of the birth or adoption of the child and must give four weeks' notice of these dates.

## I am adopting a child, am I entitled to any leave?

All women and men who are sole adopters are entitled to 24 weeks' paid adoptive leave from the date of placement of the child. You can also opt to take up to an additional 16 weeks' statutory unpaid leave.

For full information on your entitlements, see the maternity leave section on the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie) – or contact ASTI Head Office.

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# Updating members on the junior cycle review



*ASTIR* reports from one of five ASTI seminars held to inform members about plans for junior cycle change.

For ASTI reaction, concerns and policy in relation to junior cycle review proposals, see 'From the President's desk' on page 4.

The ASTI recently hosted a series of seminars to equip members with up-to-date information on the proposed roll out of junior cycle review. The seminars provided an opportunity for members to have their questions answered and offer their feedback on review plans.

### Background to junior cycle review

In 2009, then Minister for Education Batt O'Keefe directed the NCCA to engage in a 'root and branch' review of the junior cycle. The subsequent consultation process identified the need to retain subjects as the core of the curriculum, but to reduce content and introduce further choice. In addition, the review stated that continuity between primary and second level requires greater emphasis, and a focus on key skills and literacy and numeracy is also necessary.

Following a further consultation process, a framework document for the junior cycle review was published in November last year, setting out a plan for change to be undertaken over the next nine years. The focus of the plan is to move towards a system where students' connection with learning is enhanced and the quality of learning is improved to achieve better literacy and numeracy outcomes and a strong profile for key skills.

### New qualifications

A new national qualification will be awarded to students who complete the junior cycle. A level 3 qualification will replace the Junior Certificate, while a level 2 qualification will be designed for students with particular special educational needs.

Students will learn and be assessed through 'curriculum components', known as subjects, short courses and priority learning units (PLUs). Students aiming for a level 3 qualification will study subjects and short courses, while those students with special educational needs aiming for a level 2 qualification will learn through PLUs and short courses.

### Curriculum components

The framework includes 24 statements of learning, which set out what a student must be exposed to and what schools must provide through curriculum components.

Subject content will be reduced, with set minimum hours of teaching and learning outcomes linked to the 24 statements of learning and the development of key skills.

Short courses are optional courses of, on average, 100 hours' duration. Two short courses will equate to one subject, and schools can choose from six short courses developed by the NCCA or they can choose to develop their own.

PLUs will address special learning needs in the areas of communication, literacy, numeracy, personal care, living in a community, and preparing for working life.

The ASTI has expressed its concerns in relation to the impact of short courses on teaching and learning in the classroom.

### Assessment

Students aiming for a level 3 qualification must present evidence of learning in eight subjects, or in seven subjects and two short courses, or six subjects and four short courses. The Minister for Education and Skills has announced that students entering first year from 2014 will be limited to taking eight subjects for examination at junior cycle. Students will be assessed by examination and by portfolio. Terminal examinations will be set and administered by the State Examinations Commission and will account for 60% of a student's overall mark. Students will also prepare a portfolio or course work in each subject and short course. A provisional mark for this work will be allocated by the school and externally moderated by the State Examinations Commission.

Students must demonstrate learning in all five PLUs and complete two short courses in order to achieve a level 2 qualification. Assessment will be at school level for both PLUs and short courses. The ASTI has expressed its concerns about plans for school-based assessment. ASTI policy is that teachers will not award marks to their own students for the purposes of State examinations.

### Phased introduction

The reforms in the framework are due to be phased in from September 2014, with schools due to begin planning in September 2012. In September 2014, the revised junior cycle will commence for first-year students with



Six key skills central to the new junior cycle.

English and short courses. Other subjects will be added from September 2015 until September 2017. In 2017 new qualifications will be awarded in English and optional short courses, and from 2019 or 2020 the combined new qualifications will be awarded.

**Feedback and further consultation**

During the series of seminars held last month, ASTI members were invited to give feedback on the framework. The ASTI will rely on this feedback in its future engagement with the junior cycle review process.

For more information, see [www.asti.ie/education/curriculum-assessment/junior-cycle-review](http://www.asti.ie/education/curriculum-assessment/junior-cycle-review).

A network of 40 schools will give feedback to the NCCA on the development of courses and assessment methods.

**What you need to know**

- As the first step in junior cycle review, first-year students entering schools in September 2014 will study a new English syllabus.
- Other subjects will be added from September 2015 until September 2017.
- Students entering first year from 2014 will be limited to taking eight subjects for examination at junior cycle.
- In 2017, new qualifications will be awarded in English and optional short courses.
- It is expected that combined new qualifications replacing the Junior Certificate will be awarded from 2019 or 2020.

The review of the Junior Cycle is due to be implemented in conjunction with the introduction of the Department of Education and Skills' Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, as detailed in the last issue of *ASTIR*. You can find out more about this strategy at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).



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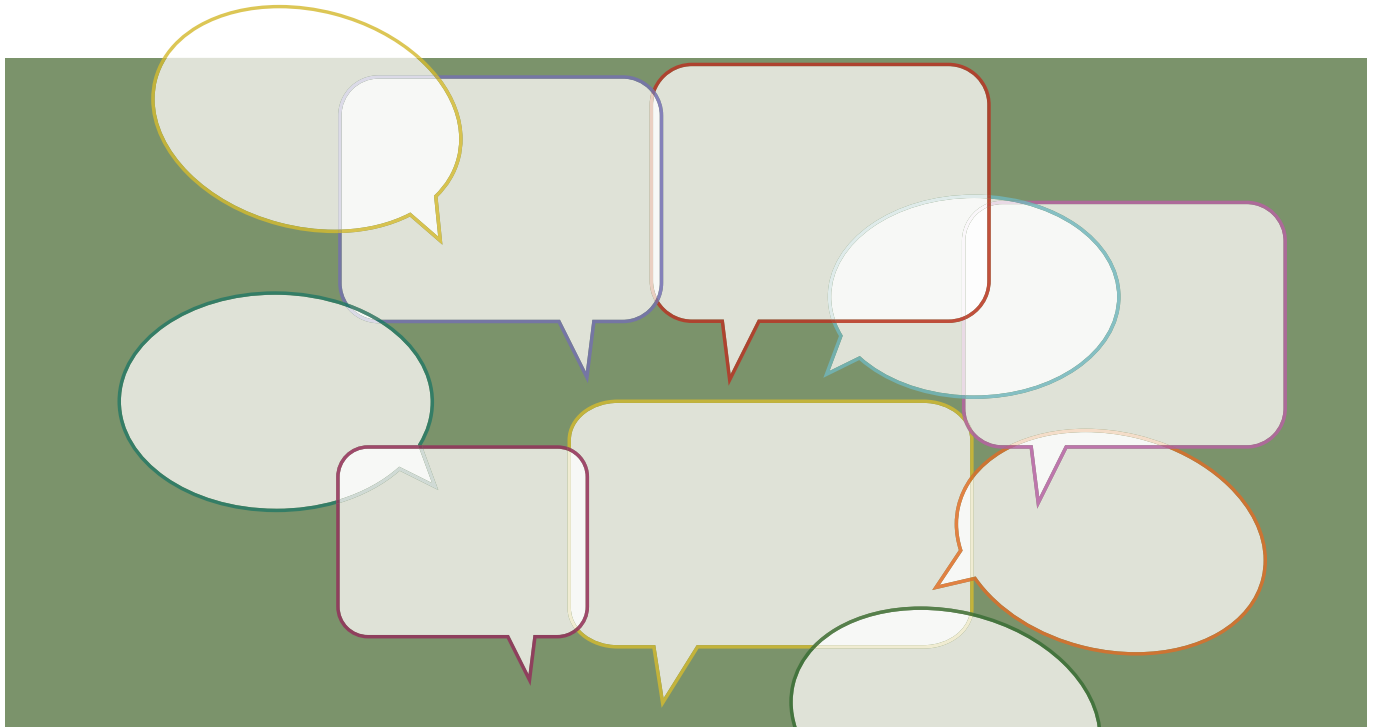
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# Help us to improve your union



- What is your view of the ASTI?
- How would you like to see it improve?
- How best can it play its role as a trade union?
- How can the ASTI encourage more engagement and participation among members?
- How can union activists/volunteers be supported?
- Are the roles of union activists clear?
- Do the current union structures promote or discourage participation and democracy?
- What services should the union provide?
- How should the union communicate with its members?

### It's time for change...

The ASTI is conducting a review of the union – its rules, structures, operation and services. This is your chance to tell us what you think about the ASTI and what can be done to improve the union.

### Survey of members

As part of this comprehensive review, a random survey of members will be undertaken via email. The survey of members is being carried out by the independent consultancy Genesis. All replies will go directly to Genesis and will be treated as confidential.

### Survey of branch secretaries

In addition, an email survey of branch secretaries all over the country will be undertaken. This survey will focus on internal democracy in the ASTI. The responses will be used to analyse activity at branch level and to inform the discussions taking place on renewing the ASTI's representational structures. All responses will be treated as confidential.

Both surveys will be carried out in the coming weeks. Members who receive a survey by email or post will have the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the review.

# RSTA Dublin Christmas lunch



Enjoying the Dublin Branch RSTA annual Christmas Lunch were (from left): Michael Caulfield; Marie Doyle; guests Lottie Ewing and Sam Dobbin from the NASUWT Retired, Northern Ireland; Louis O'Flaherty, RSTA President; Henry Collins; and, guest Pat King, General Secretary, ASTI.

## Retired Secondary Teachers' Association

[www.rsta-ireland.com](http://www.rsta-ireland.com)

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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RSTA Branch: \_\_\_\_\_ See \* below for list of branches.

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#### 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.

## New book by ASTI member

ASTI member Dominic Price has recently published *The Flame and the Candle – War in Mayo 1919–1924*. Dominic, a teacher at Drimnagh Castle CBS in Dublin, spent four years researching the book, which gives a detailed historical account of the War of Independence and Civil War in Co. Mayo. The book is available from [www.collinspress.ie](http://www.collinspress.ie).



## Teaching the Holocaust

The Holocaust Education Trust Ireland (HETI) will present a three-day summer school on 'Teaching the Holocaust' at the end of August. The HETI also organises study trips to Berlin, Jerusalem and Krakow, and runs a certificate course in Holocaust education. For more information, see [www.hetireland.org](http://www.hetireland.org).

## Drama in education

The Association of Drama in Education in Ireland (ADEI) is a voluntary organisation with a committee composed of people whose educational special interest is in educational drama. The Association holds one workshop for teachers each term. For more information, see [www.adei.ie](http://www.adei.ie).



## Transition year website

Students in Loreto College, St Stephen's Green, have set up a website to help transition year students to organise their year. The site provides a list of companies who are happy to take on students for work experience and community care, and a list of other activities that transition year students can take part in. For more, see [www.transitionyearhelp.com](http://www.transitionyearhelp.com).

## MSc/PhD in Children and Youth Studies

UCD offers an MSc/PhD in Children and Youth Studies, which explores key aspects of the welfare and well-being of children and young people. The course is suited to those working with children and young people across a range of professional and public services. For more information, contact Dr Dymrna Devine, School of Education, UCD, Tel: 01-716 7986.

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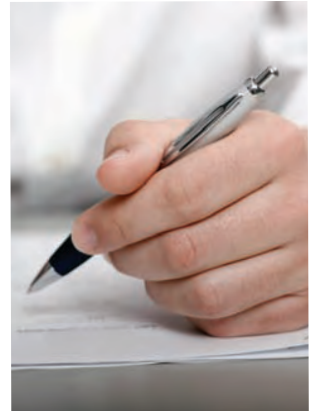
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## Survey of teachers

A UCC PhD student is currently conducting research into the experiences of second-level teachers in Ireland. He is particularly interested in how teachers perceive their working environment, how they cope with the challenges they face, and the health implications of exposure to difficult working conditions. You can help the research by completing an online survey about your experiences as a teacher, particularly those aspects you find challenging or supportive. Visit [teachersurveyireland.blogspot.com](http://teachersurveyireland.blogspot.com).



## No Name Club

The No Name Club is a national voluntary youth organisation with local clubs run by and for adolescents in branches around the country. The organisation is currently pursuing the establishment of No Name clubs within schools. For further information, see <http://nonameclub.ie>.

## Teach English in a French university

Would you like to spend a year teaching English in a French university? If you have an MA or an MEd, or you have completed a four-year degree, you can apply for a post as a 'lecteur/lectrice' to teach English in the Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale (ULCO) in Northern France. Two posts are available. For more information, contact [Imelda.Elliott@univ-littoral.fr](mailto:Imelda.Elliott@univ-littoral.fr).

## Retired teachers in action

In January 2012, 15 retired teachers embarked on a six-week trip to The Gambia to offer mentorship and training to Gambian teachers. The journey was organised by The Gambia Ireland Volunteers in Education (GIVE). A documentary to be broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1 followed the teachers' journey. 'Old School, New School' will be broadcast on Saturday April 14 at 6.00pm and repeated on April 15 at 7.00pm.

## Anti-bullying workshops

Bully 4u provides anti-bullying workshops for primary and second-level schools, as well as information evenings for parents and teachers. Charges apply, depending on the service requested. For more information, see [www.bully4u.ie](http://www.bully4u.ie).

## Concern Writing Competition

The Concern Writing Competition offers students the chance to become a published author and to win netbooks, E-readers or MP3 players. To be in with a chance, students are asked to write a 1,000-word chapter for the 2050 State of the Developing World Report. Find out more at [www.concern.net/writingcompetition](http://www.concern.net/writingcompetition).



## Arthur Sealy (1968-2011)

There was widespread sadness at the passing of Arthur Sealy on December 22 last. Originally from Ballybeg in Waterford, Arthur settled in Portlaoise in July 2007, when he joined the teaching staff of Mountmellick Community School.

As a music teacher, Arthur had an established reputation among the music teachers of Ireland and in the Post Primary Music Teachers' Association (PPMTA). Through his work with the music teachers of Ireland and with Waltons in Dublin over a period of 16 years, Arthur was at the cutting edge of music education in this country. He gave hundreds of short- and long-term music courses and workshops to children, teenagers and adults, where his knowledge of and passion for music inspired his listeners and audiences. His Leaving Certificate *Soundscapes* textbooks are recognised as masterpieces in their own right. His recently published workbook for Leaving Certificate students, written while he was terminally ill, will enhance the teaching and learning of music in Irish classrooms for many decades into the future.

As well as being a committed member of the ASTI, Arthur was a believer in human rights and justice, and supported many campaigns in Ireland and abroad.

Arthur's funeral took place on December 24 in St Saviour's Church, Ballybeg. Seven priests, including the Chief Celebrant Fr Tommy O'Reilly PP, Clonaslee, and Fr Edward Kavanagh, Mountmellick, and five priests from the Dominican Order, who had great affection for Arthur and who had been guiding lights during his life, celebrated the funeral mass in front of a large congregation.

A large gathering of Arthur's friends and colleagues, as well as many current and former students, attended. Br Ben, Arthur's former teacher in De La Salle College Waterford and a lifelong friend, gave the homily, while the eulogy was given by Arthur's Principal in Mountmellick Community School, Eric Gaughran. Expressing the appreciation of staff, students and parents, Mr Gaughran reflected on Arthur's inestimable contribution to music in Mountmellick Community School, where he invited and encouraged all who had an interest in music to follow their dreams. He established lessons for singing and all instruments. He also encouraged the development of bands among the students, and some of the musical trips and productions he staged – in the school, in the Dunamais Theatre, Portlaoise, and abroad – are still talked about with great affection and joy.

Arthur's father Tommy passed away 29 years ago when Arthur was just 14 years of age. Chief mourners at the mass were Arthur's mother Ellen, his sisters Anne Marie and Catherine, his brother Thomas, his brothers in law, his sister in law and his extended family. Arthur's untimely death, within nine months of taking ill, will have a profound effect on his family, friends and the many students he encouraged and nurtured for many years. May he rest in well-deserved peace.

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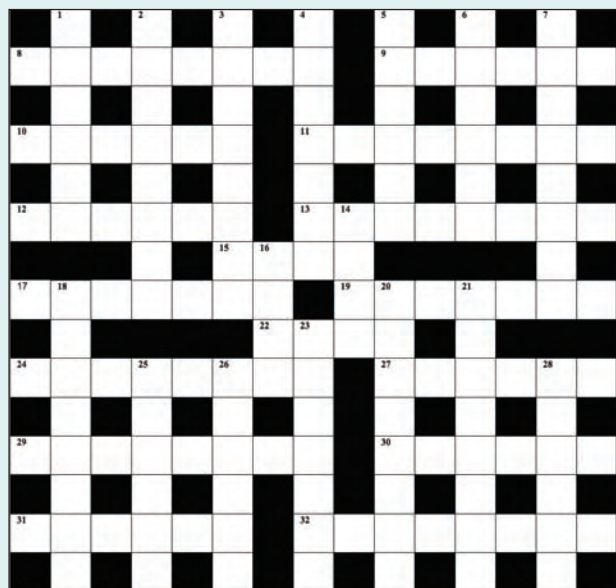


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## ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 1202

### 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. 1202, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, April 20, 2012.

**CLUES ACROSS:**

- 8 Praise the Lord! (8)
- 9 Spicy Spanish stew (6)
- 10 Max Bygraves wrote about Dutch ones (6)
- 11 First name of a very famous 1 down (8)
- 12 Da in the outhouse is keeping out of the sun (6)
- 13 A mere heap of short-lived items (8)
- 15 Rise to help inform economic and social policymaking in Ireland (1.1.1.1.)
- 17 Ultimate challenge? (7)
- 19 A must, as going back would be a little fruity! (7)
- 22 Irish donkey (4)
- 24 Of interest to house buyers! (8)
- 27 Sounds like each one needs to work with dough (6)
- 29 Three-headed dog guarding the entrance to Hades (8)
- 30 across and 25 down: Newspapers make annual attempts to compile them (6,6)
- 31 Acquiesce (6)
- 32 Sly slur (8)

**CLUES DOWN:**

- 1 One may follow a lead (6)
- 2 Confuse with wild beer (8)
- 3 Sid on the buses becomes less excited (8)
- 4 The arms of a popular pet (7)
- 5 Cry at the Oscars, perhaps! (6)
- 6 Deathbed laments could be the cause of a noisy uproar (6)
- 7 Guitar pick! (8)
- 14 International study programme will evaluate education systems again in 2012 (4)
- 16 For men only! (4)
- 18 A nice love – I don't think so! (8)
- 20 Having a high pH like some batteries (8)
- 21 Vacillated (8)
- 23 Michael, sounds like it's earth shaking! (7)
- 25 See 30 across
- 26 An E grade, that's OK, is it? (6)
- 28 You might play golf in this glen (6)

**Solution to ASTIR Crossword No. 1201**

Across	Down
1. Menace	1. Musician
4. February	2. Numeracy
9. Sombre	3. Cartesian
10. Tennyson	5. Emend
12. Curie	6. Rondo
13. Andromede	7. Austen
14. ASCII	8. Yonder
15. Athena	11. Palace
20. Anselm	16. Hamlet
21. Nehru	17. Nonpareil
24. Nectarine	18. Pharisee
27. Acrid	19. Guidance
28. Fleeting	22. Unifil
29. Belsen	23. Accent
30. Literacy	25. ASTIR
31. Sleeve	26. Ionic



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