

# ASTIR

Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

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from cuts to teachers



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Convention 2012 report

Impact of education cuts

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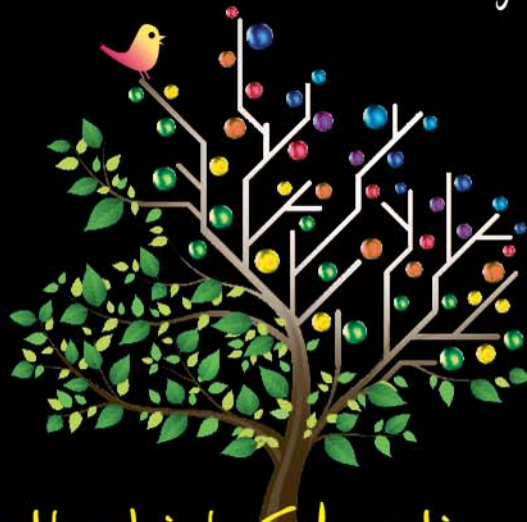
# FOLENS



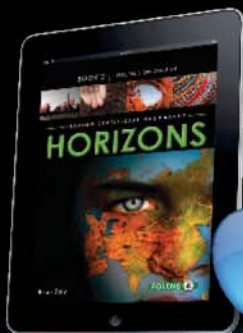
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## ASTIR

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Editorial: Ann-Marie Hardiman, Paul O'Grady.  
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Advertising: Paul O'Grady.

### ASTI

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

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

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Students from St Attracta's Community School,  
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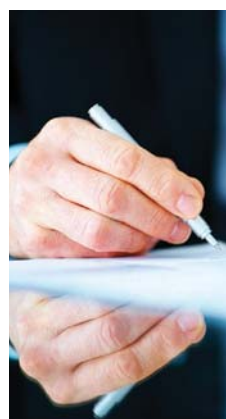
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All submissions will be considered by the ASTIR Editorial Board. Email [astir@astie.ie](mailto:astir@astie.ie).

# Education at the heart of recovery

In his last article as ASTI President, BRENDAN BRODERICK focuses on some of the issues highlighted at Convention 2012.

The fallout from recent budgets (including Budget 2012), curricular reform, the Croke Park Agreement and the welfare of non-permanent and newly qualified teachers dominated debate at this year's Annual Convention.

With this Government's stated commitment to the austerity programme agreed with the Troika, these topics look set to dominate for the foreseeable future. Everyone accepts that the country needs to sort out the economic crisis that was created by reckless financial practices in the private sector, and facilitated by political cronyism and poor regulation by those in authority in the public sector. We also need to prepare for the upturn when it happens, and it is accepted by all sides of the ideological divide that education must be at the heart of any economic recovery.

Yet when schools reopen for the new academic year next August, they will again have to cope with reduced teacher numbers, fewer financial resources, a further compromised student support allocation, and a totally inadequate in-school management system.

Meanwhile, teachers struggle to cope with the demands of a grossly under-resourced education system. Large class sizes continue to impact negatively on safety, discipline and students' ability to engage more actively in their own learning. The lesson seems to be lost on our political leaders that cutbacks in education always prove to be shortsighted and self-defeating in the medium to long term. Further increasing the pupil-teacher ratio makes a mockery of the Minister's stated aspirations for curricular reform and preparing the next generation as innovative leaders in a competitive, global knowledge economy.

The economic crisis is being used to justify the dismantling of public services and the undermining of the status and morale of public sector workers. From a teacher union point of view, the State's role as guardian of public education must be restored and maintained. As an editorial in a national newspaper stated last August: "Funding must be found for education, and if needs be, taken from more popular areas, for no service is more vital to our future".

From the ASTI's point of view, improving opportunities and conditions

for non-permanent and new teachers – who are our most vulnerable members – is the greatest challenge now facing our union and must remain our top priority.

While teachers in situ have taken cuts in net pay of approximately 25% since 2009 – including a reduction in salary, the public service pension levy and the Universal Social Charge – those appointed after January 2011 are earning up to 35% less. Newly qualified teachers have to wait, on average, eight to nine years to acquire a full-time, permanent position. Over 93% of teachers are still on fixed-term contracts after two years of teaching. This is more than double the OCED average.

This casualisation and fragmentation of the teaching profession should be a major concern to everybody with an interest in education. For the well-being of future generations and in the interests of intergenerational solidarity, this undermining of the profession must be halted and reversed.

In my last article as President of the ASTI I want to thank everyone for their support and encouragement throughout the year. My stated belief – that classroom teaching is the most important and the most physically and emotionally demanding job in education – has been confirmed throughout this time. Enjoy the summer break; you have more than earned it.



**Brendan Broderick**  
ASTI President

# ASTI message is clear: allowances are pay

PAT KING outlines the ASTI's position with regard to proposed changes to allowances, sick leave and teacher recruitment.

The results of the public service-wide review of allowances, which is currently being undertaken by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, are now expected to be announced in June.

Since the review was initiated, the ASTI has continued to make clear its position that teachers' allowances are part of their pay, and that a further cut in teachers' pay would be a breach of the Croke Park Agreement. Teachers receive allowances for having qualifications that are required for entry to teaching. Promotional posts – from special duties teacher to principal – are remunerated by way of allowances. These allowances are not bonuses or premium payments: they are part of the rate of pay for the job. At the ASTI's Annual Convention in April, the ASTI spelled out the consequences of a cut in these allowances by the Government to the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD. If teachers' pay is cut in this way a special meeting of the Central Executive Council will be called to consider balloting members on withdrawal from Croke Park. We are confident that the Minister understands the significance of the ASTI's position.

## Response to sick leave proposals

At a meeting in the Labour Relations Commission this month the ASTI and other public service unions were presented with proposals from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to change the sick leave entitlements of all public servants, including teachers. These proposals include a significant reduction in uncertified and certified leave available to teachers. The ASTI has questioned whether these proposals offer any significant financial value.

As a profession, teachers have a good record for sick leave, especially given the fact that the average teacher comes into contact with hundreds of young people every day and that many teachers work in less than ideal environments, including small classrooms and poorly ventilated buildings. The data available shows that teachers' sick leave is lower than many other professional groups. In fact, figures for 2010/2011 show that second-level teachers took, on average, less than one day of uncertified sick leave that year. This data actually overstates sick leave among teachers because it includes weekend days, holiday periods and absences

of less than a day. Figures available for 2010/2011 also indicate that a significant number of teachers took no sick leave – certified or uncertified – during the school year.

In responding to these proposals, a key concern for the ASTI is protecting teachers who experience serious illness during their lives and require recuperation and rehabilitation.

## Pursuing a panel system

The ASTI has succeeded in gaining the Department's agreement that it will explore the operation of a panel system for part-time and temporary teachers seeking permanent positions.

Once qualified, the vast majority of second-level teachers spend a number of years in part-time and temporary positions before gaining more secure employment. Many of these teachers spend between five and eight years going from school to school and can, as a result, find it difficult to integrate into the school community.

OECD international comparisons tell us that Ireland has far a higher percentage of temporary teachers than most other EU and OECD countries – almost one-third of our teaching workforce are working in temporary positions. This is no way to begin a career in teaching.

The ASTI believes that a panel system that strives to place temporary and part-time second-level teachers in secure employment would benefit the entire teaching profession and the second-level education service. In these times of austerity the cost of establishing and operating such a panel would be inconsequential.



**Pat King**  
ASTI General Secretary



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## ASTI collaborates in launch of junior cycle resource pack



Students from Mount Carmel Secondary School, Dublin, pictured with Joe Costello TD, Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, at the launch of the junior cycle resource pack.

The ASTI, in co-operation with several other agencies, has published a junior cycle resource pack on trade and globalisation.

The pack complements Unit 4 of the CSPE syllabus, 'Ireland and the World', and was developed by two experienced CSPE teachers, Maura Carey and Máire Ní Chléirigh, in collaboration with the Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education, of which the ASTI is a member. The pack aims to provide a tool to help students to understand the complex interconnections between global trade and the inequalities in the developing world.

The pack was officially launched by Minister of State for Trade and Development Joe Costello TD. Speaking at the launch Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, Education and Research, said that it was really important that young people understand how the global economy affects everybody, not just people in the developing world: "As our world grows more interdependent it is vital that young people understand how the global economy works and what changes can be made to ensure a better life for all".

## Discounts for ASTI members

ASTI members will be able to avail of discounts from over 600 suppliers from this month. The four teacher unions have negotiated a membership benefits programme, which will supply each ASTI member with a Membership Plus card, entitling them to avail of a range of discounts.



Your Membership Plus card is included with this edition of *ASTIR*.

### Register your card to start saving

To register your card, go to [www.membershipplus.ie](http://www.membershipplus.ie) and click on the Register button on the right hand side. On the Membership Plus website you will find details of over 600 offers and discounts available to you as an ASTI member. From pizza to pub grub, go-karting to golf, hairdressers to big high street names, there is something for everyone!

## Minister supports ASTI campaign to protect gay teachers

The Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, has told ASTI Convention that he intends to remove discrimination against gay and lesbian teachers, and teachers whose beliefs may differ from those of school trustees, in the near future. The ASTI has for some time campaigned for the amendment of Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act, which exempts educational institutions from the provisions of the Act on the grounds of protecting their religious ethos.

A draft bill proposing amendments to the Act was published by Fianna Fáil Senator Averil Power in February. The Minister told ASTI Convention last month that he has been in contact with Senator Power in relation to the draft Bill and, following discussions with the Minister for Justice and the Attorney General, he intends to publish proposals on Section 37 shortly. More information will be posted on the ASTI website when it becomes available.

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).





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Information also available from ICEP Europe on (01) 6510618  
Email: [info@icepe.eu](mailto:info@icepe.eu) or log on to [www.icepe.eu](http://www.icepe.eu)

## Branch retirement function



The Carbery Branch held a celebratory dinner for retired members in March. Among those in attendance for this special occasion were ASTI President Brendan Broderick, General Secretary Pat King, IR Official Bernard Moynihan, Standing Committee Rep Ann Piggott, Officers of the ASTI Carbery Branch, and colleagues of the retirees.

The retirees were: Mary Hurley Crowley; Catriona Murphy; Noreen O'Brien; Frances O'Riordan; Marguerite O'Driscoll; Joan Moloney; Betty Keohane; Beta Nyhan; Irene O'Donovan; Joan Donovan; Alma Murphy; Nora O'Brien; Anna O'Donoghue; Jim Cooney; Philomena Barry; Finbarr Corkery; Marie Curtin; Charlotte Maughan; John MacMahon; Pat Wrenne; Frank Long; Joe O'Neill; Mary Howe; and, Grace O'Leary.

## ASTI calls for panel system for part-time, temporary teachers

The ASTI has called for the introduction of a panel system for part-time and temporary second-level teachers, which would help them to gain secure employment in teaching.

The vast majority of newly appointed second-level teachers spend a number of years in part-time and fixed-term employment; many new teachers are on low hours and earn half pay or less. ASTI General Secretary Pat King says it is vital that a panel system is established that will place these teachers in full-time permanent positions as soon as is feasible.

A panel system for part-time and fixed-term teachers already operates in the primary sector. It is used to fill permanent full-time posts in schools, where the posts are not otherwise required for redeployment purposes. "Newly appointed teachers are faced with several years of uncertainty as they travel from fixed-term job to fixed-term job hoping to eventually get permanency. Many of these teachers experience spells of unemployment and under-employment. This is no way to commence a career after four or five years of college," said Mr King.

The ASTI has raised the matter directly with the Minister for Education and Skills and at the Teachers' Conciliation Council. While complicating factors include the fact that second-level teachers are subject specific (unlike the primary sector), the Minister and Department officials have agreed to explore the idea.

## Awards for high achievers



Trinity Comprehensive School, Ballymun, awarded five full scholarships and nine programme awards to incoming students in March. Supported by the ASTI, Trinity Comprehensive's scholarship programme provides academic and cultural support to students with outstanding academic promise.

Pictured with the students who received scholarships are: Back row (from left): Anne McHugh and Maureen Steely, Victory Credit Union, Glasnevin; Christine Hamill, Bank of Ireland, Glasnevin; Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Andrew Montague; Maire Mulcahy, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; and, Pat O'Dowd, Principal.





## FREE DIGITAL SKILLS COURSE FOR ASTI MEMBERS



The ASTI has negotiated an online digital skills programme that delivers a basic digital computer skill set. This is an opportunity to prepare yourself for change and give you the confidence to guide your students.

The I-CANDO Digital Skills Programme offers seven modules of online, interactive, guided learning to help you to learn a range of digital skills. The seven modules are:

- Computer: Getting Started;
- Computer: Getting Online;
- Digital Photo;
- Digital Music;
- Digital Video;
- Social Networks; and,
- Webshare.

Full details of the course and modules are available at [www.i-cando.ie](http://www.i-cando.ie), where you can view a demonstration of the photo module and download the full brochure.

This programme, which normally costs €250, is available free of charge to ASTI members. Email your name and quote 'ASTI' to [info@i-cando.ie](mailto:info@i-cando.ie), or Tel: 01-489 3604 to find out more.

## How is your school going to cope with budget cutbacks?

See page 26 to read the results of an ASTI survey into the impact of education cuts on schools, students and teachers.

## Reduction in Teaching Council renewal fee

The outgoing Teaching Council has recommended to the Minister for Education and Skills that the annual Teaching Council registration renewal fee be reduced from €90 to €65 with effect from January 1, 2013.



The existing €90 renewal fee will continue to apply during 2012.

The consent of the Minister for Education and Skills is required for the charging of fees by the Teaching Council.

Teachers must renew their Teaching Council registration each year. The ASTI is urging members to ensure that they maintain and renew their Teaching Council registration, as when Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 commences it will be a legal requirement that teachers be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from Oireachtas funds (see page 10).




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## ASTI members appointed to Teaching Council



Seven ASTI members were appointed to the new Teaching Council in March. ASTI members Kieran Christie, Lily Cronin, Noel Buckley, Bernadine O’Sullivan, Michael Barry, Elaine Devlin and Christy Maginn are among 22 teachers who sit on the Council.

Pictured are newly appointed second-level teacher representatives on the Teaching Council with Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn TD. Back row (from left): Michael Gillespie, TUI; Kieran Christie, ASTI; Noel Buckley, ASTI; Christy Maginn, ASTI; Michael Barry, ASTI; and, Fergal McCarthy, TUI. Front row (from left): Elaine Devlin, ASTI; Lily Cronin, ASTI; Ruairí Quinn TD, Minister for Education and Skills; Bernadine O’Sullivan, ASTI; Bernie Ruane, TUI; and, Marie Humphries, TUI.

## Section 30 to commence shortly

The ASTI is urging members who are not currently registered with the Teaching Council to submit an application as soon as possible, preferably before May 31, 2012.

Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 is due to commence during the 2012/2013 school year. Its commencement will mean that it will be a legal requirement that teachers be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from Oireachtas funds. The only permitted exception to this will be to meet the urgent, unforeseen and short-term needs of schools when, despite a school’s best efforts, a registered teacher is not available. The Education (Amendment) Bill, which will allow the commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001, has been passed by Seanad Éireann and has completed Committee Stage in Dáil Éireann. The Bill will be presented to Dáil Éireann at Report Stage shortly, and it is likely that it will be enacted soon after.

## St Flannan’s College blasts off to Washington DC

Four students from St Flannan’s College, Clare, have won second place in their category at the elite NASA/Ames annual space settlement design competition.

The competition challenges students to engineer and design a self-sufficient space colony capable of housing thousands of inhabitants. The St Flannan’s students are part of a larger international team made up of students from Japan, India, Ireland and the USA. The Irish team, supported by teacher Mike Horgan, was responsible for designing the overall space settlement structure and many of its subsystems. The winning team has been invited to present their paper at the International Space Development Conference (ISDC). The ISDC will be held in Washington DC.

## This issue in numbers...

**2,000**

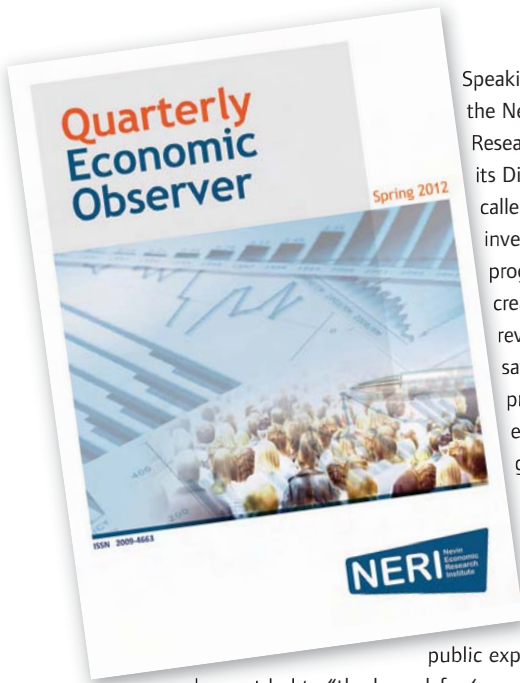
**Number of fixed-term teachers awarded CIDs in recent years (P15)**

**64**

**Percentage of principals who told the ASTI they are considering dropping Leaving Certificate subjects in 2012 (P26)**

# Invest in public services, says new think tank

The only way out of Ireland’s “debt trap” is for the public sector to act as investor of last resort, according to a new economic think tank supported by Irish trade unions, including the ASTI.



Speaking at the launch of the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI), its Director Tom Healy called for a €15 billion investment and stimulus programme in order to create employment, lift revenues to the State, save on social protection expenditure and generate consumer demand. The NERI’s first quarterly economic report states that cutting back on public expenditure in Ireland

has not led to “the hoped-for ‘expansionary fiscal contraction’”. The report outlines an alternative approach informed by a Keynesian framework, which emphasises the role of Government in taking the lead to kick-start the private economy through an appropriate fiscal stimulus allied to other policy measures. “Any

investment strategy should undergo a cost–benefit analysis to demonstrate that it is in the long-term interest of society to make these investments,” states the report. The quarterly report highlights key areas for stimulus investment including public transport, energy, education and health, and broadband. It also details options for obtaining funds for investment including the national pension reserve (see below), the European Investment Bank, and a re-launch of the National Recovery Solidarity Bond. The NERI Quarterly Economic Observer Spring 2012 edition is available at [www.nerinstitute.net](http://www.nerinstitute.net).



Nevin Economic Research Institute Director  
Tom Healy

**NERI Director**  
Director of the NERI Tom Healy previously worked with the Department of Education and Skills, the Economic and Social Research Institute, the Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the National Economic and Social Forum. He holds a PhD (economics and sociology) from UCD. His research interests have included the impact of education and social capital on well-being.

 <p><b>€5.4bn</b></p>	<p><b>Estimated value of national pension reserve discretionary portfolio (P11)</b></p>	 <p><b>€15bn</b></p>	<p><b>Amount of stimulus investment in public services recommended by Director of Nevin Institute (P11)</b></p>
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## Tullamore school wins Green Award 2012


Colaiste Choilm in Tullamore won the top prize at the annual Green Awards last month. As well as the top award, the school also received the Green Building of the Year Award. Coláiste Choilm is also involved in the Green Schools Programme and has just won its third Green Flag

Completed last September, the low energy sustainable school incorporates over 21 different sustainable design aspects, including a rainwater recovery system, waterless urinals, solar panels, intelligent lighting systems and biomass boilers. The school is testing all new sustainable design approaches and technologies, and the successful elements will be incorporated into the specifications for all future second-level schools by the Department of Education and Skills.



Photo courtesy of Donal Murphy: [www.donalmurphyphoto.com](http://www.donalmurphyphoto.com).

The school was developed by the Department of Education in conjunction with Coady Partnership Architects.



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**MA Degree in Women's Studies  
2012/2013**

This course is full-time and of 12 months duration or 24 months part-time from September 2012.

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While the focus of the course is on Women and Society, students also explore feminist theory and practice and will be provided with a comprehensive understanding of the discipline of Women's Studies.

Applications are open to candidates with a good honours degree or the equivalent. The course has an integrated interdisciplinary focus.

Graduates with an Honours MA in Women's Studies, or an appropriate subject, may apply to enter the PhD in Women's Studies programme.

Details of the programme are available on the online Postgraduate Prospectus at [www.ucc.ie/en/CKE03](http://www.ucc.ie/en/CKE03)

Applications must be made online at [www.pac.ie/ucc](http://www.pac.ie/ucc)  
Further application queries should be made directly to the Graduate Studies Office, U.C.C.

Tel: 021 4902645; E-mail: [m.coakley@ucc.ie](mailto:m.coakley@ucc.ie)

**Closing date for applications: 1st June 2012**  
*University College Cork – National University of Ireland, Cork*

## Voluntary redeployment scheme

Under the Croke Park Agreement it was agreed that discussions would take place with a view to implementing a pilot voluntary redeployment scheme. Such a scheme would allow for teachers in schools not in a surplus teacher situation to transfer on a voluntary basis to another school or geographical area.

These discussions were to take place in autumn 2011. However, at the time of writing, only one meeting has taken place. The ASTI Standing Committee has therefore decided to pass the following resolution: "That Standing Committee seeks the implementation of a pilot voluntary redeployment scheme by September 2012 as per the Public Sector Agreement 2010-2014. In the event of this not being achieved, we will seek to resolve the issue under the process agreed in the aforementioned agreement".

We will be pursuing this matter vigorously and insisting that this pilot scheme is in place for the next school year.

## Department to audit school resources

The Department of Education and Skills has announced that it intends to conduct an audit of resources in schools. It has been indicated that the audit will be carried out on a geographical basis in order to evaluate the "infrastructural resources" in regions, towns, etc. While the ASTI has welcomed the announcement, the union has pointed out that many schools share educational resources and that any proposals that schools should engage in further co-operation must take into consideration practical issues including health and safety, time constraints and costs involved.



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ASTI President Brendan Broderick.



Kathlyn Hennelly and Edward McCarthy of the Fingal Branch vote on a motion.

# Convention 2012 – the speeches

## President's address

ASTI President Brendan Broderick discussed the negative impact austerity has had on students, teachers and education.

"In Ireland, we had a change in Government without any real change in ideology or response to the economic downturn. Every Government department is now operating under the threat of cuts in pay and/or numbers, because every single Government decision is now designed to save money ... Obviously the implications of this, for public services and public sector workers, are extremely serious. The response of the trade union movement is that there must be a better, fairer way ... Teachers are well aware of the impact of the current economic crisis on families, and on the communities we work and live in ... Teachers and other frontline public servants did not share in the champagne lifestyle of the Celtic Tiger, nor are we in any way responsible for the economic downturn and turmoil in financial circles."

## Croke Park Agreement

"The ASTI always enters into agreements in good faith. Our members didn't vote for the Croke Park deal because it was a good deal for public servants ... it was seen as a least worst option. But having signed up, we expect the official side to honour its side of the agreement. So let's be clear and

unequivocal about this: if the media speculation on allowances is proven to be correct, we will be balloting our members on withdrawal from the public service agreement, and those who broke the agreement can take full responsibility for the consequences."

## Education cuts

"Since the onset of the economic crisis, education at second level has been hit hard ... All these cuts have a negative impact on our students' education despite the mitigating effects of teacher good will. In fact, it is teacher good will that continues to compensate for the lack of supports from the Department of Education and Skills ... The most significant cut in Budget 2012 at post primary is the allocation of guidance counsellors on an in-quota basis ... As a result, schools are faced with the stark choice of either curtailing guidance and counselling services to students or dropping subjects or ... a combination of both. This cut is specifically directed at adolescent students, at a time in their lives when they are most vulnerable."

## New teachers

"We need an inflow of young, talented and highly motivated teachers into the system, to ensure that the profession is continually



Cork South Paddy Mulcahy Branch members (from left): Mick Evans; Ann Piggott; and, Anne Taylor.



ASTI General Secretary Pat King.

replenished and enriched, and to ensure that the broader objectives of education are met ... Unfortunately, it now takes eight to nine years on average for a new graduate to secure a full-time, permanent teaching position at second level ... Every year for the last three years, budget changes have denied newly qualified and unemployed teachers the opportunity to gain meaningful employment in their own country. Forcing hundreds of our highly qualified, highly motivated colleagues onto the dole, or to emigrate, makes no educational, social or economic sense ... This casualisation and fragmentation of the teaching profession should be a major concern to everybody with an interest in education."

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## We need an inflow of young, talented and highly motivated teachers into the system.

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### Educational reform

"A basic precondition of social justice in any society is access to a decent public education system. Today's students are the workforce of tomorrow ... It's in all our interests that they are equipped to lead full, happy and productive lives. With that in mind, it is vital that any proposals for major changes to the curriculum are carefully analysed and critiqued, because the consequences of getting it wrong don't bear thinking about ... Given the enormous constraints in the public finances, one cannot but be sceptical about the capacity of the system to introduce the level of curricular change proposed.  
"Minister, we urge you not to allow your stated enthusiasm for

investment in education to be compromised in any way, by anyone. You are the advocate for education around the Cabinet table, and we expect you to convince your Cabinet colleagues and the general public that investment in education is an investment in our greatest resource, which of course is our young people."

Read the full text of the ASTI President's speech at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

### General Secretary's report

*Unity is essential to continuing the ASTI's important work, General Secretary Pat King told Convention.*

"I worry when I hear comments from within the trade union movement, from within the ASTI, which question the value of trade union membership ... What do you think the Government and employer groups would be up to today if there was no trade union movement, if there was no SIPTU, if there was no ASTI or TUI or INTO? Does anyone here for one minute believe in the benevolence of government? Sadly, in those places of work where trade unions are not permitted to operate, or where they are strongly discouraged, employees have suffered and have been left totally unprotected.

"Colleagues, we have difficult challenges ahead. However, our unity is our greatest strength. Of course we each have different priorities, different perspectives, different solutions ... but at a time of unprecedented challenge to the trade union movement, unity and solidarity within the ASTI and within the wider trade union movement is essential to growing our relevance and influence, so that we can be more effective at rebalancing the power between workers and employers and Government. This is what trade unions are about."

### Importance of the ASTI

"There are almost 2,000 fixed-term teachers who have been awarded CIDs in recent years. These did not come about by accident or through the benevolence of Government or employers. They came about because the



Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD.



Delegates wait to debate a motion.

ASTI campaigned for the legislative change; we spent months negotiating the terms of the various circulars that implement the Act. And we intervene where teachers are being wrongly refused CIDs ... The CID work is only one example of what the ASTI does for its members. We are a strong voice for teachers' pay and conditions. We are a strong voice for the protection of quality education ... Without the union, without the ASTI's efforts, the Government would have had free rein, with no limitations or restraints."

**Strengthening the union**

"The ASTI has achieved a lot over its 100 years in service of teachers and education. Remember, the pay, conditions and respect teachers have achieved were not won easily ... Over the past five years much of what was achieved in the past has been dismantled. We have a choice – we can walk away from the ASTI and leave it to others to recover what has been lost and we can say it's a hopeless cause. Or we can put our energies into strengthening the ASTI, recruiting every possible member ... step by step, brick by brick, rebuild and restore the working conditions of members."

**Including the new generation**

"Responsibility for the ASTI and teachers' working conditions now rests with a new generation. Serving teachers, younger teachers, must be encouraged to take ownership of their union and to take responsibility for its future. I do not buy the mantra that young people have no interest in unions. The recent demonstration by 1,500 student teachers in Dublin ... shows just how predisposed our young people are to solidarity and collective action."

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**The ASTI has achieved a lot over its 100 years in the service of teachers and education.**

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**Restoring equality for new teachers**

"The union has to put in place policies that seek to restore the one salary scale structure for all teachers. The two-tier gap must be closed and newly appointed teachers must be paid the standard going rate for the job ... On top of their lower salary, and inferior pension, newly appointed teachers are faced with several years of uncertainty as they travel from fixed-term job to fixed-term job, hoping eventually to get a permanent placement. This is no way to commence a career after four or five years of college ... we [have] raised the matter with the Minister ... The Department and Minister have agreed to look at possible solutions and to identify the numbers involved ... Unless there is a hope of a decent career path for those entering second-level teaching, the profession will become irreparably damaged."

**Teachers are accountable**

"Teachers can be an easy target for public criticism and in some quarters teacher bashing has become a popular sport ... It is said that teachers are not accountable. Colleagues, there isn't a moment in your working life when you are not accountable. You work in a very public setting. You stand each day in each class in front of 30 young people: that's 200 per day. You are accountable to them and to their parents. You are accountable to your school principal and to your board of management. You are accountable through the examination system. You are accountable through four different forms of Department inspection."

**Teachers want high standards**

"Of course, teachers want nothing but the highest standards for students; it's what you give your working life to. Of course, good teachers are in favour of education reform ... But that reform has to be funded and resourced. It has to be based on extensive consultation with practitioners. It has to be carefully measured reform and it has to take account of the ability of schools to deliver. It has to retain what is good in our system and not just introduce change for change's sake."

Read the full text of the General Secretary's speech at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).





Henry Collins, Waterford; and, Carmel Heneghan, Tuam.



ASTI General Secretary Pat King (left) pictured with Minister for Education and Skills Ruairi Quinn TD, and Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills.

### Minister Ruairi Quinn

*Funding for necessary educational reform will be prioritised, Minister for Education and Skills Ruairi Quinn promised delegates.*

"We have a common interest – improving educational outcomes for all our pupils ... It can be achieved only with your help and against the background of severe economic difficulties. You don't need me to remind you of those difficulties. You see every day evidence of the effects of job losses, reductions in pay and cuts in public spending ... I salute you for the work that you do and the hope you inspire in your pupils, despite our present economic circumstances."

#### Junior cycle reform

"We need to ask ourselves how well the present system is providing learning opportunities and serving the needs of our students. I believe that, despite the excellent work done by principals and teachers, we could do better. For this reason, reform of the junior cycle is essential and is currently being progressed ... I know that parents and teachers want reassurance that any curricular changes will be adequately resourced. I can assure you that I will prioritise this to the best of my ability and despite the crisis in our public finances."

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## Having a school system that caters for diversity is a priority.

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#### Senior cycle reform

"Last year, for the first time ever, the NCCA and the Higher Education Authority held a joint conference. This conference discussed the impact of transition to third level on the operation of the Leaving Certificate, and how

students learn during the final years of their second-level schooling ...

Some of the suggestions arising from the conference make common sense ... Critical and creative thinking, and working with others, must be to the forefront of our minds as syllabuses are revised in the coming years."

#### Patronage and pluralism

"Having a school system that can cater adequately for the demand for pluralism and diversity is a priority for our Government ... As you know when you look across your classrooms, our nation is changed and changing – both in terms of the greater diversity of religious beliefs and the multicultural composition of the population ... At second level, the process of decision-making in relation to the patronage of many of the new schools that are to be established in 2013 and 2014 is nearing conclusion."

#### Literacy and numeracy

"We all know that literacy and numeracy skills are fundamental to a person's life chances. Yet information from national assessments, school inspections and international studies has shown that many of our students are not developing these skills to the best of their abilities... Implementation [of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy] to date – with your support – has been encouraging. But this is a long journey, which will require a sustained effort over many years, and of course in an economic climate that is extremely difficult at present."

#### Gay and lesbian teachers

"I want to make a brief comment on a campaign that the ASTI has been involved in for some time: the campaign to amend Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act to remove discrimination against gay and lesbian teachers. Our Programme for Government contains a commitment that we will remove discriminations against gay people that prevent them from taking up employment as teachers. And that is a commitment I intend to fulfill."

Read the full text of the Minister's speech at [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

# The Motions

Delegates to ASTI Convention voiced their views on a wide range of important topics including junior cycle reform, education cutbacks, and the Croke Park Agreement.



*Ronan Gallagher and Caitriona Ni Mhordha, Fingal Branch, listen to Convention proceedings.*

## New teachers' pay and conditions

Proposing a motion that the ASTI investigates the legality of the change in new teachers' pay and conditions with a view to mounting a legal challenge under equality legislation, Fergal Greene, Dublin South West, said: "We want equal pay for equal work ... new entrants are now down 30% ... as a result of entering into the profession at the wrong time in the wrong country ... We need to give hope to new entrants".

Fintan O'Mahony, Waterford, said the motion was formulated before the cut in allowances took away incentives for new teachers to engage in further education and compared this to the situation in Finland, where all teachers have masters degrees.

Kitty Condren, Dublin North East, drew a comparison with legislation put in place to end the inequity where married men were paid more than other teachers in the 1960s. She called two rates of pay for the same work morally wrong, and against all that a union should stand for.

A Standing Committee motion that the ASTI: condemns the continued targeting of the pay and conditions of teachers appointed since January 2011; campaigns, in conjunction with other public service unions, to have the reductions to starting pay rescinded; will support claims to the Equality Tribunal that this pay cut amounts to discrimination; and, commits to vigorously seeking the immediate restoration of the single incremental pay scale for all teachers was proposed by Michael Barry, Cork North, who detailed the ways in which new entrants have been unfairly treated and said: "Restoring parity should be a number one priority for this union now and in the future". Demand for teaching courses is down, and students are walking away from teaching as a result of how new entrants are being treated, he warned.

Kieran Christie, Sligo, seconded the motion saying that students' futures are being dismantled and that in 20 years' time this cohort of teachers will be running the ASTI. "If we don't stand up to the plate now on their behalf, how can we reasonably expect them, towards the latter end of our careers, to stand up for us – we are all in this together," he said.

The motions were carried.

## Guidance counsellors

An urgent motion that the ASTI seek the immediate restoration of the ex-quota guidance counsellor allocation, as this not only affects a vital service

in schools but also adversely affects the pupil-teacher ratio, was proposed by Fintan O'Mahony, Waterford. He spoke about the effects the guidance cut will have on pupil-teacher ratio and teachers' jobs, and reported that the ESRI has found that students and parents value guidance and, in fact, want more, not less of it. Those most in need of help are the ones who are going to suffer the most, he said: "Schools are a microcosm of society, and the problems of the world come to our doors. And the person who provides a safe haven for students with social and emotional problems is the guidance counsellor. Without that comfort many of our students will fail to get help".

Ger Curtin, Dublin North West, in seconding the motion, said: "We are looking at up to 700 people losing their jobs ... the people most affected are the vulnerable young teachers ... this has to be dealt with immediately, because otherwise in six or seven weeks we will be saying to six or seven hundred teachers, 'you are gone'".

The motion was carried.

## Posts of responsibility

Proposing a motion that in light of the unprecedented numbers of post holders who have recently retired, the ASTI, in conjunction with the other teacher unions, urgently seek a significant alleviation of the moratorium on posts of responsibility, Paul Kilraine, Galway Branch, said that second-level schools with an already limited administrative structure have become increasing complex organisations, and were only just about able to function before the moratorium. The loss of middle management posts will, he said, mean "the weaker students slip through the cracks". Seconding the motion, Sarah Withero, Galway, made the point that the moratorium leaves new entrants, already hit with salary cuts, with miniscule chance of promotion. ASTI members have a responsibility to make sure that new teachers are not being asked, without compensation, to do the duties of teachers who are exiting the profession, she said.

The motion was carried.

## Assessment

The motion most prioritised by ASTI branches for this year's Convention was that in light of the NCCA-proposed curricular and assessment changes in the Junior Certificate Examination, the ASTI reaffirms its policy and directive on



Mary Boissel, Stillorgan Branch.



ASTI President Brendan Broderick presents former ASTI President Jack Keane with the President's Medal.

teachers assessing their own students for State Examinations, and vehemently opposes changes that include such assessment by teachers. Pat Younger, New Ross, proposed this motion, saying: "ASTI members engage in change every single day of the week in each of our classrooms" but that this particular change must be resisted. ASTI policy on assessment has been developed through consultation with members, practising teachers who teach throughout the country, who are on the ground, and who know the pitfalls that exist, he said. The pitfalls he outlined included the potential to undermine the role of the teacher, to damage the relationship with students, to open results to dispute, and to heap pressure on teachers.

Eddie McCarthy of Fingal spoke on the motion, saying: "The system we have at present is open, transparent, fair and honest. In general, hardworking students are rewarded for their efforts in a fair way".

Gearoid O'Ciaran, Bray, said: "We are being portrayed like Luddites opposing change, but this is about abolishing the Junior Cert on cost grounds ... We cannot pick pieces from other countries and slot them into our system".

The motion was carried.

#### Assessment awareness campaign

A motion that the ASTI should engage in a campaign to increase awareness among parents of the implications of teachers assessing their own students was proposed by Grainu Dwyer, Nenagh, who said teachers must work together to resist assessment proposals, but need more than each other to win this: "Who is going to lose out most if we assess our pupils? Our pupils. Not because we're not professionals – which we are – but because they should be the centre of everything we do ... If you talk to a parent and say your child is going to suffer, they'll say how and should we oppose it ... We need the whole country to say 'No, assessing our own student is wrong'". The motion was carried.

#### Class size

A motion that on health and safety grounds, and out of concern for the welfare of students and teachers, the ASTI vigorously defends its policy on class size and opposes any move to increase the pupil-teacher ratio, was proposed by Sean O'Neill, Dublin South County. He said that the fact

of the matter is that with the loss of teachers and management posts, the discipline problem in many schools is a major health and safety concern and teaching is increasingly becoming an impossible task.

Margaret Kent, Fermoy, seconded the motion, saying: "Mainstream education incorporates a huge diversity of abilities and disabilities ... any increase in the pupil-teacher ratio limits the type of learning activities that can be planned for any classroom ... the workload associated with teaching modern subject syllabuses to diverse and bigger groups because of increases in pupil-teacher ratio leads to increasingly stressed students and teachers".

The motion was carried.

#### 33 hours – inclusion of extra-curricular activities and CPD

A motion that until the cessation of the Croke Park Agreement, the ASTI will negotiate with the Government the terms and conditions of usage of the 33 hours of non-teaching work per year to include extra-curricular and other school-based activities, was proposed by Ger Curtain, Dublin North West, who made the point that teachers are expected to continue extra-curricular work while coping with an increased workload. During debate on the motion, Elaine Devlin, Dundalk, said that as so many teachers are involved in extra-curricular activities, we need to make sure that extra work is at least counting for something.

Gloria Helen, Carbery, proposed a motion that the ASTI negotiates with the Department of Education and Skills that all accredited continuous professional development (CPD) courses may count towards the extra 33 hours negotiated under the Croke Park Agreement. She said that while teachers, their union, the Teaching Council and the Minister for Education and Skills concur that CPD is both welcome and necessary, more and more in-service is being held outside of the school day, and comes additional to a full day's teaching and the preparation and correction that comes with teaching, parent-teacher meetings, Croke Park hours and extra-curricular activities. Anne Loughnane, Carbery, seconded the motion, saying: "It makes sense to look at ways that these hours can have a more positive effect ... CPD keeps us informed of new developments, energised in our methodologies and confident in our work".

The motions were carried.

# Resolutions adopted at Convention 2012

## **Motion 11 – Posts of responsibility**

In light of the unprecedented numbers of post holders who have recently retired, that the ASTI, in conjunction with the other teacher unions, urgently seeks a significant alleviation of the moratorium on posts of responsibility.

## **Standing Committee motion – Guidance counsellor allocation**

That the ASTI seeks the immediate restoration of the ex-quota guidance counsellor allocation, as this not only affects a vital service in schools but also adversely affects the pupil–teacher ratio.

## **Motion 23 – Class size and pupil–teacher ratio**

That on health and safety grounds, and out of concern for the welfare of students and teachers, the ASTI vigorously defends its policy on class size and opposes any move to increase the pupil–teacher ratio.

## **Motion 4 – Croke Park Agreement**

That anything agreed in the Croke Park deal becomes null and void if the agreement is broken by the Government.

## **Motion 24 – Extra-curricular activities**

Until the cessation of the Croke Park Agreement, the ASTI will negotiate with the Government the terms and conditions of usage of the 33 hours of non-teaching work per year, to include extra-curricular and other school-based activities.

## **Motion 53 – Continuous professional development and Croke Park hours**

That the ASTI negotiates with the Department of Education and Skills that all accredited continuous professional development courses may count towards the extra 33 hours negotiated under the Croke Park Agreement.

## **Motion 2 – New teachers’ pay and conditions**

That the ASTI investigates the legality of the change in new teachers’ pay and conditions with a view to mounting a legal challenge under equality legislation.

## **Standing Committee motion – new teachers’ salary**

That the ASTI:

- a) condemns the continued targeting of the pay and conditions of teachers appointed since January 2011;
- b) campaigns, in conjunction with other public service unions, to have the reductions to starting pay rescinded;

- c) will support claims to the Equality Tribunal that this pay cut amounts to discrimination; and,
- d) commits to vigorously seeking the immediate restoration of the single incremental pay scale for all teachers.

## **Motion 3 – New teachers’ salary**

That the ASTI urgently seeks the reversal of the inequity whereby new teachers who enter the profession from January 2011 start on point one of the salary scale.

## **Motion 56 – Assessment**

That in light of the NCCA’s proposed curricular and assessment changes in the Junior Certificate Examination, the ASTI reaffirms its policy and directive on teachers assessing their own students for State Examinations and vehemently opposes changes that include such assessment by teachers.

## **Motion 59 – Assessment campaign**

That the ASTI should engage in a campaign to increase awareness among parents of the implications of teachers assessing their own students.

## **Motion 94 – Trustees**

Trustees shall hold office for two years and shall be eligible for re-election, but in no case shall a Trustee serve for more than six consecutive years. If, from any cause, the number of Trustees should fall below three, the CEC shall elect a Trustee or Trustees to bring the number up to three. Any Trustee so elected shall hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual Convention.

## **Motion 95 – Rule 59**

Rule 59 to read as follows:

The Convention shall consist of

- (a) the Officers of the Association;
- (b) the members of the incoming Central Executive Council;
- (c) the current regionally elected representatives on Standing Committee; and,
- (d) delegates from Branches appointed upon the following basis:
  - (i) one delegate for 20 to 60 members;
  - (ii) two delegates for 61 to 120 members; and,
  - (iii) three delegates for 121 to 180 members, and so on.

## Election results 2012



**President**  
Gerry Breslin



**Vice-President**  
Sally Maguire



**Honorary Treasurer**  
Ray St. John

**Trustees**

Michael Corley  
Tom Gilligan  
Gearoid O’Ciaráin

**Investment Committee**

John Byrne  
Patrick Collins  
Michael Freeley  
Tony Waldron

**Steering Committee**

Susie Hall  
Mary Lyndon  
Deirdre MacDonald  
Paul McGrath  
Máire Ní Chiarba

**Business of CEC Sub-Committee**

Beth Cooney  
Mary Lyndon  
Ann Piggott

**Rules Committee**

John Byrne  
Philip Irwin  
John McDonnell  
Conor Murphy  
Sheila Parsons

**Pensions Sub-Committee**

Jane Craig Elliott  
Tony McKernan  
Michael Moriarty  
Denis O’Boyle  
Bernadine O’Sullivan

Election of Branch delegates shall be computed on the numerical strength of each Branch on December 1 each year. Branch delegates must be members of the Branch they represent and must have been members of the Association for at least one year prior to election. The Trustees shall also attend Convention but shall not be members of Convention.

**Motion 96 – Rule 150**

Rule 150:

The Trustees shall attend the Conventions of the Association and may speak at Convention on matters pertaining to their duties but they shall not act as delegates to Convention. The Trustees shall formally present their report to Convention. An annual report by the Trustees, which records their account of their duty to safeguard the ASTI property and funds, shall be included in the Convention Handbook.

**Motion 50 – Teaching Council subscription**

That the ASTI seeks a reduction of 50% in the subscription to the Teaching Council.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

## REQUIREMENT TO BE REGISTERED WITH THE TEACHING COUNCIL FROM 2012/13 SCHOOL YEAR

Under section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001, teachers employed in recognised schools must be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from public monies by the Department of Education and Skills or a VEC.

It is the intention of the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn T.D., to commence section 30 during the 2012/2013 school year.

If you are working as a teacher but are not currently registered with the Teaching Council you should apply to the Council for registration immediately.

Applications should be made to the Council before 31 May 2012 in order to allow sufficient time for applications (including Garda Vetting) to be processed before the 2012/2013 school year. Applications received after that date may not be processed in time for the beginning of the next school year.

Further details including registration application forms and frequently asked questions are available on the homepage of the the Teaching Council website: [www.teachingcouncil.ie](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie).

The Council may be contacted in relation to registration at: [primaryregistration@teachingcouncil.ie](mailto:primaryregistration@teachingcouncil.ie) for primary school teachers, and [postprimaryregistration@teachingcouncil.ie](mailto:postprimaryregistration@teachingcouncil.ie) for post-primary school teachers.



# Vox pops – the important issues

What were the most important motions discussed at ASTI Convention? We asked some delegates for their views.



**Ciara Kinsella, Stillorgan**

I think there has been a great show of support for young teachers and non-permanent teachers at this year's Convention. I was a non-permanent teacher for years. I'm delighted that I have my CID now, but I never want to be in that position again and I think the situation was brought to our members' and the media's attention today. A big challenge for the ASTI is how to encourage young people into the union. That can be done by supporting them. We need them to come along to meetings, to get involved; we can only change through unity.



**Mick Nally, Dublin North Central**

I feel that the most important motion discussed at Convention was on the assessment by teachers of their own students. As teachers, our role is to encourage and guide students and not to be the judge and jury. If teachers were to assess their own students, it would severely damage both teacher-student and teacher-parent relations. The proposed changes by the NCCA need to be rejected by our members.



**Cathal McGinn, Tuam Branch**

For me, the most important issue was the urgent motion regarding the cuts to guidance counselling taken in the last budget. The role of guidance counsellors in our school is two-fold: providing informed advice to students on career opportunities; and, much-needed counselling for students experiencing educational, emotional and social difficulties and traumas. In the current economic and social climate both roles are hugely important. Some students will be in the enviable position of being able to afford private guidance, while others will not. A two-tier system will further compound the less-well-off students' difficulties. This ill-thought-out budget measure will have short- and long-term negative consequences for our students:

ill-informed career choice based on insufficient and incorrect information, higher drop-out rates and a lack of badly needed counselling support. This cut is also an indirect cut to the pupil-teacher ratio, which will worsen the job situation for non-permanent teachers. The Minister for Education did not allude to this budget cut at all in his address to Convention; if it was justifiable he should have publicly stood over it.



**Joe McCormack, Fingal**

Assessment is the biggest worry for most teachers. The new junior cycle framework is so open and vague, and we don't know how they plan for assessment to be done – that's a big concern. There are so many variables at the moment and a real lack of detail in the framework document. The situation regarding non-permanent teachers is another important issue. The union has done a lot of good work on CIDs but I think a panel system should be pursued – like in primary schools. So many teachers have to worry every year about whether or not they will have a job the following year. There is a misconception in the public sphere that virtually all teachers are permanent. After working hard for the year, it would be nice to be able to relax and know you'll have a job.



**Robert Chaney, Kilkenny**

As I see it, the most important issue is that of new entrants and the dual pay scale. It's such a huge retrograde step and it's going to affect so many people in the long run, in terms of recruitment. I taught in England where they couldn't recruit enough teachers; we are going to find ourselves in a similar situation. The whole situation for non-permanent teachers is a big issue in itself. There was a lot of talk yesterday about how the employment model can lead to advantage being taken of staff who are worried about their jobs. For me, that is the issue of the moment.



**Paul McGrath, Cork South**

I think the most important debate was on non-permanent teachers. This discussion highlighted the TALIS report findings, which clearly state that continuous short-term work contracts damage teachers' effectiveness and morale.



**Tish Murtagh, Dublin North Central**

As a teacher of students with special educational needs, I feel the motion to pursue the inclusion of continuous professional development in Croke Park hours is of vital importance. Schools are faced with students with ever-changing needs, and professional development helps teachers to deal with that.



**Noelle Moran, Tuam**

A major focus of this year's Convention was on new entrants and non-permanent teachers. It is hugely important that all teachers, especially non-permanent teachers, have trade union protection. All ASTI members should be encouraged to have their voices heard and be actively involved in our union. Permanent teachers should not become

complacent with our enviable permanent status, and must endeavour at every level to protect our non-permanent, under-employed and unemployed teachers.

The lack of job security is very disillusioning for teachers. The new lower salary scale, capped allowances and lesser pension entitlements for new entrants to teaching are grossly inequitable and unfair after teachers' years of study and training.

The first post-Convention hurdle facing teachers is the threat to our allowances, which are part of our fortnightly remuneration, and not 'extras' as the media and Government strive to portray.

How the Junior Cycle Review Programme will be resourced and assessed is of huge concern to teachers at this year's Convention. Teachers are adamant that equity has a firm footing in the new junior cycle, that teachers are provided with proper training and that all schools are fully equipped with all necessary resources to deliver on the new programme.



**Cliona McManemon, Dublin North Central**

The most important issue for me is the protection of the teaching profession. It is essential that the ASTI continues to uphold the high standards that exist in our profession. The teaching profession has always attracted talented and creative people. I fear that changes in conditions of employment and the lack of trust placed in teachers will lead people to find other professions more attractive.



**Joe Costello, Dublin North Central**

As a teacher who runs five teams and organises history and travel tours abroad, I completely agree with the motion to include extra-curricular activities in the 33 Croke Park hours. I feel that the selfless work done outside of the classroom by so many should finally be recognised and included.



**Caitriona Ní Mhordha, Fingal**

The junior cycle review is going to be massive over the next few years. I don't think teachers have had a lot of time to think about it because we're just so rushed and raced all the time. It's going to be a huge change and a huge problem if it's not done properly. I've heard about the Minister's speech at Convention for years so it was very interesting to see Ruairi Quinn, but I thought it was disappointing that we weren't given any sort of proper discussion with him, and that he focused so little on education.

# Highlighting the cuts

The ASTI continues to draw attention to cutbacks in education.

## **ASTI research into the impact of education cutbacks received extensive coverage.**

"The findings are stark. A total of 47% of schools have dropped one or more subjects since cutbacks were introduced in 2009, while the impact of Budget 2012 is further threatening the range of subjects being offered for the Leaving Cert."

RTÉ Six One News, April 4

"The students of today shouldn't be made to suffer. They have one chance to go through school and this is it ... A student who does well in science at Junior Cert and is told you can't do physics for Leaving Cert will never get this chance again. And that is what is happening."

ASTI General Secretary Pat King speaking on RTÉ News at One, April 4

"With an estimated 18% of students in second-level schools coming under the category of special needs, this move to amalgamate levels will result in an impoverished learning environment for students," said Moira Leyden, ASTI Assistant General Secretary.

*The Irish Times*, April 5

"Parents need to know that the subject choices that they and their children are taking for granted may not be available very soon, and that this will have an impact on young people's entry to third-level courses and on career choice."

ASTI General Secretary Pat King quoted in the *Irish Independent*, April 5

"A total of 64% of our schools will drop one or more subjects. It is a terrible irony as our Government promotes our knowledge economy and tries to attract investment in our country that our schools are actually dropping foreign languages and dropping science subjects from the curriculum."

Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, speaking on

RTÉ's Nine O'Clock News, April 4

"It is hard to imagine a more backward step at a time when the thrust of education should be about enhancing rather than diminishing the range of subjects available to students. According to the ASTI, the secondary teachers' union, the possible move is a boomerang effect of Budget 2012, which was a blatant Government smash and grab raid on already inadequate school resources to underwrite its penal austerity programme to bail out banks destroyed by the reckless, and possibly criminal, activities of bankers."

*Irish Examiner*, April 5

## **ASTI representatives and members were quoted extensively across the media during Convention week.**

"Teachers' allowances were part of pay and any cuts would breach the Croke Park Agreement, the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) said. Its General Secretary, Pat King, told delegates attending the

union's annual delegate conference in Cork yesterday that any cut in allowances would trigger a ballot of members that could lead to the union's withdrawal from the agreement."

*Irish Times*, April 12

"ASTI Deputy General Secretary Diarmaid de Paor said State examinations were one of the few institutions in Ireland that had not lost the trust of the people ... 'At the moment, people trust that the results are fair and open and can't be got at and it would be a shame if that changed,' he told the *Irish Independent*. The ASTI has accused the Minister of trying to introduce teacher assessment as a 'cheaper option' than paying external examiners."

*Irish Independent*, April 13

"The decision to remove the specific allocation for guidance counsellors from second-level schools was a heartless one, Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland President Brendan Broderick has said. He claimed it would seriously undermine the valuable work that schools do in the areas of counselling and career guidance. 'Existing resources in schools are already completely overstretched. Now schools are expected to find extra hours for the provision of guidance, a service that should be an integral part of every school'."

*Irish Times*, April 13

"Commenting on continuing concern about budget cuts in the provision of guidance counselling, Mr Broderick warned the Minister for Education that this will lead to an increase in early school dropout rates and young people getting into trouble with the law ... An emergency motion calling on the Government to immediately restore the quota of guidance counsellors was passed unanimously by the delegates."

RTÉ News, April 11

"Guidance counsellors provide a very important service in our schools and that service is going to be seriously curtailed ... because of that, the one-to-one time that they could spend with students who are in difficulty is going to be cut ... unfortunately that comes on top of cuts that have already been made to pastoral care services."

Fintan O'Mahony, ASTI Standing Committee, on Today with Pat Kenny, RTÉ Radio 1, April 11

"The cuts in guidance in our school, as well as impacting severely on the kids who really need guidance, also affect all the other subjects, because as that teacher moves back into the quota, so other teachers will lose their jobs. The teachers with a few hours are definitely gone, and specifically in our own school our classes are going to get bigger."

Elaine Devlin, ASTI Standing Committee, on Today with Pat Kenny, RTÉ Radio 1, April 11





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# ASTI research shows impact of cuts

Research released by the ASTI last month provides evidence that schools have been forced to drop subjects, amalgamate classes and reduce guidance counselling provision as a result of budget cuts.



The full survey is available on the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

The ASTI survey provides solid confirmation of what teachers already know: education cutbacks are impacting significantly on students' educational experiences and on the operation of schools.

## Real impact of cuts

Up to 64% of the 151 second-level school principals who responded to the survey said that they are being forced to consider dropping Leaving Cert subjects in 2012.

Almost half of the schools surveyed have already dropped one or more subjects at Leaving Cert level as a result of education cutbacks implemented since 2009. Economics, accountancy and physics are the most vulnerable, with one in five dropping these subjects.

Amalgamation of higher-, ordinary-, and foundation-level classes is another likely response being considered by principals. Some 57% of schools indicated that they are likely to amalgamate classes at Leaving Cert level next year, while a third of respondents said that they are considering amalgamating fifth- and sixth-year classes.

Cutbacks are demonstrably affecting all aspects of young people's education, according to ASTI General Secretary Pat King: "Young people are attending schools where over the past three years class sizes have increased, subject choice has narrowed, more classes contain higher and ordinary level students together, pastoral care services have been eroded, and out-of-class activities have been curtailed. Schools are clearly under stress, but the real losers are the students".

## Loss of teachers

Second-level schools lost an average of 1.6 full-time teaching posts between 2009 and 2011, despite student numbers rising by almost 15,000. Schools are set to lose more teachers in September, as a result of Budget 2012 measures including the subsuming of guidance counselling to within the standard allocation.

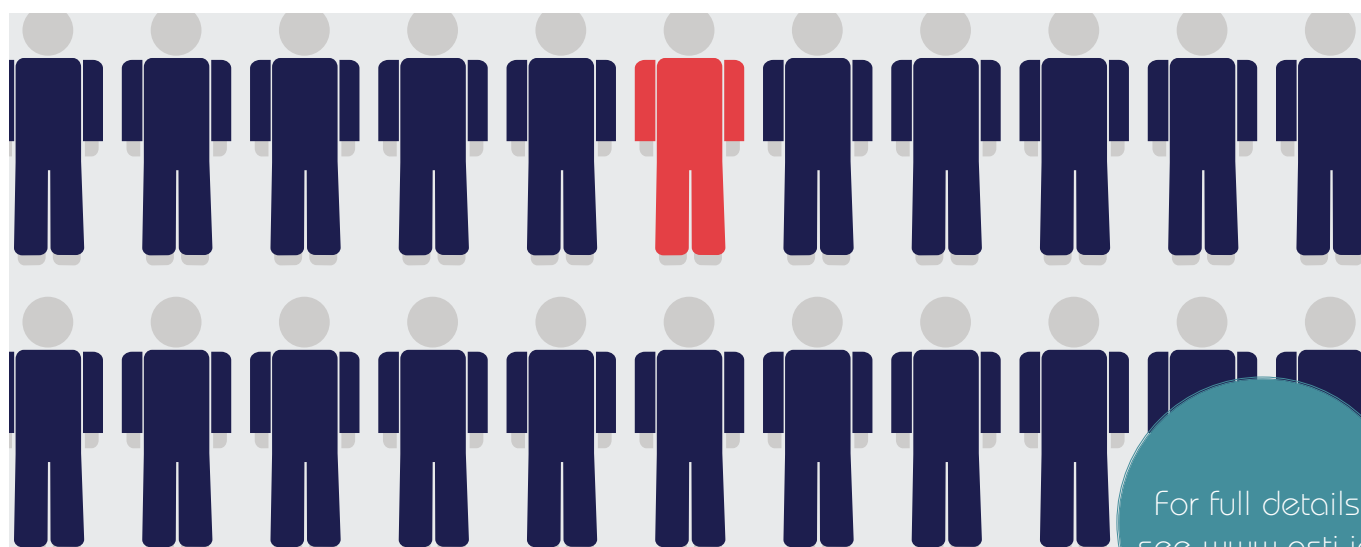
As a result of these losses, schools are considering reducing students' access to guidance counselling services. Seven out of ten schools are likely to reduce guidance provision by an average of 7.8 hours per week, the research by Millward Brown Lansdowne for the ASTI found. Student well-being will bear the brunt, warned Pat King: "The one big criticism of guidance provision in our second-level schools, which has come from parents, students and teachers, is that there is not enough of it, and not enough one-to-one counselling in particular. Instead of addressing this weakness, Budget 2012 is exacerbating it. It is a poor indictment of the value placed on the well-being of young people".

Read reaction to this research in the media on page 24.

"Like trying to hold back a tide that threatens to wipe out the community that we have worked so hard to build up"  
– one school principal on the challenges facing second-level schools as a result of austerity.

# School staffing

ASTIR explains the new staffing arrangements that will come into effect in schools from September.



For full details,  
see [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

Standard staffing allocation (pupil–teacher ratio)	18.25:1 for all DEIS post-primary schools 19:1 for non fee-charging schools 21:1 for fee-charging schools From September 2012 schools must manage guidance provision from within their standard staffing allocation
Single allocation process for learning support and language support	Schools with enrolments of fewer than 600 pupils will receive an allocation of 0.9 of a post. Schools with enrolment of 600 pupils or more will receive an allocation of 1.4 posts.
Support for schools with a significant concentration of pupils who require language support	Schools that had two temporary language support posts in the 2011/2012 school year will automatically be allocated one permanent language support post for the 2012/2013 school year. Schools that had one temporary language support post in the 2011/2012 school year will automatically be allocated 0.5 of a permanent language support post for the 2012/2013 school year. Further additional temporary support may be provided to these or other schools that have a significant concentration of pupils who require language support by appeal to the independent Staffing Appeal Board.
National Council for Special Education (NCSE) resource hours	The initial allocation for all schools for the 2012/2013 school year will include 70% of their NCSE-approved resource hours allocation as at December 31, 2011. The balance of each school's approved resource hours for the 2012/2013 school year will be allocated later when the NCSE process is completed.
Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme	All schools that operate the LCA programme will be given an allocation of 0.5 of a post. This is a fixed allocation that does not vary with annual changes in the number of LCA pupils in the school.

## Guidance posts

Guidance posts will no longer be allocated on an ex-quota basis and, with effect from September 2012, guidance provision is to be managed by schools from within their standard staffing allocation.

## Disadvantage posts

The DEIS post-primary schools that have had posts arising from a legacy disadvantage programme prior to the 2005 DEIS initiative will have these posts withdrawn, effective from September 2012.

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# Guidance decision shortsighted

From September, guidance provision must be managed from within a school's standard teacher allocation. While guidance remains a statutory requirement for schools, a recent ASTI survey found that 71% of schools expect to reduce the number of hours allocated to guidance. Here are some of the reasons why the guidance decision was shortsighted:

## Students value guidance

Students interviewed by the ESRI were generally very positive about guidance provision, but felt that there should be more of it. In 'Choices and Challenges, Moving from Junior Cycle to Senior Cycle Education', students spoke of guidance as invaluable in their subject choices and in helping them to focus on the future.

## Guidance is essential for successful college entry

Irish research shows that information about higher-level education options and the third-level application process, as well as the ability to assess interests and aptitudes and match these to specific courses, are central to successful college entry. It is essential that all students have equal access to these services, and this can only happen if they have adequate access at school.

## Parents value guidance

A recent study found that parents of second-level students want to see more guidance at second level. The ESRI study 'Behind the Scenes' found that while most parents were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their child's school, including guidance counselling provision, a significant number of parents would like to see increased guidance available at early stages of junior cycle education, as well as at crucial transition points.

## Principals value guidance

In another ESRI study, school principals emphasised the dedication, commitment, flexibility, accessibility and approachability of guidance counsellors. They paid tribute to the extra hours worked by guidance counsellors and their willingness to work outside the time allocated to the schools for guidance in order to provide for students' needs.

## School communities want more, not less, guidance

Guidance provision was considered to be restricted by most in the school community before the guidance cut. Most of the criticisms about guidance at second level that have emerged in research relate to the

level of resources allocated to guidance. Guidance counsellors felt under pressure to focus on career services for senior cycle students, at the expense of junior cycle students and one-to-one counselling.

## Pastoral care provision is under threat

A recent ASTI survey found that 93% of schools have lost posts of responsibility and the most severe impact of these losses has been on schools' capacity to provide pastoral care. Teachers are concerned that this, coupled with guidance loss, will mean students slipping through the cracks.

## Guidance is important for the economy

OECD reports stress the importance of career guidance for labour market policy and the development of human capital, and studies by the ESRI and Forfás agree that not less but more time needs to be given to guidance in schools.

## Guidance counsellors' training should be used

Guidance counsellors are highly trained professionals; as well as having a primary degree and a teaching qualification, guidance counsellors have undertaken a one-year full-time postgraduate programme. Cutting guidance provision will provide no incentive for teachers to train as guidance counsellors and could lead to an eventual shortage.

## The positive impact of guidance on mental health is acknowledged

Guidance counsellors are rigorously trained professionals in the area of mental health. The National Suicide Prevention Strategy, Reach Out, acknowledges the role schools can play in the promotion of positive mental health, and one of the objectives it sets in schools is to develop counselling services.

## Guidance promotes equal access for all

'Hidden Disadvantage?', a study for the Higher Education Authority, found a need for targeted information to inform the decisions of particular groups of students. Meanwhile, the ESRI publication 'Improving Second-Level Education: Using Evidence for Policy Development' says that the removal of the guidance allocation in Budget 2012 "is likely to prove particularly significant for young people from less advantaged backgrounds who are far more reliant on advice from their school in making post-school decisions and particularly decisions in relation to higher education entry".



# CID support

ASTIR looks back at a landmark ASTI case that led to the agreement on awarding of CIDs in second-level schools.

A 2004 case taken by the ASTI on behalf of member Brendan Horan was instrumental in progressing towards agreement on the award of contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs) in Irish second-level schools. In recognition of this, Mr Horan will be presented with the ASTI Thomas MacDonagh Medal later this month.

The ASTI had for some time opposed the policy that applied at the time in community and comprehensive schools and colleges, which capped permanent appointments at 95% of the initial teacher allocation. The union had written to all school stewards in these schools alerting them to the probable incompatibility of this practice with employees' statutory entitlements. The ASTI was also opposed to the practice of maintaining teachers on temporary, part-time or fixed-term contracts *ad infinitum*.

## The case

Mr Horan had been employed on six successive fixed-term contracts when his school publicly advertised a permanent teaching position in the subject he taught. He applied for, but was not appointed to, the permanent position and was instead offered a seventh successive fixed-term contract. In July 2004, supported by the ASTI, Mr Horan took a complaint to the Rights Commissioner claiming that his not being offered a CID breached the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003. Similar claims were also taken on behalf of other ASTI members.

The Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act states that having completed three years' continuous employment under successive fixed-term contracts, an employee's fixed-term contract may be renewed only once more and for a maximum of one year. After this the employee must be provided with a CID, unless there are objective grounds justifying the continuation of a fixed-term contract. At the time of Mr Horan's case, however, this provision had not yet been applied in second-level schools, and objective grounds had not yet been defined.

## Rights Commissioner hearing

The ASTI's case to the Rights Commissioner pointed out that no objective grounds to prevent a CID had been detailed to Mr Horan and,



ASTI Assistant General Secretary Maire Mulcahy represented the ASTI member in the landmark case.



The case taken by the ASTI was taken on behalf of Brendan Horan.

contrary to the Act, Mr Horan was not given a reason why he was being offered a further fixed-term contract rather than a CID. The ASTI's case contended that there were, in fact, no objective grounds to prevent Mr Horan being offered a CID and his contract for 2004-2005 should be deemed to be a CID. The school argued that the school's Deed of Trust required that Mr Horan should compete with all comers for a permanent teaching position. The ASTI countered that the Deed must comply with the Act and not the reverse. The school further stated that Department of Education regulations dictated that only 95% of the school's teaching positions could be filled in a permanent capacity and Mr Horan could, therefore, not be offered a permanent contract. The ASTI argued that this requirement failed to take account of Mr Horan's rights under the Fixed-Term Act. The ASTI pointed out that Mr Horan's employment since 1999 indicated that there was an indisputable need for a teacher of English, and the needs of the school, therefore, could not be counted as an objective ground.

## REPRESENTING MEMBERS

The Rights Commissioner found that the school as employer was in breach of the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act. His decision required the school to re-engage Mr Horan on a CID as soon as possible.

### Discussions and agreement

The Department of Education and Skills appealed the Rights Commissioner decision to the Labour Court. Meanwhile, the ASTI had lodged claims for CIDs in relation to five other members. On the day of the Labour Court appeal hearing, Mr Horan agreed to a postponement to facilitate the commencement of discussions between the teacher unions, management bodies and the Department of Education in relation to the implementation of legislation on CIDs in schools. Mr Horan also received guarantees from the Department concerning the number of teaching hours he would receive. These discussions eventually resulted in a transitional agreement between the parties and the issuing of Circular letter 14/05, which authorised the provision of CIDs to teachers meeting conditions set out in the transitional agreement.

Brendan Horan says he would advise teachers not to be apprehensive about contacting the ASTI if they have an issue they wish to raise: "The union will advise you if your case is solid. Having the backing of my union was very reassuring and gave me the confidence to tackle the

powers that be; it took a lot of the stress out of it. I've always been extremely grateful to the ASTI for their support in taking the case, particularly to Maire Mulcahy, Brendan Broderick and Pat Cahill. I didn't realise the impact my case would have but I am very grateful that it has improved the situation and given teachers tangible employment prospects. I had been warned by some people not to rock the boat, but I knew I was doing only what was right, not just for my own situation but for education and the teaching profession as a whole. I just had to take on the case for all that was fair and just".

Mr Horan met the ferocity of opposition to his claim with equanimity. As a young man with a young family he risked much and bestowed a benefit on many others. Mr Horan will be presented with the ASTI Thomas MacDonagh Medal later this month. The ASTI is indebted to him and other members who took claims at that time.

The ASTI has since been instrumental in testing the application and interpretation of the transitional agreement and the circular letters governing the granting of CIDs. Since 2004, over 2,000 second-level teachers have been awarded CIDs.

The granting of CIDs for teachers is now governed by Department of Education and Skills Circular 0034/09 – see [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

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# Positive engagement in changing times

ASTI member SINEAD LAWLOR assembled a group of colleagues to prepare for the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in her school.

The announcement by Minister Ruairi Quinn last June that students sitting the Junior Certificate will in future be restricted to a maximum of eight examination subjects attracted much media attention and, seemingly, caused much teacher trepidation.

The information I obtained on the topic came courtesy of our national newspapers, which, as we know, have many agendas to fulfil and are not all positively predisposed towards the teaching profession. On further investigation I discovered that the information I was privy to was very piecemeal and selective. It transpired that this new junior cycle initiative has been a long-term work in progress, and not a kneejerk reaction to PISA, IBEC and the recession, as I previously understood.

## Information vacuum

I breathed a sigh of relief when it was clarified that we did not have to limit our subject provision to eight per student from September 2012. I do, however, see the merit in many of the measures to be implemented between now and 2017. So, why all the negativity?

After discussions with my colleagues, and carrying out a questionnaire survey of our staff, it appears that, for our school, the lack of information and concern regarding adequate in-service training caused the most worry. So, instead of sitting around complaining about it, I decided to do something positive to bridge the information gap and perhaps allay the concerns a little.

Information on the plan for the new junior cycle seems to be a moveable feast, but one concrete core element is the allied Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. This, I felt, could be the initial focus for our staff to feel somewhat prepared for the next wave of changes. After all, teachers are a lot more comfortable when we feel prepared and therefore, in some way, in control. After consultation with a very supportive principal and deputy principal, the path was cleared for distributed leadership in action.

## First steps

Step one was to create a focus group of interested colleagues. I recognised that a broad spectrum of interests and disciplines should be represented within the group. Fortunately, it was not difficult to put together a group of eight enthusiastic teachers with differing lengths of service and a wide range of expertise and skills.

My next move was to contact Rachel Farrell of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). She met with our focus group, and her interest and support were second to none. Rachel advised us to

concentrate on one key skill at a time. The group selected literacy as our initial focus and Rachel provided us with lots of interesting but simple methodologies, which could be used for a variety of subjects and topics. It was our turn to experiment.

## Experimentation

As not all methodologies suit all subjects and topics, we decided to concentrate on four: 'know, want, learn' or an anticipation exercise; scanning or skimming; pair/small group talk and share; and, graphic organisers or mindmaps. The feedback from this initial stage of experimentation has been, on the whole, very positive, with some teachers expressing the view that it has given them a new wave of enthusiasm in their classroom.

Student engagement and learning outcomes, in general, have been enhanced. It is not a 'one size fits all' formula. What worked in one situation was not ideal for another and some teachers said they would use the methodology slightly differently next time – so there will be a next time! And we will experiment with another four methodologies in due course. We recognise that we are still at the infant stages of our learning process but the interest in what we are doing is growing and our enthusiasm has not waned.

## Shaping change

Our catchphrase is 'Experiment and Share', and we encourage others to do the same. This can lighten the ever-expanding load on each individual teacher's shoulders. Time has been allocated at our next staff meeting for rotation seminars where each member of the focus group can share their experiences and advice on the methodologies with colleagues. No doubt more of our colleagues will have expertise to share with us, and together we will be more prepared and confident to manage future change.

Change can be daunting, but negativity can be toxic – and not only for ourselves: it radiates to our colleagues, our students and the wider school community. For all our sakes, we should accentuate the positives and seek to challenge existing processes to shape change where appropriate.

## Sinead Lawlor

*Sinead Lawlor teaches economics, business studies and French at Loreto College, Mullingar.*

# Opening up the web

Every second-level school will have high-speed broadband by 2014. Three ASTI members demonstrate the opportunities this infrastructure opens up for teachers.



Under a plan announced in February, 100mb broadband will be introduced to all second-level schools by 2014. The first 200 schools will be connected by September, with priority given to schools in 12 counties along the west coast. A further 200 schools will be linked up in 2013, and 240 more the year after.

## Stephen Dooley on how 100mb broadband has transformed his school:

I am the IT co-ordinator in St Aidan's Community School, Brookfield, Tallaght, one of the 78 schools already connected to high-speed broadband. The school has been running a pilot programme with South Dublin County Council since 2006, which provides laptops for all staff and students, and ensures that all rooms are properly equipped. For the first few years we had all of the hardware – computers and projectors – but only 8mb of broadband, and that meant that if you

tried to do too much, or too many teachers were using it at once, it crashed. Having the 100mb connection has fixed that problem. It's great; there's no more hanging around waiting for something to download – it's instant. If you want to pull down videos or other media from the web, you can, and there are no issues with speed or capacity. A number of teachers can use it at one time, and the kids on their laptops can use it at the same time too.

It will definitely make a difference when it's fully rolled out. It opens up the web to schools and that's great because students can only take so many PowerPoint presentations! The problem is that some schools will get the 100mb broadband but won't have the other infrastructure in place. You need both, as well as a willingness to engage; then it will make a big difference.

My school is very fortunate that we had the support of South Dublin County Council as well as two forward-looking principals. Most

teachers in the school do make use of the broadband – the students having laptops puts the pressure on.

However, students don't do their Junior Cert or Leaving Cert on a laptop, so it has to be about communicating the curriculum. What we found was that it was great for first years and second years, but when it came to third year you had to make sure students were prepared for the exams.

Having said that, once a student has saved their notes to their laptop the notes don't go missing. We use Moodle as well, which is an online application that allows teachers to get together and create and share resources, and post them online to be accessed by students.

IT or broadband is not the solution, but it helps. It's something different and it gets the kids interested. It has the wow factor.

#### **Fintan O'Mahony on using Twitter in the classroom:**

Twitter is a social networking site that allows users to send and read short posts (called tweets) of 140 characters or less, which can be collected by adding a hashtag symbol (#).

I began introducing twitter by talking to the principal and then to the staff at our first meeting of the school year, and they kindly allowed a rule change so that students could carry switched off phones. I wrote a letter to parents explaining what I planned to do, and telling them that anything the students generated would be accessible.

I set up a Twitter account for my English classes and one for my history classes. I knew I could project tweets from my laptop onto my whiteboard so they would be easy to see. The next task was to find genuine and practical educational reasons to use Twitter. 'People In History' questions for Junior Certificate were perfect – significant relevant statements are required and tweets are ideal. In English I started with haikus before I moved on to sending tweets from the courtroom in *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

We have three simple rules: include the hashtag (we agree this in advance); initial the tweet (if it's from a group everyone signs it); and, spell it correctly. This causes consternation, but it promotes accuracy and attention to detail. And here's the great part: the girls love it. They get cross when I delete their inaccurate tweets, but information gets into their heads faster and stays there longer.

There's so much fear about the educational value of Twitter that some people might be worried about entering that lion's den. My answer to these fears is simple: the internet is where kids are, so schools have to go there. It was once video and TV, and I'm sure some ancient Greeks were worried about writing things down rather than learning them by heart. Students will always be ahead of us, so why not meet them there?

Read more from Fintan on his blog at <http://levdavidovic.wordpress.com/>.

#### **Pauric O'Donnell on the impact of broadband in St Eunan's College, Letterkenny:**

The 100mb broadband rollout has made a huge difference to teaching and learning in our school. The new capacity means that we can comfortably support a teacher laptop in every classroom as well as a second full computer suite and a mobile laptop station. We have used the bandwidth to extend wireless internet access to all corners of the school for mobile devices, including iPads and notebooks.

The stable high speed opens up new teaching avenues; we have a growing number of staff blogs and mini-sites that teachers use to make notes and resources available. Twitter use among staff has grown to over 12 accounts and we have introduced 'live' Twitter feeds on displays throughout the school. Staff Twitter accounts are also incorporated into live feeds on our website. These allow students to access live data in school or at home – they particularly appreciate live updates from school sports games on the displays. Our website has become a lot more interactive and effective as students and staff now have access to update their own areas – including student magazines and blogs.

Within the classroom staff now make use of online resources that may have been inaccessible before the 100mb rollout. Websites such as WolframAlpha, YouTube, Vimeo, etc., make our lessons more interactive and attractive. Indeed, classes are not just consuming but uploading and sharing more content than ever. Software such as Scratch Gaming allows our students to create their own games, learn the basics of computer programming and share their work with the online world.

All staff members now have access to a Saint Eunan's email account and accounts are currently being rolled out to students, with over half the school population having their own @sainteunans.com account. This allows teachers to email homework, assignments and additional resources to students without the typical wastage and cost associated with photocopying.

The broadband has even improved administration within the school, with the rollout of the E-Portal platform, which lets staff record attendance, and eventually more, online from their classroom. Broadband capacity has made a huge difference to our school and it continues to evolve our methods of teaching and learning.

## Terminology

### **Blog**

Blogs (short for web logs) allow users to publish articles (called posts) to personally controlled websites.

### **Twitter**

Twitter is a social networking site that allows users to send and read short posts of 140 characters or less (tweets), which can be collected by adding a hashtag symbol (#).

### **YouTube and Vimeo**

YouTube and Vimeo are websites where users can upload or watch videos.

### **Moodle**

Moodle is an online platform that schools can use to share resources, assignments and messages between students and teachers.

### **E-Portal**

E-Portals allow online password-protected access to data such as attendance records, assessments, student information, contact information, timetables, calendars, etc.

# Support for new teachers

ASTI Standing Committee member NEIL CURRAN looks at the national induction programme for newly qualified teachers.



The first programme of induction for new teachers in the second-level sector was piloted by the Education Department in UCD from 2002 onwards. It was based on a partnership initiative including the teacher unions (ASTI, TUI and INTO), the Department of Education, the education centres, the university education departments and schools. Volunteer teachers, recruited from schools throughout Ireland, were trained to act as mentors to newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

## Induction origins

The pilot programme focused on support at a number of levels, for NQTs, mentors, and induction programmes at school level. International research suggests that mentoring is a critical support for NQTs in managing the transition to the classroom. The mentor's role requires not only an understanding of the practical knowledge of teaching, and the contexts and cultures of teaching, but also the ability to make links between these realities and the theory-based learning of the beginning teacher.

The programme was delivered through the network of education centres (ATECI) around the country. NQTs attended after school in their local education centre. For many, this involved travelling long distances at their own expense.

## Current model

For the school year 2011/2012, the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) is administered by St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. A new development is that large parts of the programme are delivered cross-sectorally, i.e., the programme is delivered by practising teachers from both the primary and post-primary sectors, and their experiences in the classroom are an important element of the programme. NQTs must attend up to 12 workshops to qualify for certification at the end of the programme. Each workshop usually lasts for two hours, and they are timetabled to take place in the evenings throughout the school year. This involves a substantial commitment in terms of time and travelling for the NQTs who, in many cases, are on temporary teaching contracts. Some of the areas focused on include working as a professional, classroom differentiation, practical assessment, child protection, classroom management, behaviour management, working with parents, literacy, numeracy, and inclusion in the classroom. Where appropriate, the workshops are delivered cross-sectorally, and this allows for discussion and exchange of ideas between primary and second-level teachers.

The NQTs are responsible for their own learning and must get their attendance cards stamped after each workshop to qualify for the award

of a certificate at the completion of the programme. Workshops missed this year can be made up next year.

### Rationale for induction

Induction is now viewed as a cornerstone and essential component of teacher preparation. There is a growing awareness internationally that induction forms the foundation of professional development to meet the complexities of the teacher's role in a changing society.

The benefits of induction include an increased sense of professional confidence, the development of a culture of lifelong learning and enhanced professional status. The programme aims to build on pre-service teacher education, while including support in areas of need identified by NQTs and strategies to meet these challenges. This targeted support for NQTs focuses on managing the transition from their pre-service teacher education course to their emerging needs as they adjust to the daily realities of school.

Feedback suggests that most of the NQTs attending the workshops are very enthusiastic and appreciate hearing the views and experiences of other new teachers in similar situations. They often find that they share common problems and value the opportunity to meet and network with their peers from other schools.

### Challenges

A major issue that has arisen is that it is very difficult to find an evening where all NQTs can attend because of the implementation by schools of the 33 hours of extra work in the Croke Park Agreement. NQTs may have to attend events in their schools and, therefore, miss their workshops. This is of major concern and needs to be addressed urgently by the authorities involved. Also, NQTs are often involved in after school activities with students, so the workshops increase the demands on their free time.

The NIPT is also training school-based mentors to be available to new teachers from next year on. It is unclear how this will work in terms of school-based implementation. With the post of responsibility system under attack, there seems little chance of a mentor's work being accommodated in the schedule of posts. The possibility of mentors being allocated time within the timetable to do their work also seems remote.

It is important that any future programmes of mentoring and induction are resourced properly.

The induction programme will come under the remit of the Teaching Council in the school year 2012/2013. At the time of going to print, the ASTI understands that the Teaching Council will be writing to the education partners to outline proposals on induction requirements for Teaching Council registration for newly qualified teachers. See [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie) for more information.

The NIPT is now available at local education centres for all newly qualified teachers in their first years in the profession. Those interested in participating should contact their local education centre for times and venues of the workshops. Information is also available at [www.teacherinduction.ie](http://www.teacherinduction.ie).

Feedback from those teachers involved in the workshops suggests that they find them worthwhile. It is important that these positive attitudes are maintained by possibly allowing the NQTs to include their induction hours as part of the requirements for the Croke Park Agreement. As a result of recent education cutbacks it is important to remember that new teachers are suffering most in the area of pay and working conditions. The requirement to take part in the induction workshops is an extra burden on them. Therefore, their needs must be priority for the trade unions in the next few years. There is also a major opportunity here to include a module on the role and responsibilities of trade unionism in the teaching profession.

### Neil Curran

*Neil Curran teaches in St Columba's College, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal. He first became involved in mentoring in 2005 as part of the UCD pilot. He completed an MA in Education (Mentoring New Teachers) in UCD during 2010/2011, receiving the ASTI Centenary Scholarship in support of his studies. He is one of the facilitators delivering this year's induction programme to both primary and second-level teachers in the Donegal Education Centre. Neil is a member of ASTI Standing Committee (Donegal, Iar Thuaisceart, Sligo).*



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# ASTI advises non-permanent teachers

As the end of the school year approaches, non-permanent teachers are concerned about their job security and salary.



## As a fixed-term teacher, do I have any entitlement to a job in the school next year?

As is the case with any fixed-term contract, when your period of employment expires your employer is not obliged to offer you further work. However, if you have been in the school for more than a year and the position you hold remains viable, or if there are other hours available in your subject, you may have an entitlement to the position. You should discuss the situation with your principal, and if in doubt, contact ASTI Head Office.

## I have had a number of fixed-term contracts in the same school; am I entitled to a CID?

You may be entitled to a contract of indefinite duration (CID) if:

- you have been employed in the same school for four years under two or more contracts;
- you have not been covering for a teacher on an approved scheme of leave of absence in the fourth year and that was set out in writing; and,
- the position remains viable.

Read Circular 0034/09 for the terms and conditions governing the granting of a Department CID.

If you believe you are entitled to a CID, confirm with your principal that they intend to offer you one for the next school year. If you are not offered a CID and feel you are entitled to one, contact your ASTI industrial relations representative for advice.

## A teacher of my subjects is retiring from the school. Am I entitled to their permanent job next year?

Firstly, it is important to note that the job may no longer exist when the teacher retires – for example, if your school is over quota. If the job does continue to exist, it may be absorbed through the granting of a CID to another teacher on the staff, it may be filled through the redeployment scheme or, if the subjects match, the hours may be distributed to existing CID holders on less than full hours – and only then can it be advertised. If the post is advertised you can apply for it, as can other teachers, but there is no guarantee that you will be awarded the position. Your first move should be to inform the principal that you are interested in the position or in the hours of the position.

## If hours become available in a school, they should be offered to part-time teachers already on staff – is there a requirement for management to do that?

Department of Education and Skills circular 0034/2009 states that “as far as possible, employers should give consideration to requests by workers to transfer from part-time to full-time work, or to increase their working time, should the opportunity arise. In doing so, as with all teaching appointments, employers must have regard to the curricular needs of the school and the qualifications required for the post”. This circular is backed up by European legislation. Management should examine the situation carefully and make every effort to increase part-time hours when they

can. If you believe hours could have been given to you and were not, call us in Head Office.

**Will the time I spend teaching on a non-permanent basis count for incremental credit?**

Pro-rata contracted teachers can claim incremental credit for each year of registered service worked on a pro-rata contract. Non-casual contracted teachers can claim an increment if they work 600 hours in one year and were registered in that year. To claim incremental credit, casual and non-casual teachers may aggregate the registered service but must reach a threshold of 300 hours in any one year. They will receive an increment for each 600 hours worked.

**Can I claim social welfare for the summer months?**

You can claim social welfare for periods when you are unemployed but your payments may be deferred or delayed because of the percentage of holiday pay you received while working. Even if the amount of holiday pay received means that your social welfare payment will be nil, it is advisable to claim benefit regardless in order to maintain your PRSI credits over the summer months. See [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie) for more information.

**What is the latest on allowances for new teachers?**

In the last Budget the Government announced a review of all public

service allowances, which was due to conclude by the end of February 2012. At the time of going to print, however, the review has not yet concluded.

Pending the outcome of the review:

- On January 31, the Government capped the payment of qualification allowances for all teachers first appointed on or after December 5, 2011, at €4,426;
- the Department of Education has announced a freeze on all allowances payable to “new beneficiaries”. This means that no allowance of any nature will be paid to teachers who enter teaching after February 1. No new allowances will be paid to teachers who become eligible for the payment of the new allowance after February 1; and,
- those teachers in receipt of allowances prior to February 1 are continuing to receive their allowance as before.

This is the situation pending the outcome of the review. When the review is complete new proposals may emerge. The ASTI will keep members informed of developments. For full details, see the Q&A on allowances on the ASTI website – [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie).

For more information, see the ‘non-permanent teachers’ section of the ASTI website.



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## Coláiste Íde celebration



Coláiste Íde is delighted to be celebrating 85 years of education this year. The school plans to have a celebratory mass to include the blessing of its new classrooms, as well as an open day for all past pupils and parents, on Sunday May 27, at 12.30. More information regarding this celebration can be obtained by contacting the school, Tel: 01-834 2333/834 2450.

## Masters/PhD in Equality Studies

UCD is the only university in Europe offering an MSc/PhD in Equality Studies. Either can be done on a part-time (evening) or full-time basis. Applications are invited for courses commencing September 2012 from people who are interested in promoting equality in education and society generally. For more details, Tel: 01-716 7104, Email: equality@ucd.ie or Kathleen.Lynch@ucd.ie, or log on to [www.ucd.ie/socialjustice/graduateprogrammes/](http://www.ucd.ie/socialjustice/graduateprogrammes/).

## Project Maths game

RacetoBase is a Project Maths-related board game developed by students in the Ursuline Secondary School in Thurles, Co. Tipperary. The game helps students in first and second year with all aspects of the new course. See [www.racetobase.com](http://www.racetobase.com) to download or order the game.

## ASTI member on song

ASTI member Marion Rose Horgan has launched a CD of six songs called 'Eternity is Here'. The album, which features songs written by Marion and performed by artists from Cobh, Co. Cork, is available on iTunes.

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## Teachers and civil partnership

Second-level teacher Aoife Neary is conducting research into the realities of everyday life for lesbian and gay teachers in Ireland. She would like to interview lesbian and gay teachers who are considering, planning or have had a civil partnership ceremony. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured. For more information, contact Aoife Neary, secondary school teacher and doctoral researcher, Department of Sociology, University of Limerick, Tel: 086-864 7474, or Email: [aoife.neary@ul.ie](mailto:aoife.neary@ul.ie).

## Survey on student mental health

A DCU masters student is asking teachers to participate in an online survey, which aims to gauge the extent of mental/emotional health problems among school students in order to inform his dissertation research into suicide in Ireland. You can complete the survey at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MN756CM>.

## Yellow Flag Programme



The Yellow Flag Programme is an equality and diversity initiative for schools, which provides and supports an environment for interculturalism. It is a practical scheme with an award incentive; following completion of eight steps and external assessment the school is awarded its 'Yellow Flag' in recognition of its work in promoting diversity and inclusion. For more information, Tel: 01-679 6577, or log on to [www.yellowflag.ie](http://www.yellowflag.ie).

## Calling NUI Galway graduates

Did you graduate from NUIG? The University really wants you to stay in touch. The Alumni Association supports many graduate gatherings and keeps former students up to date on what's happening on campus now. It's really easy to reconnect. You can update your details at [www.nuigalway.ie/alumni](http://www.nuigalway.ie/alumni), or just text GRAD followed by your year of graduation to 51000.



## 'More Languages More Options'

A new series of seven video clips for second-level students and teachers on the importance of foreign language skills is available online at [www.languagesinitiative.ie](http://www.languagesinitiative.ie), or by request from the Post Primary Languages Initiative office, Tel: 01-805 7794.



# Fiftieth anniversary RSTA enrolment drive

In this anniversary year, the National Committee would like to encourage all 16 RSTA branches nationwide to make a concerted effort to enroll recently and newly retired teachers into membership of the RSTA. More teachers will have retired by the end of this school year than in any other year heretofore. In response to this, our strategy is that every RSTA branch should make contact with the secondary schools in its area to request assistance from each school in getting information about the RSTA to all the teachers who have retired from that school. We suggest that branch officers prepare information packs, place them in stamped envelopes and ask if the school secretary would address the envelopes for posting to the retired teachers from that school. Each pack would include an RSTA Newsletter, an RSTA membership application form, the RSTA information leaflet and information about local branch activities. The National Committee will supply newsletters, application forms and leaflets to branch officers on request. This strategy was followed with notable success in the Kerry Branch last autumn. If the branch is also hosting a reception for retired teachers, as some branches have already done this year, an invitation to the reception could be included in the pack. To mark the fiftieth anniversary of the RSTA, and to ensure that the RSTA will be available to the many teachers who are retiring this year, the National Committee has created a special fund to support the enrolment drive. RSTA branches may apply through the National Treasurer for a grant to cover such additional costs as may be incurred in making contact with newly retired and recently retired teachers.

## Email addresses and mobile phone numbers

For the last two years all new members of the RSTA who have mobile phone numbers and email addresses have been including them on their RSTA membership application forms. We have also requested that existing members send us these details. As a result, we now have email addresses for 35% of our members and mobile phone numbers for 41%. This is very encouraging. If you have not already provided us with your mobile phone number and email address (if you have one), please do so by texting 'RSTA', followed by your name, postal address, and email address, to the RSTA National Secretary, Seán Fallon, Tel: 086-849 6460. Thank you.



Volunteers from the RSTA Dublin Branch packing a recent RSTA Newsletter for posting.

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- Ard-Diplóma san Aistriúchán Dlíthiúil

Earcaíonn an tAontas Eorpach aistritheoirí agus dlítheangeolaithe go tráth rialta. Tá ganntanas ar an AE faoi láthair maidir le haistritheoirí dlíthiúla agus dlítheangeolaithe<sup>1</sup> le Gaeilge.

**Deireadh Fómhair 2012 - Bealtaine 2013** tairgidh Óstai an Rí cúrsaí páirtaimseartha ardeibhéil chun rannpháirtithe a chumasú le cur isteach ar fholúntais mar aistritheoirí dlíthiúla le Gaeilge agus dlítheangeolaithe le Gaeilge le Institiúidí an AE.

Seasfaidh na cáilíochtaí seo freisin don té ar suim leis fostaíocht taobh amuigh d'Institiúidí an AE. Tá maitheamh táillí ar fáil do dhaoine a bhfuil deacrachtaí airgeadais acu. Ní gá cáilíocht sa Dlí don chúrsa san Aistriúchán Dlíthiúil.

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agus ó : [daihi.maccarthaigh@kingsinns.ie](mailto:daihi.maccarthaigh@kingsinns.ie)  
087-2368364.**

Cuireann an Roinn Ealaíon Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta tacaíocht ar fáil don dá chúrsa seo.

<sup>1</sup> Daoine, a bhfuil cáilíocht ghairmiúil sa dlí nó céim sa dlí acu, a dheimhniú go bhfuil leaganacha éagsúla de achtachán i dteangacha éagsúla ag teacht lena chéile.

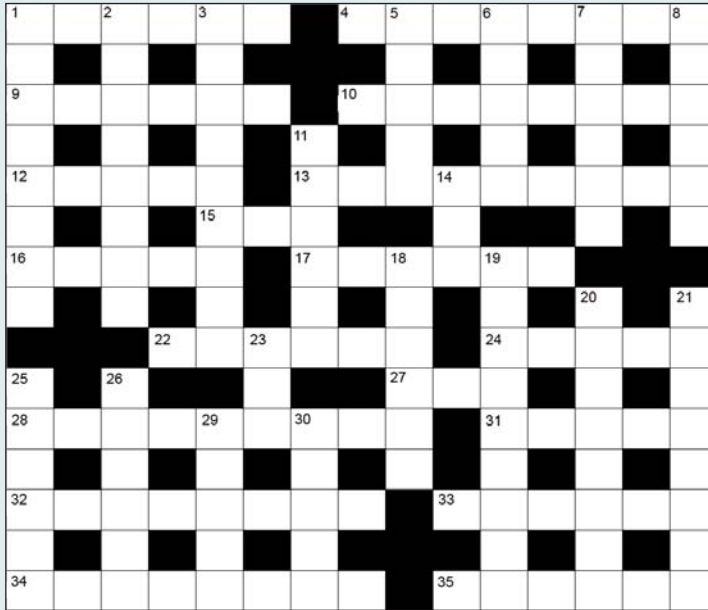


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ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 1203

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. 1203, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.

To arrive by: Friday, July 13, 2012.

CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 "On the beautiful blue ...", a Strauss waltz (6)
- 4 Threats faced by small primary schools (8)
- 9 "Better a diamond with a flaw than a ... without." (Confucius) (6)
- 10 Approbation (8)
- 12 A derelict keepsake (5)
- 13 Spinal bones collectively known as this (9)
- 15 Fifth sign of the Zodiac (3)
- 16 Retax more than usual (5)
- 17 A line connecting points of equal atmospheric pressure (6)
- 22 Beasts could be a breed of hound (6)
- 24 Listened to the sound of cattle! (5)
- 27 Familiar to those looking for a third-level place (1.1.1.)
- 28 A person who exercises authority (9)
- 31 A short thick-skinned animal (5)
- 32 Sounds prudent but distinct (8)
- 33 See 7 down
- 34 Such a woollen garment is ready money only! (8)
- 35 On a colloquial high (6)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1 Left for dead! (8)
- 2 Aristocracy (8)
- 3 Battle headgear (9)
- 5 Push back the outcast – back! (5)
- 6 "They also ... who only stand and wait" (Milton) (5)
- 7 down & 33 across: Bar of soap (6,6)
- 8 Lasted by being preserved (6)
- 11 Stays clear of (6)
- 14 But it's an open, flat-bottomed vessel (3)
- 18 Tumult, uproar (6)
- 19 Bear north in a repugnant way (9)
- 20 Dour, stern (8)
- 21 Affixed, appended (8)
- 23 A tocsin could contain a violation of religious or moral law (3)
- 25 Acerbic, sharp (6)
- 26 I am useful to entertain (6)
- 29 Latin gold (5)
- 30 Discourage, inhibit (5)

Solution to ASTIR Crossword No. 1202

Across	Down
8. Alleluia	1. Sleuth
9. Paella	2. Bewilder
10. Tulips	3. Subsidies
11. Sherlock	4. Hamster
12. Shaded	5. Speech
13. Ephemera	6. Bedlam
15. ESRI	7. Plectrum
17. Everest	14. PISA
17. Satsuma	16. Stag
22. Asal	18. Violence
24. Mortgage	20. Alkaline
27. Kneads	21. Seesawed
29. Cerberus	23. Seismic
30. League	25. Tables
31. Accede	26. Agreed
32. Innuendo	28. Druids

Congratulations

to the winner of Crossword No. 1202: Eamonn Daly, Good Counsel College, Co. Waterford. New Ross Branch member.

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