

astir

Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

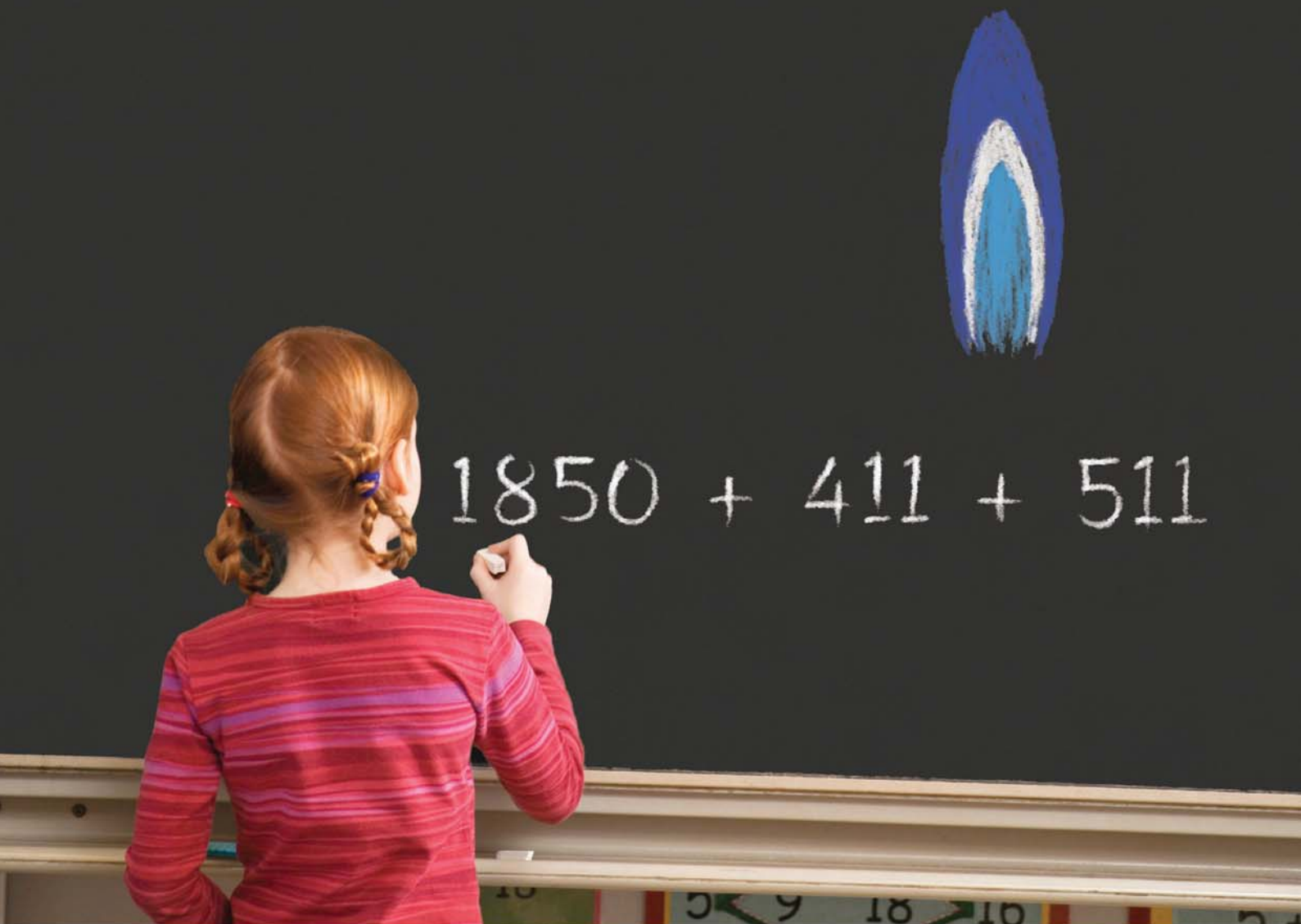
Teacher, coach,
All-Ireland captain
Teachers using their talents



Teachers searching
for work

Croke Park
discussions

Report on teachers'
pensions



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Volume 28: Number 5: November 2010
ISSN 0790-6560

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Published on behalf of ASTI by Think Media.
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Design: Tony Byrne, Tom Cullen and Ruth O'Sullivan.
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Cover photo: Denise Masterson, teacher at St Michael's Finglas pictured after her All-Ireland Ladies Football victory. (Picture credit: Brian Lawless/SPORTSFILE.)

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

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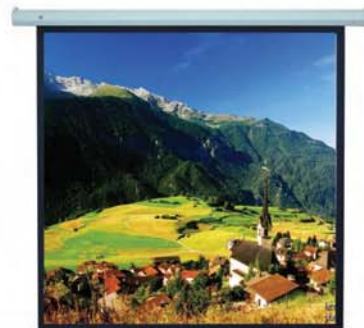
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ASTI addressing the issues

Croke Park talks

Talks on the Croke Park Agreement continue and, while it is not possible to report on specifics at the moment, it is important to note that these talks do not indicate an acceptance of the Croke Park Deal. Any outcome from these talks will be put to a ballot of members. The TUI has now joined the talks having also suspended its industrial action for the duration of the talks. Whatever the outcome, the future direction of the ASTI will become apparent in the coming months. It is vital therefore that each and every member participates in the decision-making process.

Amendment Bill undermines regulation of teaching profession

The ASTI is dismayed that at a time when so many high-quality teachers cannot get work, the Government is introducing the Education (Amendment) Bill, which, if passed into law, will allow schools to employ unregistered personnel (including non-teachers) to work in a teaching capacity. The General Secretary and I have asked the Minister for Education and Skills to review the Bill, which is also opposed by the Teaching Council and by colleague teacher unions.

Unemployed teachers

This edition of *ASTIR* contains an article about ASTI members who are currently out of work. The ASTI is concerned at the high levels of unemployment among recent graduates. Hundreds are out of work. Even more young teachers – up to 3,000 ASTI members – are in temporary or part-time positions and are looking for more secure work. The ASTI is strongly urging schools to give any additional work to new and part-time teachers and to prioritise unemployed teachers.

New teachers' pensions

If Government plans to change pension arrangements go ahead, teachers entering service from 2011 will pay more in contributions to the scheme that they will get out in pension benefits.

A report by Trident Consulting on the impact of the proposed arrangements on teachers entering service from 2011 – commissioned by the ASTI, the INTO, and the TUI – found that teachers will pay more, work longer and get less. The proposed new scheme is based on 'career average' earnings rather than final salary, with increases based on inflation rather than salary increases, and a retirement age of 68. The

ASTI believes that if the new scheme is implemented it will have devastating consequences for those who commit to a career in teaching and will deter many capable graduates from entering the profession. The three teacher unions have launched a campaign of opposition to the new proposals, which includes a media launch, a lobby of political parties, and a series of regional meetings (the first to be held in Dublin on Tuesday, November 23 and the second in Cork on Monday, December 13). Today's teacher retirees fought hard and achieved many improvements in conditions that we as working teachers benefit from. It is vital that we fight to protect the conditions of the next generation of teachers. It is therefore important that members try to attend one of the regional meetings in order to be fully briefed and to participate in the campaign of opposition against this attack on the right to a reasonable pension.

Contributing to society

Recently I was honoured with the task of presenting ASTI Achievement Awards to classroom teachers who have shown outstanding commitment to developing their pupils through extra-curricular activity. The work of these Achievement Award winners will be profiled in the next edition of *ASTIR*. Meanwhile, in this edition we interview four teachers who are using their talents to make a valuable contribution to society. What continues to amaze me about the teaching profession is the extent to which individual teachers give their time and energy in order to contribute to the life of their schools, communities and country. We must always celebrate the work of teachers outside the classroom.



Jack Keane

ASTI President

Protecting education

Budget 2011 threatens to further erode education, says PAT KING.



Despite being told that last year's draconian Budget would somehow break the back of Ireland's economic dilemma and set us on a road to recovery, we are now facing into the harshest Budget in the history of the State. In recent weeks, the national media has been dominated by demands on the Government to direct budgetary cuts at the public service generally and public servants in particular.

The ASTI is extremely concerned that the most vulnerable in society – including second-level students – will be targeted again this year. Budget 2009 unleashed a range of savage cutbacks on second-level schools. The worsening of the pupil-teacher ratio, which came into effect in September 2009, resulted in schools dropping key subjects such as science subjects and modern languages, which are vital to Ireland's development as a smart economy. Budget 2010 targeted public sector workers and followed the unilateral imposition of a pension levy resulting, in effect, in a total pay cut of approximately 14%.

The Renewed Programme for Government, agreed in October 2009, restored a number of vital education grants and made a commitment that there would be no further deterioration in the pupil-teacher ratio in second-level schools. The ASTI welcomed the Renewed Programme for Government on the basis that it acknowledged the devastating impact of the Budget 2009 education cuts on the second-level education system. It would be astonishing if the Government were to renege on these commitments. Second-level students are at a vital stage in their development and their experience of school has a crucial impact on their future life chances. The ASTI has written to the Minister for Education and Skills, Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, and to representatives of the Green Party, urging careful consideration in any Budget discussions.

From early 2009 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions warned that the economic choices made by this Government – austerity as opposed to stimulus – were a recipe for disaster and would depress demand, cause job losses and retard prospects for growth. More than 100,000 people showed their support for this view when they participated in the ICTU demonstrations in November 2009 and February 2010. Unfortunately, as it turns out, Congress could not have been more accurate in its predictions. To date we have seen three deflationary budgets that have taken some €14.5 billion out of the economy. Yet our budget deficit is now higher than when the Government's austerity programme began and we have mass unemployment.

The recent report from the Economic and Social Research Institute has questioned the wisdom of the Government's austerity programme, stating that "an austerity package of €15 billion within four years could damage the potential of the economy to grow its way out of recession".

Don't wait till December 8

The ICTU is holding a demonstration in Dublin on Saturday, November 27, at 12 noon, starting from Wood Quay, ahead of Budget 2011 (December 7). As public servants and trade union members we must give a clear message to the Government that fairness is not only morally better, it is economically superior as well. The greater the attendance, the better the chance we have of influencing the fairness and distributional burden of Budget 2011. Your support will help to protect your working conditions and the interests of your students. Protesting on December 8 will be too late!

Update on Croke Park talks

As this *ASTIR* goes to print the ASTI is engaged in intensive talks with the Department on the Croke Park Agreement, with the sole purpose of seeking to protect teachers from threats that are being promoted by many commentators of a worsening of conditions and imposed redundancies. Any outcome of these discussions will be put to the Central Executive Council for consideration and then to a ballot of members. Developments in this regard can be found on www.asti.ie.



Pat King

ASTI General Secretary

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Thomas MacDonagh Awards



The Thomas MacDonagh Award is presented to ASTI members in recognition of their service to the union. Pictured left is a group of recipients who received Thomas MacDonagh awards in September. Back row (from left): Seamus Heaney; Joe Niland; Sean Gilson; and, Christy Maginn. Middle row (from left): Hugo Martin; Claire Moran (accepting on behalf of her father, Ed Moran); ASTI General Secretary Pat King; Eileen Scanlon; Kevin McEneaney; and, Oliver McDermott. Front row (from left): Dan Healy; ASTI President Jack Keane; Margaret Moore; Mary Morgan; and, Phil Doherty.

Seanad candidates – invitation for nominations/endorsements

The ASTI has formal nomination rights for candidatures for election to Seanad Éireann only on the Cultural and Education Panel. The ASTI invites applications for nominations to the Seanad Cultural and Education Panel. The ASTI also invites applications for endorsement of candidature for Seanad Éireann on the NUI and Dublin University Panels. Applications should be forwarded to the General Secretary. Under ASTI rules, endorsement of candidates for election to Seanad Éireann must be decided by Convention. However, if time or an early general election does not permit this, the endorsement will be decided by CEC or Standing Committee.

Applications for endorsement must arrive in ASTI Head Office no later than 5.00pm on Friday, December 10, 2010.

Political Fund

Members who are nominated or endorsed can apply to the ASTI Political Fund for a grant towards expenses incurred in the manner set out in the Rules for the Political Fund.

For further information, see www.asti.ie, Tel: 01-604 0160, or Email: info@asti.ie.

ASTI Achievement Awards

At a ceremony held last month, the ASTI presented teachers with ASTI Achievement Awards for their outstanding contributions to their schools, communities and counties.



Tom Reynolds and Triona Brosnan (pictured with ASTI General Secretary Pat King (right) and ASTI President Jack Keane) worked together to guide a team from their school, St David's Greystones, to win the world championship F1 in Schools competition. Champion kayaker Eileen Murphy, Old Bawn, Tallaght, also received an award for her commitment to motivating young people to reach their potential in outdoor activities. Read more about the award winners in the January edition of ASTIR.



At the same ceremony, Donal O'Mahony was awarded the ASTI Centenary Bursary 2010 for his research into the potential of online social software to improve teaching and learning. Donal is pictured above with ASTI General Secretary Pat King (left) and ASTI President Jack Keane (right). Donal's research and in-depth knowledge of the subject will be a significant resource for the ASTI in forming its policy on ICT integration in schools, learning and assessment.

Pensions research exposes devaluing of pensions



The devastating effect on teachers' pensions of the proposed single new scheme for the public service is revealed in research just published by the three teacher unions. New joiners in 2011 who enter teaching after the effective date of the new scheme would have a career average rather than final salary pension, a retirement age of 68 rather than 65 and see an end to pension parity with salaries.

As details of the new scheme became clear the ASTI, together with the INTO and the TUI, commissioned research on its effects. This research was conducted by Trident Consulting and was published jointly on November 4. The research shows that the proposed new scheme is significantly inferior to current pension terms and provides no net benefit whatever to many new joiners. The research is summarised below.

Trident Report *Future Pension Provisions* summarised:

1. Previous adjustments (e.g., 1995 and 2004) to the Teachers' Superannuation Scheme, and to public service schemes generally, have reduced benefits and increased the proportion of retirement benefits funded by employees.
2. With the pension levy from March 2009, a new member joining the current scheme at age 21 requires only a 3.4% (of salary) contribution from the State as employer to help fund their pension costs.
3. A new teacher starting today at age 25 requires a 5.7% employer contribution, still less than the private sector average.
4. The proposed 2011 changes – to 'career average', later retirement and CPI linkage – mark a drastic disimprovement in retirement benefits for new teachers and public servants generally.
5. The value of teachers' contributions under the proposed new scheme will exceed the value of benefits, a situation that may be open to a legal challenge, especially since membership is compulsory.
6. The new scheme would be less generous than the provisions of all private sector schemes and (actuarially) less valuable than no pension provision whatsoever.
7. If the pension levy were cut in half or abolished from 2011, the employer contribution then required would be just 1.5% or 4.9%, respectively.

8. The new scheme would result in a total pension of 44% of final salary after working for 43 years, compared to a 50% pension for working 40 years at present (lump sum falls from 150% to 129%).

9. With changes over recent years (including 1995 and 2004) the existing pension terms for teachers are sustainable.

10. Alternative approaches to cutting costs, and especially to curbing the gains through final salary linkage for high earners on retirement, are available. These include setting a maximum public service pension or hybrid pension where salary applies up to a certain threshold.

11. A single pension scheme for all public servants will be complex to administer, especially where payroll remains decentralised.

12. Assumptions used in the Report are standard ones, with a conservative approach to the salary growth assumption.

13. The results are sensitive to the salary growth trend; if salary growth is significantly ahead of inflation, the new scheme would compare even more unfavourably to the current terms.

14. The value of promotion, especially in later career, would be reduced substantially in pension terms under the new scheme.

15. Among categories of teacher who would pay more in than they would get out of the scheme are: (a) age 21 joiner, no promotion, unbroken service; (b) age 21 joiner, special duties post at age 40, unbroken service; (c) age 25 joiner, no promotion, unbroken service; and, (d) age 25 joiner, no promotion, five-year career break.

The three teacher unions have announced that they will, as initial steps in opposition to the new proposals:

- undertake a round of senior level political lobbying in early November; and,
- organise a series of regional meetings on pensions, the first of these to be held in Dublin on Tuesday November 23, and the second in Cork on Monday December 13.

Further steps in this campaign are planned. Visit www.asti.ie for more information.

Tribute to Paddy Mulcahy



Pictured at a presentation to mark the contribution made by the late Paddy Mulcahy to the ASTI are Paddy's wife, Terry; Pat King, ASTI General Secretary; and, Paddy's son, Seamus.

Global solidarity



The ASTI hosted an ICTU Forum on Global Solidarity in late August. Fifty-seven trade unionists came together to discuss how to develop international trade union solidarity work. Pictured at the forum are (from left): Jack O'Connor, ICTU President; John White, former ASTI General Secretary; Patricia McKeown, ICTU past president; and, Jack Keane, ASTI President.

ASTI makes Oireachtas presentation on curricular reform

In a presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills last month, the ASTI emphasised that high quality teachers and learning environments must be prioritised to allow creativity, innovation, teamwork and critical thinking to flourish.

The ASTI was invited to address the Committee in the context of the ongoing review of the junior cycle. The presentation stressed that the way in which students learn is as important as what they learn. In supporting any curricular reform, certain conditions are necessary to allow schools to become innovative learning hubs: smaller class sizes,

continuation of the Smart Schools Programme, provision of teacher training in targeted areas, proper support for Project Maths and other curricular reforms, and trust in schools as innovation builders.

The ASTI pointed out that teachers and legislators share a common aim: the creation of well educated young people who, as well as being well equipped for the global labour market, have critical thinking and creative skills; who are open to change and innovation; who are socially responsible; and, who value our distinctive Irish cultural heritage.

View the full presentation at: www.asti.ie.



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Order your copies of the 2010-11 Europa Diary at www.europadiary.eu before **28 January 2011**, or while stocks last. You may also order from Léargas by email, fax or by post before the deadline. **Late requests cannot be fulfilled, so order now!**

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ASTI meets education spokesperson



Pictured outside Leinster House following the meeting with Fergus O'Dowd are (from left): Jack Keane, ASTI President; Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; Deputy Fergus O'Dowd; and, Pat King, ASTI General Secretary.

Representatives from the ASTI met with Fergus O'Dowd, Fine Gael Spokesperson on Education and Skills, in September. At the meeting Deputy O'Dowd agreed to highlight the ASTI's concerns regarding the proposed changes in the public service pension to the Fine Gael Finance Spokesperson, Michael Noonan.

The delegation discussed the ASTI position that the moratorium on appointments to posts of responsibility should be removed completely and made the case for increased funding for second-level education. The OECD Education at a Glance 2010 report shows that Ireland ranks fourth to last out of 31 OECD countries in terms of the proportion of GDP invested in education.

At the meeting the ASTI also discussed the disproportionate effect that the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio is having on students with special needs, and the need to ring-fence funding for the upskilling of maths teachers.

A meeting with Ruairi Quinn, Labour Party Education Spokesperson, has also taken place. The ASTI will continue to lobby politicians and promote the interests of its members in the lead up to Budget 2011.

Retirement function



Some retired members of the Iar-thuaisceart Branch pictured at a retirement function held in May. Back row (from left): Gerry McLaughlin; Hugo Martin; Paddy McMenamin; John Friel; Paul Curran; and, Liam Maloney. Front row (from left): Nora Graham; C.P. O'Donnell; and, Margaret Friel.

Review of the ASTI begins

The ASTI has begun the process of reviewing the union's organisation and structures, following a resolution adopted at Convention 2010. The intent of this review is to make the ASTI fully responsive to members' concerns and fit for purpose for today's world.

The review is currently at a preliminary stage. As a first step, a random sample of members has been asked to identify areas of ASTI activity, structures and services that should be examined in the course of the review.

A more comprehensive consultation process will take place in the New Year. Updates will be posted on the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

Know Your Rights events



Members who attended the ASTI Know Your Rights information evenings in September were invited to enter a draw to win an Apple iPad. Congratulations to Evanna Derrick from St Aidan's Comprehensive in Cavan, who was the lucky winner! Pictured making the draw are (from left): Jack Keane, ASTI President; Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; and, Justin McCarthy, Cornmarket (sponsor).

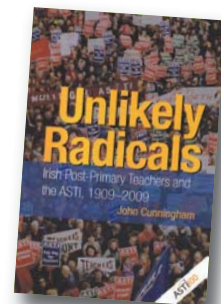
Funding for schools

A circular released by the Department of Education and Skills in October sets out the Department grants and funding available to voluntary secondary schools. Circular 0062/2010 covers standard capitation, the school services support fund, book grants and programme grants. Find it on the circulars section of www.asti.ie.

Lobbying by the ASTI and the other teacher unions resulted in the restoration of a range of grants and funding originally withdrawn under Budget 2009.

History of your union

Dr John Cunningham will give a lecture on the history of the ASTI in Galway on December 13, as part of a series of lectures organised by the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society. The lecture will be held in the Harbour Hotel, The Docks, Galway, at 8.00pm. See www.gaahs.info for more information. Dr Cunningham is the author of *Unlikely Radicals – Irish Post-Primary Teachers and the ASTI, 1909–2009*, which is available in bookshops nationwide and from Cork University Press – www.corkuniversitypress.com.



Teaching Council bursaries awarded

On October 5, the Teaching Council marked World Teachers' Day by awarding €123,000 in research bursaries to 30 teachers.

The bursaries were awarded as part of the Council's fourth scheme of research bursaries. The current scheme has been dedicated to the memory of the late Kieran O'Driscoll, a former member of the Teaching Council who died in March of this year.

Commenting on the bursary recipients, Teaching Council Chairperson and ASTI member Lily Cronin said: "The promotion of research into teaching, learning and assessment is a key function of the Council and the awards made today highlight the Teaching Council's commitment to the continuing professional development of teachers. I wish all the recipients well with their research, but particularly those who are practising teachers, since I know that they will bring the insights from their research back to the classroom so that there will be very real benefits for their pupils."

Commenting on the research being undertaken, Áine Lawlor, CEO of the Teaching Council, said: "The response to the bursary scheme this year has been overwhelming and has provided evidence of the variety of research work that is happening on the ground in the teaching profession. I am confident that the research carried out will have the potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in Ireland".



Teachers recently awarded Teaching Council bursaries. Back row (from left): Naomi McGoldrick; Barry Slattery; David King; Patrick McAree; Aideen Cassidy; Kevin Cahill; Clare Ryan; Eleanor Walsh; and, Tony Sheridan. Front row (from left): Teresa Hennessy; John Talbot; Áine Lawlor, Teaching Council CEO; Lily Cronin, Teaching Council Chairperson; Teresa O'Driscoll, wife of the late Kieran O'Driscoll; Diane Birnie; and, Eileen Kelly-Blakeney.

Gaisce research – your help is needed



Gaisce –The President's Award, in conjunction with the UCD School of Psychology, is conducting research from this autumn until May 2011 to determine if participation in Gaisce – The President's Award (Bronze Award) enhances the positive psychological attributes of its participants.

The involvement of second-level teachers is crucial to the success of this research. In order to complete this study, Gaisce regional development officers will be asking if you could give a letter of explanation about the research and a parental consent form to all Bronze Award participants (both will be supplied by Gaisce).

It is hoped that all Bronze Award participants will complete a questionnaire before they begin the programme and again on completion of the programme. The questionnaires will be completed online and take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

All necessary documentation and information relating to the research will be supplied to each school.

Gaisce – The President's Award is committed to providing a quality award programme. Your participation will help to ensure that Gaisce's high standards will continue to be met and maintained.

It's been said...

"Education, if it is prioritised, can provide us with the single most important route to job creation – white collar, blue collar, any collar – full stop." Martin Murphy, Managing Director of Hewlett Packard, in *The Irish Times*, Thursday, October 5, 2010.

Induction for new teachers

A new induction programme for newly qualified teachers is now available in all education centres around the country. The support programme helps teachers to manage the transition from pre-service education to the daily realities of school life and the daily demands of life in the classroom. Participation is voluntary but is recommended for all teachers in their first year of teaching or those who have been teaching for a number of years but who have not previously completed an induction programme. The programme includes modules focusing on the needs of newly qualified teachers: peer networking and support opportunities; the development of an induction portfolio and resource materials; and, mentoring support and advice. Participants will be awarded a certificate to acknowledge their successful participation in the programme. For full information, see www.nationalinductionprogramme.com.

Student council support

Student council support is now jointly managed by the Schools Division of the Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

The role of the Student Council Co-ordinator is to provide a programme of professional development in response to the information, resources and training needs of schools in planning the implementation or establishment of an effective student council.

According to the Student Council Support Service, an effective student council is one that is democratically elected, is representative of the entire school and has meaningful involvement and participation through consultation in relevant policy making, which allows young people to have a real influence over decisions that affect them.

See www.studentcouncil.ie.

Sharing learning



An expanded programme to link schools in Ireland and Africa was launched by President Mary McAleese in October. The programme allows students to share their experiences and learning to promote development education and increase awareness of development issues in Irish schools. Find out more at www.lcdinternational.org/ireland.

Intercultural Education Strategy launched

Ireland's first national Intercultural Education Strategy has been launched following two years of consultation, which included input from the ASTI. The ASTI participated in the national consultation conference on the Intercultural Education Strategy and in subsequent second-level-specific seminars. In a formal submission to this process, the ASTI reiterated its call for more English language support teachers and further integration training for teachers of all subjects. The strategy acknowledges that all teachers are teachers of language, specifically of the language required to access the curriculum, and calls for teacher education programmes and continuous professional development to reflect this.

The strategy aims to build on the existing good practice in schools and other education institutions to ensure that all students experience an education that respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society, as set out in the Education Act 1998. The strategy encourages the adoption of a whole school approach to creating an intercultural learning environment.

For more information see www.integration.ie.

Health and safety tool kit for schools

Guidelines and a tool kit on health and safety in second-level schools have been developed by the Health and Safety Authority in conjunction with the State Claims Agency and the Department of Education and Skills. The materials were issued to second-level schools in October and are available at www.hsa.ie.

The guidelines and tool kit will be of interest to all teachers, and in particular to ASTI staff safety reps. The material includes a template for a safety audit and a sample accident/incident record form.

The ASTI urges all schools to elect an ASTI staff safety rep. Support and training are provided by ASTI Head Office.

Regulation of teaching profession undermined by Amendment Bill

The ASTI has called on the Minister for Education, Tánaiste Mary Coughlan, to review the recently introduced Education (Amendment) Bill, which, if passed, will allow for un-registered teachers to be employed in a teaching capacity. ASTI President Jack Keane said the amendment comes at a time when hundreds of qualified second-level teachers all over the country are looking for work because of the Budget 2009 decision to cut the numbers of teachers in second-level schools: "On the one hand the Minister is urging schools to make use of the national resource that is our highly qualified registered young teacher graduates, hundreds of whom are looking for work. On the other hand, the Government is legislating that schools can employ non-teachers in a teaching capacity. There is no valid reason why schools should be employing un-registered personnel to work in classrooms when there are hundreds of high calibre teachers out of work".

The Bill, introduced in October, will amend Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, which requires teachers to be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from State funds. If passed, the amendment will undermine the role of the Teaching Council and the capacity of teacher regulation to protect the educational interests of young people, said Mr Keane.

The ASTI is calling on the Minister to review the Bill as a matter of urgency.

2010 is crucial

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is supporting the Act Now on 2015 campaign to ensure the attainment of the Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs) by 2015. These goals form part of a

**Act Now
on 2015**
Deliver Ireland's Aid Promise

global deal made in 2000 to eliminate poverty and hunger, work towards achieving gender equality, fight against environmental degradation and reverse the advance of HIV/AIDS, while improving access to education, healthcare and clean water.

Ireland signed up to the MDGs in 2000 and has since shown leadership in relation to HIV and AIDS, hunger and aid effectiveness. In support of the MDGs, Ireland pledged to increase its overseas aid so that we would reach the UN target of spending 0.7% of national income on overseas aid.

Since its original pledge in 2000, the Government has twice shifted the date for achieving this international commitment, and now states that its aim is to reach the UN target of a minimum of 0.7% by 2015 at the latest. A recent survey by Dóchas shows that 81% of Irish people feel that it is important for the country's international reputation that Ireland delivers on its promise.

Visit www.actnow2015.ie to find out more and to join the campaign.

Chief examiners' reports

To find out how Leaving and Junior Cert candidates in your subject perform in exams and read detailed analysis of the standard of answers, go to www.examinations.ie and have a look at the chief examiners' reports.

Teachers searching for work

ASTIR takes a look at the situation facing hundreds of unemployed second-level teachers.



The guaranteed permanent teaching job is a myth from another era. Today, hundreds of teachers are finding it very difficult to obtain teaching work, and finding a permanent position is close to impossible.

Unemployed and non-permanent teachers are a core concern of the ASTI, says ASTI General Secretary Pat King: "We are committed to ensuring that the rights of our 3,000 plus non-permanent members are fully asserted. We are conscious that hundreds of other teachers are currently searching for work. We recognise that these teachers need as much, if not more, protection and support from their union".

More jobs make sense

To that end, the ASTI is campaigning against the increased pupil-teacher ratio and for more support teachers "The jobs crisis is hitting hard in every sector, but when education is the acknowledged key to recovery, and when teachers are consistently identified as the most important factor in providing a quality education, it just doesn't make any sense to put teachers out of work, and leave students in overcrowded classrooms and without adequate support," says Mr King.

This message rings true and, as a result of lobbying and campaigning, last year the ASTI secured extra second-level teaching jobs at a time when all other areas of the public sector were losing staff.

The ASTI has since concentrated on highlighting the issue of teaching jobs through the media and other channels. In the run-up to the Budget, the ASTI will continue to stress the vital importance of teachers to students' lives, to society's wellbeing and to economic recovery.

The ASTI strongly urges schools to give any additional teaching work to new and part-time teachers and to prioritise teachers on the live register because, says Mr King: "The teaching profession needs a continual infusion of young teachers in order to ensure diversity in the teaching profession. It would be a tragic loss to the country if young teachers were forced to emigrate or leave the profession, particularly when numbers entering our second-level schools are on the rise".

Searching for options

For many teachers, however, there is little alternative to emigration. One teacher, still unemployed despite some 60 CVs dispatched, says: "For the first few weeks job hunting wasn't so bad because I had hope I would get something. But I've been looking for months now and there's just so little out there it seems impossible. My husband is working at the moment, but if he is let go, I would move abroad. At the moment, it's really the only option". One piece of good news is that projections show that the number of students entering second-level schools will continue to grow over the next number of years. This coincides with a large proportion of those currently teaching nearing retirement. That is of little help to those who, like this teacher, are searching today and finding very little teaching work out there: "I know there will be jobs in the future, but when? I don't want to leave teaching but I'm just not sure what to do. You want to be able to plan your life and see a future. Even if teachers could get three or four hours in a school each week, it would be better than nothing; they'd still be teaching".

Teachers want to teach

Teachers are willing to make sacrifices to stay in their chosen profession, as this unemployed teacher explains: "I've moved twice already for jobs and my current job search extends to seven different counties. It's depressing that after five years of college, I don't have a career. I realise teaching is not the only profession in this situation but a lot of people have the impression that teaching offers a guaranteed permanent job when, in fact, getting a permanent teaching job is like winning the Lotto! Instead, there seems only to be precarious temporary work and we find ourselves celebrating if we get a day here or a day there subbing. When we graduated we certainly didn't think this is what teaching would be".

It is not only recent graduates who are faced with the job hunt. Despite ten years teaching experience in the UK, one teacher *ASTIR* spoke to has spent the last number of months dropping CVs to schools and searching for work. She has finally found a steady job, but that will only last until Christmas. After that, she says, the situation doesn't look great. "There just seems to be less teaching work available this year. I suppose the jobs that used to be out there were things like leave cover, job sharing hours, etc. In the current climate, a lot of teachers can't afford to take leave or are anxious to hold on to a full-time job if they have it. It's a funny situation out there but hopefully things will pick up soon".

The ASTI is always anxious to hear the views and experiences of members. Get in touch at astir@asti.ie.

At a time when hundreds of qualified high-calibre teachers are looking for work, the Government has introduced the Education (Amendment) Bill, which, if passed, will allow schools to employ unregistered teachers in a teaching capacity. The ASTI has called on the Minister to review the Bill as a matter of urgency. See page 13.

If you are a non-permanent, substitute or job-hunting teacher the ASTI is here to support you:

- Find out if you are being paid correctly and other important information
- Join our Substitution Service to help you find work
- Find out about your entitlements to a CID and about other contracts
- Get representation if you need it
- Attend our professional development courses and information evenings
- Keep informed about developments in education and teaching
- Access a number of specially negotiated deals
- Attend events for new and non-permanent teachers
- Join in ASTI campaigns to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio and for more teaching jobs

www.asti.ie 1850-418400 info@asti.ie



Join the job-hunting discussion on Facebook – www.facebook.com/astiteachers.

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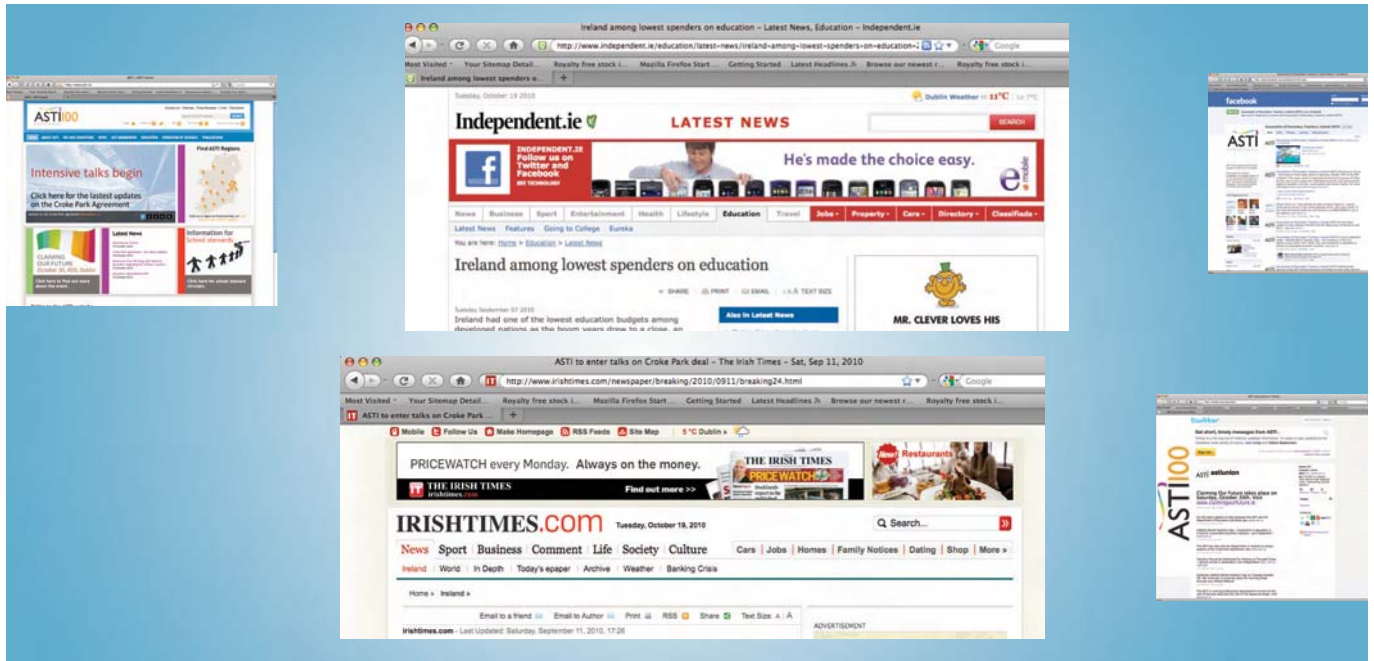
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Making headlines

Keep an eye out for news of your union's activities in the media.



Over the last month

ASTI appeared on

Today FM/Q102/RTÉ Nuacht/UTV Radio/TV3/Newstalk/RTÉ Television/
RTÉ Radio/FM104/4FM

ASTI appeared in

*Irish Examiner/Irish Independent/Irish Times/Irish Daily Mail/
The Star/Sunday Business Post/Industrial Relations News/
Mail on Sunday/Sunday Times/Sunday Independent/
Evening Herald/Metro/Daily Mirror/Irish Sun*

Below are some examples of ASTI media coverage over the last few months:

Government failure

"Given that these figures [OECD] relate to 2007 – before the crisis – they are an even bigger indictment of the failure of successive governments to build the educational infrastructure necessary for the knowledge economy."
ASTI General Secretary Pat King – *Irish Independent*, September 8

Education is the solution

"We are painfully aware of the economic situation. Teachers have husbands, wives, sons and daughters who are facing economic hardship. But to suggest that you can save in an area that should be a springboard for future development is short-sighted in the extreme. It saw us out of the last recession – people came here because there was a bright, well-educated, young population. That's what will attract employment. That is the solution."
Pat King, ASTI General Secretary – *Sunday Business Post*, September 5

Croke Park Agreement

"We are engaging in intensive discussions now after today and in three or four or five weeks' time, we will go back to our members and ask them to decide on an outcome."
Pat King, ASTI General Secretary – *RTÉ's Six One News*, September 11

Student achievement

President of the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) Jack Keane congratulated all the students, teachers and parents involved in this year's exam. "One of the great successes of the Junior Certificate is its all-encompassing nature as evidenced by the growing numbers of non-traditional students taking the exam, including students with special educational needs and newcomer students," he said. However, he expressed concern about the impact of the education cutbacks on junior cycle education.
Irish Times, September 16

Don't forget to keep up with all the latest ASTI news on the ASTI website, on Facebook and on Twitter!

www.asti.ie

www.twitter.com/astionion

www.facebook.com/astiteachers



Debunking the myths

ASTIR explains the truth behind some common myths.

Clamp down on lazy public service staff

Myth: Teachers retire on a full pension and get the State pension on top of this.

Fact No. 1: The majority of teachers do not have a full 40 years' service at retirement and are therefore not entitled to a full pension. Teachers may acquire a full pension by purchasing notional service, the cost of which can be significant depending on individual circumstances. Teachers can also purchase additional voluntary contributions (AVCs), which are subject to the vagaries of the market.

Fact No. 2: Teachers who entered service before 1995 are not entitled to the State Contributory Pension as they pay a reduced PRSI contribution (Class D). Teachers who entered service before 1995 and who previously worked in the private sector and paid the relevant PRSI contribution may be entitled to the State Contributory Pension depending on their individual circumstances. Teachers who entered service after 1995 pay a higher PRSI contribution (Class A). These teachers receive a reduced pension payment, but may also be entitled to the State Contributory Pension. The State Contributory Pension is paid from age 66.

For more information, visit the pension section of the ASTI website – www.asti.ie.

Myth: Teachers work 22 hours a week.

Fact: The 22 hours a week refers to a second-level teacher's class contact time, not their working time. The work of second-level teachers includes teaching in the classroom, lesson preparation, staff/team planning, setting and correcting assignments and tests, staff meetings, subject teacher meetings, liaising with parents, liaising with external organisations, pastoral care activities, extra-curricular activities, and administrative duties.

Irish second-level teachers spend more time in the classroom teaching their students than the EU and OECD average. The average number of class contact hours for teachers in the EU is 646 per annum, while the OECD average is 685 hours. Irish second-level teachers teach for 735

hours. The average class contact time for second-level teachers in England is 722. In Finland it is 571 and in France it is 635.

Myth: Irish public servants are lazy.

Fact: The most recent OECD report on public services found that in comparison with other OECD countries, Ireland has been able to deliver quality public services with a workforce that is relatively small given the size of the economy and the workforce. The report states that public sector employment represents around 14.6% of the total labour force in Ireland, which is relatively low among OECD countries and significantly below Norway, Sweden, France, Finland and Belgium. While numbers employed in the public sector increased between 1995 and 2005 (a time of significant growth in the population of Ireland), this increase was from a relatively low base.

The report also found that Irish public servants are delivering high quality services at a relatively low cost. Among 25 OECD countries, Ireland ranked third from the bottom in terms of public expenditure as a percentage of GDP.

Ireland is also languishing at the bottom of the OECD league table for expenditure on education services as a percentage of GDP. In terms of investment per second-level pupil as a percentage of GDP, Ireland comes fourth last of 27 OECD countries. The only countries spending a lower percentage than Ireland are Chile, Mexico and the Slovak Republic. Ireland's teacher-pupil ratio is below the EU average. The OECD Report Education at a Glance 2005 (the most recent report containing information on non-teaching staff as well as teaching staff in schools) found that when non-teaching staff are considered (administrative, managerial and other support staff), the number of staff in Irish schools is well below the EU and OECD averages.

The OECD report Education at a Glance 2009 found that Irish second-level teachers deliver value for money. Only five out of 28 OECD countries have a "lower teacher salary cost per student". The valuable contribution of teachers is also affirmed by the PISA international research, which shows Irish second-level students performing very well – fifth in the world in literacy, well above average in science and average in maths.

Teachers using their talents

ASTIR speaks to four teachers who are using their talents and interests to enhance their teaching.



Denise Masterson captained Dublin to All-Ireland victory in the Ladies GAA final 2010.

School: St Michael's, Finglas, Dublin

Winning the All-Ireland this year was amazing. To work so hard for something and then to have it work out is a great feeling; it's very emotional. It's a huge commitment so to achieve something like that after years of work – there's just great satisfaction in it.

It was fantastic coming back into the school after the win; the students and the staff were so lovely. I wasn't due back in until the Wednesday but I went in on the Tuesday with the cup and there was a lovely reception in the sports hall. I was delighted. The students were all very supportive and it's great – they all know me now on the corridor, even the ones I don't teach.

I've been teaching German and maths in St Michael's Finglas for about seven years now. I was a student there myself. I'm involved in sports in the school too. We don't actually have a ladies' football team in the school but we are looking at starting one. We have a camogie team and basketball is very popular, so I'm involved with that.

I didn't take up football until relatively late in life. Around the time I was doing my HDip, I started training with a team in Dublin so I joined the NUI Galway team while I was there too. I was 23 at the time, so it just shows it's never too late!

I did play netball when I was in school and my PE teacher, Ms Galvin, was very encouraging and enthusiastic. Sport is very important for young people and their development, I think, especially in terms of learning discipline and how to look after yourself. It's great for self-esteem too.

I find that my sports experience helps in my teaching. Working with a team, you learn how to deal with different personalities and the students respond to me because they know how much I put into things. Being captain of the team relates to teaching too; you're motivating people, tapping into things that you have in common, and encouraging them to do their best and to work hard.

since performed in many plays, everything from Beckett to Friel to Martin McDonagh and more.

I began with a few plays in secondary school and university and then got involved in Scór – the GAA talent competition, winning six Ulster titles and one all-Ireland. I was involved in the re-emergence of the local Tydavnet dramatic troupe in 1985 and in 1996 I joined the Drumlin Players in Monaghan. I have travelled the world with them staging productions in Prince Edward Island, New York, South Korea, Japan and India. This year we produced *The London Vertigo* by Brian Friel at the Edinburgh Fringe, having secured four stars for *The Lonesome West* there in 2003.

Drama can have a significant effect on young people. I'm involved in a new primary school drama programme where we put on short plays in Irish with the children. We worked with 16 schools last year and we're hoping to extend it this year. The idea is that children get up on stage, get to experience stagecraft and practise their Irish. The improvement in oral Irish can be significant. There seems to be more interest in drama than ever before. It used to be confined to one local group, putting on one play a year.

But now, there are two full-time theatres in Cavan, and another in Monaghan, where I live. More people, especially young people, are interested in live shows now. People want to be able to judge for themselves.

Drama has turned out to be a great resource in my teaching, especially in Transition Year. Many students aren't used to the theatre, but with enthusiasm you can get them to come to see the plays. I also take them to rehearsals, to meet the cast and see behind the scenes, and that gives them a real idea of what goes into a play. It makes it accessible to them, and they might decide to get involved and interested. And at the end of the day, engaging with students is a great part of teaching.

I think drama really has a lot to offer in education. Even learning about the theatre makes students aware of just how much goes into the production – the time, the stagecraft, the rehearsals, the lighting, sets, etc. From there you go on to the monetary side – the economic aspect of putting on a play. So it's a good learning tool really about many aspects of life.

It's amazing what students can do through drama. You can cover so much – bullying, problems at home, in society, school, and peer pressure.

Presented visually, it's 15 times better than on paper, especially when it involves people you know. It also teaches students that it takes many years for a star to appear – success doesn't happen overnight; it takes work.



Pat Deery is involved in local drama and has acted in films, adverts and TV productions.

School: Largy College, Monaghan (recently retired)

The personal satisfaction I get from acting is unreal. Teaching has been my chosen career and I love it, but acting is a great activity helping to keep me busy on winter nights! I first became interested in drama when I saw my father on stage when I was 12 and have



Barry Hennessy reports for Dublin City FM's 'Inside Education' School: Donahies Community School, Dublin

I first got involved in radio when I was studying languages in DCU. I had always been a big fan of radio so I joined the Media Society and worked on college shows. It's been a hobby of mine since and I've worked on a few different programmes. I teach French at Donahies

Community School and I used to be the French expert on the exams programme on 2FM.

I find radio fits around my teaching pretty well if I organise my time well. The programme airs on a Sunday evening and I mainly do the weekly news round-up. I keep an eye on the news and developments throughout the week, but it would be in the second half of the week that things start to come together. We cover all the major education stories, and try to add to them – there's no point in just rehashing things that have been covered already.

From Wednesday onwards I begin to plan and make phone calls. I can do that in my spare time, at home in the evenings. Then on Sunday I go out to the studio in the afternoon to work on scripting and do a few pre-records. A lot of teachers listen to the show and we're very pleased that many future teachers listen too. It is a specialist audience but I think it is indicative of how we are viewed – as a well-informed source of information – that next to nobody refuses to talk to us when we invite them to contribute.

I enjoy working on the show because it gives me an opportunity to participate in and facilitate debate. It also gives me the chance to pass a critical eye over what's going on. The show is called 'Inside Education' and that's really how we approach it. Being an insider – a teacher – affords me a unique view as a reporter, and I have found that when I'm reporting at events like teacher conferences, other journalists will try to pick my brains. Having a foot in both camps is an interesting perspective but I do, of course, apply journalistic standards of objectivity and integrity. It's important that the show isn't seen as having an axe to grind.

We began the programme during the summer of 2009. It's an unprecedented time in teaching and across the public sector. Many teachers feel that they are just on the receiving end of whatever is thrown at them. Through the show, we aim to give them a context and a view of what's really going on.

So many aspects of how the education system works are a mystery to the profession. There's a lack of transparency and we are trying to shine a light. I like to think that I have learned a reasonable amount about what is going on through doing the show but there is still so much I don't know. Chatting to colleagues in the staffroom often shows me that and gives me great ideas for the show. We rely massively on feedback from listeners and teachers as to what needs to be covered, so please tune in!

Listen to Inside Education on Sundays at 7.30pm on Dublin City FM or at <http://insideed.com>.



Noel Cunningham blogs at thinkforyourself.ie.

School: The King's Hospital, Dublin

We only get one go on this ride and if I'm going to spend almost my entire professional life as a teacher, I want to do a bloody good job. For that to happen, I need to communicate with others as much as possible. Blogging is one great way to do that.

I think most bloggers would acknowledge

that the greatest benefit is to the blogger themselves. It may seem pretentious (and maybe it is) but there is a sense of catharsis each time you hit the 'publish' button. Sometimes it's no more than me letting off steam – it gives me the chance to address some of my pet peeves such as the non-appearance of evolution in the Junior Cert science syllabus or the mere passing references to global warming. Other times I use it to share resources or to comment on interesting things I find.

My other motivation is my fascination with the world of science combined with a feeling of dismay at how education can present a picture of science that is totally at odds with the real thing. As I put it in one blog post: "We teachers take this incredibly exotic jungle of knowledge called science and distil it until all the wonder has been removed and we are left with nothing but dry shavings. We then pour this into our school syllabus and from there to our textbooks and then we force our students to swallow it in such a manner that it can all get vomited back up come exam time. And then we wonder why so many young people don't like science".

I used try to post something once a week, but my wife and I had our first baby about a year ago, so productivity has fallen somewhat since then! I am also involved in a couple of other projects, which tend to soak up any available free time. I run www.thephysicsteacher.ie, which offers free resources to students and teachers. Every teacher develops resources and I just want to make mine as accessible as possible.

I'm not a techie by any means – in fact I was one of the few in my physics degree class to have absolutely no interest in computers. Technology just offers the best way to pool resources. I am always keen to know what tools exist to improve delivery of information in the classroom and I am indebted to the Computers in Education Society of Ireland (CESI) discussion forum, which is a wonderful font of shared knowledge. The CESI forum runs so successfully that some of us have just set up a forum for science teachers called Sharing Science – see below to sign up. While few Irish teachers blog, many schools have set up school or class blogs. I would love to see teachers communicating with each other regularly online, not just face to face at one-off conferences. Why does the ASTI not have a discussion forum? At Leaving Cert level there are discussion forums for most subjects at slss.ie but all comments are moderated, which can cause delays and militates heavily against online 'discussions'.

I use technology to enhance my own teaching too – it may just be showing a funny YouTube clip in order to keep the troops from falling asleep first thing on a Monday morning. There is the suspicion that technology is a lazy option but invariably anybody who has given up their own time to become proficient in a new form of technology is not someone who falls into the 'lazy' category. Ultimately, teaching success has nothing to do with technology – it revolves around our relationship with our students. If we can't maintain a healthy relationship of mutual respect and trust there, then no amount of whiz-bang electronic aids is going to make a difference!

Noel's blog recommendations:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ frogblog.ie | ■ morestresslessuccess.ie |
| ■ sccenglish.ie | ■ blog.teachnet.ie |
| ■ pdonaghy.edublogs.org | ■ spring.org.uk |

To join the 'Sharing Science' forum, go to www.thephysicsteacher.ie. Follow Noel on Twitter at www.twitter.com/physicsteacher.

Why is age an issue?

Older teachers are an important resource, writes CARMEL HENEGHAN of the Equal Opportunities Committee.



The recent death of gerontologist Dr Robert Butler, who coined the term 'ageism' – analogous to the terms 'sexism' and 'racism' – as a result of a protest against the elderly in his neighbourhood in America, highlights once again the issues around the provision of equal treatment for all citizens, including retirees. Dr Butler was appalled by the callous lack of interest in and even contempt shown towards the elderly and won the coveted Pulitzer Prize for a breakthrough non-fiction book – *Why Survive: Being Old in America*. His work revolutionised western attitudes to old age.

By restricting recruitment to the so-called 'prime age' workers, many organisations have lost out on maximising their human resources potential.

Overcoming a deep-seated prejudice

Ageism is a cause of growing concern in society today. It is a deep prejudice, which can undermine people. Age is not about decline – it is about progression, to quote clinical psychologist Marie Murray. Queen Elizabeth, the queen mother, was proud of her wrinkles, having earned them during her long life. Older workers are an increasingly important resource for employers who benefit from their late-life creativity, wisdom, strategic thinking and reasoning, according to Professor Des O'Neill of the Centre of Ageing, Neuroscience and Humanities at Tallaght Hospital. He highlights several masterpieces by artists and composers that were completed in old age. He also argues that there is accumulating evidence of a major demographic dividend to be had from an ageing population. By restricting recruitment to the so-called 'prime age' workers, many organisations have lost out on maximising their human resources potential. He disputes the common perception about the decline in cognitive skills of older people, but states that older workers face many barriers to employment because of ageism in society.

Ageing and education

As ageism is one of the nine grounds covered by the Employment Equality Acts, the Equal Opportunities Committee of the ASTI selected it as one of the themes at a recent seminar. The Acts cover dismissal, equal pay, harassment, sexual harassment, working conditions, promotion, access to employment and collective agreements. Dr Jane Pillinger, a consultant of international repute who has worked with the public and private sectors, gave the keynote address at this seminar, where the question posed was: why is age an issue?

The immediate answer to this question is that changes in the age profile of workers have made age an issue in our society. We are living longer, fertility rates are declining, and in the next decade the majority of the population across Europe will be over 40 years of age. In the education sector, 42% of the workforce is over the age of 45, making it the sector with the second highest ageing profile in the EU. Consequently, there will be significant changes in dependency ratios and there could be an increase in age discrimination at work. As a result many public and private sector employers across Europe have considered age management policies and strategies, which include workforce planning/skills mix, promoting age diversity and tackling age discrimination. Teaching has an ageing profile and action is required on retaining and valuing the skills of older teachers, recruiting and retaining younger teachers, and the role of inter-generational knowledge transfers. In Sweden senior teachers have the option of remaining in the classroom or opting for reduced class contact hours to devote some time to mentoring young staff. There is a realisation there of the need for a good mix of intergenerational skills. In Ireland there is a culture of fear among older teachers who feel that they are being pushed out

Don't forget!

The ASTI will assist members who believe they have been discriminated against on age grounds in their employment.

Some feedback from members in response to an opinion article on the supervision of State exams by retired teachers (ASTIR, September 2010)

Not all retired teachers are in comfortable circumstances. Many have quite small pensions because of interrupted service due to child-minding, illness or care of elderly relatives. Some depend on the extra income generated by supervision of exams ... Retired members of the ASTI are fully aware of the difficulties faced by young teachers. Many young teachers are the sons and daughters of retired members ... Supervision of examinations should never be a substitute for a decent salary for young teachers.

Louis O'Flaherty, RSTA

"We are each of us equal, regardless of our age. We have all of us had life experiences and school experiences that were broad and beautiful, difficult and easy ... It would be a sad day if others were to see older people as 'has beens'. It would be a sad day for our profession if my union was to take such a derisive tone."

Mary Francis O'Conghaile, retired, Galway Branch

"I wish to commend Joe Coy on his brave article on the supervision of State Exams ... The ASTI must reclaim the supervision of examinations for the full-time teachers who make up the majority of fee-paying members of the union."

TC, Mayo

"Try *Unlikely Radicals*, the history of the ASTI, just to remind yourself of how much the younger generation of teachers can now take for granted. A decent salary and pension; equal pay and equal rights; entitlements to pro-rata terms and conditions; CIDs for non-permanent teachers; payment for supervision, etc."

M. Cunnane, retired, West Mayo Branch

"Many of our members were actively engaged in the ASTI and fought long and hard for the conditions which are now being eroded. The inference that retired teachers would strike break is totally unacceptable as the RSTA has always marched in support of serving colleagues and has always advised its members to conform with ASTI policy."

The Mayo Branch of the RSTA

"Retired members who are members of the ASTI are not non-members and are entitled to the full support of the ASTI, which in fact they do get. The ASTI supports all members equally, concentrating on individuals or specific groups as the need arises ... It seems to me that any attempt to drive a wedge between various groups in the ASTI will have serious implications for the cohesion of the union."

Tim Lynch, retired, Kerry Branch

because of scaremongering and uncertainties like salary cuts, break in pension parity, etc. Of course, age discrimination does not only apply to older staff; young entrants to the profession will be obliged to work for longer to receive pensions, must pay higher PRSI, have little hope of promotion and may be faced with doing in-service in their own time. Huge challenges are evident here. In 2008 the highest number of cases taken under the Employment Equality Act were those taken on age grounds.

We are living longer, fertility rates are declining, and in the next decade the majority of the population across Europe will be over 40 years of age.

Action for the future

There are numerous advantages to a comprehensive approach to age diversity, including ensuring the best skills mix for the future, harnessing the talent and experience of all workers, and planning across the life course, to mention but a few. The European drivers are the Stockholm and Barcelona targets (EU guidelines on retention reinforcement and re-integration of older workers in employment) and the EU Directive 2000/78 on equal treatment in employment and occupation. In Ireland there are the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2004 on age discrimination, but very few national initiatives to respond to age diversity in the economy. Age diversity must be part of the

social dialogue and unions play a crucial role in this. At the ASTI equality seminar, Dr Pillenger concluded by stressing the need for a plan for age management to value and harness the skills of all workers. She suggested either of two models – specific collective agreements or age diversity integrated into all agreements.

The need for urgency of action cannot be overstated. Professor O'Neill highlights the "push" factors – the failure of workplaces to engage with ageing through ageist recruitment policies, negative perceptions, and inflexible work practices. Most importantly, he warns against extending the retirement age in the absence of life-long training and age-friendly workplaces, without which ageism could be a double threat to older people. Nevertheless, it is heartening that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions advocates a continuing relationship between retired members and their union, as does the European Trade Union Confederation. The European Federation of Retired and Elderly People has stated that an economic crisis can cause intergenerational conflict but stresses that intergenerational solidarity lies at the basis of modern trade union policy. The ASTI is also to be commended for having selected this theme.



Carmel Heneghan

ASTI Equal Opportunities Committee

ASTIR welcomes feedback from members. Send your views to astirfeedback@asti.ie. If you would like to submit an article, email astir@asti.ie.

Combating cyber-bullying

A look at cyber-bullying and how schools and teachers can help to address the problem.



Cyber-bullying has become international news in recent times, with a number of high-profile cases receiving extensive media attention. The problem is significant in Irish schools too; a recent survey of over 2,500 students carried out by the Anti-Bullying Centre at Trinity College Dublin found that one in seven students had been cyber-bullied over the preceding couple of months, while one in 11 had taken part in bullying of others at school.

We must be careful not to overstate the issue, says Simon Grehan, Internet Safety Project Officer with the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE): "We wouldn't see cyber-bullying as anything new; it's not a separate construct to traditional bullying. It is just manifesting itself in ways we didn't see before, using tools like mobile phones and the internet. You rarely, if ever, find that this behaviour happens in isolation from other forms, but cyber-bullying does bring a new dimension to the problem". Recent European-wide research examining children's experiences online agrees. It showed that cyber-bullying is more common in countries with

higher levels of bullying generally. In Ireland, it showed that 4% of children aged nine to 16 had been bullied online in the last 12 months, as compared to an average of 5% across Europe. Significantly, however, the research found that while online bullying is the least common risk, it is the most likely to upset children.

An often hidden problem

Cyber-bullying can be particularly upsetting because it is silent and hidden, which makes it difficult to detect and to trace. The anonymous aspect presents a double threat: the victim may not know who their harasser is, causing alienation and isolation. Meanwhile the anonymity and detachment from the victim and consequences can embolden the bully. With cyber-bullying, the reach and scope of bullying is extended; rumours or comments can be spread to an entire school, or even to strangers, instantaneously. Harassment can come from the next seat over or from across an ocean. Crucially, home is no longer a refuge; bullying can now

occur 24/7 and its forms can be accessed again and again. Most harassment does in fact happen in the home, at night and not under the supervision of schools or teachers but, says Simon Grehan, schools are best placed to proactively tackle the issue – through policy and education programmes: “There is no one way to deal with the problem, and the policy each school adopts will depend on their own circumstances and set up. Schools have been dealing with bullying for a long time; they are aware of the complexities, but due to its anonymous nature cyber-bullying can prove particularly difficult to counter. We encourage all schools to build cyber-bullying into a bullying policy and into their acceptable use policy for IT equipment. This protects both the students and the school, and means that when a situation arises, the school has the means to deal with it”.

Policy and education

An anti-bullying policy should bring the issue out of cyberspace and into reality: it should send a clear and specific message about what the school is doing to prevent bullying; what students, teachers and staff can do towards that aim; what to do in the event that bullying occurs; and, how incidents will be handled and what disciplinary action will be taken against perpetrators.

In the recent TCD survey on cyber-bullying, only 6% of those who said they had been cyber-bullied reported the bullying to adults at school. They were twice as likely to do nothing and five times more likely to talk to a friend. This highlights the importance of assuring students that teachers are familiar with the issue and equipped to tackle the problem. Through education and policy, schools can create a positive, supportive atmosphere with clear channels for reporting and discussing bullying.

Cyber-bullying offers a renewed opportunity to confront the issue of bullying generally and, critically, to engage with student attitudes. To this end, the NCTE and SPHE Support Service have developed resources to use in class. The programme is not about the technical details but about the impacts of behaviour, says Simon: “It’s about values and attitudes, using open discussion and learning from each other, teasing things out. It includes a lot of peer learning and group work to raise awareness of the impact of bullying, which is really the best way to change attitudes to the problem”.

The other side of cyber-bullying is that it can be easier for victims to take action to tackle it themselves as there are tools built in to sites to empower the victim. Online social networking sites, for example, allow users to delete comments, block other users, and report them to the website. According to Simon: “This is a massive deterrent because teenagers spend so much time building their profiles that to have them taken away is both a huge embarrassment and a nuisance. In fact, research shows that when sites have structures in place to counter harassment, you do see a difference in the figures for anti-social behaviour on the sites. It’s important to note that those who run the websites and phone companies are just as responsible as schools or parents – a combined effort is needed”.

A measure of how seriously the issue of cyber-bullying is taken in Ireland is demonstrated, not only by the efforts of the NCTE and schools, but also by those of a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications. As a result of pressure from that Committee last year, Ireland is now unique in that mobile phone companies have implemented measures and strategies to counter cyber-bullying.

What is cyber-bullying?

In general, cyber-bullying can be defined as repeatedly threatening, extending power over, intimidating or causing harm to a person through the use of online communication or mobile devices.

Examples include:

- Postings, messages or emails that have a negative effect on the wellbeing of the victim
- Taking, making, posting or distributing videos or pictures intended to embarrass
- False reporting to a service provider to have an account/ website deleted
- Intimidation via SMS, online comments, email, or instant message
- Blocking a person from a group or online community
- Sending offensive, cruel or threatening messages, emails, photos or film
- Accessing someone’s account in order to scare or cause trouble for them

Tech/NO/bullies

Buzzworx Theatre Company is currently taking bookings for its tech/NO/bullies live show, which covers many areas of cyber-bullying and its effects. The show was devised with a young audience in mind and is revised on a regular basis to keep up with current affairs. The show is followed by a short workshop, during which students are given the chance to voice their opinions and experiences regarding the topic. If you are interested in having the show come to your school or if you would like more information, Tel: 086-059 7369, or Email: buzzworxtheatrecompany@gmail.com.

Teachers – protect yourselves online

It is important that teachers know how to protect themselves and their reputations online. Check your privacy settings on Facebook, MSN and similar sites to make sure that only those you know and permit can access your information.

Some tips from the Canadian Teachers’ Federation:

- Maintain professional standards and use a teacher’s voice when communicating with students via email
- Don’t permit images of yourself to be taken and posted on any site without appropriate privacy safeguards
- Don’t post criticism of colleagues or students on social networking sites
- Don’t share confidential information about students or colleagues on social networking sites
- Don’t post confidential images or information about yourself on social networking sites.

All schools should have an acceptable use policy for technology in schools.
All schools should incorporate cyber-bullying into their anti-bullying policy.

Find out more at:
www.internetsafety.ie www.webwise.ie www.watchyourspace.ie



Towards equality for teachers

The ASTI Gay and Lesbian Equality Network meets regularly to identify ways in which the ASTI can promote equal treatment for gay and lesbian teachers. One member tells us about his experience as a member of the Network.

I had been back in Ireland for about 12 months and was eager to meet other gay and lesbian teachers. I had worked in two schools but I hadn't met any gay teachers; they were definitely not visible on the staff of either school. I had the feeling that being a gay teacher in Ireland was very different to being a gay teacher in the UK, where I came out instantly to anyone who asked and everywhere I worked. It just seemed perfectly normal and acceptable to say you were gay in England. But now that I was back in conservative Ireland, my sexuality was once again kept under wraps in my workplace and it bugged me.

Getting involved

I had been a member of the ASTI since returning to teaching in Ireland and I was very happy to see an advertisement in *Nuacht* about an LGB group the ASTI was running. I immediately rang the ASTI and spoke to a very friendly and pleasant lady, who informed me that the group was up and running and gave me the date of the next meeting, which was about a week and a half away on a Saturday morning. I was nervous, as you always are when meeting new people, but eager at the same time to learn more about other gay teachers' experience in Ireland and how we could take collective action that would improve our rights and

conditions as gay teachers. I was also very aware that most schools in the state had religious trustees and that this could have implications for gay teachers in these schools.

We're a diverse group – starter teachers, teachers at the point of retirement, male, female (fewer), country and city. We usually meet up once a term and develop a work programme for the year. This identifies the actions that the ASTI needs to take to support gay and lesbian teachers. For example, we drew up a Code of Practice for Promoting Equal Treatment in Schools for Gay and Lesbian Teachers.

The ASTI has been unequivocal in its support for gay and lesbian teachers.

Supporting each other

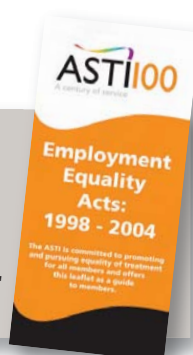
Everyone in the group is very friendly and supportive. We share experiences and it also provides me with clarification on areas concerning my professional life that were previously vague or grey. The

group is also very much a social get together and we usually go for lunch afterwards and have a more informal chat. The group is also eager to get new members to join and we are constantly trying to come up with new ways of getting more members.

Prior to joining the group I felt quite isolated as a teacher, but that has changed now; I now know my union recognises that being a gay teacher in a school can be quite daunting, where we may have to deny a part of our identity or where we can sometimes encounter homophobic bullying among students. The ASTI also provides us with a platform to progress our issues with the Department and school management bodies. The ASTI has been unequivocal in its commitment to support us if any school were to discriminate against us because of our sexuality. Our group has also met the last three ASTI presidents, which again reaffirms to us the seriousness with which the ASTI takes our views. We have also linked up with kindred bodies campaigning for equal treatment on other grounds.

If you are a gay teacher, please be reassured that the group is totally confidential and very supportive. We need new members all the time to give our cause even greater urgency. We need your experience and views to feed into our proposals. Do join!

The ASTI has published a questions and answers leaflet on the Employment Equality Acts. The reference guide gives members an overview of the Acts and their rights and entitlements under the Acts. The guide has been sent to all school stewards, or you can find it on our website – www.asti.ie.



ASTI lobbies for repeal of Section 37

The ASTI formed part of an ICTU delegation that recently met with Mary White, Minister of State with Responsibility for Equality, Integration and Human Rights, to make the case for a repeal of Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act, 1998.

Section 37 affords religious institutions an exemption, where they may argue that an allegedly discriminatory provision is necessary to ensure that the ethos of the institution is not undermined. The scope and reach of the provision is unknown as it has not yet been tested. However, that is not to say that its very existence does not generate fear in members employed in denominational institutions.

The meeting followed the adoption by the ICTU at its biennial conference of an ASTI motion calling on the Minister to engage in a consultative process designed to effect the repeal of Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act.

Measures short of repeal were also advanced by the ICTU delegation. The Minister is to revert to the ICTU on the proposals.

The next meeting of the ASTI Gay and Lesbian Equality Network will be held on December 11 in ASTI Head Office. Email: gayandlesbiannetwork@asti.ie or keep an eye on the ASTI website to find out more.

Equality in school planning guidelines

Guidelines for embedding equality in school development planning were recently published by the Equality Authority in partnership with the School Development Planning Initiative. They are intended to assist schools to meet the ambition of the equality legislation and to embed equality in school development planning.

The ASTI was represented on the steering committee, which advised on the preparation of the guidelines, by Maire Mulcahy, ASTI Assistant General Secretary, and Sheila Parsons, former President. Take a look at the guidelines at www.equality.ie.

The ASTI is committed to promoting equal opportunities for all teachers in terms of access to employment, employment practices and working conditions. The ASTI is also concerned with the promotion of equal opportunities for students.

Find out more about ASTI policy on equality on the policy section of the ASTI website.

Read the proceedings of an ASTI equality training seminar at www.asti.ie/about-asti/policy/equality.



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What you need to know

Here is a selection of the questions that members have raised with ASTI Head Office.



Increase in CID hours

I'm hoping to get a contract of indefinite duration (CID) from next September. I know that this contract will be based on the hours I teach this year but I only have 12 hours at present. Can these hours be increased in the future if hours become available?

The number of hours included in a CID equates to the number of hours you held under fixed-term contract in the year prior to the granting of the CID. While you hold a CID, you can teach additional hours in the school, if they are available. However, these additional hours are not automatically included in your CID, meaning that they are not permanent hours.

A recent Department circular directs management, where possible, to offer available teaching hours to CID holders who are not on full hours. So, if hours become available in the subjects you are qualified to teach, you should be considered for these hours. If these hours meet CID criteria and are viable, they may be added to your CID in future.

For more information on CIDs see the contracts section of the ASTI website.

Entitlement to hours

I have a fixed-term contract to teach French and Irish for 10 hours a week. One of the other French teachers in the school is retiring this year. That teacher has a permanent position; should I automatically get that job?

Firstly, it is important to note that the job may no longer exist when that teacher retires, if, for example, your school is over quota.

If the job does continue to exist, it is at the discretion of the management as to how it is filled. Management may decide to offer you the job or they may decide to advertise it internally or externally. If the post is advertised, you can apply for it, 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.

Contact ASTI Head Office for more information.

Changes to sick leave arrangements

How much sick leave am I entitled to take?

Uncertified sick leave:

Effective from September 1, 2010, the maximum number of uncertified sick leave days allowable in a school year is seven. If you are absent for more than four consecutive school days (three in the VEC sector), a medical certificate of illness is required. If you are a Class A PRSI contributor (all who entered teaching service since April 1995), then if you are absent for more than three consecutive school days, the MC1 Social Welfare Certificate must be submitted to the Department of Social Protection. This is required for PRSI compliance. This form can only be obtained from your doctor.

Certified sick leave:

Certified sick leave requires that you provide a medical certificate of

illness, which should refer to the entire period of an illness. A total of 365 days over a four-year period is the limit for which incremental salary will be paid to a permanently employed teacher in the event of certified sick leave. Weekends and holiday periods are included in the calculation of this period.

For more, see the leave section of the ASTI website.

Medmark referral

I have received a letter referring me to Medmark. Am I required to go?

Yes. Medmark is the occupational health service provider for teachers. Any teacher who is absent on sick leave for 12 weeks or more over a 12-month period – regardless of the cause of each absence – should automatically be referred to Medmark for medical assessment.

A principal can refer a teacher to Medmark at any stage if there is a justifiable reason for doing so. This situation most often occurs when a teacher has been absent on sick leave for a period of time. However, a teacher can be referred to Medmark where they are not on sick leave if there is a justifiable reason for concern about the welfare of the teacher or of the students.

You will have to attend for assessment, but if the time or date provided to you by Medmark does not suit, you can reschedule.

See the leave section of the ASTI website for more information.

What are my retirement options?

Do I have to be 65 to retire? I know the early retirement strands have been discontinued but are there any other options open to me?

Teachers who began teaching before April 2004 must retire at the end of the school year in which they turn 65. Teachers who began service after April 2004 can continue to work after 65, subject to suitability and health requirements. If you are interested in retiring before 65, there are a number of options available to you.

If you have reached age 55 with 35 years' service you may apply to retire with pension. If you don't have 35 years' service but you began teaching before April 2004, you can opt to retire at age 60 or any time after. In such a case you would receive a pension and lump sum based on the number of years you were in the pension scheme.

Another option is 'cost neutral' retirement. Under 'cost neutral' retirement, if you began service before April 2004 you can retire at age 50, or if you began service after April 2004 you can retire at age 55. A penalty or adjustment is applied to your pension and lump sum based on the age you are at retirement.

For more information see the retirement section of the ASTI website or attend one of the ASTI retirement seminars to be held early next year – see www.asti.ie for details.

Can I enhance my pension benefit?

I've heard about buying back service for my pension and additional voluntary contributions, but it's all double Dutch to me. What are my options?

The ASTI has negotiated a pension 'buy-back' scheme by which members

of the teachers' pension scheme can purchase pension credit for years when they were in service but not yet a member of the pension scheme. Such purchase of pension benefit can be applied to years of part-time service. This option provides excellent value for teachers and is the most cost-effective way of augmenting pension entitlements.

A teacher who is a member of the pension scheme may also purchase 'notional' pension service. In essence, this scheme allows teachers to purchase pension credit for extra years when they were not actually teaching. Notional service may be purchased by regular deduction from salary or by payment of a lump sum.

Cornmarket Financial Services provides an additional voluntary contribution (AVC) scheme for ASTI members. This tax-efficient scheme may be suitable for members who will have less than 40 years' service on retirement or want to make extra provision for their retirement.

For more information, see the retirement section of the ASTI website or attend one of the ASTI retirement seminars to be held early next year – see www.asti.ie for details.

How many S&S hours?

For how many hours do I have to be available for supervision and substitution each week?

The Supervision and Substitution Scheme (S&S) is voluntary so you can decide to opt in or opt out. If you sign up to the scheme, you must be available to supervise or substitute for 37 hours per year, two class periods a week. You sign up for these periods at the beginning of the year, so you know that you have to be available at those times each week to supervise or to substitute. You may be called for only one period or neither – but you must be available to be called.

In return, you receive an annual payment of €1,811 (gross). If you supervise or substitute for more than 37 hours in a year, you will be paid an additional hourly rate.

Role of the school steward

I've been approached to take on the role of school steward in my school. Can you tell me what that would involve?

School stewards play a pivotal role in the organisation and function of the ASTI. The school steward is the official ASTI representative in the school and offers support and information to ASTI members, makes representations on their behalf, and welcomes and recruits new staff to the ASTI.

The steward is elected by members and acts as a conduit between the ASTI and the school staff. This includes being the point of contact in the school and distributing information and literature to ASTI members. School stewards organise and administer at least one staff meeting per term and may be called upon to consult with staff on behalf of the ASTI or to attend meetings with management on behalf of the staff. School steward training is provided by the ASTI and all necessary expenses incurred in acting as school steward are reimbursed by the local ASTI branch. The ASTI is indebted to its school stewards for their efforts and hard work on behalf of their colleagues and the union.

To find out more about taking on the role of school steward, call ASTI Head Office, Tel: 1850-418400.

Registration explained

COLM O'LEARY, Registration Officer with the Teaching Council, talks us through the requirements and the process of teacher registration.

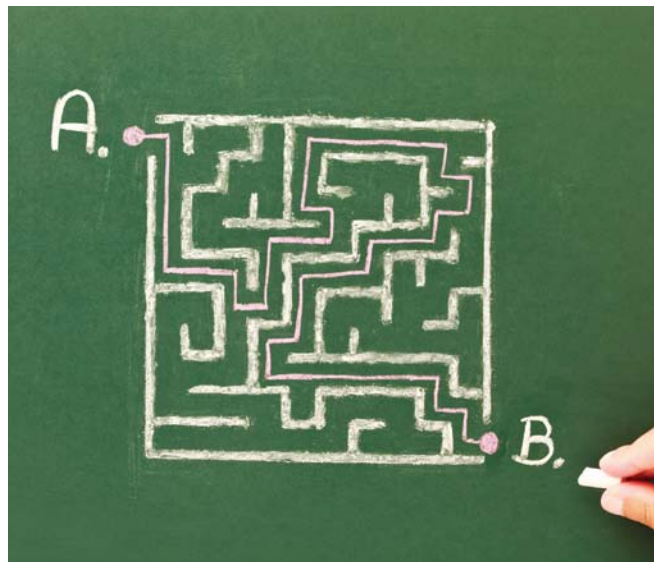
The Teaching Council is the professional body for teaching in Ireland. One of its main functions is to regulate standards in the profession, and in order to do this it has established and maintains a register of teachers. Teacher registration enhances and protects the reputation and status of the teaching profession. Until now, there was no universal standard for teacher qualifications. From 2013, however, Teaching Council regulations will mean that every teacher entering the profession will have to have a Level 8 degree and a teacher education qualification, regardless of the setting in which they work. Until the Teaching Council was established, registration procedures and regulations varied from sector to sector. We undertook to set out universal registration regulations, in consultation with unions, employers and education agencies. The regulations have changed the landscape of teaching significantly and will continue to do so.

The initial registration process

In order to register with the Teaching Council for the first time you must submit an application form, your academic transcripts, a Garda vetting form, character references, proof of identity and the registration fee. We will either send your application to an external assessor or process it in house. At this stage, we also send your Garda vetting form to the Garda Central Vetting Unit. The Garda vetting process can take a significant amount of time (up to 12 weeks); it can be the biggest delay factor in registration. If you do this in advance of beginning the registration process, it will speed the process up for you.

Did you know ...?

- From 2013 every teacher entering the profession will have to have a Level 8 degree and a teacher education qualification.
- Once registered, if you leave teaching for some time and want to return you are only required to fill in a form and undergo Garda vetting. Transcripts will be required if you have not submitted them previously to The Teaching Council.



Only serious issues that arise from Garda vetting will cause problems for registration, for example, where there are child protection concerns or repeated offences. When your vetting outcome comes back, we send a vetting letter to you directly so you can use it when applying for teaching positions. As soon as the registration process is complete we will send you a confirmation of registration, which will list the sector to which your qualifications apply and the subjects that you are qualified to teach. At a later stage, you will get a Certificate of Registration. That is a very significant legal document and is issued only once, so when you get yours, hold on to it.

Recognition of qualifications

There is a list of recognised qualifications and subject criteria on www.teachingcouncil.ie. If you have one of those qualifications and you satisfy the subject criteria, you should not have to go through the qualifications assessment process. Qualifications assessment applies where a person has completed a degree outside of Ireland, or has a qualification that is new to us. In such cases, we may need to put them through an assessment process to see if they meet the subject criteria. As well as teacher education criteria, we have criteria for every subject on the curriculum. These criteria are our method of maintaining standards for the teaching of subjects. The key thing is to have a degree with 30% subject coverage (or 54 ECTS credits) or more throughout a degree in a curricular area. This can vary from subject to subject and you are advised to check the subject criteria for your teaching subject(s).

See page 13 for an update on Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, as amended in the Education (Amendment) Act. Section 30, which has not yet been enacted, requires that all teachers in State-recognised schools whose salary is funded by the Department of Education and Skills must be registered with the Teaching Council. The amendment will allow for the temporary employment, in certain exceptional and limited circumstances, of persons who are not registered teachers if, and only if, no registered teacher is available.

Post-qualification employment

In order to receive full registration, you are required to have undertaken a certain amount of post-qualification teaching employment. We recently reviewed this requirement. Before the review, a teacher had to teach in a school for one year, and for approximately 18 hours a week. This caused a lot of problems for newly qualified teachers who could not get those hours, so we have amended the requirements. Now, if you teach a curricular subject or teach in a mainstream classroom for 200 hours, and you do 100 hours in another classroom setting, you will meet our criteria for full registration.

Graduate registration

During the year, we visit students on programmes of teacher education and liaise with colleges to have results transferred to us. We write to every teaching graduate in mid-July inviting them to register. We know that graduates need to get registration confirmation before they start working, so we are anxious to get them processed as quickly as possible.

Registration renewal

To retain registered teacher status, registration must be renewed annually. Each year, in advance of their renewal date, we issue a reminder notice and renewal form to all registered teachers at their last notified correspondence address. The annual registration fee is based on the operational costs of the Council and, when the tax relief is taken out, the fee works out at €52 a year.

Taking time out?

If you fail to renew your registration, you will be removed from the Register. If you have previously submitted your transcripts, you can re-register without submitting your transcripts again. So if you leave teaching for some time, and you want to come back, all that you will be required to do is fill in an application form and undergo Garda vetting. You will not have to pay fees for the time you were not teaching. Retired teachers returning to substitution work are required to register with The Teaching Council if they are paid from Oireachtas funds.

Read more about teacher registration and The Teaching Council at: www.teachingcouncil.ie.



Colm O'Leary

Registration Officer with the Teaching Council

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CID-related issues

Over the last year, the ASTI has advised and supported hundreds of teachers in pursuit of their entitlements. ASTIR takes a look at the range of issues at play in a number of CID appeals cases taken this year.



Teachers who have been refused a contract of indefinite duration (CID) can appeal to the Adjudicator or to the Rights Commissioner Service. ASTI Head Office representatives will advise and support members in their appeals. CID appeals have important consequences, not just for the individuals involved; they can also have a bearing on future interpretation of Circular 0034/2009, which governs the granting of CIDs in schools.

The importance of detail

The terms of the contracts held prior to application for a CID are very significant in the determination of entitlement to a CID. In particular, details included about the reasons for the fixed-term appointment are important. In one ASTI case taken this year, a school in the south east claimed that a teacher was not entitled to a CID as their appointment was to cover for a colleague on career break. However, this had not been set out as an objective ground in the teacher's contract. The ASTI supported the member in an appeal to the Adjudicator, who found that the teacher was entitled to a CID because the objective grounds to disqualify a contract holder from entitlement to a CID must be clearly set out in their contract.

Duties undertaken

While the detail included in the contract is significant, the nature of the job actually undertaken is also important.

One Dublin teacher was refused a CID because the school claimed that she was covering for a colleague who was absent on leave and she was not, therefore, entitled to a CID. In fact, the teacher was not actually performing the duties of that teacher and was instead carrying out the duties of a teacher who had resigned. The ASTI supported the member in a case taken to the Rights Commissioner, who found that there were no objective grounds to disqualify the teacher from receiving a CID and that the teacher's position was viable. The teacher was awarded a CID.

The terms of the contracts held prior to application for a CID are very significant in the determination of entitlement to a CID.

Hours covered

In two cases taken by the ASTI, it was the hours of the CID that were at question, rather than the award of a CID itself. In both cases, the schools offered CIDs for some of the hours held by the teachers in the year prior to the granting of a CID, but not for other hours that resulted from job sharing and leave cover.

In both cases the Adjudicator found that the terms of Circular 0034/2009 must be applied. The Circular states that the hours of the CID will be the hours for which the employee was engaged on a fixed-term contract in the school/academic year prior to the issuing of the CID. The teachers were, therefore, granted CIDs for all the hours held under fixed-term contracts in the year prior to the year when the CIDs were granted.

In another case, a teacher held four continuous fixed-term contracts in which there were no objective grounds to disqualify her from entitlement to a CID. In her fifth year, rather than granting a CID for all of the hours held in the fourth year, the school offered a CID for some of the hours, and a further fixed-term contract for other hours held that year. On appeal, the Rights Commissioner ruled that, in accordance with the Fixed-Term Work Act, a CID should be identical in all respects to the fixed-term contract preceding it, except for the fact that there is no longer a limit on its duration. The teacher was, therefore, awarded a CID for all of the hours taught in the previous year, even though some of these hours derived from hours vacated by a job-sharing teacher. The teacher has been awarded back payment for the contested hours.

The reason for refusal

When a CID is granted by a school, it must be ratified by the Department of Education and Skills. If a CID is refused by either the school or the Department, there must be foundation for the refusal. A teacher in a Dublin school was refused a CID by the Department of Education and Skills but the Department failed to specify the reasons for the refusal. The ASTI supported the teacher in an appeal to the Adjudicator, who found no objective grounds to prohibit the teacher from receiving a CID and upheld the teacher's claim.

Adjudication is the agreed process by which teachers can appeal CID refusals to the Department of Education and Skills.

The Rights Commissioner Service investigates disputes, grievances and claims that individuals or small groups have under certain legislation, including the Protection of Employees (Fixed Term Work) Act and the Unfair Dismissals Act.

The Labour Court hears unresolved cases referred by the Rights Commissioner or appeals of Rights Commissioner decisions.

Did you know ...?

- The ASTI will help members to achieve their entitlements, including advising and supporting them in CID appeal cases.
- CID appeals to the Adjudicator must be taken within four weeks of notification of refusal.
- The outcome of CID appeal cases can have a bearing on future interpretation of the rules governing the granting of CIDs for teachers.

Your school has refused to award you a CID?

Check that:

- You have four years' continuous service ✓
- You are registered with the Teaching Council or are in the process of registering ✓
- You are not employed as a substitute for a teacher absent on approved leave in your final year as a fixed-term employee (there are variations to this requirement. ASTI Head Office is available to advise you) ✓
- The post is viable ✓
- You have written to the Board of Management of your school seeking confirmation of the award of a CID ✓
- Your Board has refused you a CID ✓

If you answer yes to all of the above, please consult ASTI Head Office on the submission of an appeal to the Adjudicator or Rights Commissioner. Appeals to the Adjudicator must be submitted within four weeks of the date of refusal.



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Encouraging education

Take a look at some of the projects supported by the ASTI that aim to encourage education.



The Computer Clubhouse

The Computer Clubhouse is an innovative after school learning centre in the heart of The Liberties in Dublin city. Young people aged 8-18 from the south west inner city area of Dublin can drop in after school to work with a team of volunteers on continuous and short-term projects. They learn whatever grabs their interest, be it filmmaking, game design, music production, fashion design, or even guitar.

The young learners are hugely enthusiastic says Janice Feighery, Clubhouse Manager: "Each day from 3.00pm the young people bound through the door with speed and energy. One will run directly into the music studio to play the drum kit or guitar, others will launch into writing a 'scary' story, some will use the programming application, some the animation programme, or others might create a montage of their favourite football players in Photoshop". The hectic Clubhouse has elements of a TV studio, an artist's space, a music production suite, a graphic design office, an inventor's workshop and more. The young people come up with the ideas for projects themselves and mentors offer one-to-one guidance with a collaborative approach that allows the young people to experiment creatively but also provides them with real 21st century skills and training that they can apply in school, in life and in their future careers.

As well as learning digital and multimedia skills, the Clubhouse enables young people in the disadvantaged inner city area to develop their personal and social skills, and encourages them to enjoy learning, says Janice: "The children only work on projects they want to work on and there's never any right or wrong; it's about trying things out and learning from the outcomes. That cultivates confidence and helps the members to rise to new challenges. The Clubhouse keeps kids off the street, opens opportunity and, ultimately, offers a better chance at success in the future by cultivating digital fluency".

In the Clubhouse children can work with professional software and hardware they wouldn't otherwise have access to. Abdul Ali Hassan, an alumnus of the Clubhouse who is now studying engineering at Dublin City University, says his

experience using digital programs like AutoCAD in the Clubhouse is invaluable to him in his current studies.

Another clubhouse alumnus, Ross Mooney, who joined the Clubhouse in 2003 aged 12, is now in his second year of third-level education, and says: "That would not have been possible without the support of many great people I've had the chance of working with throughout the six years I was a Clubhouse member. Now I volunteer at the Clubhouse to help others to realise their potential!"

There are three Computer Clubhouses in Ireland/Northern Ireland. Each is run independently by a local community development organisation.

Find out more at www.theclubhouse.ie.

Children First

In Ireland, one child in ten lives below the poverty line. The Children First Foundation works to help these children to break free of the poverty trap. Through its Graduate Programme, the charity links those who have with those who have not. Long-term sponsors provide support to individual children to help them to reach their full potential and 'graduate' to independence and a secure future.

Tom Farrell, CEO of Children First, says: "Without early intervention some children will never break free of poverty. This programme is about giving children a chance they might not otherwise get, making things possible and allowing those in disadvantaged situations to believe that if they want to do something, there is nothing to stop them from doing it".

Children First supports children in their education, health, security and social integration. The support can cover anything from providing uniforms and medical expenses to legal protection, home heating or leadership skills.

Frankie Tate, a beneficiary of the Graduate Programme, says it had a profound effect on his life: "When I met Children First, I wasn't sure about what way

my life would go. Nobody in my family had ever been to college, my family couldn't afford to send me and I didn't think I'd be able to pass even if I tried. Children First gave me the confidence and support I needed; they encouraged me and made me believe I could do it. I work as a community manager with Dublin City Council now. It's a good job; I'm helping people and giving something back". Children First also provides family/child counselling to those who are disadvantaged.

Find out more at www.childrenfirst.ie.

The Gerry Lawless Bursary

The Gerry Lawless Bursary was set up to increase the number of students making the transition from second-level to third-level education. Administered by the North Clondalkin Community Development Programme (NCCDP), it offers financial assistance and support to students from North Clondalkin who have secured places at third level. The fund was set up by local residents in 1999 in memory of Gerry Lawless, a local volunteer who believed that education was the key to enabling young people to reach their full potential and was particularly active in promoting third-level education in schools in the area.

In its first year, the Bursary had three applicants for funding. This year 40 students applied to the fund, evidence that the Bursary not only benefits the individuals who receive it, but enhances the educational opportunities for the community, says Aisling Kennedy of the NCCDP: "North Clondalkin



The Computer Clubhouse cultivates confidence and helps the members to rise to new challenges.

is an area where families have experienced many social problems. These problems have a tendency to be extended due to the low levels of educational attainment, and resultant unemployment and low paid work. Obviously this fund is not the only factor in increasing participation at third level, but it definitely has the effect of making third-level education more acceptable and accessible".

Doodle 4 Google
To me, happiness is...

For the third year running we're inviting Irish school children to create their own doodle by taking part in the Doodle 4 Google competition!

The winning student will have their doodle appear on the Google Ireland homepage for 24 hours. They will also receive a laptop for themselves and one for their teacher; as well as a €10,000 technology grant for their school!

To be in with a chance to win these great prizes, enter your school today at www.google.ie/doodle4google

A view from the outside

As part of a series featuring views on education from those working outside the teaching profession, *ASTIR* gets some perspectives on the issue of curriculum review.



Entrepreneur Padraig O'Ceidigh, Chairman of Aer Arann, worked as a second-level maths teacher before going into business.

I left teaching 20 years ago, so I'm not totally up to date with changes that have occurred in the system, but my perspective is that of a former teacher and an entrepreneur, and is informed by my role as Adjunct Professor of Innovation, Creativity and Enterprise at NUI Galway, as well as my experience as a parent, watching my own kids go through the system. I think a key aspect in deciding what students are taught is that it should be relevant to where they are in their development and to their social and community awareness. If you expect kids to learn things that are outside their scope of understanding, they learn by rote and true understanding doesn't permeate. Students need to understand what they are learning so that it can reach deep enough to be a tool of knowledge to work with going forward – a stepping-stone to further learning. Child psychologists and educational psychologists could be consulted to plan how best to target the curriculum to the development of students. I think it is important to have a contribution from voices outside education and academia. Those in industry or working in fields relevant

to individual subjects should also be consulted. Of all the things I have done in my life, the thing I enjoyed most was teaching. Teaching methods are of huge relevance to the delivery of the curriculum. Teachers should be facilitators of learning and students should be encouraged to be proactive in their learning and take ownership of it. Ireland could be a world leader in teaching. We are good, but we could develop into a centre of world-class excellence. Other countries would look to us for example and we could have people coming here from all over the world to learn from us. The ASTI could certainly take a lead in that.

Neil Leyden's proposal to create a global media hub in Ireland was one of two winning proposals in the 'Your Country, Your Call' initiative this year.

'Chalk and talk' no longer holds any interest or relevance for children brought up on Playstations and mobile phones. Their brains are hardwired differently now and there is nothing wrong with that. We were brought up on TV and that didn't do us any harm. In the same way that we brought TVs into the classroom, we now have to bring digital

technologies. We have to engage our children in a new way and in a way that will prepare them – and us – for a remarkable future. We hear all the time about the 'smart economy' or the 'knowledge economy', and this is often greeted with cynicism. The opaqueness of the terms doesn't help and people tend to shrug it off as another meaningless sound bite from government. But it is inarguable that digital technology is becoming an everyday part of our lives, and that access to information is a crucial part of living in a networked age. What is also inarguable is that there are high levels of digital illiteracy in this country – a problem that is preventing people from taking full advantage of the benefits of digital technology. The first excuse was the cost of technology, then it was access to broadband, but all of these have passed. The only barrier now is the individual, or the 'fear of technology' that is exhibited by so many adults in this country. I see consistently that those aged 30 or more have severe problems when it comes to technology. Ironically, they perceive young people to have no problem with using technology, leading them to hide their own inability all the more. The truth is that young people may have no 'fear of technology' but the majority, in my experience, are not very good at using technology well. In fact, when it comes to 'best practice', i.e., using the technology the way it's meant to be used, or indeed safely, they are equally illiterate. So we are left in this disastrous situation in

Irish education where the teachers are afraid of the technology because they think that their younger pupils will show them up and the young pupils are in desperate need to learn how to use the technology properly in order to embrace their future development. The future is all about digital services. The world and its mother know this to be true and if we don't get to grips with it, our country hasn't a hope of avoiding the economic abyss. We need to embrace digital technologies, not only for ourselves, but to ensure our children's future. If you want to improve your digital skills, take a look at www.i-cando.ie: endorsed by the Digital Media Forum, it's the ECDL for the 21st Century! Teachers can avail of the programme at a subsidised rate from the Digital Media Forum Skillnet Programme until December 31. See www.digitalmediaforum.ie.

More on the web

Renowned education advisor Ken Robinson spoke at the 2010 TED Conference. In a very entertaining talk he advocated a revolution in the way we view and deliver education. Watch at: www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_bring_on_the_revolution.html.

View from the inside

Joe Moran, teacher at Presentation Secondary School, Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary, and ASTI representative on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, gives his view as a classroom practitioner.

Padraig O'Ceidigh is right when he states that students need experiential understanding of a subject if what they are learning is to be of relevance and serve as a "building block" for future learning. Making syllabi relevant to students and ensuring that teaching and learning methods are appropriate to students' current developmental stage is imperative and is an ongoing process. Teachers understand the limitations of rote learning and its prevalence in today's classrooms is often exaggerated.

Where once course content was the key to curriculum development, today learning outcomes are the primary focus for students. Knowledge is no longer a given, a finite construct. Learning outcomes are not about acquiring specific knowledge; rather they are about learning how to learn, process information, be critical and analytical, communicate, work with others, adapt to new circumstances, adopt ethical positions, and problem solve.

As any teacher will know, these kinds of outcomes are only possible where the syllabus is interesting and relevant to the students, where it includes practical and interactive aspects such as classroom discussion and team work, and where teachers can facilitate individualised learning so that every student – regardless of ability or developmental progress – can benefit. Project Maths shows how an innovative model of curricular change in which the experts – the classroom teachers – shape syllabus content is possible. This model draws heavily on teacher expertise in creating an active learning environment.

The role of the teacher in realising this kind of reform cannot be overstated. Facilitating individualised learning, for example, requires that the teacher understands the different teaching and learning methodologies appropriate

to students' developmental stages and abilities. This requires investment in teacher professional development as an ongoing career-long process. In addition, the teacher must have adequate opportunities to engage in interactive teaching with groups within the class and with individual students. Class size and a reduction in the pupil–teacher ratio are absolutely crucial in this regard.

Neil Leyden is correct to say that we need to embrace digital technologies to protect our children's future life chances. For teachers this means using technology as a teaching and learning tool. The evidence is that teachers, far from being afraid, are in favour of technology in the classroom; a significant proportion of teachers have completed courses in IT. In 2008 alone more than 20% of second-level teachers participated in non-in-service IT courses for teachers organised by the National Centre for Technology in Education. Teachers and schools need support in order to develop schools as technology-rich learning environments. This means:

- Adequate IT equipment. The ASTI welcomes the recent announcement of the long-awaited €21 million for hardware equipment for maths and science classrooms.
- ICT advisors to offer technical support and pedagogical advice to schools. ICT advisor posts were provided as part of an ICT advisory service but the posts were abolished in 2008.

Digital literacy is essential to effective teaching and learning in a modern classroom. It is not just another component of the curriculum, but is an essential skill that must be integrated into all subjects.

Just like curriculum reform, the true integration of ICT is contingent upon teachers' conviction that it will enhance the teaching and learning process. In-service support and consistent policy is vital to this. An integrated coherent approach must be taken if the potential for ICT in education is to be recognised.

A taste of the real world

ASTIR looks at an initiative aiming to show students the long-term benefits of second-level education.

School days are supposed to be the best of your life. So if you give your students a look at what lies ahead for them in the working world, how will they react? With enthusiasm, is the somewhat surprising answer from Germanine Noonan, teacher and Schools Business Partnership Programme Manager with Business in the Community (BITC).

The Schools Business Partnership matches over 150 schools around the country with local businesses to provide students with a realistic view of where education and hard work can lead. Germaine, who is seconded to the Programme from Pobalscoil Rosmini in Dublin, says: "The programme gives students a context for their learning; it shows them where a good education can lead, which motivates them to consider their future careers, stay in school and work hard at their education".

BITC offers a range of programmes, including a student mentoring programme, a Skills@work programme, and a summer work placement programme. As part of Skills@work, employees and managers from partner companies provide students with an insight into the diversity of employment roles in a company. The programme provides site visits, 'Day in the Life' talks, CV workshops, mock interviews, company overviews, interview skill techniques, and other sessions such as workplace etiquette and teamwork. Four out of five students who participated in the programme said it changed their view of education and the importance of completing the Leaving Certificate, according to a recent survey. Meanwhile, 98% of schools said the Programme had a positive impact on students' overall attitude and focus.

Invaluable motivation

That is certainly the case at St Nessel's Community College, a DEIS school in Limerick City paired with Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT). Mary O'Sullivan, Guidance Counsellor at St Nessel's, says the Programme has had a real impact on her school and students over the past four years: "There is always 100% attendance on the Skills@work days; the students really invest in it. Participating can be the making of the student; they meet positive role models and gain insight into the working world. I find it invaluable in motivating students at risk of early school leaving. It gives them a sense that they can succeed and do better if they try harder, and the overall experience provides a clear rationale for further education".

Each year Mary selects a number of fifth-year students to take part in the

Programme, which complements both the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Guidance Programme in the school. The students visit LIT (as a place of employment) one day a month between January and May each year. They experience the world of work by listening to some of the employees talk about the roles and responsibilities of their various jobs, the challenges they faced initially and how they overcame them, and also the promotion and changes they have experienced since first taking up employment in the organisation. Great emphasis is put on preparation and learning about the skills and qualities that enhance employment prospects in the future. For this reason LIT also runs CV and interview workshops for the students. The

highlight of the BITC programme is the mock interview, which puts the students themselves in the hot seat. They get both written and oral feedback from the interview panels in LIT.

Most of the students would not have an opportunity to do an interview except for this programme and it really improves their job search skills. They have to find a week's work experience in May each year as part of the LCVP programme. Mary says: "The positive feedback they receive from the mock interview panels builds their self esteem, and gives them a real sense of achievement. They have proved to themselves that they can succeed and they will have that experience to draw on throughout life. These students are trying to overcome different types of adversity and social disadvantage. To get encouragement like this from mentors in the real world can turn things around for them. You can see clearly the effect the programme has on individual students. It can encourage them to turn over a new leaf, to use their abilities and to plan and work for their own future".

Find out more at www.bitc.ie/sbp.

Management excellence programmes

BITC also offers programmes in management excellence for principals and teachers. Through these programmes, business leaders share expertise and strategy with educational leaders through a series of workshops over the course of the school year. Find out more at www.bitc.ie.



RSTA Christmas events

News from RSTA branches around the country.

Branch Secretaries

Branch	Name	Address	Telephone
Cork	Ms Geraldine Murphy	Ligoniel, Ashboro, Shanakiel, Cork	021-439 6782
Dublin	Ms Maureen O'Connor	89 Castleknock Elms, Castleknock, Dublin 15	01-822 7597/086-877 5754
Kerry	Temporary Vacancy		
Kilkenny	Ms Kay Sheedy	Kin-Ross, Waterford Rd, Kilkenny, Co. Kilkenny	056-772 2271/087-245 4380
Mayo	Ms Carmel Heneghan	'Iona', Shrule, Co. Galway	093-31273/087-225 8978
Nth. East	Mr Michael McMahon	Derryolam, Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan	042-966 1097
Wicklow	Ms Aveen Kilduff	49 Herbert Park, Bray, Co. Wicklow	01-276 0616/087-664 1466
Kildare	C/O Ms Grace Walsh	4 College Grove, Roseberry, Newbridge, Co. Kildare	086-816 1043
Sligo	Ms Maire T. Finan	Dun Clíodhna, Strandhill Rd, Sligo, Co. Sligo	071-916 2185
Galway	Ms Sheila Conneely	Kinvara West, Kinvara, Co. Galway	091-637206/087-256 3264
Wexford	Mrs Mary Kavanagh	Gobinstown, New Ross, Co. Wexford	051-424502/086-357 7887
Midland	Ms Martina Kelly	Clonturk, Longford, Co. Longford	043-334 7981/086-882 0537
Tipperary	Ms Elizabeth Hayes	Cluain Aogdha, Kilconnell, Fethard, Co. Tipperary	062-61633/086-170 6853
Limerick	Ms Mary Burke	10 Ashville, Ballysheedy, Co. Limerick	061-417247
Waterford	Mr Henry Collins	20 Meneval Green, Farmleigh, Dunmore Road, Waterford	051-345787
Donegal	Ms June Hosty	64 Thorndale, Magherennan, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	074-912 0816

Christmas lunches

Many members look forward to their branch Christmas lunch as it is usually a very enjoyable experience where friends of many years can meet and eat and enjoy a special convivial atmosphere. Some branches have already arranged their Christmas lunch, while others will be arranged in the near future.

We already have some branch Christmas lunch details as follows:

Cork Branch	Thursday December 2
Dublin Branch	Wednesday December 1 Wynne's Hotel
Wicklow Branch	Friday December 10 at 12.30pm Powerscourt Golf Club, Enniskerry
Mayo Branch	Thursday December 2 at 1.30pm Ashford Castle

Please contact your Branch Secretary or Branch Co-ordinator to find out the details of your branch Christmas lunch and to make arrangements if you wish to attend.

John White – a friend to the RSTA

We wish to congratulate John White on his retirement as General Secretary of the ASTI. John has been a good friend to the RSTA over the years, supporting our work in every way he could. He facilitated our National Committee by allowing our meetings to take place in Thomas MacDonagh House, where our Christmas coffee morning also takes place each year. He has shared his wisdom with our members on many occasions and has always been available with advice when needed. He has spoken at our AGM on several occasions.

We wish John a long, happy, healthy retirement and wish every success to his successor Pat King as General Secretary.

RSTA Christmas coffee morning

The RSTA Christmas coffee morning will be held on December 14 at 11.00am in ASTI Head Office, Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8.

Mea Missa ex Extremis *(Words of advice from a retired teacher to those considering retirement)*

*To you who wish to change your lot,
To start anew – from what you've got
In case your mind all full of care is
I send to you this missa speris.*

*So your thoughts are on retiring
Ceasing work – no more aspiring
To teach to others what you value
And take this step, you shall ... or shall you?*

*Let there be no hesitation
Take the step with great elation
Stop your pacing on the sand
Come on in – the water's grand!*

*Ask yourself what you like best –
Tempus in agrorem dulce est.
When you retire you'll do it your way,
Spend your precious time sub Jove.*

*Do not hesitate or linger
Or put your plans on the long finger.
It's not as bad as it might seem.
Take the plunge – just carpe diem!*

*Remember in your busy day –
"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may!"
Tempus fugit – your days slip by.
Seize the moment – vive hodie!*

*And if you worry – "Will I miss it,
Be alone, a social misfit?"
Worry not, your mind give rest –
Tempus abire tibi est.*

*"No more Latin, no more French,
No more sittin' on a hard old bench!"
Quod sum quod! It's time to go.
Honey'd days! Meliora spero.*

*So now I've come to my letter's end,
Which with my blessing to you I send.
Come visit me, yes, be my guest –
Causa mea finita est!*

For those who slept during Latin class:
Mea missa ex extremis – my letter from the peripheries
Missa speris – a letter of hope
Tempus in agrorem dulce est – time spent in the fields is sweet
Sub Jove – in the open air
Carpe diem – seize the day
Tempus fugit – time flies
Vive hodie – live for today
Tempus abire tibi est – It's time for you to go
Quod sum quod – I am what I am
Meliora spero – I hope for better (things)
Causa mea finita est – I rest my case

Vestigia nulla retrorsum (footsteps do not go backwards)
Lorcan Leavy, Mayo Branch.

North East Branch outing



Members of the North East Branch of the RSTA pictured on a recent outing.

Mayo Branch talk



Charlie Lambert, Mayo Sports Partnership Co-ordinator, recently gave a very informative talk on physical activity to members of the Mayo Branch. Those attending were supplied with details on opportunities for physical activity in Mayo.

For information about the RSTA and its activities please visit our website at www.rsta-ireland.com.

For those who wish to join the RSTA please contact Muriel McNicholas, Cordarragh, Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo, Tel: 085-118 1330.




Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013

The Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission offers funding for a range of activities for schools, educators and pupils.

These include:

Comenius School Partnerships: pupils, students and staff from schools across Europe work together on joint projects. Deadline for applications: 21 February 2011

Comenius Regio Partnerships: local and regional authorities with a direct role in school education, schools and other actors in education, working with European partners on topics of mutual interest. Deadline: 21 February 2011

Comenius In-Service Training: training for staff involved in school education. Deadlines: 14 January, 29 April, 16 September 2011. Please note that deadlines relate to specific training periods.

Comenius Assistantships: encouraging intercultural awareness and language learning. Deadline: 31 January 2011



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

Study Visits: networking opportunities for education and vocational training specialists. Deadlines: 31 March, 14 October 2011. Please note that deadlines relate to specific time periods.

eTwinning: a simple and straightforward way to forge partnerships and work on projects with other schools in Europe using Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

To find out more about these or any other activities under the Lifelong Learning Programme, please contact us: 01 873 1411 or education@leargas.ie.

www.leargas.ie

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SIMS is an international product used in 22 countries worldwide, all Northern Ireland schools and 80% of UK schools





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Dublin 12 Tel: (01) 4603785

Bóthar launches new website



Teachers in all areas, especially CSPE, LCVP, LCA, TY and RE, are invited to visit the new 'Education' section on the Bóthar website. Launched in September, it contains plenty of supporting material for action projects, as well as development education activities and fundraising suggestions. Contact Jeremy Meehan, Bóthar's Director of Education, Tel: 086-3601624, or Email: jmeehan@indigo.ie to find out more, or log on to <http://bothareducation.ie>.

Writing competition

Young people aged 14 to 18 are invited to submit their views on how we can renew agriculture for better food and better health as part of an International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) writing contest. For additional guidelines, background information and to enter, visit <http://2020conference.ifpri.info/>.

Scholarships for Irish teachers

The Fulbright Awards offer teachers of Irish the chance to work as teaching assistants and carry out postgraduate study in the US for 10 months. An Irish Language Scholar Award is also on offer to Irish teachers interested in carrying out research and lecturing at a third-level institute in the US. For more information see www.fulbright.ie.

Scoliosis detection

Scoliosis – a curvature of the spine – is very prevalent in adolescents. Early detection is a vital part of the monitoring and effective treatment of the condition. In April 2009 a scoliosis screening programme for schools was withdrawn by the Health Service after 35 years. Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, has produced an educational DVD to aid in early detection of scoliosis. For more information on the screening programme and DVD, contact Frances McDevitt (Scoliosis Assessment Specialist), Tel: 087-259 8363, or Email: frances.mcdevitt@gmail.com.

Museum programme for schools

Every year the National Museum of Ireland welcomes large numbers of students to participate in its learning programmes at each of its four museums in Dublin and Mayo. The 2010 programme for schools has just been launched and complements the curriculum in a range of subjects. For more see www.museum.ie.



Anti-racism creative competition



Students from St Dominic's, Ballyfermot, St Aidan's Community School and Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, pictured at the launch of Show Racism the Red Card's programme of events for this year.

Show Racism the Red Card is inviting second-level schools to register and participate in its second annual Anti-Racism Creative Competition. Schools can enter work featuring the anti-racism message in various forms including DVDs, poetry, painting, written testimony, comic books, samba raps and more. This is an opportunity for schools to engage in promoting a positive and inclusive message while working across the curriculum. Teacher Mary Quinn from Blakestown Community School in Dublin was involved in the competition last year: "When I introduced the concept of the competition to students last year it was the most amazing experience. To hear their views and share their experiences and see the artwork they produced as a result of this was fantastic. It became a learning experience more than just a competition for the students, as they were unaware of just how strong an impact words can have on people's lives, especially those that have been hurt by racism as they were growing up". For more information on the competition, follow the link on www.theredcard.ie.

Meningitis appeal

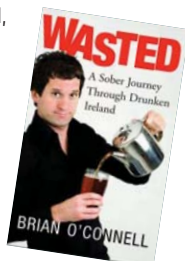
The Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF) has extended its mobile phone recycling appeal to second-level schools to spread awareness of the disease and its symptoms and to raise vital funds. By taking part, students can also acquire equipment and vouchers for their school. Register now by calling 1890 252 874. The MRF has also launched a new SMS mobile video to raise awareness of the disease – it gives a symptom checker and freephone emergency number. Text Time to 50308 to download the video.

Teaching about the built environment?

A new international award scheme has been developed by the International Union of Architects (UIA) to recognise initiatives that help young people to understand architecture and the built environment. The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) invites applications from individuals and organisations involved in any way with architectural and built environment education for children. For more information, Email: uia-goldencubes@riai.ie, or log on to www.riai.ie/education.

Alcohol awareness school visits

Due to demand, *Irish Times* journalist Brian O'Connell, author of *Wasted: A Sober Journey Through Drunken Ireland*, is planning to participate in school visits during January/February 2011 to discuss the issue of teenagers and alcohol. He is available to speak with both students and parents. Schools interested in receiving a visit should Email: alcoholvisits@gmail.com.



Can you sing?

Cantairí Avondale is a mixed-voice choir looking for sopranos, tenors and basses to sing a challenging and varying repertoire of sacred music, jazz and modern classics. Rehearsals are held on Monday evenings in Dublin city centre. For further information, Tel: 086-052 2515.



Gaeltacht scholarship scheme

The Coláiste UISCE scholarship scheme allows students to enjoy an exciting Gaeltacht experience free of charge. Applications for the scholarship, as well as further details on courses, can be found at www.uisce.ie.



French immersion courses

French teachers: are you interested in spending a week immersed in French language and culture? Sign up for a summer Comenius course to update your teaching methodologies and develop your French. You can apply to Léargas for funding. Find out more at www.lfee.eu.

Health and safety resources

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has produced a number of resources for schools. The Choose Safety programme for Transition Year and senior cycle introduces students to the principles of workplace safety. The HSA also has five e-learning courses, and an educational game, and runs 'safety and health' in-service training for teachers. For more, see the education section on www.hsa.ie.



Larry McGuinness



Just as the summer begins to fade a new school year comes around with its promise of new beginnings. This annual phenomenon seems as ceaseless as life itself. Yet in this yearly ritual another of nature's great truths is played out – the end of a cycle. In most years this is painless, as we note the missing faces who have just finished a five- or six-year cycle and have moved on anew. There is also the loss of young teachers who for many reasons flash across our paths all too quickly before heading off to pastures new. This new school year begins in Colaiste Choilm, Swords, and the McGuinness home in Rathfarnham, and all has changed, utterly changed. When on a sad Sunday morning in February, Larry McGuinness died, he left behind a void bigger than himself. We in Colaiste Choilm could not compare our loss to the magnitude of loss suffered by Eileen, his wife, Eamon, Bobby and Gerard, his sons or, the very apple of his eye Sinead, his daughter. To listen to Larry when he spoke about his family with joy and pride bursting out of every pore, one was left in no doubt about how much he loved and cherished his family; they truly were the very centre of his universe. Listening to Stephen Hawking recently explain how bodies with greater mass exert greater gravitational pull might also explain the influence Larry McGuinness had on Colaiste Choilm since first entering that fledgling school in 1971. Larry was not just physically big; he had a big intelligence, a big capacity to listen and understand, a big capacity to argue and fight his corner and, most of all, a big heart.

The new school year has highlighted his family's and our loss. Our universe is less full; the void left by Larry is like a black hole impossible to fill. Larry McGuinness was also a great union man. At school, at branch (Fingal), at CEC and at Convention, Larry could be found speaking up for teachers in his very passionate and forthright manner. Larry had a profound interest in the well-being of his colleagues and fought for them even when doing so might have damaged his own interests. Larry often said to me: "Rights are hard won and easily lost". His last text to me just three days before he died wished me all the best and exhorted me to keep up the fight, and said he hoped to be back for Convention 2011. He will be there in spirit.

Larry was a great teacher. The boys at Colaiste Choilm adored him; he was year head to the sixth years that left in June, and they referred to him as Big Lar (not to his face I might add). When speaking to the boys in the weeks after his death the conversation would always begin with a comment about his size. Then they would mention that he was hard but fair, and as the talk grew more personal they would recount the times he helped them either academically or personally. There was forever a genuine respect and affection between them. Larry McGuinness had many titles: teacher, union activist, year head, and some titles denied: "The best principal we never had". But the titles that gave him greatest pleasure were that of husband and dad.

This school year did begin as it must but it was missing something that will be rectified where old ghosts meet. Until then Larry will be remembered with great respect and affection by all who knew him. Once more our deepest sympathies go out to Eileen, Bobby, Gerard, Eamon and Sinead. May you find comfort in his memory.

By Ed Byrne

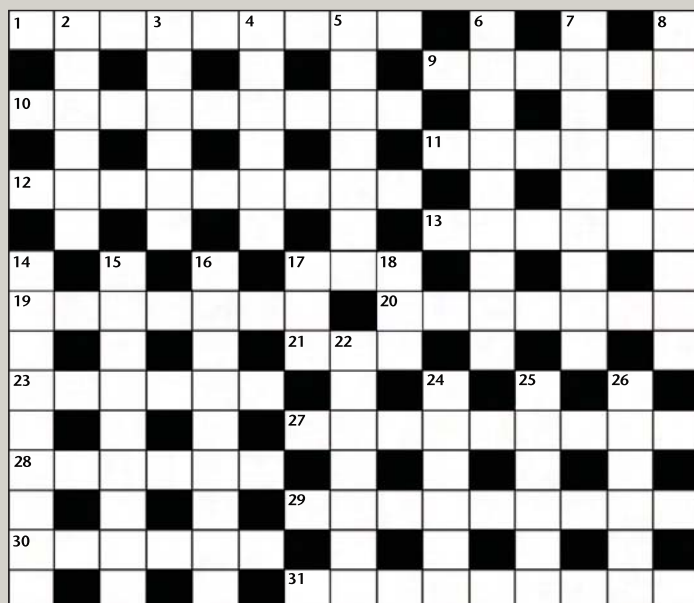


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CLUES ACROSS:

- 1 Indoctrinate so as to banish war (9)
- 9 The crones condemn and pass judgment (6)
- 10 Cautioned about schooling (9)
- 11 Relegate to the ash bin (2)
- 12 Left rated but insincere compliments (9)
- 13 Puts on a coat (6)
- 17 Grasp this computer language (3)
- 19 Gloves involved in mood change (7)
- 20 He rang Eve and exacted satisfaction (7)
- 21 Gender in a part of Essex (3)
- 23 No raid during this hostile invasion (6)
- 27 Mac's iPods are intermittent (9)
- 28 Herod's new island (6)
- 29 An audit test could change to certain moods (9)
- 30 Scandinavian synonym for these countries (6)
- 31 Break one's word! (9)

CLUES DOWN:

- 2 "Russia is a ... wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" (Winston Churchill) (6)
- 3 Stir up an ice tin (6)
- 4 Writhe about and shrivel up (6)
- 5 She rows during short falls of rain (7)
- 6 The area's pest comes apart (9)
- 7 The sea pigeon is involved in spying (9)
- 8 A carthorse might play instruments in this group of musicians (9)
- 14 Incomer (9)
- 15 The board rats lean towards the right side (9)
- 16 Tennessee Williams created a glass one (9)
- 17 A vain, stupid person as silly as you can get (3)
- 18 A Latin peace (3)
- 22 Be sensitive and understanding when you pay them (7)
- 24 Known as the Shakespeare of the Bible (6)
- 25 Colum needs a supporting pillar (6)
- 26 Our lives begin to end the day we become ...
About things that matter"
(Martin Luther King) (6)

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 1004

Across

1. Genial
4. Uploaded
9. Orange
10. Argentum
12. Nonce
13. Flyweight
14. Poses
15. Echoes
20. Graham
21. Peach
24. Apartment
27. Alone
28. Dinosaur
29. Varied
30. Nostrils
31. Penang

Down

1. Grown-ups
2. Nearness
3. Aggressor
5. Party
6. Obese
7. Dotage
8. Dumpty
11. Afresh
16. Humpty
17. Esplanade
18. Japonica
19. Sheepdog
22. Garden
23. Paints
25. Taser
26. Equal

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